

FITZPATRICK. Did he tell you that?

NORA. No, actually, I just heard him mention it.

FITZPATRICK. Then I guess you know he wasn't real excited to hear from me. Well, no one is, frankly. This is a nice room. Nice house. Eighteen months, I'm sitting in jail with every nutjob on the planet, and you're here. Raising children. Watching television. Eating chocolates.

(He is weary, almost bemused by this.)

NORA. Look, if you need money, I, I can help you with money. I mean, it will take a little bit of maneuvering with Evan, but I can get it, a little bit at a time. Just, you have to come to me. Evan's not... He doesn't know about my involvement in what happened, and—

FITZPATRICK. You never told him? *(Surprised:)* Huh. I guess I just assumed—well, no wonder he was—I just assumed you would have told him by now.

NORA. There was no need.

FITZPATRICK. Yeah, okay. So, can you talk to him for me?

NORA. Talk to him?

FITZPATRICK. Evan. About giving me a job. I mean, I knew it was unlikely, but I had to do something. I'm kind of running on fumes here, trying to figure this out. Anyway, he didn't... he was not responsive, to my... request. So, can you talk to him?

NORA. I just, I—^{Staff} I wish you had come to me first.

FITZPATRICK. I'm coming to you now.

NORA. Yes, but if you had come to me yesterday—

FITZPATRICK. *(Edgy now:)* You just said to come to you, Nora. That's what I'm doing.

NORA. But I already...look. I'll just tell you. A friend of mine, an old friend from high school—she needed—well, she needed what you need, so I spoke to Evan about it last night, and—

FITZPATRICK. And what?

NORA. Well, I—just did, what you're asking for someone else. I can't help you now.

(He looks at her, confused.)

FITZPATRICK. You did it for this old friend, but you can't do it for me.

NORA. Look. I can get you money—

FITZPATRICK. I don't need money, I need a job! I took eighteen months on an embezzling conviction! No one is exactly lining up to give me my second chance. Plus I have an M.B.A., from Harvard, so the local McDonald's tends to think I'm overqualified. Then on top of that, my ex-wife is a little pissed off at me, well, why not, anyway, she's taken the position that I can't see my kids till I start coughing up some child support. So, I mean, due respect to my idiot parole officer, but I have to hold out for something that pays enough to meet the demands of contemporary society. That's what I'm looking for. I'm highly educated. And I payed my debt. I need a real job.

NORA. Yes, but I—I can't—

FITZPATRICK. Why? Why can't you?

NORA. I just told you! I mean, Evan hasn't even technically started that job, he can't just show up the first day of work with my—

(She stops herself. He considers her.)

FITZPATRICK. With your what? Your partner in crime?

NORA. *(Bristling:)* There are rules about these things, Neil, you know that—

FITZPATRICK. You weren't so worried about the rules when you needed money. Back then it was oh, Neil help me, I'll do anything—

NORA. Look. I said I'd help you, I want to help you. But I'm being honest! I can't ask him now! Give me a couple of months, so that he's had time to—

FITZPATRICK. I don't have a couple of months!

~~NORA. You have to give me time to handle this!~~

~~FITZPATRICK. (Angry.) What there's only one job down there. He's about to take over a major goddamned branch. Aside from the main office, how many branches are under him, you don't even know, do you? I do. Three hundred and twelve. In the greater metropolitan area. We can find something for me to do. You talk him to do that.~~

~~NORA. How can I just do what I tell him?~~

~~FITZPATRICK. You tell him to do what you tell him to do.~~

~~NORA. If you will just help me.~~

~~FITZPATRICK. Then I have to listen? I took a bullet for you—~~

~~NORA. You took a bullet because you broke the law.~~

~~FITZPATRICK. We both broke the law. You so, not just falling yourself, that you just borrowed that money, are you because I think I explain.~~

~~NORA. You were supposed to help me. Why didn't you stop?~~

~~FITZPATRICK. I don't have to explain myself to you.~~

~~NORA. You will not get my job!~~

NORA. It doesn't work like that!

FITZPATRICK. Then I'm going to tell him! (Beat.) This isn't a game! If you won't help me, I will tell him what I have on you. And he'll know what that means. No more handling things. He'll just give a job because he has to.

NORA. He won't.

FITZPATRICK. Yes he will! I should have figured it out yesterday when I, he was so—no way, if he knew? No way would be quite so cavalier, about whatever happens to me. (Beat.) I'm sorry. I have been trying, for months, to do this without dragging you into it, and I'm not getting anywhere. I'm a goddamned marked man and I'm not going down again without a fight. Now, I need help, and you are the one person who can help me, and you owe me. You and I

did a dumb thing, together, and I covered for you, because I admit it, I admit it was my own damn fault I got caught. (Beat.) And your dad was good to me. I didn't want to, for his sake? But sentimentality only goes so far. I am trying—I want to see my kids. I want to be a father to them. And I don't want to get just stuck in this loop where prison is always hanging over your head, the only option you have is to break the law again because it's too hard not to. I want a decent life.

NORA. And that's why you've resorted to blackmail.

FITZPATRICK. Yeah, okay, it's ironic, but you know what? A year and a half in jail, what goes on in there, "irony" doesn't seem like such a bad thing. (Beat.) You get him to give me a break, he doesn't have to know. I'll call you tomorrow morning.

NORA. That's not enough time!

FITZPATRICK. That's your problem. end

(He finishes his beer, and goes, without looking back. After a minute, CHRISTINE sticks her head out. She looks at NORA, who is sitting on the couch, distraught. She tiptoes to the front window, and looks out.)

NORA. (Upset.) Did you hear?

CHRISTINE. Of course I heard, I absolutely just stood right in the hallway and listened to every word.

NORA. It's not as bad as it sounds.

CHRISTINE. Nora, listen—that's probably true, but you know, it sounds pretty damn bad, so it could absolutely be not as bad as it sounds, and still be bad.

NORA. It's bad.

CHRISTINE. What did you do?

NORA. It wasn't—listen. Things were very, Evan was sick. He was very sick, and he wouldn't admit it, he was in complete denial.

CHRISTINE. I mean, so you stole, money? How much did you steal?