

VIVA

Hi Claude, welcome back. It's no problem, let's take care of that-

CLAUDE

All right then, continuing on. Have you been involved in any ligation involving trampolines?

VIVA

No?

CLAUDE

Is that an answer?

VIVA

Is that a question?

CLAUDE

That was the question, yes.

VIVA

Is this an issue?

CLAUDE

The question?

VIVA

That question. Have you had a problem with prospective employees being involved in lawsuits dealing with trampolines?

CLAUDE

Listen. They give me the list of questions. I ask them. You answer. We move on.

VIVA

Got it.

Long exhale from Claude.

CLAUDE

All right, where was I...?

VIVA

Claude.

START



CLAUDE

Yes?

VIVA

Can I just ask one question? And then I swear I'll answer everything on your list.

CLAUDE

Okay, fine, but just get it over with, there are other places I DON'T WANT TO BE as well as this one.

VIVA

Got it. Do you like working here?

CLAUDE

Like? I don't know what the word LIKE has to do with working here. I'm not sure I have any idea what HERE even means anymore. And no one cares whether I like it here or not.

VIVA

Okay, fair enough. How about this one: How do you FEEL after a day of working here? Or maybe this is more clear: How do you FEEL when you wake up in the morning and you know that you're going to come HERE and work all day?

CLAUDE

Viva, How do I feel? I'm bored just saying those words.

VIVA

So it's just a job.

Claude pulls his chair in, places his elbows on the table, and leans in.

CLAUDE

Since Gloria left I don't think I've felt anything about anything.

VIVA

Gloria used to worked here?


CLAUDE

Gloria was my wife.

VIVA

Where did she go?

Claude pauses. He looks down at his notes, like he can't decide how to respond.



She died. CLAUDE

Oh Claude. How long ago? VIVA

4 months ago...yesterday. CLAUDE

How did Gloria die? VIVA

Cancer. It was quick. Thank God. CLAUDE

It's never *quick*, Claude. VIVA

Claude is caught off guard by this. There's a subtle passage of electricity between them.

You know, don't you? CLAUDE

Yes. I do. VIVA

Someone close to you? CLAUDE

My mom. VIVA

Recently? CLAUDE

Years ago. But it always happened JUST RECENTLY, you know what I mean? VIVA

I do. CLAUDE

Long pause.

CLAUDE

Try being married to someone for 53 years. She said I HAVE LOVED YOU THE WHOLE TIME, CLAUDE. And then she was gone.

VIVA

That's beautiful...My mom and I lived in this house together in the town where I grew up. Just the two of us in that house all those years. And then she died and what I wasn't expecting was for that WHOLE LIFE to die with her. It wasn't just her, it was EVERYTHING.

CLAUDE

So what did you do?

VIVA

I sold it. Everybody told me that was the dumbest thing in the world to do-

CLAUDE

Equity.

VIVA

Yes! Exactly! Equity! Everybody kept telling me how fortunate I was that my mom had paid off the mortgage and I owned the house outright. I HAVE A HOLE IN MY HEART THE SIZE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM and people are talking to me about equity and assets and nest eggs and making wise financial decisions.

CLAUDE

Fuck equity.

VIVA

Yes, Claude, exactly.

END

They smile at each other. Claude is ever so steadily coming to life.

CLAUDE

You left? You took the money and you went somewhere else?

VIVA

I did. I took that money and I went EVERYWHERE else!

CLAUDE

I don't follow.

VIVA

So help me understand: Why are you here?

YUKOSA

It's a job.

VIVA

But with you-with how you see the world-why do you-

START

Claude walks in and nods to Yukosa and sits down, energized and focused.

CLAUDE

I realize I'm totally breaking protocol here Viva, you know THE PROCESS and all that but you were interrupted earlier just as you were saying something about the FIRSTS?

Yukosa leaves.

VIVA

Yes! The FIRSTS-the firsts can so brutal.

CLAUDE

I don't understand.

VIVA

The first Christmas without her. The first birthday without her. The first summer-

CLAUDE

The first time you go somewhere that you always used to go together but now you're going there alone. I sat in the parking lot of our favorite restaurant for 2 hours last week. Just sat there. Couldn't go in.

VIVA

Yeah, that one may take a while. Restaurants are brutal. Same with songs. But I *can* tell you this: The SECONDS are better. Sweeter, actually. Still painful, but you start to live just a little bit.

CLAUDE

I know, my kids keep telling me to get out of the house and LIVE A LITTLE, get back in the swing of things. And I say "I go to work everyday." But apparently that isn't what they mean...

VIVA

I was going to ask you about that Claude, what *are* you doing here? You could retire, right?

CLAUDE

I could. Years ago, actually. But then I'd be sitting at home. Bored. At least here I'm bored but I'm surrounded by insanity. And that's mildly entertaining from time to time. I probably shouldn't be talking like this-I definitely shouldn't be talking like this. But we're off the record, right?

VIVA

Absolutely, I won't tell a soul. Except Connie, she'll need to write it up in a report.

CLAUDE

The Ice Queen?

They both laugh.

CLAUDE

Although you can't blame any them, they're all just reacting to IT in their own way.

VIVA

It? What's *it*?

CLAUDE

This, I don't even know what the right word is-CHAOS? ANARCHY? Or as they officially called it A TAPERED RE-PIVOTING PHASE. The old CEO left in a blaze of confusion and rumors-nobody knew what to think or who to listen to...it was like nothing I've ever witnessed. And then Rick stepped in with all this structure and process and rules and forms. We are drowning in steps, we are gagging on tools and reports.

VIVA

And everybody just goes along with it?

CLAUDE

As long as we're off the record...

Claude leans in conspiratorially.

CLAUDE

Some people are masters of destabilization. They throw everything off balance-whether it's a conversation or a company-and while everybody is trying to figure out WHAT JUST HAPPENED they are working their plan, whatever it is. I think it was all a play.

END