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Paper Man

By Michele Mulroney

[building acoustic guitar music]

- I was feeling free

I had the ringing of the sea

in my ears

And who else could I be?

I had the ringing of the sea

in my ears

And the pavement

rushing under me

Just drowning out

the passing of the years

And I said who-ooo-ooo

Who else do I need?

And without you

What else could I be?

What else do I need?

Well, I guess I need

falling skies

And more apologizing

for the way I became

Windmills to fight with

stay up all night with

Just give me enough room

to hang

I was feeling free

I had the shining of the ocean

in my eyes

And who else could I be?

I had the shining of the ocean

in my eyes

See, I was blinded

by the very thing

On which my fragile

peace of mind relied

And without you

What else could I be?

- The pictures didn't

do it justice.

- Oh.

- I sense danger.

- It's fine.

I'm fine.

- Were you carsick?

- Of course not

Of course I wasn't carsick.

That's

- Richard, I'm not sure
you fully understand
what you're walking into here.

There are countless unknowns.

- I can handle this, okay?

Please, just give me
some credit

- There's gonna be crying.

[knocking]

- I'm having trouble believing
how great this is.

You comin'?

Whoa!

Good Lord.

Claire.

- Oh, poor thing.

Well, at least it was quick.

It's a clean thoracic tear.

- We should give him

a proper burial.

I feel like I just lost
my bearings.

[sighs]

- Oh, thanks.

- Yeah.

[door creaking]

[door slams]

- [gasps]

Oh, this is charming.

Oh, the water works.

Good.

[stove clicking]

I don't know if the stove works.

Maybe they have take-out menus.

- Ah, listen!

Come here, come here, come here.

There she is, the mighty sea.

Still in there.

- Wow.

- Yeah?

- Yeah, yeah.

- [chuckles]

- That's so that's
I'm gonna look around.

- [chuckles]

- Oh, they've got plenty
of towels.
We didn't need to bring any.
Oh, well.
The fuse box is in
the linen closet, Richard.
Oh, there's a skylight
Richard?

- The couch
could be a problem.

- Don't fixate.

- You're right
Wonderful, everything.

- Good, that's right
You want to grab the luggage
out of the car?
I'll do it

- Phil Turley
is very concerned, Claire,
about the community's efforts
to protect the nesting grounds
of the native tern.
As he should be.

- Listen, I put all
my numbers
on the top sheet
of that memo pad by the phone,
so if you want to tear that off
and tape it up somewhere.
I'm in surgery from 9:00
till noon.
So I'll check in after that,
okay?

- Great, good.

- Are you sure you don't want
to rent a car?

- Didn't they say there was
a bike?
I'll dig it out of the garage.
It's ten minutes to town.
This will be ideal.

- Okay, it's up to you.
- [laughs]
- So what does your schedule
look like for tomorrow?
- I'll start
at the very beginning.
That's a very good place
to start.
- Speaking of which...
Close your eyes.
Okay, you can open them.
- Oh.
- Mark just got one of these.
He said a five-year-old
could use it
- Richard, use your words.
- Actually, I was thinking
of writing on the Corona.
- Oh.
- No, but this is good.
No, this is
you're right
This is better.
- Yeah.
Okay.
- Richard.
These fabrics.
[chuckles]
- [coughs tightly]
- Oh, I talked to Peter
and Lucy,
and they said they might come
out the weekend of the 2nd.
- Great, great
Who?
- Peter and Lucy?
- Oh, good, yeah.
They're always fun.
- Yeah, yeah.
You didn't bring
you didn't bring him out here,
did you?
- What?
No.

No, of course not

- No. Okay.

All right

[door slams]

[engine turns over]

Have a productive week, okay?

- Save some lives!

[bird cawing]

ding!

beep!

[keys clacking]

[rattling]

[bicycle squeaking]

[bell chimes]

- Hot wheels.

- Let go of me.

- Do you remember the time
that you ran over the neighbor's
guinea pig, Little Fluff?

- No, I do not

Now will you let me go?

- Look, we both know that you're
not equipped to deal
with your current circumstances.

And until you prove otherwise,
I feel compelled to be on hand.

- Could you step aside?

I have things to do.

- I sense danger.

- Would you stop saying that?

[squeaking]

- Be careful!

- Buh-buh-duh

Buh-buh-buh-duh

Buh-buh-duh

Buh-buh-buh-duh

Buh-buh-duh

Hmmm

- Why aren't you a cheerleader,
anyway?

- 'Cause I'm not

- Later.

[spits]

- You could so easily

be a cheerleader.

- You could so easily drop dead.

[squeaking]

[bell dinging]

[flames crackling]

- Ugh!

[squeaking]

Oh, no!

No, it's not like that

Hand soap?

- No, it's for your wheels.

The squeaks drive me nuts.

It's a nice bike, though.

I used to have one of these

when I was your age.

[bell dings]

So how come you're following me?

- I'm not

- Are too.

- I'm not

I'm not

- Are too.

How come?

- Well, I was just

I kind of

I just moved into town.

And I need a babysitter.

[chuckles]

I just thought you know,

I thought maybe you might know

somebody who

- Yeah, okay.

When do you need me for?

- Oh, um...

Friday night

6:

- Address and phone number?

- 18 Sag Harbor Road.

I don't know

the phone number yet

Sorry.

- All right,

I'll see you Friday.

- I'm Mister
I'm Richard.
ding!
[intense drumbeats]
Merton regarded his solitude
as something sacred.
Merton regarded his solitude
as something s
[gulls cawing]
- Face it
You can't live without me.
- Do you mind?
I'm communing with nature here.
Why are you so incapable
of believing
I can do things perfectly fine
on my own?
- Because you never have.
- Excuse me?
- Oh, Richard, Richard, Richard.
How many times, huh?
Huh?
How many times?
"I'm gonna go through these
baIIet Iessons aIone."
- Do not mock me.
- "I'm gonna, Iike, go through
the college years, like, alone."
- Okay, that
- "You know, I don't need you,
Captain.
I'm gonna resuscitate
my half-dead marriage alone."
- Zip it
You kindly zip it
- Please, for once in your life,
go it alone.
- GIadIy!
Good day, sir.
- A good day.
- You just don't like it
because I'm on an upswing.
- Oh, my God.
[splashing]

[gulls cawing]

- Merton regarded his solitude
as something sacred.

Merton?

Burton.

Milton?

Milton.

Milton regarded his solitude
as something sacred.

[knocking at door]

[sighs]

- Hey.

Sorry, I'm a little early.

- No, no problem.

I'm sorry, I forgot your name.

- Oh, that's okay.

I forgot yours too,

but I was thinking

that it was Paul

or Steve or Dave, maybe?

- Richard.

- Oh, okay.

That works.

- [chuckles]

- Oh, here.

It's a Love-A-Lot for the kid.

- Oh, well...

[clears throat]

Actually

- Um, so you just moved here?

Where from?

- Just the city.

- Oh.

- Yeah, it's only temporary.

My wife Claire is at New York

Presbyterian.

She's a vascular surgeon.

- Oh, wow.

Is that her?

She's cute.

- Oh, yeah, that's the doctor.

- My parents went through

a trial separation once too.

- What?

Oh, no, no. No, no, no.

That's not what's happening
here.

No, that's
no.

That's
I don'tis it?

- Well, you should probably
find out

- Huh.

- Is it sleeping, the baby?

- The thing about that baby is
are you thirsty?

- Um, no.

- Oh, look.

The baby is not here.

- What do you mean?

- Basically, I guess,
there is no baby...
as such.

- There's no kid?

- Nope.

- Well, shit

Then this will be easy.

So when do you think
you'll be home?

- Oh, 9:

- Okay, I got a lot of homework.

So have fun.

[toy squeaks]

- Okay.

- Only when the good
is unattainable

Do I start to feel like

I'm losing myself

And this deep secret

that hasn't come out yet

- Chickenshit

- Is buried down deep

With the rest

I can't coerce you

into this one

Jealousy lay all

your spells to bed
I'll choose unloved instead
- "'Self-loathing
is an underrated form
"'of psychological checks

and balances:

"'never too high,
never too low,'
"thought Merton to himself
as he gazed into the rapidly
reddening bathwater."
Jesus.
- Lay all your spells
to bed
I'll choose unloved instead
[waves crashing]
- Don't say it
- Say what?
- I know what you're thinking.
- No, you don't
I was thinking about pantaloons.
[water running]
- What are you doing?
- You ass!
How did you get in here?
- The door was open,
which is extremely unsafe,
by the way.
- You don't need to keep
checking up on me.
- Isn't this the guy you said
was following you?
Who does that?
- You do.
It's just babysitting.
- Where's the kid?
- He doesn't have a kid.
- Abby, this guy is a perv.
We got to get out of here now.
- Okay, he's a famous writer,
okay?
Get a life.
- You are my life.

[water running]

You've got a problem with men.

- No, I have got

a problem with you.

- What about Bryce?

- What about him?

- He treats you like shit

- When?

- Always.

- No.

- Yes.

- Shut up.

- Oh, you are not

- I'm not what?

- What are you doing?

- Making soup.

- You've known this stalker guy
five minutes.

You're already making him soup?

- I told you, Christopher.

He is a writer.

- I love you.

- [sighs]

- What are you doing out here?

- I told her 9:

- No, I mean what are you doing
out here with the girl?

- Nothing.

- That doesn't strike you
as odd somehow?

A babysitter?

- I'm under a lot of pressure,
okay, to produce.

People expect literature:

the doctor, my publisher.

I've got three months,

three months to crack

this thing.

- And the girl helps how?

- Was I popular in high school,
in retrospect?

- And the girl helps how?

- Do you have to question

every decision I make?

- Make better decisions.

- Just do the voice.

- Oh.

Oh, now he needs me.

- At this juncture, yes.

- Juncture?

- Yes.

- Oh.

- Yes, just do it

[triumphant music]

- [booming voice]

When the world is in peril,

when evil surrounds you,

when danger is lurking,

who do you call?

[horns trumpeting]

Captain Excellent!

- I'm bolstered!

[hooting and chattering sounds]

There's something out there

in the woods.

- Oh, my God.

The wolf.

Didn't you hear?

It escaped from the zoo

this morning.

- There's a zoo here?

- [laughs]

No, I'm just

[groans]

Well, whatever it is,

I won't let it get you.

Come on, there's soup.

- What?

- Yeah, I made soup.

I thought that you might

be cold.

What did you do tonight?

- I went to the shore,

did some thinking.

- Oh, for three hours

in the freezing cold?

- You made this?

- Yeah.

- How?

- I don't know.

A couple of carrots,
an onion, one of your beers.

Oh, I hope that's okay.

I just kind of helped myself.

- No, it's fantastic.

- Oh, well, you haven't even
tasted it yet

- No, no, no, I mean,
the fact of it is fantastic,
that you made something
from nothing.

- Oh, you can, you know,
kind of make soup
out of anything.

That's the great thing about it
Just whatever's left
laying around, you know.

You can take all the crap
that's rotting in your fridge
and throw out,
or you could toss it into a pot

and make soup out of it

So I go with soup.

- [slurping]

Oh.

It's superb.

- Thank you.

- No, really.

It's excellent

- Do you remember the moment
when you realized
that soup didn't have
to come out of a can,
you know, like all manufactured,
that your chicken noodle
could kick

Campbell's chicken noodle's ass
any day of the week?

- I think I'm having
that moment right now.

- [chuckles]

Plus, it's very nutritious,
which is good.

- Whatwhat happened there?

- Oh.

Sorry.

It's just

it's a boyfriend thing.

Just, um,

the bird kind of reminded me
of him.

He's chickenshit

- Oh.

Actually, it's not a chicken.

It's the North American

heath hen.

Related to the greater

prairie chicken,

but not technically a chicken.

- Oh.

- It's extinct now.

The last few lived out here

out on the nature preserve

at Camp Hero.

- Hmm.

I did not know that

- I'm not a birder or anything.

It's just, the last surviving

heath hen

is a character in...

- In what?

- That bird's just

it's the main character of this
book that,

you know, I'm attempting

to produce, to write,

finish.

Actually, to start.

Saying it out loud just sounded
kind of stupid.

-Well, there's Chicken Little,

you know, and Little Red Hen.

- Henny Penny.

- Yeah, exactly.

Exactly.

Oh, you know, there's a lot
of books out there
about poultry.

[laughter]

- We should settle up.

- Okay.

- Is that about right?

- Actually, I'm \$12 an hour.

- Oh, okay.

I only have a \$10.

Do you have change?

- Let me check.

- So how come your boyfriend's
a chickenshit?

None of my business.

Sorry.

- No, he just

He just bugs.

You know, it's like when he's
with me, it's all,

"Oh, you know."

And when he's with his friends,
he's all, "Ugh, whatever."

It's just you know,

he's a fucking chickenshit

- Right

- Okay, so thank you.

- Mmm-hmm.

Thank you.

Can I ask you a quick question?

- Sure.

- Does this couch
make me look fat?

- I wouldn't sit there.

- Hmm.

- So okay.

Good luck with the chicken book.

- Same time next week?

- Um...

Okay.

- You didn't tell me your name.

[door creaking]

- Richard?

Richard.

- Are we separated?
- What?
- Is this a trial separation,
what we're doing?
- What makes you think that?
- I don't know.
Our separateness.
- Sweetie,
if we were separating,
you'd be the first to know.
- I guess.
- Well, we would have
discussed it
Trust me.
- Okay.
Whew, good.
It just moved.
- Well, that's not possible.
It's been boiled to death.
- Poor little Louie.
- Well, don't name it, Richard.
I mean, do whatever you want
No, don't
don't name your food.
Here.
[shell cracking]
- Oh.
[shell cracking]
- There.
Okay?
Hmm?
There you go.
Hmm?
- If only everything
in the world
could be covered in butter.
What a world that would be.
- I guess.
- What a buttery world.
[birds cawing]
- He any good?
- I don't know.
It's kind of wordy.
- So what does

the renderer render?

- I haven't gotten

to that part yet

- Well, let me know.

I'm sure it's something

briIIiant

- What were you doing

in my gym class?

- Nothing.

- You think I didn't see you?

- I was just there

for moral support.

- I suck at volleyball.

- You do not

- I suck at everything.

- [sighs]

No, you don't

You're fantastic

across the board.

- Would you just shut up?

- We never go out anymore.

- Look, you got to leave, okay?

I'm meeting Bryce later.

- He's beneath you, you know.

[both moaning]

- Why you got to wear

so much shit?

- 'Cause it's freezing in here.

Run the heater.

- You want to pay for the gas?

[grunting]

- Are you done?

- [sighing]

Yeah.

[moaning]

See you later.

[engine turns over]

[rock music blaring]

[buzzing]

- Okay.

- Well, just go for it

- I'll

I'm going.

[buzzing]

Okay, well, he's dead now.

Why don't you go?

Damn it

It's your turn.

I don't know how you do this
all day.

I mean, there's so much
pressure.

- Well, it's just a game.

- I know.

- No one's dying here.

- Go ahead.

- We can play something else.

- No, it's fine.

It's you know.

- All right

Let's see.

That one's on my side.

- Yeah.

Well, that was fun.

- Yes, it was.

- Fun-packed weekend.

- Okay, well,

have a productive week.

And I'll see you on the 15th.

- Yeah.

[engine turns over]

- [humming quietly]

What?

You're standing.

Oh.

Really?

[groans]

[exhaling deeply]

That's enough of that

You remember when you stuck

that dime up your nose

and tried to snort it

out your mouth?

The cowboy outfit for your

seventh grade school picture?

You remember?

The horny toads,

the hunger strike?

I cautioned you against
those decisions,
but you didn't listen to me,
which is fine,
'cause you were just a kid.
But now it's grow-up time.
The babysitter?
Bad, Richard.
Very, very bad, Richard.
That chair's gonna be a problem.
- Sakes alive.
[sighs]
- "Making the monkey.
"A humorous monkey is popular
in zoological gardens.
"For example, it is lovely
that you make a baby monkey
"with small paper and that you
put it on a mother monkey.
Fold A, top right corner."
- Why origami?
Why now?
- I needed something to do
with my hands.
- I'm having trouble telling
which is the monkey
and which is the swan.
[knocking at door]
- Oh, that can't be all of them.
- No, no, there's a bunch more
in the truck.
- Oh, great
Start bringing them in.
Horton r
[knocking at door]
- Richard, Richard,
for the love of God,
don't do this please.
Listen to me.
You're making a huge mistake.
You're going for it
- It's Abby.
My name.
Oh, you got rid of the couch.

- Yeah, the couch was a problem.

- [chuckles]

Um...

This is for you.

- Oh.

It's...

it's a fish.

A dead fish.

A whole dead fish.

- Yeah.

My dad fishes, like,

for a living.

It's a fluke.

- In what sense?

- It's called a fluke.

It's the water around here

is swimming with them.

- Ah, yeah.

So it's edible?

- Yeah.

- A fluke.

That's great

Thanks.

- So I read that book you wrote.

I hope that's okay.

- Reading my book?

Of course.

You may be one of the few.

- So are you going out tonight?

Out on the town?

- Uh, I don't know.

What do the people of Montauk

do on a Friday night?

- The Yardarm's totally dead.

So you'd probably like that

It's down by the harbor.

You can't miss it

- What did you think

of the book?

- I don't know.

What did you think of it?

- Me?

Oh, I

you know,

it's got its strengths,
got its moments.

I hate it

- You should probably
put that fish in the fridge,
'cause it'll stink up
the whole house.

Trust me.

I know.

What?

- Soup ingredients.

You know, if you feel like it

- You bought me a rutabaga.

- [chuckles]

- You're making this

too easy on me.

- Well, like I said, you know,
if you feel like it

No pressure.

- Your book was cool, actually.

It kind of blew me away.

[bass-heavy rock music]

- You planning on having
something to eat?

- Thanks, no.

I've got soup at home:

homemade.

- Can't beat that

Another beer?

- Sure.

- So what brings you down
to the South Shore, then?

- A book.

A bird.

A book about a bird.

Research work, you know.

- My wife makes

a good chowder.

Not so much a clam chowder

like you'd expect,

more of a corn chowder.

- My Lorraine, she can shuck

a dozen oysters

in a minute and a half.

- Local Malpeque oyster?
- That's the one.
- My wife invented and patented a lifesaving polymer shunt
- Shunt, you say?
- Shunt

So there's our heath hen,
hunkered down at Camp Hero.

- Just down the road here?
- Yep.

As game warden

- The Alfred guy.
- Yeah, correct

Alfred is his actual name.

In the book, I am going
to call him Horton or Morton.

Anyway, so he's brought
his flock of heath hens
back from the brink
of extinction.

- Awesome.
- I mean, he was down to 1 1
of them.
- 1 1, you know, but now with care,
and dare I say, love,
and incubators,
he's got 200.

And it's like the hen is saved.

- Safe, thank God.
- But because our story
is a tragedy,
you know what happens?

- What?
- Fire.
- No!
- Come on!
- Oh, yeah,
it sweeps across the preserve.
Of course, the heath hen,
not nature's most intelligent
bird to begin with...

- I hear ya.
- She just sits in her nest
You know, and she doesn't have

the sense to run
or fly or waddle.

You know,

when the fire runs out,
there's just five birds
remaining.

- Roast chicken.

- What happens to the five?

- They dwindle.

They dwindle
till there's just one left,
you know?

Just one.

Just one poor stupid
little thing.

You know,

it's just a stupid bird.

Just one.

It's a true story.

- Another round

for my friend here, Mike.

- Chicken shit

Oh, you did make soup.

Bless your heart.

Oh.

Mm, oh.

Such a small act of kindness,
but I can't tell you
what that means to me.

- Well, it's no big deal.

It's just soup.

- You are such a beautiful girl.

You are such a beautiful child.

- You're loaded.

- No, no, no, I

well, yes.

- Okay, I should go.

Since tonight
was a little longer

- You know what I am?

Let me tell you what I am,
just in case you're interested.

This is what I am.

- What?

- I am the only child
of an only child
and an only child.
And you know what that means.
- No cousins?
- It means I am the end
of a bloodline,
the last of my kind.
- Okay, well,
then have some kids.
- [laughs]
Said the babysitter.
If you only knew.
[groaning]
- Okay.
Look, it's gonna be 60 bucks.
Okay, you should go to bed.
- I don't blame her, the doctor.
You know, she's just
she's a human mechanic.
You know, she's got her hands
inside human beings every day.
They're just machines to her,
you know.
They're machines that break,
like rot factories.
So how can you create life
when you know it's gonna
end up in death?
I mean, I get that
I get it!
I don't blame her, but
- Hey, I'm sorry.
- Eh.
See, she doesn't realize
that human beings are warm.
You know, they need contact
They need, you know
you are such a beautiful girl.
You are such a beautiful child.
thud!
No, no!
thud!
[groaning]

[dishes crashing]

- Shit

- [groaning]

- I'm gonna go.

[door creaking]

Why are men such dicks?

- Beats me.

- I just thought he was lonely.

- We're all lonely.

- I don't know.

Maybe I shouldn't have hit him.

- No, you definitely

should have.

Okay, would you rather?

- I don't want to play.

- Oh, come on.

Would you rather

have no TV for a year

or only be able

to watch The Golf Channel?

- Golf Channel.

- Yeah, me too.

At least it's TV.

Your turn.

- Okay, would you rather have

no friends or no parents?

[gulls cawing]

[door creaking]

- Claire?

- Richard, the couch is outside.

- Is it the 15th already?

- Are you okay?

- Yes, I am.

- There's soup in the kitchen.

Have you been making soup?

- I'll be right back.

- All right

You made the soup.

What babysitter?

Work is going great,

and I'm still not here.

Drink it up.

There you go.

Now get out there.

- You know the funny thing
about soup?

You get the ingredients
basically into the pot
along with the sauce and the
not the sauce.
The juice.

- You mean the broth?

- Right, right, and then
it just needs some cooking.
[clears throat]

- Richard, is anything wrong?

I'm not

I'm concerned.

- Oh, well, thank you
for your concern, Claire.

Speaking of...

how are your patients?

Are they doing well?

And what are some
of their names?

- You know, you've got a bruise
right here.

- Oh, well, you know,
beaten down by life.

You know, winds of change.

Anyway, I want to do some
unloading of boxes

if you want to pitch in.

Then we can grab some brunch.

- Oh, no, Richard, no.

Are these all

- Oh, yes.

- Why?

Why would you do that
to yourself?

- Well, I just thought
as I embarked

on the writing of my second
my much anticipated

second novel,

that I should be reminded
of the remarkable,

I mean, really

quite noteworthy failure
of my first novel to sell
any copies whatsoever.

- Richard, I can't go
down this road with you.

- No, no, no, it's gonna be
very motivational, really.

- That was smooth.

- Hey, I got through it

- Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait,
wait

- What?

- My super senses
are telling me something.

- What?

- Yes.

I think the doctor
may be on to you.

- Oh, hush your mouth.

- Knock, knock.

Who's there?

[knocking at door]

- Shit

What do you want?

- I came to see
if you were okay,
'cause your head was
- It's fine.

I'm fine.

You need to go.

- What?

- You need to go now.

- Well, screw you too.

And you were the one
who came on to me,
by the way.

- What?

- Last night, asshole.

I was gonna apologize
for hitting you,
but forget it

You're a creep.

- Wait, Abby.

- The doctor's

out of her shower, FYI.

- Richard, who was that?

- Girl scout

- Oh, okay.

- Horton regarded his solitude
as something sacred.

Horton, Norton,

Norwood.

Norwood regarded his solitude
as s

[groans]

- How's it coming?

- Norwood regarded his solitude
as some

- Richard, what's this?

- It's a fluke.

- In what way?

- The fish.

It's called a fluke.

The water around here
is swimming with them.

- Oh, okay.

What were you planning
on doing with it?

- Do I have to have a plan?

Can't I just have a fish
in the house?

- Yes, fine.

I'm sorry.

- I thought we could cook it
then eat it

How's that?

- I guess I just hadn't caught
up with the fact
that you're a cook now.

[wet splattering]

- Okay, stop.

Stop it

You can stop.

Please stop now.

Stop it

Stop, stop, please!

Stop!

- Abby.

- Who the hell is that?
What the hell is she doing?
- I don't think I got a chance
to pay you the other night
How's \$60?
- Keep it
You don't even
have a kid, so
[horn honking]
- I think there was kind of
a misunderstanding
about some of my actions
or intentions.
I'm pretty sure
I said some things.
- Whatever.
I'm sure you're sorry
that you said all that stuff.
- I'm not sorry, actually,
about all that
What I'm sorry about is that
I was so abrupt at the house.
It was just
- Your wife was there.
Yeah, I figured that out
- Yes, it would have been,
you know,
awkward, you know?
- No, actually, I don't know.
- Well, Claire wouldn't really
understand our...
- Our what?
- Uh...
our friendship.
- Abby.
Come on.
We're out of here.
- Anyway, I wanted to let
you know that I respect you.
And is that Chickenshit?
- [laughs]
Yeah.
- He's a good-looking guy.
- Yeah, he sure thinks so.

- You coming or what?
We're going to Turner's house,
smoke a jay.

- Yeah, just a minute.

- I'm Richard.

- Look, you said you wanted
to hang out more.
You in or out?

- It's okay, Abby.
I don't want to keep you
from your jay.

- Who's your friend
with the bike?

- Abby's been babysitting
for me.
How's Wednesday night?

- [scoffs]

- Sure.

- Damn, girl, move your ass.

- Sorry.

- What's wrong with you?

- Richard!

[air whooshing]

- Hello!

[explosion]

[both grunting]

Don't you do it!

- Richard, are you here?

- Yeah, I'll be right there.

- Listen to me.
Hey, this won't end well.

- [grunts]

Hey, how you doing?

- Come on.
I want to show you something.

- Great, okay.
I have a problem with my hands.

- What do you mean?

- They won't do
what I want them to do.

- What do you want them to do?

- Anything.
I don't know, something useful.
I want them to build something

or make something.

- Like what?

- Even Jesus, I mean,
he was a carpenter.

You know, it wasn't enough
for him to save mankind.

He needed a trade.

I'm a flimsy man,
an insubstantial.

- Well, compared to Jesus.

- I'm a paper man.

- No, you're a writer.

- Yeah, that's crucial.

- No, it is.

Here we are.

[gulls cawing]

- Where?

- "It is possible

to be so at sea

"when life and land have

slipped under the horizon.

I quietly wish to never see
either again."

- Did I write that?

I wrote that

[gull cawing]

- Hold this.

- Abby?

Abby!

Come on.

Abby!

Abby.

Abby!

Jesus, what are you doing?

What are you doing?

- [laughing]

- Come here.

- You cannot do this.

You can't do that

- It was me

that dared her

to go in.

It was really cold.

It was much,

much colder than today.
But you know, she wasn't gonna
turn down a dare.
[chuckles]
We were like that
And I had eaten 23 oysters.
- Hmm.
- So I don't know
why she went in
in her clothes.
Um...
I guess maybe we thought
it would be warmer.
Kids.
And she was laughing,
and, you know, fine.
And then she was...
And then she was gone.
Just under and gone.
And I just stood there.
And then a couple hours later
my mom came
and found me.
And I guess, you know,
I was waiting for her
to swim back in.
But she never did.
- How old?
- Same age as me.
We're twins.
- Oh.
Oh, my God.
- That was a long time ago.
I like to go out there
every year
and swim back to shore.
You know, I like to feel
the cold.
- It must have
I don't know what to say.
- So we're both only children.
- That was our thing every year,
and you know it
And you take that guy out there

on this day.

He didn't even know her.

- I know.

- Remember when I was the only one that would talk to you for a long time?

- I know, but

- He doesn't love you.

If that's what you think, you're wrong.

- What do you want me to say?

- I could so move to California.

You shouldn't just assume

I'll always be around,

'cause one day

maybe I won't

- Stop it

- Is that what you want?

- I don't have much of a story, do I?

- It's all relative, I suppose.

- Exactly.

Other people seem

to have had events.

Things have happened to them, life-altering occurrences.

- I used to do things.

Remember?

- This isn't about you.

- Amazing things.

[inhales deeply]

What do you want me to say?

- I don't know.

- No, no, no, no.

Tell me what you want me to say, literally,

'cause, frankly, at this point, I got nothing.

- [whispering]

- But you have touched several lives, Richard, through your work.

It's not about your happiness

but the happiness you've brought
to others.

[phone ringing]

[answering machine beeps]

- Hey, look,
it's the fund-raiser
for the children's hospital
tomorrow night.

And I was thinking of donating
that bottle of wine,
the '71 Chteau Petrus.
I know we were saving it
for a special occasion,
but, well,
it's for a good cause.
So what do you think?

[phone ringing]

[machine beeps]

Richard, did you drink
that wine,
that \$5,000 bottle of wine?
It's not in the rack.
It was for the children.
Will you call me, please?

[tape crackling]

[knocking at door]

- Come in.

- Whoa.

Check out the couch.

- You like?

- [laughs]

- I made it with these.

- All right!

That's awesome.

- Yeah, sit

sit, sit, sit, sit, sit

- Uh!

- Huh?

- It's nice.

- Oh, those

just ideas for titles.

- For your new book?

- Mm-hmm.

- Cool, what have you got?

- Uh...

Cloudscape,

Death and Desolation,

The Daffodil.

- [laughs]

- Memoirs of an Amnesiac,

Bolero.

- Bolero?

- Okay.

Ad Nauseam,

Balm of Silence.

No?

Old Miss Ptarmigan's

Blackberry Wine?

- Whoa.

- Let's forget it

Titles are impossible.

[paper crinkling]

- Paper Man.

[laughs softly]

- You seem a lot more
interesting than me.

- I'm not

It just seems that way

because I have a dead sister.

[door creaking]

- Where you been all day?

- I don't know.

- Whatever.

So the party's off this weekend.

Turner's mom busted him.

- So what about the cove?

- It's fucking cold out there.

- Big deal.

So the party's off.

- What kind of party?

- What do mean

"What kind of party?"

A fucking party.

- Just nothing.

Just some friends hanging out

- You could use my place.

- What?

- Seriously?

- Yeah, why not?

This weekend's not so good.

My wife's back.

But you know,

we could do next week.

Friday?

- Friday is cool.

- Really?

- Yeah, I'll get a keg.

- Nice!

Nice.

- What else do you guys need?

Appetizers, you know,

paper plates and stuff?

- No, no, no.

We're okay.

We've got it covered.

- Great, we're on.

- Righteous.

Thanks, man.

- You didn't have to do that

- Ah, it'll be fun.

[slurping]

- Richard!

Richard?

Richard, please.

- Hi.

- [booming voice]

When the world is in peril,

when evil surrounds you,

when danger

[door slams]

Okay.

- Richard, help me.

- You don't like it?

- All the furniture is outside.

And what the hell is this?

- You seem disappointed,

going off your body language.

- You don't pick up the phone

once this week.

You don't call me once.

I drive all the way out here,

and there's this.

Richard, say something.

- [stammering]

- [sighs]

What's this?

- What's what?

- This.

Whose is this?

- Will you just tell her?

- Claire?

- Yes?

- Are we unhappy,

or are we just pretending
to be unhappy?

- What do you mean?

- Are we just pretending
to be unhappy

to add drama to our lives
so that we seem somehow
more substantial?

I mean, think about it

Our lives

are embarrassingly easy.

We've got plenty of money.

We got friends.

Well, you've got friends.

There are people out there

who have real problems,

you know,

real reasons to be unhappy.

I mean, I could be a coal miner

dying of black lung

or something.

You could be a Cincinnati

crack whore on food stamps.

- What?

- I don't know.

Doesn't it feel like

we're faking it,

our unhappiness?

- No.

No, it's real.

It's very real.

I'm going home now.

I think you think

this is still charming.
We're not 23 anymore.
You need to pull it together.
Pick up the phone this week.
[door unlatching]
And bring the fucking furniture
in from the lawn.
[door slams]
- Norwood regarded his solitude
as something
Norwood, Norman, Richmond?
Richmond, Richmond.
- Richmond regarded his solitude
as something
Ew!
Richmond.
Hitchmond.
Shmichmond.
[crashing]
- Richmond regarded his solitude
as something...
- Unbearable!
- Richmond regarded his
- Unbearable!
- Richmond regarded his solitude
as something unbearable.
- Ptoo!
[bicycle squeaking]
[knocking at window]
Come on.
Scalpel.
- No, you're starting too high.
You need to go down at the base
of the chin.
- Oh.
And then cut up from there.
Good.
Careful, careful, careful.
[laughs]
Let me help you.
All right
Ready?
- Yeah.
- And there.

Good, good, good, good.

Okay, would you rather
always walk backwards
or stub your toe every time
you took a step?

- Why would I want to do either?

- It's a game.

Just pick one.

- Ah!

- Oh, drop that in the pan.

[sizzling]

Beautiful.

You are really good at this.

- My wife reattached
a leg today.

- Oh.

- Maybe I should have been
a fishmonger.

I could have, you know,
mongered some fish.

- Okay, which one is it?

Is it walk backwards
or stub your toe?

- Well, could I just design
a special kind of shoe

- Mm-mm. No.

Oh, wait Here.

Flip that in a minute.

Gently, gently, gently.

- I guess I would
walk backwards.

I'm not good with pain.

You?

- I like to see where I'm going.

Okay, come here.

You hold this end.

- Ahh, paper men.

- You know, for your book.

- Oh, yes!

Oh.

I got something for you too.

Yeah, close your eyes.

- Oh!

A camel.

A peacock.

- It's the swan,
the beautiful, graceful swan.

- Oh, sorry.

[laughs]

Aw.

- And I know
what it means to you
And I know
what it means to you

And I know

who I want to be

[knocking at door]

- Come in.

- Whoa.

Oh.

- We look good.

- Yeah.

Wow.

You really went all out

- Yeah, too much?

- No, mm-mm.

No, it looks great

Party town.

- Mm-hmm, the keg's in here.

And I put the hors d'oeuvres
in the kitchen.

I think it will flow well
that way.

- Yeah, oh.

That's a piata.

- Yeah, I went for the donkey.

You know, go classic.

- [laughs]

You don't really

do parties much, do you?

- No, I'm a little nervous.

- [laughs]

Well, relax.

It will be fun.

- Okay.

- [laughs]

No.

Hey.

- Hey.
- Shit
- Yeah, I know.
- Where's the freak?
- Don't be an asshole.
- What a dickweed.
- Hey, Bryce.
What's up, man?
[laughs]
- Where do I put these?
- Kitchen.
- What about the box?
- Whatever, man.
Whatever feels right, you know.
Mi casa, you know.
- What?
[pulsing hip-hop music]
Where's the cups?
Nice.
- [laughs]
- Hey, welcome to party central.
Come on in.
That's it
Hey, what's
hey.
What grade are you guys in?
Wow
oop, I'm sorry.
Somebody wants to party.
[laughs]
What's up?
Hey, come on in.
[whooping]
Let me see some ID.
I'm kidding.
[jumping hip-hop music]
Hey!
Hey, hey.
Having fun, huh?
What's happening?
[keg squeaking]
All right, line up.
Get 'em up here.
[laughing]

- Stop dicking around.
- Watch this.
[all cheering]
Drink, drink, drink!
[laughter]
Whoo, whoo, ooo, ooo!
High school for me was a time
of self-discovery.
[laughing]
There you go.
When I look back on it
though, got to say,
wouldn't want to be 17 again.
[all shouting]
- We're 15.
- Ah.
[laughter]
[cheering]
Okay.
[pulsing dance music]
- Oh, what?
[laughter]
- Come on.
[people chatting]
[dance music continues]
- I'll take you to a place
that you've never been before
Come on,
don't stop
[heavy rock music]
- Oh, sorry.
- Dude, do you mind?
- What are you doing?
- What?
- What the fuck are you doing?
What about Abby?
- What about Abby?
- You don't do this to her.
You don't do this
to that little girl.
- Mind your own business,
you fucking pervert.
- Chickenshit
- What did you call me?

- Chickenshit bastard.
- You don't talk to me
like that
Who the hell are you?
Who the fuck
do you think you are?
You don't talk to me like that,
you fucking freak.
- You think you can threaten me?
You're a child.
[all gasp]
- I'm a child, huh?
Is that what I am?
- Bryce, get the fuck
off of him.
What are you doing?
Stop it
Are you okay?
- What's the deal?
What's the deal here?
You fucking him?
- Stop it, Bryce.
- Seriously,
are you fucking her?
- No.
- I don't give a shit
He can have her.
She's fucking crazy anyway.
Why don't you go back
to the Ioonney bin
where you belong?
And take him with you.
- Get the fuck out
- Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Get the fuck out now!
Go!
What the fuck are you
looking at?
Get out of here.
Party's over.
- Chickenshit is an asshole.
- Yeah.
- Great party.
- Yeah.

- I love you.
- What?
- Not in any inappropriate way,
nothing that's not,
you know, decent or
I just find when I examine
my heart
I find...
I think that there's love
there...
For you.
Yeah.
I love you.
- It was...
It wasn't really a looney bin.
It was...
I mean, I was only there
for a couple months,
you know, just until I...
My parents thought..
I don't know.
I never told them.
I never told anyone.
It was a pact
Me and Amy
were both supposed to go
into the water,
and she did it
And I swam back.
I swam back.
I couldn't
[sighs]
I don't know what we were
so unhappy about
I mean...
what could we have been
so unhappy about?
Eight
I guess you're too young to know
that you can get over anything.
- He's always made
poor decisions.
- Same with her.
- You feel helpless.

How long you been with her?

- Since she was eight

You?

- Oh, Christ

That's got to be over 40 years.

[inhales deeply]

Second grade.

- Isn't he a little old for you?

- I keep telling him that

He never listens.

- They never do.

- No.

- What's your gig?

- I've pretty much done it all.

Battled monsters under the bed,

been a cheerleader,

confidant

These days, it's a bit of a
mystery, to tell you the truth.

You?

- I'm crazy in love with her.

- [groans]

Tough one.

- Yeah.

It's been all right

I think she's almost done

with me.

- Good.

Great

Get out while you can.

I tell you, they open the door,
you run.

You don't want to end up

like me.

- Guess not

- Captain Excellent

- Christopher.

Nice to meet you.

- See you around.

[bird cawing]

- Oh.

- What? What?

What? What?

- You son of a bitch!

You son of a bitch!

- Don't overreact here.

- Shut up.

Don't tell me how to react

- It's not like that

- Shut up!

What is this, Richard?

What

who is that?

Who the fuck is that?

- She's the babysitter.

- Get out

Get out

Get out!

- Hi, Lucy.

Hi, Peter.

- Hi.

Claire, we'll just be

- I didn't sleep

with the babysitter,

if that's what you're thinking.

- Oh, that's so comforting.

Why do we even have

a babysitter?

- It's just a kegger, Claire.

That's all.

- Just a kegger?

And with whom exactly

did you have a kegger?

- Just some kids

from the high school.

- Richard, just stop.

None of this is okay.

- Okay.

- You knew we were

coming this weekend.

Why are you doing this?

- I've been at a bit of a loss.

- That's a bullshit answer.

- I've been floundering,

and Abby has been

- What?

Abby's been what?

- A friend.

- For God's sake.
That's not a friend;
that's a child.
You have friends.

- No, I don't

- Do think that was a chipmunk
that we hit?

- I think they hibernate.

- Yeah.

- 'Cause you don't know how
to relate to other human beings.
Yeah, you isolate yourself.

- Oh, you could talk.

- What the hell is that supposed
to mean?

- You can be cold, Claire.

- Let's just maybe
get out of here.
Can we just get out of here?
Can we leave this area?

- What do you mean by that?

- I don't know
if it's your profession or what
[both muttering]
But it's made you hard.

- I can't
I don't accept that

- I wanted to have a baby.

- Is that what
this is all about?

- We could have had a baby,
Claire.
Why didn't we have a baby?

- Why?
Because you are a baby!
You're an infant
You still have
an imaginary friend.

- I just wanted
a little warm thing,
something simple
I could start with,
a single relationship with
a person that was new and pure,

where I could be me
and they could be them,
and that was all
that was expected.
And we could build this world
where there was someone else
other than me
to think about and be about,
the relief of being able to give
the world to someone else
and just let it be theirs,
let them have their turn,
so it doesn't end with me.
- Well, that's all you.
Where do I come in?
- What do you mean?
God, you're the mother.
- Uh, I'm so sorry, you guys.
But we're gonna go.
We're just gonna go.
- B&B just anywhere?
Anywhere.
- I'm sorry.
- No, it's fine.
- No, no, no, no, no.
- We're just gonna
- Okay, I'll walk you out
- We should all go on a cruise
or something.
- Okay.
- Take care.
- All right, if we're gonna do
this, let's
all right, by the way,
what is she, like, 13, 14?
Let's at least get
our facts straight, though.
Okay, it was you, Richard.
You didn't want to have a baby.
You weren't ready.
So that little fuzzy
fucking speech
my friends had to hear
was bullshit

And now I'm
I can't
So I guess I'm the bad guy.
- No, not the novel.
Look, I'd rather you didn't
- What is this?
What is this?
- That's it
- After all this time out here,
this is it?
This?
Maybe if you'd spent
more time working
instead of fucking
the babysitter
- No.
- You're useless.
- Yes.
- You're totally useless.
- Yes, I am.
- What is wrong with you?
- I don't know what to do
with my hands!
- [sighs]

- **Everyone:**

and Liv all envied me.
I had the one who made me laugh.
What happened?
I don't know what happened.
- You stopped laughing.
[squeaking]
[morose vocal and guitar music]
- Help you?
- Yeah, I came to pay
my respects.
- Sorry?
- The heath hen,
the North American heath hen.
This is where
the last one lived, died.
- Oh.
I wouldn't know anything
about a heath hen.

But you're welcome

to look around.

We've got several varieties
of plover.

- Thank you.

[bittersweet acoustic
guitar music]

So this is what the end
of something looks like.

- The world went on, Richard.

- But never the same.

Who knows how she might have
changed things

with her just being here,
the ripple effect

- And if that chicken

hadn't died out,

you'd be perfectly

well adjusted.

- Maybe.

- Doubtful.

- Instead,

I'm a childless loser.

I'm condemned to oblivion,

Captain,

just like our little hen.

It's time for you to go.

- No.

- You know what I'm saying,

Captain.

I mean,

go and never come back.

- I'm not ready.

- It doesn't matter.

You can't help me anymore.

The doctor's right

- But you'll be all alone.

- Yes.

Last of my kind.

Okay.

Do the voice

one last time.

Please.

- When the world is in peril,

when evil surrounds you,
when danger is lurking...
[whispering]
Who do you call?
- Captain Excellent
[triumphant music]
- [sighs]
[sobbing quietly]
[knocking at window]
[window whirring]
- I wish I had
a really amazing
fucked-up father like him.
[window whirring]
[engine turns over]
[typewriter whirring]
- Captain.
[typewriter whirring]
Richmond regarded his solitude
Merton regarded
Horton regarded
[Richard's voice overlapping]
[whispering]
Richmond?
Richmond?
Richard.
Richard regarded his solitude
as something sacred.
[typewriter keys clacking]
- I had this dream last night
And you were in it
- Oh, was I interesting?
- You were you.
You're leaving, aren't you?
- Yeah, you know,
'cause of the situation.
- Yeah.
I figured.
You know,
spring is my favorite time,
'cause summer people
aren't here yet
It's not so fucking cold.
- Yeah.

Um, I made you something.

- That's the swan.

The beautiful, graceful swan.

It's

Richard, it's perfect

- Yeah, well...

- Thank you.

- It seems like we were
just getting started.

- Here.

- Got to find a way
back home

- Okay.

[bittersweet music]

- Got to find a way
to get home strong
Got to find a way back home

- [laughs quietly]

- Got to find a road
that brings me back soon
Got to find a way back home
Got to find a way
to get home strong

Got to find a way back home
[stirring rock music]

- Never wanted
to feel this way
I never wanted
to feel so sad

- [sobbing]

- Never wanted
to feel this way again
- Okay.

- I'm a horse's ass.

- Yes, you are.

- I'm sorry.

I'm gonna need some help
getting this couch in.

- Got to find a way
to get home strong
Got to find a way back home
Richard regarded his solitude
as something sacred,
as a well-earned

badge of honor,
a cloak to be worn
to ward off life,
as his safety.
Solitude is who he was.
This caused those in his life
to view him
with a barely veiled contempt.
Richard was certain
that he was not liked,
which is hard on a man.
Maybe it was because
he gave nothing
that he received nothing
in return.
In any case, his situation
had become intolerable.
The closest things
he had to friends
were either imaginary
or extinct.
Richard had reached a point
in his life
where this was no longer
enough.
And then he met a girl,
and she was warm,
and she was sad,
and she was maybe lonely
in a way
that reminded him of himself.
She'd lost things that a girl
should never have lost.
And she knew things,
and she taught him.
And Richard thought,
"Maybe this is what friendship
feels like.
Maybe."
It was just a glimpse.
They'd barely begun, really.
But in those long
few winter days,
she'd given him so much,

enough so that Richard
could go on.

And what had he given her?
Just a few words on a page.
Not much, perhaps.

But for Abby,
he hoped it was enough.

[gull cawing]

[bittersweet music]

- Got to find a way
to get home strong
Got to find a way back home
Got to find a light
to guide me home
Got to find a way back home

- Okay.

- Got to find a way
back home

[wistful rock music]

- I broke the door
I broke the furniture
I painted pictures
Did it for you

Oh, ho

Oh, oh

I said good-bye
To my whole family
I hope they'll miss me
As much as you

[bright acoustic guitar music]

- Driftwood finds its way
to sand

So I'm sure that we will
Recognize our landmark soon
Wanderlust has lost
its shine
It's left me cold,
and we're running out of time
As we wonder how much longer
we can keep

Our cars in tune

And I only know that I'll
never be the boy wonder

Yeah, I only know that I'll

never be the boy wonder
It's too late
for that sort of thing now
Maybe I'll just cut my losses
in this city
That is how
we say "surrender"
Driftwood finds
its way to sand
And they're wondering
if they'll somehow
see a grandson soon
And I only know that I'll
never be the boy wonder
It's too late
for that sort of thing now
Maybe I'll just cut my losses
in this city
That is how
we say "surrender"
[humming]
Now if I get carried away,
I'll get plowed under
So I can't forget that I'll
never be the boy wonder
I'm too gray
And I'm too beat down
I could just come to my senses
then retire to some small town
And just surrender
Driftwood finds
its way to sand
So I'm sure that we will
Recognize our landmark soon