

Whit: Well, do you have something with you that could help me? Some pills?

Steven: I do.

Whit: Thank God.

Steven: But I can't give them to you.

Whit: What?

Steven: Dad, I just told you. I'm not a doctor. I'm not authorized to hand out medication.

Whit: Well, what am I supposed to do?

Steven: Nothing. You just sit here and relax. I'll set the table for Nikki, and I'll find a vase for those flowers that she picked today.

Whit: Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young.

Steven: What?

Whit: Our House.

Steven: Dad please. You're not making any sense. Now, just sit here and try and keep your heart rate down. Let your mind go blank. Don't think of anything that could excite or upset you. All right?

Whit: I'll try.

Steven: Good. I won't be long. And remember. No excitement.

*(Steven exits to the kitchen. Whit sits back and closes his eyes.)*

Whit: *(To himself.)* No excitement. No excitement. *(He sings softly.)* I'll light the fire. You place the flowers in the vase that you bought today.

*(Erica enters from the bedrooms. She approaches Whit.)*

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Erica: *(Loudly)* Dad!!

*(Whit is startled! He screams.)*

It's Erica!!

Whit: Yes, Erica. I know! We've been over this. I can see you. I can hear you. Now, what's on your mind?

Erica: I need to talk to you.

Whit: Talk about what?

Erica: I've got a problem.

Whit: A problem?

Erica: Yes. And I just have to tell somebody.

Whit: And why me?

Erica: Because you're my father. And this is what fathers are for. You're supposed to be that shoulder that I can lean on. You can fix any dilemma.

Whit: Who told you that nonsense?

Erica: Dad?

Whit: All right. What's the problem?

Erica: I'm worried.

Whit: What about?

Erica: Well...I don't want to be an orphan.

Whit: What?

Erica: Well, you're sixty-one.

Whit: Sixty-one? Sixty-one is nothing. My father lived until he was sixty-two. Okay, that's a bad example. He was a sickly man anyway. He was lucky to make it to sixty-two. He should thank his lucky stars that he lived that long. Is this helping at all?

Erica: No.

Whit: I didn't think so. I guess I'm not that good at this father thing.

Erica: No, Dad. You're great at this father thing.

- Whit: I am?
- Erica: Yes. That's why I'm worried about being an orphan. If you were a terrible father it wouldn't matter to me that much. In fact, I'd be better off without you. I might even be wishing you were dead.
- Whit: Boy, that took a bad turn.
- Erica: But you're a wonderful father. You're a fantastic father.
- Whit: I am?
- Erica: Yes.
- Whit: I didn't know you felt that way. Isn't that ironic? All this time, you thought you were a disappointment to me, and I had no idea that you thought that I was a wonderful..
- Erica: Dad? I'm talking.
- Whit: Forgive me.
- Erica: I mean, you were always there for Steven and I. Mom was out working all day at her job as a social worker. Sometimes she would work very late trying to help solve the family problems of perfect strangers. And even when she was home she would be busy giving piano lessons to neighborhood kids. And she wouldn't even charge them. She just wanted them to have music in their lives. She thought it was important to be a well-rounded individual and so she gave those lessons for free. Sometimes we wouldn't see Mom for days on end. She was either at work solving other people's problems, or she was locked away in the music room giving piano lessons to children in an effort to enrich their lives, at no cost to them. But that wasn't the case with you. You always seemed to be around. Sitting in your big easy chair. Dozing off. Spilling a drink on your shorts. Sometimes you'd be home from your mail route at noon. I don't know how you did that. Into work at nine a.m. and home by noon? You must have worked really hard to be able to do that.
- Whit: Well, I walked fast.
- Erica: That would explain all the naps you took. Now, don't get me wrong. I loved Mom. I worshipped her. She was a wonderful woman and she set a great example for Steven and I. But that doesn't mean that you aren't great too. Steven and I are very lucky to have had

you both in our lives. Very lucky. And that's why I don't want to lose you. We lost Mom too soon because of breast cancer, and I don't want to lose you too. I don't want to be an orphan.

Whit: You're thirty-one years old, Erica. You're employed. You live in a nice apartment. You wear beautiful clothes. It's not like you're going to be singing It's A Hard Knock Life all day.

Erica: It doesn't matter how old an orphan is. They're still an orphan.

*(Nikki enters from the kitchen.)*

Nikki: Okay you two. Time to dig into Grandpa's Hat.

Erica: Can we call it something else?

Nikki: Why? What's wrong?

Erica: Well, Grandpa's hat just doesn't sound that inviting.

Nikki: Okay. How about Grandpa's rubber boot?

Whit: Grandpa's skivvies.

Nikki: Grandpa's upper plate?

Erica: All right. Grandpa's hat is fine.

Nikki: Good. Now, come and get it.

*(Nikki exits. Erica starts to leave.)*

Whit: Erica?

Erica: Yes?

Whit: Has Steven mentioned anything to you about asking Amy to marry him?

Erica: What?

Whit: Steven. He just told me he's going to propose to Amy.

Erica: Balloon girl?

Whit: Yes.