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## CHARACTERS

**CRYSTAL:** *a high school sophomore. She is AUSTIN's sister; she knows her brother very well.*

**AUSTIN:** *a high school senior. He is CRYSTAL's brother; he intends to impress.*

**MARIA:** *a high school sophomore. She is CRYSTAL's friend; she is perceptive.*

## TIME

*Yesterday, after school.*

## SETTING

*A basement. Several boxes or storage trunks. A work light, maybe attached to a sawhorse. Also, a number of vinyl records, at least some of them in protective plastic sleeves, and at least a couple that are mimicking rare and collectible editions.*

*AUSTIN's and CRYSTAL's basement. Except it's really their parents' basement. A group of boxes or storage chests dominates the space. Approaching the mess are three teens—AUSTIN, CRYSTAL and MARIA—bearing flashlights. AUSTIN carries a backpack containing a laptop and a book: a dog-eared collector's guide to pricing vinyl records.*

**AUSTIN:** *Aiming his flashlight at one particular box. There. That one.*

**CRYSTAL:** So you're like burglarizing our own house.

**AUSTIN:** Crystal, chill. I just like to know what's what.

**CRYSTAL:** If you've been getting into my stuff? I swear I will text, tweet, and Facebook you to death.

**AUSTIN:** I don't go into your room and you know it.

**CRYSTAL:** I will bury you in rumors five miles deep.

**AUSTIN:** I heard you the first time.

**MARIA:** Hey, I'm feeling a little creeped out, so I'm just going to . . .

**AUSTIN:** Whoa, wait, Maria. Don't go. This is worth seeing.

**MARIA:** *To Crystal.* You said we were going to Dairy Queen.

**CRYSTAL:** And we will. But until the rain lets up, and since Austin's so gung-ho to show us this whatever it is . . .

MARIA: I don't like the dark.

AUSTIN: I don't think the overhead's working, but this won't take long, okay?

MARIA: It doesn't bother you? Darkness?

AUSTIN: Sure—but then I realized that when I was in the dark, I was part of the dark, and I'm not afraid of myself, so that kind of ended that.

MARIA: Wow. That must be incredible.

AUSTIN: What?

MARIA: Not being afraid of yourself.

AUSTIN: Okay, look, we can at least get a work light or something, here.

*He gets the work light on. Not bright, but better than nothing.*

There. See? Nothing to worry about.

CRYSTAL: My, aren't we gallant today.

AUSTIN: Just look in the box.

*CRYSTAL hauls out an old vinyl record album.*

CRYSTAL: So this is what you're just dying to show us?

AUSTIN: That's it.

CRYSTAL: Why?

AUSTIN: Because they're worth some serious money.

CRYSTAL: This? Get out.

AUSTIN: Maybe not that one, no. But some . . .

CRYSTAL: Even if they are. They're not ours.

AUSTIN: Possession is nine-tenths of the law.

CRYSTAL: And just who are you quoting that from?

MARIA: I like the artwork. I mean, that's wild.

CRYSTAL: I've seen worse, I guess.

MARIA: So these are all, like, your dad's?

AUSTIN: Not any more.

MARIA: My uncle collects records. Not this kind, though.

AUSTIN: What kind?

MARIA: Tex-Mex, Tejano. If you've got any of that, old forty-fives, he'd be wanting to hear from you.

CRYSTAL: Oh, listen to you. Talkin' the talk, "Old forty-fives" and stuff.

MARIA: Y'know, I can go to Dairy Queen on my own.

CRYSTAL: *Teasing.* Not if it's dark.

MARIA: *Not unkindly.* Which it isn't, so shut up.

AUSTIN: *To Maria.* Hey, you like the old covers? Look at this one, check that out.

CRYSTAL: Austin, give me a break. You don't care about artwork.

AUSTIN: Says who? I mean, look at this thing.

CRYSTAL: Austin.

AUSTIN: Okay, yes, there is a larger purpose.

CRYSTAL: Which is?

AUSTIN: I knew Dad had been pretty serious once upon a time, so when I found these, I wrote some things down, right? And then I checked online, and I was just about jumping out of my chair.

CRYSTAL: You already said that.

AUSTIN: No. I mean really valuable.

CRYSTAL: Really valuable meaning what?

AUSTIN: Thousands. Like many, many thousands.

CRYSTAL: For true?

*AUSTIN hauls out a record in a protective plastic sleeve. He angles it so MARIA has the best view.*

AUSTIN: Look, look at this one. The Beatles. Common as dirt, right? But not with this cover. This is the butcher cover, see? The dead baby dolls, the blood? And it's mint, inside and out. Still in the shrink-wrap.

CRYSTAL: Can I see, too, please?

MARIA: And this is worth . . . what?

AUSTIN: According to this price guide, eight to twelve thousand.

CRYSTAL: Excuse me?

AUSTIN: It came out in 1966, it was only on the shelves for a cou-

ple of days, and people got so angry, the record company pulled it and pasted new covers on. So an original, without the paste-on—I mean, we’re talking about the Beatles, the Beatles where they made a mistake, and when people like that blow it in public, that means big money.

MARIA: I like it. The way they’re smiling, even with all that blood. It’s all—you know—what is it? Irony.

CRYSTAL: It’s gross.

AUSTIN: You don’t have to like it. The point is, it’s valuable, and there’s more. Weird mono editions, Japanese pressings, bands no one’s ever heard of . . .

CRYSTAL: Does Mom know this is down here?

AUSTIN: I think she’s too upset to remember.

MARIA: So your dad skips out, and you’re gonna sell his stuff to get back at him?

AUSTIN: And to make some money, yeah.

MARIA: If I had this, I wouldn’t sell. I’d hang it on my bedroom wall.

AUSTIN: You’d hang twelve grand on your wall? To look at?

MARIA: It’s a piece of history.

AUSTIN: A very valuable piece, yes! And way too ugly for your bedroom wall.

MARIA: Oh, I don’t know. I’d probably have to take down the Giger or the Eulsmann to make room, or maybe the Warhol . . .

AUSTIN: You have an original Warhol?

MARIA: No. Just a poster. You know, the banana.

CRYSTAL: See, Austin, I know you don’t get this, but Maria is not a girl who does teddy bears and hearts.

AUSTIN: Either way. None of us can afford this on our wall.

MARIA: So you’d rather have the cash, that’s cool. But what would you spend it on?

AUSTIN: I don’t know. We could get a car with this. A new stereo. More iPhones than even my sister’d know what to do with.

CRYSTAL: What kind of car?

AUSTIN: How ’bout a rag-top? How ’bout a vintage T-bird convertible?

CRYSTAL: Huh.

AUSTIN: Huh? What huh?

CRYSTAL: You’d look pretty sharp, showing up to prom in a T-bird.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes, I would.

CRYSTAL: And even sharper with Maria here in a really gorgeous dress, decorating the front seat.

AUSTIN, *glowering at CRYSTAL, fails to respond.*

MARIA: Oh, I get it!

CRYSTAL: Yeah, so do I.

MARIA: No, it’s kind of sweet.

To AUSTIN:

If I’d known you got me down here to impress me, I could have made it easier on you.

AUSTIN: Oh, really.

MARIA: I could have at least pretended we were on the same wavelength.

CRYSTAL: C’mon, girlfriend. I hear a DQ Blizzard calling our name.

MARIA: Look, Austin, if I had this box in my basement? No matter who screwed me over, I wouldn’t be just selling it off. I mean, you’re right, I’ve met your dad, he’s a jerk. But that doesn’t mean you have to act like him.

AUSTIN: Excuse me?

MARIA: It’s theft. Taking something that isn’t yours and selling it, that’s theft.

AUSTIN: Maria! I’m in my own house!

MARIA: What are they always saying on that one show? “It’s black-letter law.”

AUSTIN: Okay, seriously. You can go now. Both of you.

CRYSTAL: Wait a minute. What if we sell these, yeah, but what if we don’t keep the money?

AUSTIN: What are you talking about?

CRYSTAL: What if we give it away, to something good, like that playground fund, or the Red Cross?

AUSTIN: Give it away? Crystal, this is free money!

CRYSTAL: Yeah, it is. So what have we got to lose?

MARIA: And it still sends a big "up yours" to your runaway dad, if that's what you're after. But this way, you stay on the straight and narrow.

AUSTIN: Oh, listen to the future PhD in ethics.

MARIA: I'm starting to think you would not make a very good prom date.

CRYSTAL: Hang on. Austin. I'm serious.

AUSTIN: Do you have any conception of how much money is wrapped up in this one box? And there are three more like it, at least!

CRYSTAL: Hey, so we could have the whole school over for a party, hire a bartender, the works. Or we could do what dad never would have done, ever, and do something nice for, I don't know . . .

MARIA: . . . for charity . . .

CRYSTAL: Exactly, that's right, for charity. For people in need.

AUSTIN: Why can't we do something nice for us?

CRYSTAL: You know what? I bet that when the Beatles made this cover, they thought it was a good idea. Funny or whatever. But then it turned out it was a bad idea, and they had to suck it up and deal. So I'm looking at you, big brother. I'm looking at you with a potentially really great idea and a major opportunity to blow it. And I admit, I would like a new car. That box could maybe take me straight from my learner's permit to a Jaguar. But I gotta ask, is that the kind of car I want to drive?

AUSTIN: What are you talking about? Jaguar's a decent car.

MARIA: But not for thirty pieces of silver.

AUSTIN: Thirty pieces . . . ? I just asked you to prom, and you're calling me Judas?

MARIA: Well, first off, you didn't actually ask me, and second . . .

CRYSTAL: Maria. Just leave it alone.

MARIA: You're right. And I am starting to hear that Blizzard calling . . .

CRYSTAL: Smooth like Maxwell.

MARIA: Bruno Mars.

AUSTIN: You are both certifiable.

CRYSTAL: No, don't stop, don't engage, keep walking.

MARIA: 'Bye, Austin. Thanks for showing me the basement.

*Both girls exit. A moment. Then AUSTIN opens his laptop.*

AUSTIN: Fine. Open eBay. Sell. Your. Item. Enter.

*As the lights come down, we hear (ideally) the opening of the Beatles' "Nowhere Man."*

END OF PLAY