

What can you say about Mr. Crane?

Characters 4 to 6

***Charles Benjamin Crane:** (He was eighty-five) Now he's dead.

Daniel Tailor: Thirty-two years old, Mr. Crane's store manager.

Stephanie Tailor: Thirty years old, Dan's wife.

***Carol Denise Crane:** Sixty-one- but doesn't look it- Charles' fifth and current wife.

***Jose Antonio Romano:** Twenty-eight years old, Charles lawn boy.

***Paige Anne Crane:** Sixty-five years old, Charles first wife.

* = May be double cast (Personally I would prefer it.)

Only Act, Scene one

Sunday April 14th 20 2013

(The lights go up and Dan is standing next to the coffin of Charles Benjamin Crane the audience is seated as the viewers would be but in the reality of the show Dan's Wife Stephanie is the only one watching the speech)

Dan: What can you say About Charles Benjamin Crane? He was a man of great wealth. A man of great... of great- What can I say? He was a materialistic, greedy, self absorbed, racist. A close-minded bigot beyond words, and as another one of these dinosaurs bites the dust, the world becomes a little better place.

Stephanie: Honey (standing from audience by his side to comfort him) You're allowed to embellish, actually I think you're supposed to embellish. It's expected. This is a eulogy. Maybe you could say how generous he was.

Dan: That's not embellishing, that's an out right lie. He was the cheapest son of a bitch I ever met. He's probably got most of his cash sewn into the sides of this casket.

Stephanie: That's silly, You know the funeral home people would've checked that. You're just too emotional right now.

Dan: Let me try again. Dearly beloved we are gathered here today to say farewell to-

Stephanie: Dan, It's a funeral, not a wedding.

Dan: The dearly beloved is a wedding thing?

Stephanie: It's a wedding thing.

Dan: Alright. We are gathered here today, to celebrate the passing of-

Stephanie: Dan, no.

Dan: No?

Stephanie: No celebration.

Dan: You obviously didn't know the man very well.

Stephanie: You can't start a eulogy with celebrating his passing.

Dan: I don't know how I got stuck doing this.

Stephanie: You were like a son to him.

Dan: No I wasn't! He has a son. His son doesn't speak to him.

Stephanie: See, you were closer than his son.

Dan: If I didn't know him so well I might be able to say something nice about him. He should've hired someone to give this.

Stephanie: Why won't his son do this?

Dan: I don't even know if he's coming to the funeral.

Stephanie: You're sad, it's understandable.

Dan: No, that's not the problem. Every time I picture myself standing up here tomorrow all I can think of is asking every one join me in a verse of ding dong the bastard's dead! (He notices the body in the coffin as he's dancing around it) Yeah, I'm talking about you.

Stephanie: Are you the same man I married? Aren't you the one that told me that there's a little good in everyone? "No person was ever put on this planet that didn't make it just a little better in one way or another." Didn't you say that?

Dan: Maybe I've said that, but that was before I worked for him.

Stephanie: So you're saying there isn't good in everyone? Is that what you would say to our child?

Dan: I didn't say that.

Stephanie: You're implying it.

Dan: He will make excellent worm food. Compost is good for the world.

Stephanie: You can't use that in the eulogy either. So there's not good in everyone? You were wrong?

Dan: I'm exploring the possibilities that I may have been incorrect. Look- You've heard me talk about him. What can I say about him that's nice?

Stephanie: Don't look at me, I met him twice and I didn't like him.

Dan: Whatever happened to some good in everyone?

Stephanie: I was pointing out that you said that, I never said I agreed with you. He was a cheap nasty bastard. You forgot to say he was a sexist too.

Dan: That's a lot of help.

Stephanie : I don't know why you agreed to do this.

Dan: What am I suppose to do? I got a letter from a dead man. How can I say no? Literary, how?

Stephanie: You could take this opportunity, to prove your theory to me.

Dan: The good in everyone theory? This is a tough one. Find something genuinely good to say about Charles Benjamin Crane.

Stephanie: It would be strong proof. Then again, you can just say no to a dead man. He won't argue.

Dan: No, I will tell my son -or daughter that there is some good in everyone, and I'm going to prove it -honestly. I always enjoy a challenge.

Stephanie: What about those two ladies that came in crying thanking you for all he had done for them.

Dan: He donated to their church.

Stephanie: That's generous.

Dan: Yeah generous. I remember one time we got a truckload of moldy two by fours...

(The lights shift on the coffin- Mr. Crane sits up using it as a desk with a phone and some paperwork on it. Perhaps a lamp. He is yelling to whoever is on the other end of the phone.)

Crane: What the hell am I suppose to do with it? - Why should I pay for it when I didn't make the truck break down? So I'm supposed to keep up with the maintenance on your truck? You don't think I can buy lumber from any other mill? What? You're a bean counter? Why don't you put someone on the line that knows about money then -Sorry, I count money not beans, beans give me gas. Really? You think you can do that? Or do you know? Okay then. Yeah, I can live with that. That sounds terrific, now go back to your beans. (Hangs up the phone.) You just gotta know how to talk to people Dan, you gotta let them know who's the boss. I got all the charges removed for that delivery.

Dan: Great I'll toss that moldy stuff out.

Crane: What are you kidding me? Have that Steve kid take the pressure washer to it and see what you can clean up.

Dan: Some of those boards smell like fecal matter, that's not going to go away.

Crane: Well take the boards that don't clean up and donate them to that church down the street. Maybe they can build a new wing on their orphanage with them, then I can get my tax deduction from it.

(Lights go back and Crane lays dead once more.)

Stephanie: That's still kind of generous.

Dan: It was never a real donation.

Stephanie: Well then fake the eulogy, it falls in line with the rest of his life. I don't care.

Dan: No, I'm not faking it, I always try to be honest.

Stephanie: Always?

Dan: Yes, as a general rule I'm an honest person.

Stephanie: You've never told the tiniest little fib before?

Dan: Yes, but I try not to. Sometimes I guess you have to just to spare feelings. But he doesn't have those.

Stephanie: You can't know what death is like. He might be watching you.

Dan: Being dead doesn't have anything to do with it, he never had feelings.

Stephanie: Greed is a feeling.

Dan: Not one I'm afraid to hurt. He did tell me once how attractive you were. That was kind of human of him.

Stephanie: Aww, really? Maybe I didn't dislike him as much as I thought. Did you notice I got hit on tonight?

Dan: By who?

Stephanie: That funeral director.

Dan: You got hit on at a veiwing?

Stephanie: I know, it's tacky.

Dan: You're so obvously-

Stephanie: Obviously what?

Dan: Married. It's sick.

Stephanie: It's still kind of flattering.

Dan: Well, I'm going to have to figure this out, I've got what? Thirteen hours to come up with something nice to say about the guy.

Stephanie: Do you have to do it here? He gave me the creeps when he was alive, and it's just not right to linger in these places.

Dan: Okay, to solve this problem, I'm going to have to do a little research. It's time to go on a little fact finding tour. (He picks up the guest book.)

Stephanie: What are you doing with that? I don't think you can just take that.

Dan: I'll have it back tomorrow for the service. This is a comprehensive list of his closest family and friends -wow - Only six people claimed to know him. Look at this. This is that high school kid that works part time at the register. "Mr. Charlie, I didn't even know you were sick. Please forgive me for not coming in these last weeks, if I knew it would've been the last time I seed you, I would've been there."

Stephanie: Seed you? S E E D , like a flower seed?

Dan: Never mind the spelling or grammar, it's a letter to the dead guy.

Stephanie: His way of saying goodbye, don't ridicule it. That might be sacrad to the familij now.

Dan: This is mean to be sent to the other side.

Stephanie: They can burn it, and let the smoke carry the words to heaven.

Dan: Then how will Mr. Crane ever see it?

Stephanie: Dan, stop.

Dan: I don't believe this, five people and a moron.

Stephanie: You forgot to sign it.

Dan: I didn't forget, I just didn't want anyone to know I knew him.

Stephanie: He specifically requested you to read his eulogy, that's going to be a clue.

Dan: His wife sent me the letter, that doesn't mean he actually wrote it.

Stephanie: Why would she lie about that?

Dan: So she wouldn't have to figure out something nice to say about the guy.

Stephanie: She's his wife, if anyone knew his sweet side it's her.

Dan: We're about to find out.

(They exit, lights out)

Scene Two

(Lights up on a bar, I envision the coffin being raised and turned longways to up and downstage so that it becomes the bar. A middle-aged and abnormally large breasted Mrs. Carol Crane is drinking while on the cell phone in tears as Dan and Stephanie walk into the room)

Carol: I can't help that my husband just died. You don't plan those things. Well no, no I didn't. (She hangs up crying)

Dan: Carol Crane?

Carol: Might be. Who's asking?

Dan: Daniel Taylor, and this is my wife Stephanie. I worked for your husband.

Carol: Daniel?

Dan: I was your husbands store manager for the past couple of decades.

Carol: Is that so?

Dan: You sent me a letter last week from your husband.

Carol: I sent a lot of letters.

Dan: Everyone calls me Dan.

Carol: Oh, I always thought it was Stan. Ah well, Stan, Dan -all the same to me if you're already married.

Dan: It's nice to meet you Mrs. Crane.

Carol: I don't think I'm Mrs. Crane anymore, I'm now a Ms. And that's pronounced mizzzz. I'm still new to this widow shit.(she gestures for them to sit.) It's good to meet you too. I sent that letter alright, but I got it in my head your name was Stan

Dan: I just assumed you had horrible handwriting. That letter is what brings me here tonight. How are you?

Carol: I'm hanging in there, but I don't know how much more terrible news I can take.

Dan: Is there anything we can do to help?

Carol: No, I'm afraid Mr. Crane has left me in quite a bind.

Stephanie: Deaths always come on so unexpectedly.

Carol: Who wasn't expecting it? The man was over wieght with high blood pressure it was a matter of time. No, that duch-bag convinced me to get these things, then he paid for them on a credit card, and never paid it off.

Dan: I'm sure you inherited enough-

Carol: Ha! I didn't get shit. What do you think of that? That sneaky little puke put his kid as the joint name in all of his savings accounts and let me have joint credit cards with him. I get whatever debt we had and according to my two-bit lawyer. That spoiled ungrateful son of his gets all the money.

Dan: What about the house?

Carol: To the first Mrs. Crane. He never changed the deed. He got married and divorced four times and never changed the fucking deed. It still belongs to Paige Crane, his first wife.

Stephanie: Maybe he didn't think about-

Carol: Honey he thought about nothing but shit like that. He was all into the legal details. He knew what he was doing. I'm sorry, is there anything I can help you with? Can I buy you two a drink?

Dan: Not for me thank-you.

Stephanie: Sex on the beach?

Dan: Sweet heart.

Stephanie: My bachorlereet party was at this place, they're known for that drink.

Carol: That's why I'm here, that's what I've been hav'n all night. Bar keep! Bring one of my usuals for my friend here.

Dan: I'll be glad to buy your drinks.

Carol: Okay, Dan. Did he leave you with anything?

Dan: Not that I know of. I have to see what his son is doing with the hardware store before I know whether or not I keep my job.

Carol: Oh, well put the drinks on my tab then. I'm gonna haveta file bankruptcy anyway just to get out from under my own tits.

Dan: I've been working on this eulogy for two days now- since I got that letter, and honestly, I'm just not happy with it. I was hoping you could maybe give me a little bit more information about the side of mister Crane I never saw.

Carol: You mean his ass?

Dan: No, not that. I mean the softer, gentler side.

Carol: Dan, his ass was his soft side. I can't imagine you didn't know him better than I did. You were stuck with him six to eight hours a day, six days a week. You couldn't pay anybody to spend that much time with the man. Then again- I guess he did pay you - didn't he.

Dan: Not nearly enough, but you're his wife.

Carol: His widow, thank-you very much. That man spent at the minimum nine hours a day in that damn hardware store of his. He woke up every morning at six o'clock ate his bran flakes, did his tread mill and watched the news, then kissed me goodbye. Hell, sometimes he'd just grab my chest and say see ya later as he walked out the door. Then When he came home, well on occasion we'd go out to the country club for dinner, sometimes I'd fix him dinner, at any rate we ate, he wrote in his books and ledgers, and he went to bed to start the whole blasted thing over the next day.

Dan: That's it, that was your whole marriage?

Carol: On Saturday nights, we'd have sex. It usually took about fifteen to twenty minutes, do you want more details?

Dan: No- thanks.

Carol: Believe me, some of it I'd rather not know.

Stephanie: I think Dan was hoping you might have a few more nice things to say about your late husband.

Carol: That's funny; I thought you knew a few nice things about him. He always talked about you, but I could've sworn he called you Stan. Honey if you don't know anything nice to say about him then it ain't there. You've got better things to worry about than his eulogy.

Dan: You must have something nice to say about the man. Why did you marry him?

Carol: He was loaded, but please don't use that.

Dan: Don't worry, I won't. His financial status was the first positive attribute to pop into my mind too. (He takes a sip of Stephanie's drink)

Stephanie: Hey.

Dan: That is good. Do you know anybody else that may know something nice to say?

Carol: His customers. He had them snowed pretty good.

Dan: Did he have any friends? Any one he talked to about...stuff?

Carol: I thought he talked to you.

Dan: Only about the store. He did go out of his way to say hi to a few people though. They looked rich like him, so I always assumed they were friends.

Carol: His friends were whoever belonged to the country club, don't you know that? He enjoyed golfing when he was with golfers he enjoyed football when he was with football fans. The only thing he truly enjoyed as far as I know was boobs. He loved boobs. He slept a foot further down on the bed than me so that when he woke up every morning the first thing he'd see was boobs, and the man's pillow was filled with silicon.

Stephanie: Really?

Carol: No, but it felt a hell of a lot like it.

Dan: Why me? Why do I have to do this eulogy?

Carol: Don't ask me. I didn't write the letters.

Dan: Letters? There was more than one?

Carol: Yeah, the lawyer gave em to me to mail out straight from Charlie's safe deposit box. Stamps were already on them and everything. Except for mine- I didn't get a stamp cause the cheap bastard knew I'd be mailing them.

Dan: So you never read my letter?

Carol: No, why should I?

Dan: It mentions you (he fumbles through his pocket and takes out his folded and dogeared letter. He mumbles to himself) Daniel, blah, blah, blah -honors of delivering my eulogy- blah blah- here it is. (He reads from the letter) Be sure that busty little vixen of mine -I am assuming that's you.- check the box springs, not the mattress, mattresses are too cliché.

Carol: That's my million dollars!

Dan: He doesn't mention money in any amounts, but I assumed it was something valuable. Why didn't he mention it in the letter to you?

Carol: He would be afraid the lawyer would read my letter. He was just as paranoid as he was cheap. Thank you so much Danny that's my million!

Dan: Really I don't know that.

Carol: Oh, but I do. I always told him if he was leaving all of his accounts to his kid I wanted a mattress stuffed with a million dollars the IRS couldn't touch! I sliced up a perfectly good seely postradedic for nothing. Ah well, I can buy a new one. (She kisses his cheek)

Dan: I'm glad I could help.

Carol: Me too! That bastard wasn't all that bad after all. I hope you do find something nice to say about him, something other than telling everyone about my tax free cash.

Dan: As far as I'm concerned, I know nothing about that. I'm sorry to bring this up but weren't you his fifth wife?

Carol: Don't be sorry, I was number five, I'm not ashamed of it.

Dan: What happened to two through four? In the guest book at the viewing you and Paige Crane were the only two that signed.

Carol: I was currently married to him when he croaked. I felt obligated to go, and Paige is the mother of his only child.

Dan: Was the son close to the mother?

Carol: No, I don't think boy spoke to either one of them. His birth mother never fought for custody. Never even visited the kid.

Dan: And none of the other wives felt the need to go?

Carol: I think number four paid someone for the privilege to shovel the dirt in on him at the grave site, I thought the current wife had first dibs but no -I don't think two or three could give a shit.

Stephanie: This man was a piece of work, his own son didn't go to the viewing.

Carol: Yeah, I don't expect to see him till the reading of the will next week.

Dan: Were you there when he died?

Carol: No, he died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

Dan: So you don't know if he had any last words, like rose bud or anything.

Carol: No he had last words on the floor of the restruant as he was clutching his heart. He looked up at me and said "don't tip"

Dan: I can see that. I should be going then. I guess next stop is going to have to be the first Mrs. Crane.

Carol: Wait, now there is one other person. That might have something nice to say. Juan? Raul?

Dan: (Looking in the guestbook) Jose?

Carol: Yeah, that's his name Jose. He doesn't look half bad shirtless and sweating, he was our lawn boy, of course he's old now.

Dan: He signed the book, but I had never heard of him.

Carol: He and Charlie talked together a lot. I had always assumed it was their mutual love of cleavage they were discussing, but perhaps he knows some more. Give Jose a ring see what he knows.

Dan: He doesn't list an address or phone number.

Carol: Oh yeah, he doesn't have one. He lives in our shed out back.

Dan: Excuse me?

Stephanie: Is that legal?

Carol: The hell if I know, the house ain't in my name. I'm just grabin my box spring and headin to Alcopulco. He's an illegal immigrant, I think. Barely speaks english. Just head out on the back forty just to the side of the pool house. You'll see it. Unless of course he ran back across the boarder now that Charles is dead. But he's worth looking for, he and Mr. Crane did a lot of projects together.

Dan: I'll do that Mrs. Crane, Thank-you for your time.

Stephanie: Thank -you for the drink.

Carol: Thank-you for reading that letter to me, you are an honest guy aren't you.

Dan: Mr. Crane always said I was a smuck.

Carol: That was his word for honest.

(Dan and Stephanie exit as the lights fade.)

Scene Three

(As the lights come up Dan is banging on the door of a tin shed. Yet again I picture the underside of the coffin to be painted for use as the shed and just tipped up on it's side.)

Stephanie: Maybe he's not home?

Dan: This is a home?

Stephanie: Well maybe he's not at shed.

Dan: I feel horrible; this must be that guy at the wake that I didn't recognize. I assumed he worked at the funeral home.

Stephanie: A millionaire dies and you mistake his best friend as the janitor.

Dan: I thought I was his best friend.

Stephanie: You didn't even sign the guestbook, what kind of friend are you?

Dan: A smart one. Why didn't he ask this guy to give the eulogy?

Stephanie: Mrs. Crane said he didn't speak English very well.

Dan: Good, he could've given an honest eulogy in Spanish and no one would've been the wiser.

Stephanie: He's either asleep or not here, let's go. This place is creepier than the funeral home.

Jose: (Jumping at them with a baseball bat from behind a bush. I picture using the same actor as Mr. Crane) What is it you want from me?

Dan: Whoa! Hold on there. Are you Jose?

Jose: Si- who are you?

Dan: Dan Tailor this is my wife Stephanie, I worked for Mr. Crane at his hardware store. I saw you at the viewing tonight.

Jose: You have my money?

Dan: What money?

Jose: The money that Mr. Crane owed to me.

Dan: I'm sorry, I don't know anything about that.

Jose: (begins weeping.)

Dan: I'm sorry, he must have meant so much to you.

Jose: He died owing me six hundred and twenty five dollars.

Dan: That sounds like him.

Stephanie: Did you know Mr. Crane well?

Jose: You from immigration?

Dan: I told you I worked at the hardware store, with Mr. Crane.

Jose: Immigration can be tricky.

Dan: You may be right, but I'm not with them.

Jose: That's why Mr. Crane was nice to let me live here, so no immigration officers could find me.

Dan: He let you live here?

Jose: He built just for me.

Stephanie: He built this for you?

Jose: He make it up for me. Before I needed home it just held rakes and shovels.

Stephanie: He made you live in a storage shed?

Jose: No shed, my home.

Dan: Mr. Crane was good to you then?

Jose: Si muy beuno

Dan: Can you give me any examples of how Mr. Crane assisted you? (Jose looks perplexed.)

Stephanie: The man barely speaks English. Como fue el Sr. Crane bueno parausted? I took Spanish in high school.

Jose: He paid me in cash, so I no have to pay taxes.

Dan: I don't think any of us should mention tax-evasion as one of his strong points. Was there something else he did nice for you?

Jose: There was time I fell off the telephone pole. Pulled my arm out of joint. He helped me re-set it himself and gave me special pain killing medicine when the aspirin didn't work.

Stephanie: Why didn't he take you to the hospital?

Jose: I was so stupid I was about to go, but then he warned me about the immigration officers at the hospital, and told me how much hospitals cost. I didn't want to be sent back to New Mexico or pay the hospital all my money.

Dan: Why were you climbing the telephone pole?

Stephanie: Wait a second! You're from new Mexico?

Jose: My mother was from mexico, she snuck across the border. I did not know I was illegal until Mr. Crane warned me.

Stephanie: But you were born in New Mexico?

Jose: Si.

Dan: Don't get into this, I've only got one night, and it's half past six. Why were we up a telephone pole?

Jose: To hook up some wires for Mr. Crane's house.

Stephanie: Why would he have you do that? Why didn't he call the telephone company?

Jose: This wasn't for the telephone wire; this was for the cable company's wire.

Dan: He had you stealing cable for him?

Jose: It wasn't really stealing cable. It was just taking back the television that was already his. You see everyone gets television for free in America; it's even on my little black and white set for free. Until the cable company came and stole the television stations so that they could charge people money to watch them, so he was taking his back.

Dan: Yeah, that sounds like Crane logic.

Stephanie: So he had you climb a telephone pole to help him steal cable, then when you fell and dislocated your arm he gave you an aspirin and convinced you not to go to the doctor?

Jose: When the aspirin did not work he gave me a bottle of his own medicine to help with the pain.

Dan: A bottle of his own medicine? You mean a prescription?

Jose: Si, thinking nothing of himself he gave his pills to me.

Stephanie: He could've killed you!

Jose: No, no Mr. Crane, always very nice.

Dan: Are there any other times you remember him being unusually nice to you?

Jose: No.

Stephanie: Good in everyone? I think we have enough on him to get his corpse arrested.

Dan: Jose, you should know - if you had gone to the hospital and told anyone what happened he would've been the one in a lot of trouble, not you.

Stephanie: Mr. Crane would have been responsible for your doctor bills too.

Jose: This is true?

Stephanie: Jose, New Mexico is a state, you were born in America, as long as you have a birth certificate to prove that, you already are an American citizen.

Jose: I don't have to work for an American for years in a shed to become a citizen?

Dan: No.

Jose: ¿Qué un gilipollas!

Stephanie: That was fast.

Jose: Yo estaba bastante loco el día cogí le viendo a mi hermana ducha, pero me lo perdonó pensando en todas las cosas buenas que hizo por mí. ¿Qué un perverso sin valor. I wish he wasn't dead so I could kill him myself! (Exits into his shed and slams the door, then he opens it to bid them good night) Buenos Noches, muy bonito conoerte.

Dan: I'll look into that money for you, we'll see if we can get it to you.

Jose: Gracias. Good night (He slams the door again)

Stephanie: Your theory is on shaky ground.

Dan: Did you understand any of that?

Stephanie: Something about mr. Crane being a pervert. Nothing new.

Dan: That guy looked remarkably like-

Stephaine: I'm sure Crane had a Hispanic housekeeper thirty years ago. Probably from New Mexico.

Dan: He wouldn't. Would he? -Okay, one more stop will do it. Then we can go home.

Stephanie: The first wife?

Dan: She could be his saving grace.

Stephanie: Or the last nail in the coffin. So to speak.

Dan: She's the last hope for my theory.

Stephanie: She probably hates him the most.

Dan: No, she showed up at the viewing, it's the son that hates him the most.

Stephanie: So far, his only good points have been tax-evasion and embezzling.

Dan: No one has mentioned embezzling.

Stephanie: You did. You said yourself you always saw him cashing checks made out to the Hardware store and putting the money in his pocket.

Dan: Well yes but-

Stephanie: Where do you think he came up with a million in cash to stick under his bed?

Dan: We don't know he had a million in cash anywhere.

Stephanie: This has nothing to do with him anymore, he called you honest.

Dan: So what, I am.

Stephanie: That letter was designed and written to make you feel obligated to say something nice, and you know it. He probably planned for you to write Jose a check.

Dan: You think I should? I was just going to tell the son.

Stephanie: Tell the son then leave it alone, it's not your problem. Stand up there tomorrow and tell everyone what an asshole he was.

Dan: I'll say something mean if it's all I've got. I just want to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Stephanie: He was right about you. You are a smuck.

(Lights out)

Scene Four

(As the lights come back up Dan and Stephanie are sitting on the couch at the home of Paige Crane, she's dressed in a robe and slippers they are sipping hot drink of some sort and talking. I imagine the same actress as Carol -since Charles had desurning taste in women, only this Mrs. Crane has blue hair and smaller breasts or perhaps they've simply sunk to her waist level. Now the coffin can be lowered to be a coffee table or perhaps the sofa.)

Paige: The only thing surprising about his heart attack was finding out he had a heart at all.

Dan: That's a bit harsh isn't it?

Paige: Not at all. You worked with him long enough, I'm sure you noticed.

Dan: I assumed he was a different man in a personal environment, I thought what I saw was profesional.

Paige: Yes dear boy, he was a professional asshole.

Dan: (He laughs and holds his face in his hands.) I'm sorry; I'm just a bit tired. I'm also sorry to be disturbing you this late.

Paige: It's not even midnight, I feel sorry for you if your husband can't stay up till midnight at his age.

Stephanie: Ms. Crane

Paige: Please, call me Paige.

Stephanie: Paige, Dan's fairly desperate here. He's trying his best to find something nice to say about your ex husband for the eulogy.

Paige: Why don't you just say: He died, that's the nicest thing he's ever done for any of us.

Dan: Did he have a friend? Any highschool chums or anything like that?

Paige: Chums? There was Harold, he was the best man at our wedding. They grew up together.

Dan: What happened to him?

Paige: I think he's dead.

Dan: So he won't say anything nice about him.

Paige: Oh, he wouldn't if he were alive. That's the guy Charles ran out of business when he stole his hardware store idea.

Dan: You married him! You married him before he had money and you never re married after. You must have felt something, for some part of him.

Paige: I never re married after because I had found out how horrible marriage was.

Dan: But something made you marry him to begin with.

Paige: He was fun. Back in the day, of course the mighty t-rex roamed the earth back then. He would take advantage of people -sure, he was lazy about anything but business-true, but he was fun. He could tell jokes that cracked up the entire country club at one point. He wasn't always an obsessive penny pinching freak.

Stephanie: What happened?

Paige: He quit drinking.

Dan: I didn't know he ever drank.

Paige: Didn't you see all those pictures in the office with a big smile on his face and a cigarette in his hand?

Dan: Yes.

Paige: He was drunk.

Dan: Drunk at his businesses grand opening?

Paige: Almost all the time. His orange juice at breakfast would be a screwdriver. He'd go through a pack a day of ciggs, of course he was laid back. Then one day, his doctor told him his lifestyle was going to kill him, and he stopped. It may be selfish to say, but the lifestyle didn't kill him, that doctor killed him right then and there.

Dan: What do you mean by that?

Paige: Before things got too bad I'd always joke about that day, I said he went to the doctors to have the stick surgically inserted up his ass. He just got grumpier and grumpier. He wouldn't take me out dancing because people smoked at our dance clubs, and he wasn't going to let second hand smoke kill him, he had done too well quitting. He stopped joking, he stopped laughing. On my thirtieth birthday, while I was preparing my own party at the house, for his country club friends. That's when I started thinking about a divorce.

Stephanie: So I shouldn't have pressured you to quit smoking?

Paige: Now dear, I'm not advertising vices. It wasn't just a habit for Charlie; his personality came in a bottle and a pack. He had a childhood that even I know very little about, mother died young father killed in a mining accident and he was raised by an insane uncle. I used to blame the age difference, I thought he was just far too old for me, but that wasn't it. Long ago, I came to terms with the fact I never loved Charles Crane. If I was in love with anyone it was Jack Daniels, he worked his magic through the body of Charles Crane.

Dan: Why did he quit drinking if it was such a big part of him?

Paige: It wasn't that important to him, it was important to those of us that had to deal with him.

Dan: Your name, you kept his last name all these years.

Paige: It's also my son's.

Dan: Then why didn't you try to make contact with your son?

Paige: I did, yesterday. He didn't want to talk to me.

Dan: Why wait so long?

Paige: That's my father's fault.

Stephanie: Okay, I'm lost.

Paige: My father was a fairly wealthy individual when Charles and I were married. Just as paranoid as every other white rich guy. He made us sign a prenup, of course when we divorced Charles was wealthier than my father ever was, and he used my prenup against me. Said if I didn't give him custody, and if I ever made contact then Bradley would be disowned and never get a dime of his father's fortune.

Stephanie: A little boy needs a mother more than money.

Paige: My father's fortune had collapsed. I was eating with food stamps, so I decided my son was better off without me. I secretly kept in touch with Charles's mother. Even met my son a few times, I was introduced as a maid - you know, when we were sure it was safe. Bradley didn't remember me. We divorced when he was three. Luckily Charles was so occupied with his business, Bradley was practically raised by his grandpa. I just wish he would've lived a little longer.

Dan: When Brad Crane discovered all this, is that when he stopped talking to his father?

Paige: I don't think Bradley knows to this day. No, he had his own reasons for hating his father, I can only imagine.

Dan: But Mr. Crane's own parents were on your side?

Paige: Of course, but what could they do? Charles held the deed to their house.

Stephanie: He held his money over his own parents?

Paige: You never wanted a gift from Charles Crane unless you could clearly see the string.

Stephanie: He was that bad?

Dan: Haven't you been listening?

Stephanie: Haven't you heard enough?

Dan: I don't think I can do any more, just think about everything I've learned tonight.

Paige: Why is this so important to you?

Stephanie: Mr. Crane wrote a letter from the grave asking Dan to give the eulogy.

Paige: Did he write the eulogy he wanted?

Dan: No, he asked me too.

Paige: Well, you do know what that means don't you?

Dan: He was trying to torture me?

Paige: No dear, it means he couldn't think of anything nice to say about him either.

Dan: I was trying to prove that there's some good in everyone, even him.

Paige: Just make it up for the eulogy. The general population will buy it, they always believed him. The one's of us that know the truth aren't going to contest you at the funeral. Well, my son might. But I doubt he'll be there, so just lie.

Dan: I'd like to be an honest man.

Paige: Then how the hell did you work for Charles Benjamin Crane for fifteen years?

Dan: I don't -wait yes, Yes I do. (he smiles as he realizes.) I know why and how I worked for him.

Stephanie: Are you ready to call it a night Dan?

Dan: Yes, yes I am. I've got to get some rest for the funeral tomorrow. Thank-you again for your time Ms. Crane.

(Lights out)

Scene Five

(Lights up at the funeral of Charles Crane, all his relatives are there, and the audience is part of the fural party, and the coffin once again resumes it's duties as a coffin.)

Dan: What Can I say about Charles Benjamin Crane? He was a man of great wealth...and yet so much more. He was also a man of considerable age. He lived a long and prosperous life because he knew how to take care of himself. He took care of himself like no other I have ever met. If we all knew how to take care of ourselves as well as he did, we wouldn't need charities, or welfare or social security. He knew that it all boiled down self-care. That however is not what compelled me to keep his company. I didn't work for him for him all these years just to learn about self-care, I didn't keep my job for the raises he refused to give or the benefits he never offered.

I went back to work every morning for that feeling he gave me. No, he was not an emotional person but when I think back at why I liked to talk with him, it was about the way he made me feel. I went in every morning knowing when I left that night I would feel like a little better person. After spending a few hours with him I felt more honest, more generous, and a little more worthwhile. Charles Benjamin Crane may not have brought out the best in anyone, but in comparision he certainly took us at our worst, and made that seem, well- not so bad.

It's like that slow kid in gym class that makes you feel fast, or that dumb roommate that makes you feel smart, or that really fat hairy guy at the beach in a spedo that makes you feel like you're attractive. Mr. Crane made me feel like I was a better person- just because I wasn't him. Even as I speak right now in front of his family, and all of us that knew him well. I know I can say with complete honesty, I feel wonderful, because I can say something nice about Charles Benjamin Crane.
Goodnight.

(Lights Out)
Rest in peace.