

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU

By

Philip Middleton Williams

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CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU

*For Robert Anderson.
Playwright, friend, and mentor.*

Thanks to Kenneth N. Kurtz for directing the first reading of “Can’t Live Without You” at the University of Miami on November 20, 2005, and thanks to Ross Evans, Rebecca Voss, Mark Mochabee, Maha McCain, and Chris Teutsch for reading the roles. It was a great beginning.

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CHARACTERS:

BOBBY CRAMER: early twenties, well built, with a friendly demeanor.

ANNA MORGAN: early thirties, attractive, dressed-for-success, and assertive.

DONNY HOLLENBECK: mid-thirties, in good shape, carefree.

BARBARA SOLOMON: in her forties, large and loud.

NICK WILSON: mid-thirties, Beach Boy type.

PLACE and TIME: The living room of a home in the Florida Keys. A morning in May, present day.

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU was first staged at the Manhattan Repertory Theatre in New York City on January 23, 2008. It was produced by Rachel Charlop-Powers and directed by Adam J. Natale with the following cast:

Bobby Cramer.....	Will Poston
Anna Morgan.....	Rachel Charlop-Powers
Donny Hollenbeck.....	Tom Pilutik
Barbara Solomon.....	Mary Fassino
Nick Wilson.....	Gary Mahmoud

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU was first produced fully staged by The Playgroup, LLC at the Willow Theatre in Boca Raton, Florida, on March 30, 2019. It was directed by Jerry Jensen with the following cast:

Bobby Cramer.....	Robert Ayala
Anna Morgan.....	Leslie Kandel
Donny Hollenbeck.....	Anthony Wolff
Barbara Solomon.....	Carla Zackson Heller
Nick Wilson.....	AJ Ruiz

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

*It is a quiet May morning in the home of Donny Hollenbeck and Anna Morgan. This is a nice house on a quiet stretch of beach in the Florida Keys. It is not a fancy home and the furnishings are not too modern, but they're well-appointed and the walls are clean and brightly painted. We are in the living room. The furniture is tropical – rattan or bamboo – and there are the usual decorative touches of a house in the tropics: floral prints on the walls and bamboo blinds on the windows and doors. In the center of the room is a couch, chairs, and coffee table combination with a standing lamp and magazines – “Caribbean Travel & Life,” “The New Yorker,” “Architectural Digest” – on the table. There is a TV set on a stand in one corner of the room, and a bar set-up on a rolling cart. Upstage center is an open French door that leads out to a patio. Patio furniture, including a small outdoor café-style dining table and chairs, can be seen outside, and the background is the sky, which is bright blue and clear. There's also a door Stage Left that leads off to the front of the house. Stage Right leads to the rest of the house. Upstage Left is an office area in the corner of the room consisting of a desk, bookshelves, desk lamp, and a desktop computer with a printer. This area is in contrast to the rest of the room: the desk is old, beat-up, and cluttered with papers, books, files, newspapers, coffee mugs, pencils, pens, office supplies, and a telephone. The bookshelves are cheap, packed with old books of every type, in disarray, and somewhere in the middle of it is a stereo system. In short, this area is a messy corner of an otherwise neat space. At rise, it is around eight a.m. Sunlight is streaming into the living room. It is empty for a moment, then from the open Stage Left door **BOBBY CRAMER** enters. He is an attractive young man in his early twenties, well built, with a friendly demeanor. He is wearing jeans and a polo shirt. He comes into the living room and looks around it as if it is a place he's heard about but never seen. He strolls around for a moment, finally ending up by the desk. He looks it over carefully as if he's looking for something, then picks up a small stack of papers and looks at them, flipping through the pages. He shakes his head, mutters a soft “Jesus Christ” then carefully puts the papers back in the place where he found*

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them. As he does this, a woman's voice is heard off Stage Right, coming into the living room. This is ANNA MORGAN. She is in her early thirties, attractive, dressed-for-success, and assertive. She is carrying a briefcase and talking on a cell phone. When she enters, she goes directly for the desk area, completely oblivious of Bobby. She rummages around on the desk for something as she talks.

ANNA. *(On phone.)* No, no. I have the Applegate showing at ten, then the Flannery house at one. If Nick wants me to go hold his hand for the Freeman closing, he's got to reschedule it.... Because he's a big boy and he can do it himself.... I don't care if he's afraid he'll 'screw it all up.' Jesus, do I have to do everything for him? *(Pause as she listens, still rummaging through papers on the desk. Bobby watches with a mixture of bemusement and revulsion. She ignores him.)* And now, goddamit, where the hell is the debit card? No, not you, Arlene, I'm talking to myself.... All right, then. Tell Nick if he can move the closing I'll be there, although I may not stay for the whole show, and he owes me a Bahama Mama at Snapper's, and maybe lunch as well. Thanks, you're great. *(Ends call.)* Surrounded by incompetents. *(Calls off Right.)* Donny, where's the debit card? *(Gets no reply, tries again louder.)* **DONNY, WHERE'S THE DEBIT CARD?** **DONNY.** *(Off.)* Hell if I know. You had it last.

ANNA. And I left it on the desk. *(Shuffles through more papers, finally finds it under a coffee mug.)* There you are. *(Stuffs it into the briefcase along with the cell phone. Calls off.)* Found it.

DONNY. *(Off.)* Good. What'd ya need it for, anyway?

ANNA. *(As if that was a dumb question.)* Shopping. Remember, we have company for dinner tonight.

DONNY. *(Off.)* It's not company. It's Barbara.

ANNA. Well, whatever. I'm going to get fresh fish and some peppers and a nice bottle of wine. I'll be home by six at the latest. Start the grille, will you, and we'll eat at seven or so. *(No reply.)* Did you hear me? **(DONNY HOLLENBECK enters. He is in his early to mid-thirties, attractive, in good shape, wearing a worn polo shirt, shorts, and sandals. In color, size, and build he looks like he is Bobby's older brother. He is carrying a large coffee mug. He has an air of casualness about him that is a distinct contrast to the business and energy of Anna, but it's a nice contrast, and he puts up with her drive and directness with a nodding tolerance**

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and even admiration. He strolls into the living room and, like Anna, does not notice Bobby.)

DONNY. Yes, I heard every word. What's up with Nick?

ANNA. After six months of trying, he finally sold a decent piece of property, and now he's completely freaked out about doing the closing. So, I guess I have to go meet him at the title company to get him started. I'll be home as soon as I can. What are you going to do with Barbara?

DONNY. Not a damn thing. This was her idea, and as far as I'm concerned, she can go down to the beach with a towel and cooler of beer and hit on the lifeguards. I'm not the entertainment committee.

ANNA. She'll want to see the manuscript.

DONNY. *(Pointing at the desk.)* It's right there. All forty pages of it.

ANNA. She's expecting four hundred.

DONNY. People in hell want ice water, too.

ANNA. So, she isn't going to get it.

DONNY. *(Nonchalantly.)* I love how quickly you grasp things.

ANNA. When's the deadline?

DONNY. *(Looks at his watch.)* Two weeks ago. Look, they haven't even sent the last one to press yet. The one before that is still flying off the shelves at every drugstore and Winn-Dixie. They got four out of me last year alone. What is the big rush? It's not like they're holding up the New York Times bestseller list until "Amanda Longington" pens yet another bodice-ripping-bulging-crotch romance classic.

ANNA. No, they may not be, but you have a contract, and right now, you're behind, "Amanda." And how long will it take you to crank this one out? All you need is to hit "Find and Replace" on the computer, change the names and the locale on any of the twenty other books you've written and voila, another Amanda Longington romance classic. You could be done before lunch.

DONNY. Is that how you think I do it? It's not that simple, like I can just push a button and they pour out of the printer.

ANNA. Well, it's just that you've been doing this for so long I thought it was just something you didn't even have to think about. It's not like you're creating great literature or anything, is it?

DONNY. I guess not.

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ANNA. That's right. It pays the bills. (*Goes to Donny and kisses him.*) And I gotta go. I'll be home as soon as I can.

DONNY. (*Settling on the couch, picking up TV remote.*) Gotcha.

ANNA. Say hi to Barbara for me. And maybe if you were sitting at the computer instead of watching TV when she showed up, she might not be so pissed.

BARBARA. (*Off.*) If it'll make you happy, I'll be pissed no matter what he's doing. What's he doing? (**BARBARA SOLOMON** enters from the French door. *She is a large and loud woman in her forties wearing typical Florida tourist beachwear: a large floppy straw hat, colorful shirt and skirt, large sunglasses, and carrying a large straw purse, probably with a flamingo on the side, and a newspaper. Like Donny and Anna, she is oblivious to Bobby. She takes off her hat and fans herself.*)

ANNA. Not a whole lot.

DONNY. (*To Anna.*) Do you mind? Hi, Barb.

BARBARA. (*Goes to Anna, gives her a quick kiss, same to Donny, and then flops on the couch.*) Jesus, did you have to buy a place out in the middle of nowhere?

DONNY. That was the idea.

BARBARA. Well, I thought I'd end up in Havana by the time I got here. For the last five miles I was wondering how to explain to Cuban customs that I'm just a tourist from New York and the white Ford is a rental.

DONNY. You're not supposed to be here until this afternoon. I thought you were up in Boca Raton with your mother. That's a three-hour drive. Jesus, you didn't drive down from there this morning, did you?

BARBARA. Oh, hell no. I drove down last night, bunked up at the Hungry Pelican Motel and shared a very small room with three large cockroaches and a very noisy air conditioner. If I'd spent one more night with my mother, someone was going to end up dead – either I was gonna kill her or I was gonna kill myself. I decided to get the hell out before one of us became that strange smell in the crawlspace. God, she can kvetch about anything... "It's too hot in here, it's too cold in here, there's too much fat on the brisket, and by the way, you could stand to lose a few pounds yourself, dear...not like I'm trying to run your life or anything." So... how are we doing?

DONNY. (*Gives a warning look to Anna.*) Fine. Chugging right along.

ANNA. And I need to get chugging along myself. See you later, Barbara. Dinner's at seven.

BARBARA. Oh, you don't have to go to any trouble.

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ANNA. It's no trouble – just remind Donny to start the grille and we'll be all set.
(*Goes to Donny, gives him a kiss.*) Work hard.

DONNY. (*Returns kiss.*) Uh huh.

BARBARA. Bye-bye, dear. (*Anna goes out French door, exits Right.*)

BARBARA. Sweet girl. Why don't you marry her?

DONNY. I thought you left your mother up in Boca.

BARBARA. Oh, ho.... Skating a little too close, huh?

DONNY. We're happy as we are.

BARBARA. How's she like the real estate biz down here? A little different than Manhattan, isn't it?

DONNY. What can I tell you? She's good at it, she makes a good income, and she gets out of the house.

BARBARA. Leaving you alone to write.

DONNY. Yeah, that's the idea.

BARBARA. So, this is the place I've been hearing so much about. Nice. Who did the decorating?

DONNY. Anna's mother. This was her parents' place until they got tired of the upkeep and found a nice condo in Naples. We bought it and left it as it was except for my little corner of the world. (*Indicates the desk area, and, without knowing it, Bobby.*)

BARBARA. Yeah, I recognize that pile from the place on Christopher Street. All you need is a steaming radiator and a view of Sheridan Square. All things considered I like this view better. How far is it to the beach from here?

DONNY. Fifty yards through those mangroves and you're there.

BARBARA. Wow. This is better than Sag Harbor. What about hurricanes?

DONNY. What about them?

BARBARA. You ever get them?

DONNY. Hurricane season is June to November, and we moved here a year ago. A couple of close calls, but so far, so good.

BARBARA. That would bother me, never knowing if one day it could all be wiped out in an instant.

DONNY. You get hurricanes in New York. In 1960 Hurricane Donna wiped out Sag Harbor.

BARBARA. Thanks for cheering me up. So, you really like it here.

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DONNY. I didn't think I would at first, but now that I've been here a while, I love it. It's quieter, the weather's great, and when I'm out walking, I know that if I step on something that crunches, chances are it's a seashell and not a crack pipe. You ought to try it, Barbara. God knows you make enough money that you could afford a place like this.

BARBARA. I don't want to live in the same state as my mother. Hell, I don't even like being in the same time zone with her. And being within a day's drive—don't even want to go there. But I have to admit it must be a nice place to work. (*She strolls around the living room, Donny watching her. He knows what's coming next.*) So, how's the newest baby coming along? The last one looked good, so Jo Ann's naturally wondering where the next one is.

DONNY. It's not done.

BARBARA. So I figured. How much more needs to be done?

DONNY. Oh, not too much.

BARBARA. What, twenty more pages? Finishing touches? Posing for the cover with your shirt off?

DONNY. A little more than that.

BARBARA. (*All business.*) How much more, Donny?

DONNY. All of it.

BARBARA. All of it?

DONNY. Yep. All of it. (*Beat.*)

BARBARA. You haven't started.

DONNY. Oh, I started. I'm just having a little problem with it, that's all.

BARBARA. The only time a man says he has "a little problem" is when he can't get it up.

DONNY. Well then, I guess you could say that I have the writer's equivalent of a limp dick. It's just not happening with this one.

BARBARA. You're writing a romance novel, not *Pride and Prejudice*. Same shit, different day. It's like writing porn: all you gotta do is clean up the language and keep their clothes on until the last page. You've written twenty-plus Amanda Longingtons. Why is this one so hard, pardon the expression?

DONNY. I don't know. I mean, I can see the characters, I know the setting, I've even come up with some great new metaphors for creamy breasts and rippling thighs, but...that's all.

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BARBARA. How long has this been going on...or, should I say, NOT been going on?

DONNY. A few weeks.

BARBARA. So, what have you been doing?

DONNY. Well, I've become really good at the New York Times crossword puzzle. Did you know that a black bird of the Caribbean is an "ani," spelled A-N-I?

BARBARA. (*Deadpan.*) That's fascinating.

DONNY. Look, maybe I just need some time off.

BARBARA. I'd be the first one to tell you, "Donny, take some time off." But you have a contract. You owe two more books by the end of the quarter, and you're already two weeks late. Jo Ann's been on my ass for the last ten days and I'll bet she's left two messages this morning. One of the reasons I drove down here was to see if I could get out of the range of Verizon. (*Pulls out cell phone and looks at it.*) Nope...and dammit, I have messages. The hell with it. I didn't just come down here to see my mother.

DONNY. Yeah, I was wondering why you came down to Florida this time of year. Even I know you're not that crazy about your mother.

BARBARA. Have you ever written a screenplay?

DONNY. You mean, like for a movie?

BARBARA. That's what screenplays are usually for.

DONNY. No. But I—

BARBARA. Doesn't matter. I got a call last week from a very well-known film production company. They're looking into cashing in on the romance novel craze and developing some of the best for TV movies. Like what they did with some of the Danielle Steele and Sidney Sheldon books...maybe even do some as the basis of a series. And they think Amanda Longington is perfect for it.

DONNY. You're shitting me.

BARBARA. I shit you not. (*Long pause as Donny absorbs this.*)

DONNY. And they want me to write the screenplays?

BARBARA. At the very least to help them with them. They have people who can turn the owner's manual for a microwave oven into a screenplay. You just supply the story.

DONNY. What happens when the world finds out that Amanda Longington is not some winsome blonde who lives in a Tudor style mansion with servants and

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limousines, but is a guy in his thirties who lives in the Keys and drives a ten-year-old station wagon?

BARBARA. You're not gonna go on The View. The screen credit will read "based on a story by Amanda Longington, screenplay by Donny Hollenbeck" and whoever the production company teams you up with.

DONNY. How much money?

BARBARA. Much money. But the catch is you have to finish up the current contract. Two more bodice-rippers and you're off to Hollywood.

DONNY. That's... great.

BARBARA. Well don't knock yourself out with enthusiasm. Isn't this something you want to do?

DONNY. Sure, sure. (*Thinking it over, he wanders around the room, ending up standing next to Bobby.*) Then what?

BARBARA. The market's real hot for terrorism stuff nowadays. I'll bet you could crank out some action-adventure-sex novels about a hunky bad-boy detective with a pouty bosomy blonde in tow chasing evildoers and saving the world from mass destruction. Call yourself Bolt Upright and knock Clive Cussler and Tom Clancy for a loop. I can sell that just as easily.

DONNY. Too much research. I'd have to learn about guns and planes and bombs and stuff.

BARBARA. Well, whatever. All I care about right now is two more Amanda Longingtons by the end of June.

DONNY. Okay. I get the picture.

BARBARA. I hope so. So fire up the computer and let's get cracking. Meanwhile, I need to find the little girl's room. Not enough coffee...or too much.

DONNY. (*Indicating off Right.*) Through there on the right.

BARBARA. Thanks, doll. (*Barbara exits. Donny crosses back to the couch, with Bobby shadowing him now. They both sit on the couch. Donny picks up the newspaper and looks at it. Bobby is watching him silently. After a moment Donny puts down the paper and leans back on the couch, covering his face with his hands in an expression of frustration.*)

DONNY. Oh, shit. (*Bobby looks as if he is about to speak as Barbara re-enters.*)

BARBARA. I'm going to leave you alone now. I think I'll go find a place for some breakfast and maybe stroll down the beach a little. (*She picks up her purse*

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and the paper.) I'll come back around noon and take you to lunch. I want a hundred pages by then. *(Pause.)* Just kidding.

DONNY. *(Gives her a mock salute.)* My life is but to serve, Your Majesty.

BARBARA. *(Gives him a kiss on the cheek.)* See you later. Just get to work.

(Exits. Donny watches her go then turns back into the living room. He strolls around the room, then goes to the desk and switches on the computer. As it boots up, he fiddles with the papers on the desk, poking through them absently as if he's trying to find something. All this time Bobby has shadowed him and is now standing behind Donny as he sits at the desk. Donny picks up his coffee mug, looks in it, sees that it needs a refill, gets up and goes off Right to the kitchen. Bobby stays where he is, then, when Donny is gone, goes and stands in the center of the room so that when Donny re-enters, they are standing face-to-face. Bobby closes his eyes for a moment, clears his throat, and, as Donny enters, he opens his eyes and grins. For a split-second, Donny appears startled, but it is not a momentous "double-take," because he knows who Bobby is. They look at each other for a moment, and Donny nods in acknowledgement.)

BOBBY. How long has it been...five years?

DONNY. Something like that.

BOBBY. Last time you were in an apartment in Greenwich Village. This is nice.

DONNY. We like it.

BOBBY. You look good. I kinda thought you'd flab out now that you're making money and living the high life in Florida.

DONNY. I still work out. There's a nice little gym down the road.

BOBBY. I know.

DONNY. You haven't changed.

BOBBY. No, and I wanted to thank you for making me fairly attractive. *(Looks himself over.)* Nice build. *(Pats chest.)* Nice pecs, *(Bends arm and feels a biceps.)* nice arms, and nice... *(Offhandedly gestures towards crotch.)* You didn't make me an Adonis, but—

DONNY. I was writing fiction, not fantasy. *(Looks at Bobby.)* So, where did you come from?

BOBBY. From right where you left me. Let's see, where was that? *(Bobby goes to the desk, opens a bottom drawer, pulls out a thick file folder and thumbs through it to the last pages.)* Here it is... *(Reads aloud.)* "It was a cool September evening when he arrived in Boulder. He found a small motel off Arapahoe Road. The next

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morning, he would begin looking for a job, but for now he was just glad to be here, away from home, away from school, and – he hoped – ready to start life over again.” (*Closes folder and puts it on the desk.*) Kinda cheesy. No wonder you make such a good living writing romance novels. So, what happens to me next? Do I get a job in Boulder? Do I get my shit together? I’d like to know. After all, I’ve spent the last five years in a seedy motel on the outskirts of Boulder.

DONNY. It doesn’t say “seedy.”

BOBBY. Hey, I’m the one who’s stuck there. After five years, even the Ritz-Carlton can get a little old.

DONNY. I haven’t thought much about it.

BOBBY. I know that. That’s why I’m here.

DONNY. And probably why I can’t finish this Amanda.

BOBBY. Well, I guess it’s hard to write about mad passionate Gothic lust when you’ve got your alter ego lurking in the back of your mind. You didn’t think I’d really go away, did you?

DONNY. No, I just thought I could put you on hold for a while.

BOBBY. Why did you do it?

DONNY. Do what?

BOBBY. Just stop. Leave me hanging out there. We were going along great, I thought. Yeah, a little episodic here and there, and I thought the way you described my first sex was a little hackneyed, but by and large, you were doing a pretty good job. Next thing I know, I’m stuck in a motel in Boulder at the age of twenty-two for the next five years without a job, and no idea what happens next. All of a sudden there’s this bimbo Amanda Longington with her tales of the heart and these characters right out of a soap opera crowding me out.

DONNY. Well, what you’re forgetting is that when I got you to Boulder, I was also down to my last hundred bucks. I hadn’t sold an article in two weeks. The life of a freelancer in New York isn’t easy, and the temp jobs were drying up... not that I didn’t love being a data input specialist for a real estate company anyway.

BOBBY. Yeah, so?

DONNY. So, I’m scrounging through the aisles of this little bodega on Bleecker Street for my weekly supply of Top Ramen when I come across this collection of romance novels with these impossibly syrupy characters written in this appallingly bad style, all written by someone with a name like Heather Golden and Sylvia Frothington. So, I figure, what the hell, maybe I can crank out one of these. A

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week later, I have a hundred pages of this incredibly cloying crap, using every cliché known to man...we're talking heaving breasts and husky voices, throbbing manhoods and bulging biceps – the whole nine yards. I used my last stamp to mail it to the publisher just for the hell of it as I'm on my way down to see about getting a job waiting tables at Joe Allen. Three days later I get a phone call. They want it. They can't wait to read the rest of it. They say I'm the freshest new voice in romance literature – they actually call it that – in the last twenty years. Two days after that, Barbara Solomon, the literary agent who wouldn't return my phone calls a month before is suddenly trying to take me to lunch at the Russian Tea Room. She's the one who came up with the name "Amanda Longington." And.... There you have it. Another great literary career is on its way.

BOBBY. (*Shakes his head.*) And now they want you to write for the movies. No, not you. They want Amanda to write for the movies.

DONNY. Hey, as long as they make the check out to me, I don't give a damn.

BOBBY. What about me?

DONNY. What about you?

BOBBY. When are you going to get back to me?

DONNY. I still have two more Amandas to do.

BOBBY. Then what?

DONNY. Hey, what do you mean by saying your first sex was "hackneyed?"

BOBBY. (*Picks up folder, goes through it and finds place.*) You have me losing my virginity at the age of sixteen on a peaceful June night on a smooth grassy bank by a gently flowing brook.

DONNY. So, what's wrong with that?

BOBBY. It sounds like I have the best sex imaginable with the most magnificent woman a sixteen-year-old boy can conjure up: his best friend's girlfriend's best friend. I can see why you're a hit on the romance novel circuit. And, by the way, have you ever had sex outdoors on a June night?

DONNY. No, I haven't.

BOBBY. What about the mosquitoes? Good thing it's only a novel or I'd still be scratching. (*Puts folder down.*)

DONNY. What's wrong with a sixteen-year-old having incredible sex? It's every man's dream. I get hard just thinking about it.

BOBBY. I guess that was the idea...but it makes me feel kind of used.

DONNY. Oh, well, pardon me.

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BOBBY. And why didn't you tell the truth? Like how the first time you had sex was when you were fifteen in the basement of your best friend's house with his cousin Jack, the high school wrestling champ who was visiting from California for a week. You guys downed a couple of beers, he offers to show you some wrestling moves, and the next thing you know, both you and Jack have your jockey shorts around your ankles.

DONNY. Like I said, it's fiction.

BOBBY. Well, yeah, but it's your life you're writing about, isn't it? I know the truth. Like the time when you were eighteen, down in Palm Beach with your grandparents at the country club New Year's Eve party. You and that thirty-year-old tennis pro from Newport—what was his name, Preston...?

DONNY. Prescott.

BOBBY. Yeah. How you got to talking, then took a walk along the beach and ended up in his hotel room. How many blowjobs did he give you that night?

DONNY. I was a kid. And those were the only times.

BOBBY. (*Chuckling ironically.*) Have it your way.

DONNY. You know of any other times? (*Bobby taps his temple with an index finger.*)

DONNY. Okay, okay.

BOBBY. And you never told Anna.

DONNY. No. And I never asked her about her teenage sex life.

BOBBY. Yeah, what's her story? I'm kinda fuzzy on that. I must have been in the bottom of the drawer when you hooked up with her.

DONNY. I met her in New York. She was looking for a roommate; I was looking for a room. We've been together ever since.

BOBBY. So, what is she, roommate, girlfriend, wife?

DONNY. A little of each.

BOBBY. So why don't you get married?

DONNY. We like things as they are. We're...friends.

BOBBY. She's what, into real estate?

DONNY. Yeah. Got started in New York, and rose through the ranks until she attracted the attention of some people down here. They offered her the sales manager job with a nice boost in salary. She was tired of the snow and the cold and the darkness and the cutthroat life of real estate in Manhattan, so she took it.

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BOBBY. Wow. I didn't picture you with that kind of woman. Or any woman for that matter. Has she always been like that?

DONNY. No. She was waitress when we met, then did temp work with me at a real estate company and ... (*Shrugs.*) she's off to the races.

BOBBY. And you're just along for the ride.

DONNY. Hey, I pay my share.

BOBBY. You mean "Amanda" pays for it.

DONNY. Is there some point to your being here? Showing up at this particular time?

BOBBY. I thought I made that clear. I want to know what happens to me.

DONNY. I told you. You get a job in Boulder, you write freelance articles, and you move to New York and hit the big time.

BOBBY. That's it? Jesus, how boring.

DONNY. Well, what do you want from me? That's life.

BOBBY. Life, sure. But is it worth writing about? Remember, I'm a character in a novel. I have to follow a structure...boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl—or in your case...

DONNY. All right, enough of that.

BOBBY. Hey, look – maybe you're still figuring things out, but as for me, I'd like to know. Hey, maybe that's the crisis I can confront. Is Bobby gay or straight? Nah, that's been done to death. How about, can he deal with growing up on his own? Nah, too Dickens, and besides, you're not an orphan. What about— (*Snaps fingers.*) I got it. He's a writer who is tired of selling out to the establishment press for money and throws it all away to write a soul-searching exploration of his innermost thoughts and feelings, but he's afraid of giving up all the nice goodies and comforts, so he's torn and therefore has a terrible case of Writer Interruptus, or as you put it so well, "the writer's limp dick." And not only with the writing, too. When was the last time you and Anna seized the headboard?

DONNY. (*Looking at Bobby in wonder.*) "Seized the headboard?"

BOBBY. Sorry, I guess I'm not as good with the colorful euphemisms as you are.

DONNY. No, I like it...it has a certain raffish charm. I'll have to use it sometime.

BOBBY. Hey, be my guest. How about it?

DONNY. The idea? (*Mulls it over.*) Enh... what's the payoff?

BOBBY. You tell me. You're the writer. I'm just the character. But about that other thing? You and Anna?

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DONNY. That's not relevant.

BOBBY. (*Skeptical.*) Oh, yeah, right. (*Picks up a manuscript of one of the romance novels and finds a passage; reads aloud.*) "She knew from the moment she heard his voice that there was a passion in him, a dark, driving force that seethed and boiled beneath his cultured manner. And when she first saw him stride across the graveled driveway, his long legs taking one long stride for every other man's two..." (*Looks up.*) uh, you use "stride" twice in the same sentence here...are you supposed to do that? (*Donny glares at him.*) Okay, anyway. "She felt a presence in him that reached out to her, examined her, and found her reaching back. She envisioned them together in the dimness of a secret place, the milky light streaming across them and pooling on the bed next to them as if it was showing her the inevitable. His powerful arms pulled her to him, his breath and its aura nuzzled her neck, his strength peeled away her caution, and soon all she could hear was the pounding of her heart as he took her with the great gentle strength that only a man of deepest passion and infinite grace could possess." (*Puts manuscript down.*) Wow. Now how could the same guy who wrote that just fart, roll over and fall asleep after Jimmy Fallon's monologue?

DONNY. It's not the same thing.

BOBBY. So what's the problem? Anna? She looks fine to me.

DONNY. She's great. I like her a lot, and when we feel like it, we have some pretty good sex.

BOBBY. That's inspiration for your novels? Lying there in the dark when it's all over, you lean over and whisper softly, 'Hey, we had some pretty good sex.'

DONNY. No! The stuff I write has nothing to do with my real life. It's not the same thing. Everyone's perfect in a romance novel. No one's ever overweight, or has a headache, or has bad breath. That's why people read it. So what?

BOBBY. It's not realistic. It's escapism.

DONNY. So what? There's nothing wrong with that. We've been doing it for centuries, millennia. What's TV? Soap operas? The movies? Hell, even jerking off; anything to drive away dull cares, to take us from our mundane world of screaming babies, dirty laundry, cell phones: the crushing boredom of everyday life. It's entertainment.

BOBBY. It's not entertainment, it's an addiction, and I'm amazed that you're a contributor to it.

DONNY. An addiction?

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BOBBY. Entertainment is like medicine; you need it every so often to cure an illness. But when you start needing the medicine when you don't have the illness, then it's an addiction.

DONNY. You're equating a romance novel to heroin?

BOBBY. Sure, why not?

DONNY. Then I guess that makes me a pusher. But let me tell you something: when millions of women line up to plunk down money to buy the latest Amanda Longington saga and those nice royalty checks roll in every month, I don't exactly feel like Benny the Weasel on the street corner.

BOBBY. Well, who do you feel like, Steinbeck? Is that why you do this, for the money?

DONNY. You damn betcha, and any writer who says he doesn't do it for the money is either a liar or has another source of income. And when somebody's gonna pay me thousands and thousands of dollars for three weeks of furious typing, I'm all too happy to oblige.

BOBBY. Even if it's junk.

DONNY. Hey, I'm not the only one in on this. Have you seen any movie trailers recently? We're not talking Casablanca here.

BOBBY. (*Dryly.*) I don't get out much.

DONNY. And it's not just writers and movies. Look in any art gallery around here. Ten-by-ten paintings of red and blue squares, pelicans constructed out of garden tools. There's junk for you, and some Naples-wintering nouveau riche dye job from Darien is going to drag her current hubby in there and fork over five grand just so she can drive the face-lift next door crazy with envy. At least you can put mine in a purse and read it on the airplane. I have no apologies to make for the writing I do. I'm pretty damn good at it, as a matter of fact.

BOBBY. Yes, I know. I know that all too well. That's how I got here. But it looks like until you finish this other crap I'm not going anywhere, okay? So, get to work. Barbara wants a hundred pages by lunchtime. (*Donny goes to the desk and sits in the chair. Bobby stands behind him, looking over his shoulder. Donny wiggles the mouse.*)

DONNY. (*To himself.*) Okay, where's the file.... There you are.... And here we are. 'The Heart of Crystal,' chapter one. (*He flexes his fingers.*) Okay, where was I? (*Hits a key to take him to the last place he was working on.*) Yeah, there I was.

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(Leans back in and stares at the screen.) “The butterflies drifted across the meadow like late blossoms.” Hoo, boy.

BOBBY. When did you start talking to yourself? You didn't do that before.

DONNY. Do you mind? *(Starts to type, slowly, then picks up the pace. Bobby watches for a few moments, then wanders from the desk, looking back at Donny every so often. Donny continues to type, and Bobby slowly goes out of the room onto the patio. Donny reaches for the stereo remote and hits a button. Soft jazz starts to play as Donny continues writing. Bobby stands out on the patio and watches DONNY from a distance.)*

SCENE 2

It is several hours later. The room is empty, the stereo still on. The French door is open.

ANNA. *(Off.)* You want some coffee?

NICK. *(Off.)* I'm good. Maybe a glass of water if you got it. *(Anna enters through the French door, followed by NICK WILSON. He is in his mid-thirties, the same age as Donny. He has an athletic, muscular build, still thinks of himself as a beach boy, and can pull it off in the right situation. He is dressed in khakis and a short-sleeved shirt and tie, carrying a briefcase, and wearing Ray-Bans. Anna looks at the computer, sees it is still on, nods approvingly, turns off the stereo with the remote and goes to the kitchen off Right. Nick takes off his sunglasses, drops his briefcase on the couch, and looks around.)*

NICK. Nice place.

ANNA. *(Off.)* You've been here before.

NICK. Only at that Christmas party you had for the office, and that was out on the patio.

ANNA. *(Off.)* Oh. Thanks.

NICK. Where's, uh, Donny?

ANNA. *(Off.)* Probably taking a swim. He likes to do that this time of day. *(Anna enters with a glass of water and a can of Diet Pepsi. Hands water to Nick.)*

NICK. Thanks. *(Moseys over to the desk.)* He still writing those romance stories, huh. *(Anna nods.)* I picked one up once. It was... *(Trying to find the right word.)* interesting.

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ANNA. You're not exactly the market he's writing for.

NICK. Does he like doing it?

ANNA. He does it for the money.

NICK. Yeah? Not that it's any of my business.... (*Can't resist.*) Good living?

ANNA. Pretty comfortable.

NICK. Hmm. Does he write anything else?

ANNA. Not really. They keep him pretty busy. He's under contract to write four a year.

NICK. Y'know, I did a little writing. When I was in college.

ANNA. Really?

NICK. Yeah.

ANNA. Funny, I never took you for a writer.

NICK. (*Shrugging.*) I wrote a sports column off and on...y'know, talking about the players and that sort of stuff. No big deal.

ANNA. How'd you get into it?

NICK. By accident. Really. I was a walk-on in football my freshman year and played second-string, then moved up to first my second year. I was doin' pretty well until I blew out my knee in a game against U-N-L-V, and, well, that was it for my playing career. Spent a week in the hospital. Nearly went crazy with boredom. I was dating this chick (*Checks himself.*) this *woman* on the school paper and she asked me to write my impressions about what it was like to be on the team and what it was like to be injured and what it meant to me...blah, blah, blah. They ran it, and I wrote for them...y'know, off and on for the rest of the time I was in school.

ANNA. Well, Nick, I'm impressed.

NICK. Yeah, I'm full of surprises.

ANNA. Let me find those inquiry sheets for Flannery. I know I brought them home. (*She goes to the desk and searches through the pile.*) That's the problem with two people sharing one desk—there's crap everywhere. Here they are. (*Pulls a sheaf of papers out of the pile.*) Okay, you know the drill. Lots of signs and lots of smiles. (*Gives the papers to Nick with a dazzling smile.*)

NICK. (*Puts papers in his briefcase, shakes his head.*) Oh yeah.

ANNA. You're doing fine, Nick.

NICK. Six months, four sales. Adrian's not smiling.

ANNA. Hey, I'm your boss, Nick. Adrian just runs the office. Besides, you don't want to see Adrian smile a lot. His teeth are in terrible shape.

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NICK. So you're the big New York real estate gun. What's the secret?

ANNA. Experience, pure and simple. I've had my share of dry spells. And here it's resort property. It's quirky. Some months are hot with properties going for asking or over. The next month you can't sell a sauna to a Swede.

NICK. Maybe I should go back to selling cars.

ANNA. Oh, now there's a secure job. C'mon, Nick. You worked too hard for this. And you've got a closing this afternoon, and you're making a good commission on it. That should keep Adrian smiling for a while, if that's what you really want.

NICK. What I want is to be as good as you.

ANNA. (*Chuckling.*) Flattery will get you nowhere, but keep trying.

NICK. No, I've watched you. You're good. You know how to talk to people. You listen to them.

ANNA. I'm sure you had to do that in your last job.

NICK. Nah, not really. I mean, yeah, you nod and smile a lot, but all the time you're just trying to figure out a way to not let them off the lot without signing something. This is different. People buy houses differently than they buy anything else.

ANNA. You know why, of course.

NICK. Yeah, it's a lot of money.

ANNA. Wrong. Well, yes, it is a lot of money. But buying a house is like falling in love.

NICK. 'Kay, now you're gonna to have to explain that to me.

ANNA. It's very simple. People need a house – some form of shelter. It's a basic instinct, like eating or surviving. But we don't need much; four walls and a roof to keep us protected, and for that we could get by with a cave or a cardboard box. But we need something more. We need something that says, "This is my place. It says something about me. It tells you who I am. It complements me." How many times have you shown a place and the people say, "Hmm, I like it, but it just isn't me."

NICK. Always thought that was their way of trying to bring down the price.

ANNA. No, they really mean it. They may not know how to say it, but they know what it is. And if it isn't there...well, there's not much you can do about it. But when they find it, (*Snaps fingers.*) the thunderbolt strikes and you've got 'em. They'll sign on the dotted line no matter how much more it is than they thought they could afford.

NICK. So you just gotta keep shopping around until the thunderbolt hits, is that it?

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ANNA. That's it. Haven't you ever been out with someone who just wasn't your type?

NICK. Sure. Lots of times.

ANNA. Well, there must have been a reason you asked them out for the first time. Looks, personality, something that made you interested.

NICK. (*Confidently.*) Oh yeah.

ANNA. And then...what?

NICK. (*Shrugging.*) Sometimes I can tell right away. There's just a feeling. You know, the conversation's easy or it's not. The mood's right and you really hit it off or who knows...you can't even make eye contact. And sometimes it takes a while. Hell, with Julie it took twelve years and two lawyers to see that we ...we just weren't meant for each other. I still like her; it was an easy split, and she's doing a great job with Ian...but I guess it wasn't in the cards.

ANNA. How old is your son?

NICK. Sixteen. Great kid. (*Pulls out iPhone, goes to a picture.*) That's him.

ANNA. (*Looking at picture.*) He's very handsome.

NICK. (*Proud father.*) Yeah, he's six foot two, a hundred and seventy pounds, looks like a movie star. Julie says the phone never stops ringing for him, girls calling night and day. But he's a quiet guy...never in any trouble. I'm taking him out to Colorado to go camping this summer.

ANNA. Maybe that's what brought you and Julie together in the first place; you knew somehow that something good would come out of it.

NICK. (*Laughing.*) That's a little too heavy for me. We got married when we were both nineteen and she was six months pregnant. I'm just glad he turned out okay. (*Donny enters from the beach through the French door. He is wearing a swimsuit, sandals, and carrying a towel and shirt. Bobby follows him.*)

NICK. (*Hearty.*) Hey, there he is, the great writer.

DONNY. (*Not impressed.*) Yeah, hi, how are ya? (*They shake hands. Donny doesn't outwardly dislike Nick, but he doesn't go to any great length to be pals with him.*)

NICK. Good, good, and you?

DONNY. Okay.

NICK. How was the water?

DONNY. Nice. The usual. Warm. Salty. (*To Anna.*) I thought you had a showing. (*Bobby has resumed his place by the office and is watching this with*

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great interest. He is unnoticed by Nick and Anna, and when he speaks, they cannot hear him, nor do they hear Donny when he speaks to Bobby.)

ANNA. We did. It's over. Couple of tire-kickers. They walked in, took a quick look around, smiled, and took off for some four-bedroom place in Key Largo. We're on our way back to the office. (*Pulls debit card out of the briefcase.*) I'm not going to have time to go to the store after all. Would you please go pick up the groceries? I called Julio and told him to set aside the fish we want, and just pick up some nice fresh bell peppers. The green ones are the best, but if you see any red ones that don't look like a shrunken monkey head, I guess that will do, and if there are some yellow ones, get one of those, too. Also, Romaine lettuce, not that crappy iceberg shit. There should be a bottle of dressing in the pantry, but just in case, get another bottle. You know the type, right? Get another bottle of that Pinot, too. And please remember to start the grille. Oh, and pick up some fresh dill if they have it and a couple of lemons. I think we have some, but you can check before you go, okay?

DONNY. (*To himself.*) Well, I guess I know what I'm doing the rest of the afternoon.

NICK. Sounds like a great menu. (*Anna hands the debit card to Donny and turns to Nick.*)

ANNA. Nick, why don't you join us for dinner?

NICK. Oh, I don't want to intrude—

ANNA. If you were intruding, I wouldn't invite you. It's just us and Donny's agent Barbara. Very casual.

NICK. Well, thanks!

ANNA. My pleasure. I'll be right back. Gotta freshen up. (*She exits Right.*)

NICK. (*Slightly embarrassed pause.*) So, Anna says you're working on a new book. That's great.

DONNY. Yeah, I am.

NICK. I was telling Anna... I did some writing in college.

DONNY. Really.

NICK. Yeah. Sports columns for the school paper. Nothing big.

DONNY. No, that's good.

NICK. Well, I was no Red Grange.

DONNY. Oh... I didn't know he wrote columns.

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NICK. Not Red Grange...you know, who was that guy who used to write...then he was on the radio for a while. You know. Wrote for some New York paper... Used to be a broadcaster. Long time ago. The old guy. Always talked about his garden.

DONNY. Red Barber?

NICK. Bingo! That's the guy.

BOBBY. Who the hell says "bingo" anymore? (*Donny motions to BOBBY to be quiet.*)

NICK. So, how's it coming, or am I not supposed to ask?

DONNY. It's okay. Not a big secret. It's coming along. Wrote a bunch this morning.

NICK. Wow.

BOBBY. (*Mocking.*) Wow.

DONNY. So, how's the real estate biz?

BOBBY. Like you really care.

NICK. Good. Got a closing this afternoon and a couple of places that are in negotiation, so I'm doing good... (*Correcting himself.*) well, I mean. Sorry, I wasn't an English major.

DONNY. S'okay, neither was I.

NICK. Oh, yeah?

DONNY. Yeah. Poly Sci. But one day I saw this ad in the school paper for a fiction contest, so I figured what the hell. I batted something out in one draft, turned it in, and won. So, I figured, hey, this is easy, and I started cranking the stuff out. Got some freelance work, picked up a couple more awards, and headed for the Big Apple.

NICK. So you're not from New York?

DONNY. Minnesota. Went to school in Colorado.

NICK. No shit. (*Nick goes over to look at the bookshelves, passing by Bobby in the process.*) So, these are some of the books you wrote?

DONNY. These? No...just my library, that's all. (*Points at a collection of paperbacks on a lower shelf.*) Those are some that I did. I stopped collecting them after the first twenty or so.

NICK. (*Letting out a whistle.*) Wow. Damn, Donny, that's amazing. I'm really impressed. You must be a really great writer. So, you write all those sexy scenes, huh? That must be fun.

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DONNY. Oh, it's okay. I mean, it's no big deal. I mean, once you get the basic idea across...it's pretty easy. You just re-write it a different way each time.

NICK. Hmm...that'd get me all fired up. Doesn't it get you going?

BOBBY. Oh my God.

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* What.

BOBBY. I think he likes you.

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* Huh?

BOBBY. I think he's hot for you.

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* What?

BOBBY. I'm not kidding. I think he's working on a hard-on. Check out the pants.

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* No way! He's...oh, man, you can't be serious. *(Nick has pulled one of the books off the shelf and thumbs through it.)*

NICK. You mind?

DONNY. Be my guest. That one came out about three years ago. Destiny's Vision.

BOBBY. Well, don't you think he's attractive?

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* Uh, not really. I mean, he's not bad looking...but...

BOBBY. Oh, come on. Take away that real estate salesman get-up and he's kinda cute in a Beach Boy sort of way. He's got a pretty good build, he's got a nice face, and if you can shut him up, he's probably a nice guy. Wonder what he looks like in a Speedo. And...you know, I think he was checking you out, scoping out your build. I even think he shot a look at your crotch. Is that why you didn't put your shirt on, kinda hoping you'd see who might see you without it?

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* No. *(Drops towel on couch and pulls on shirt.)* Well, I'm not gonna say anything.

BOBBY. Oh, hell no, you'd never do that. You're straight, remember? Besides, I don't think he'd be all that interesting to have around. Maybe good for a few laughs, but you really couldn't get into much of a philosophical discussion with a guy like that. Doesn't appear to be the brightest bulb on the porch.

DONNY. *(To Bobby.)* He's all right. Sure, he's no great thinker, but then...he's harmless. Anna likes him.

BOBBY. I'm sure that counts for something. *(Anna re-enters.)*

ANNA. Okay, I'm good for the rest of the day. *(Goes to Donny, gives him a quick peck on the cheek, then points to the computer.)* How's it coming?

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DONNY. Great. Did almost eighty pages this morning. I should be done in a day or two. Now I just have to come up with a happy ending.

ANNA. Happy endings are very important. Maybe you'll be done by the weekend and get it sent in before it's three weeks late.

DONNY. (*Slugging the air like a cheerleader.*) I'll sure give it the old college try.

ANNA. That's my guy. Okay, Nick, we're outta here. See you later, and don't forget about the lemons.

DONNY. I won't. (*Anna and Nick exit through the French door, Nick offering a smile, a nod, and a wink at Donny.*)

BOBBY. Oh, God, he winked at you.

DONNY. (*Watching them go.*) I saw that. (*To Bobby.*) Okay, so let me see if I have this right. This isn't like one of those stupid TV sitcoms like "Bewitched" or "I Dream of Jeannie," is it? You know, where there's someone like a witch or a ghost or something that only one person can see so that when they talk to them, the other people in the room thinks they're talking to them or they think the guy is crazy for talking to himself. Is that what's going on here?

BOBBY. No! Jesus, what a cliché. (*Taps his head.*) It's all up here...or I should say, (*Indicates Donny's head.*) all up there. You're talking to yourself, so, unless you are in the habit of talking to yourself out loud, no one hears you.

DONNY. (*Thinking this over.*) Okay...I think I get it.

BOBBY. So, what's up with Anna inviting Nick to dinner?

DONNY. Hell if I know. Maybe she's just being nice to the guy. He lives alone, microwaves his dinners, and watches a lot of ESPN.

BOBBY. Yeah, or maybe there's something else going on there.

DONNY. Like what?

BOBBY. You tell me. You know him better than I do...don't you?

DONNY. Hey, all I know about him is what Anna tells me.

BOBBY. You guys really communicate a lot.

DONNY. What's that supposed to mean?

BOBBY. When was the last time you asked her about her job?

DONNY. I ask her all the time.

BOBBY. Beyond "hey, how was your day?"

DONNY. I don't know anything about the real estate business.

BOBBY. So what? Do you know anything about what she does?

DONNY. She never asks me about what I do.

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BOBBY. Maybe that's because you don't do anything worth asking about.

DONNY. Hey! Is that what you really think?

BOBBY. Ha! I could ask you the same thing!

DONNY. (*Waving him away.*) What did you mean back there about "maybe there's something else going on" with Anna and Nick?

BOBBY. (*Shrugging.*) What do you think? He's a good-looking guy, you and Anna aren't exactly hot lovers...maybe she needs a little lovin' on the side.

DONNY. With Nick?

BOBBY. Why not?

DONNY. Nah.

BOBBY. She invited him over for dinner.

DONNY. What's that prove? If anything, if she was screwing around with him, the last thing she'd do is have him over for dinner. It would be weird.

BOBBY. What, you think they'd let something slip – a telling glance here, a touch there, maybe a guilty laugh while you're blithely playing the genial host and friend?

DONNY. Yeah, something like that.

BOBBY. Jesus, you have been writing too many of those fucking romance novels. (*Mimicking a romance novel heroine.*) "Oh, Lance, not here, please – my husband might suspect something, and you know what a horridly jealous man he can be." (*Mimicking the hero.*) "Let him see our telling glances, Miranda! What do I care what that insensitive, uncaring, grasping, and cold-hearted bastard suspects? I love you, and while I may be nothing more than just a well-muscled gardener who earns my meager living by the sweat of my brow and the calluses on my hard hands, I offer you something he cannot: passion!" (*Heroine.*) "Oh, Lance – take me! Here, now, on the wheelbarrow!" (*Back to his normal voice, with a chuckle.*) Ouch, hey, watch out for that garden rake, big fella.

DONNY. You are so full of shit. Nick is so transparent that he wouldn't dare set foot on the place if he were doing anything like that. He hasn't got the acting ability to cover something up like that.

BOBBY. Bet he's thought of it. You know, sitting there with Anna at an open house, no traffic, time to kill, her a good-lookin' chick, him a horny jock...or at least thinks he still is. (*Mimicking Nick as a horny jock.*) "So, hey, Anna...how's it going? How're things going with your writer boyfriend? Boy, I'll bet that kind of work keeps him real busy – up all night, writing about all that sex...ever bring any of that into the ole sack with him? He ever come to bed with a ragin' boner?"

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Y'know, I'm kinda an expert on ragin' boners. I get 'em all the time. Got one now. Wanna see it?"

DONNY. Do you have a point here?

BOBBY. (*Back to normal voice.*) No, but Nick might. C'mon, I'm just playin' with you. But seriously...what do you know about what Anna does, or thinks about, or cares about? Or better yet, do you really care?

DONNY. Of course I do.

BOBBY. How do you show it?

DONNY. Lots of ways.

BOBBY. Name one. When was the last time you took her in your arms and said, "Anna, I love you."

DONNY. She doesn't go for the goopy shit. Never has.

BOBBY. Have you tried?

DONNY. Look, in the ten years we've been together she's made it really clear that she's not the romantic type.

BOBBY. How ironic for you, "Amanda." You mean she's been this barracuda the whole time?

DONNY. No, but she's never been the candles-and-wine type either. I tried it once. Didn't work. We went to a nice little Italian place and...well, she wasn't crazy about it. I mean, she didn't say that, but the next time I offered, she said, "No, thanks", and changed the subject.

BOBBY. (*Mulling this over.*) Hmm. Was this before or after you first slept together?

DONNY. After.

BOBBY. Well, there you are.

DONNY. (*Mystified.*) What?

BOBBY. It was a Guilt Date. You slept with her, you felt guilty about it, so you tried to treat her like a girlfriend. But you know what she was thinking? She's going, "Look, you're a nice guy and you're good in the sack, but you don't have to feel like you need to take me out as a thank-you card, and besides, I don't expect it. It's not like I'm going to think of you like a boyfriend or anything...it was just a nice little recreational romp and let's leave it at that." And that's the way it's been ever since. Am I right?

DONNY. (*Unconvincingly.*) Not even close.

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU

BOBBY. Oh, come on, I'm the last person you can lie to. Face reality. She likes you and you like her. But you two aren't really each other's idea of a match; it just worked out that way. You were roommates, brought together by an ad on a bulletin board at a mom-and-pop bodega in the Village. You both made enough money to cover the rent and share a fridge, and you didn't get in each other's way. She didn't have a boyfriend, and you didn't either. (*Donny starts to interrupt.*) Wait, let me finish – you know what I mean. You liked the same kind of music, neither of you smoked, and you both kept the place reasonably clean. And after a while, you got to like each other: you shared some things about work, got to know each other's friends, and people started to think of you two as Donny-and-Anna. And one night, after a nice bottle of white wine and some Dave Brubeck on the stereo, you're sitting on the couch talking quietly, and just like your best friend's cousin Jack.... And when it was over, you were so relieved because you had done it you'd proved to yourself that you could do it and like it. So, all you had to do was just keep on doing the same thing for as long as you could. You were safe. And that was the last time you thought about me.

DONNY. It was red wine and Carly Simon.

BOBBY. Close enough. (*Picks up the folder with the old novel in it and holds it out to Donny.*) It's time. (*Bobby puts the folder back on the desk. Donny comes over and picks it up, thumbs through it. He stops and reads some of the writing, nodding and smiling as he remembers it.*)

DONNY. Not bad.

BOBBY. It is good. And the best part is you can pick right up where you left off.

BARBARA. (*Calling from off Right.*) Anybody home?

BOBBY. Shit.

DONNY. (*Calling back.*) In here. C'mon in. (*Barbara enters through the French door, dressed as before.*)

BARBARA. Nice little town you have here: kitschy shops, over-priced souvenirs, and horrendous traffic on the highway.

DONNY. A lot like Sag Harbor, wouldn't you say?

BARBARA. Smart-ass. So, where do you want to go for lunch?

DONNY. Tell you what, Barbara; let me take a rain check on that. I have some work to finish up, and I don't want to stop. I need to get cleaned up from the beach, anyway.

CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU

BARBARA. Oh, well, listen, anything to keep you writing. I finally talked to Jo Ann this morning. They want to re-negotiate your contract once you get this movie deal done. They think they can get some mileage on that, then get you up to six books a year with an option for two more. After all, you did four this year. You'd double your take and Amanda Longington will top the charts. Of course, that all depends on you finishing what you owe them now. So, keep on doing what you've been doing! Want me to bring you something to eat?

DONNY. Nah, I'll grab a sandwich.

BARBARA. Great. Well, then, I'll see you later this afternoon, okay?

DONNY. Dinner's at seven, according to Anna. Come on over about six or so. Anna's invited a friend to even out the table.

BARBARA. Male or female?

DONNY. Male. Nick from the office.

BARBARA. Good-looking?

DONNY. Beach-boy type.

BARBARA. Straight?

BOBBY. We have our doubts.

DONNY. *(Over Bobby.)* Divorced.

BARBARA. Any kids?

DONNY. Sixteen-year-old son lives with the mother.

BARBARA. Sounds good! Well, I'll see you then.

DONNY. *(Waves folder at her.)* Okay!

BARBARA. *(Going off.)* Keep at it! *(She is gone. Donny puts the folder down.)*

BOBBY. Six books a year.

DONNY. With an option for two more on top of that.

BOBBY. *(Almost pleading.)* You can't.

DONNY. I have to.

BOBBY. You don't have to.

DONNY. I have a contract.

BOBBY. *(Angrily.)* Break it! Tear it up! Kiss Amanda goodbye! You can live without her. But I can't live without you.

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