

Legacy

by Joy Hinckley



Characters: **Crystal** a community in-home care worker. Age 20s – 30s
Danny an old man, one of her clients. He could have a slight residual trace of a German accent.

Setting: *A park overlooking a view. A bench.*

Danny and Crystal enter, with Crystal trailing Danny. Danny walks slowly with the aid of a wheeled walker. Crystal is talking quietly into her mobile phone.

Crystal Have you looked under his bed? Honestly Dave, I've no idea. Just keep looking. Yes, I'm nearly on my way. Well, I might be a little bit late. Yes, I know how ratty he gets without his squishy monkey. I know, but – I'll be home as soon as I can. Put on his favourite video.

Danny glances back, frowning. Crystal gives him a “Be right there” wave, and he gives his head a little shake and continues towards the bench muttering.

Danny Squishy monkey.

Crystal *Into phone.* Look, I'm at work, OK? I've got to go. *She ends the call, and catches up with Danny as he arrives at the bench.* Here we are, Danny. Let's get you sitting down. It's hot, isn't it?

During the above, Danny sits, hand to chest as he regains his breath. Crystal hands him his water bottle, and takes hers from her bag. They sip.

Danny That's better. That path has gotten steeper! Thank you for stopping. I used to come here with my Ruthie. We would just hold hands and look at this view and think about how lucky we are. *Looks down at his watch.* But Crystal, I'm being selfish! Your time with me is up for today.

Crystal Don't you worry about that, my lovely. Let's just sit for a bit.

Danny But you won't be getting paid.

Crystal *Laughs.* Don't worry. They barely pay me as it is. *She looks out.* Beautiful. I can see why you and your wife loved it here.

Danny On a clear day you can see everything, everything! The islands, the mountains over there (*gesturing, then peering*). Ha, well, I used to see everything. Now my sight is useless, even on a Crystal clear day like this.

Crystal Can you see the way the sunlight makes lovely shadows on the grass over there? Oh, a butterfly! It's huge.

Danny I see it! *He laughs.* And just like that, you distract me, so I see what I can see now. You're too clever for me. I'll miss you very much when we can no longer spend this time together.

Crystal Oh?

Danny I'm old, Crystal. I love my home with all its treasures and memories, but it's time for me to sell it and put myself into the old people zoo.

Crystal You're still doing ok. You have these home care visits. I'm sure there are other services you can access to stay at home.

Danny There's just me now. I have to be my own bossy grown up child, and make sensible decisions. I have a lifetime's worth of stuff! I must go through it all, and what the charity shop won't take, goes in the skip.

Crystal (*Sadly.*) Oh, Danny. You have no relatives?

Danny No, no. And most of my friends are dead or as useless as me. (*He chuckles wryly.*) Don't be sad. We're missing this lovely park! See, there's a tiny bird in the grevillia. And another! Honeyeaters.

Crystal I could come and visit you.

Danny I would like that very much. But you're busy, busy.

Crystal (*Sighs.*) That much is true. Hey, how do you know I'm busy, busy?

Danny You look tired. Bags under your eyes.

Crystal *(Laughs)* Thanks. *(Professionally)* I'm fine.

Danny Crystal, I know we're only friends for the space of time we spend together each week, but I can see you're tired. And anxious. You don't need to pretend with me.

Crystal Since Dave – my husband – lost his job because of the pandemic, I've been taking every shift they can throw at me. Luckily he loves being at-home Dad with George, at least we don't have to pay for child care.

Danny And how old is your young Master George now?

Crystal Three. He's a regular handful, especially when he loses his old squishy monkey, but we love him!

Danny So young George is not one of the sources of your worry at least.

Crystal No. Well yes, in a way. I worry every day about the kind of world we've brought him into. What might he have to face in his lifetime? Some days I feel – I don't know. I go on Facebook and some of my friends are posting these bright colourful positivity sayings, whatever, and some are all doom and gloom – the house is on fire and just getting worse, billionaires getting richer while people struggle. How do I react to the world as it is now? Do I try to be optimistic? Isn't that just unrealistic and naïve? Do I give in to pessimism, which is the same as giving up on my boy's future?

Danny Shall we have a peppermint?

Crystal *(Startled but not fazed by the sudden change in subject)* Why not.

Danny Could you get them for me please? *(Indicating wheely walker.)*

(As Crystal has the lid of the wheely walker open looking for the mints)
While you're in there - there's a black bag in there too. Could you get that too, please?

Crystal hands him the mints, then hunts for the black bag.

Crystal This bag is a sock. You have a rock in a sock.

Danny I take it everywhere with me. *(He holds out the peppermints and she takes one, still holding the rock.)*

Crystal OK. It's just a rock.

Danny I think that the story of my rock might help you with the answer to your question. But it's not an easy story to hear. It's from a time even stranger than this. A dangerous, mad time.

Crystal Now you've got me hooked. You'll have to tell me.

Danny You're sure?

Crystal *Smiles.* I'm sure. Squishy monkey can wait a bit longer.

Danny *Holding up the rock.* This is – a souvenir, if you like. (*Grows serious.*) Of a night in Germany in 1938. Kristallnacht.

Crystal I think I've heard of that.

Danny It was the night the Nazis went on a mad rampage, destroying Jewish synagogues, businesses, homes. The word "Kristallnacht" means "Crystal Night", because the next day all the cities and towns glittered like Crystals from all the broken glass.

Crystal And this rock?

Danny This rock was thrown through the living room window of my family's apartment.

Crystal (*Looks at the rock in horror as though it is toxic.*) This rock? You mean Nazis threw this actual rock? You mean Nazis touched this rock? (*She hands it to him quickly, then reaches into her bag for her hand sanitiser.*)

Danny Relax, you can't catch Nazism that way, it's OK.

Crystal But still.

Danny Anyway, a Nazi didn't throw it. Or if it was a Nazi, it was a Nazi with a conscience.

Crystal Crystal Night. Oh my god, whenever you say my name you must get like, flashbacks or something.

Danny Honestly? When you introduced yourself that first time, I wondered if I could send you back and ask for somebody else! But now, when I say your name, all I think of is how I'm going to have a lovely outing, do my shopping, maybe go to lunch or even sit on a bench with a lovely view.

Crystal You don't talk about the past much. I mean, I knew you were born in Germany, but I never added up what that might mean. (*Beat.*) Will you tell me about Kristallnacht? *Danny hesitates.* It's OK, you can.

Danny Well, after Hitler came to power, things got slowly worse for us Jews. I was only little then, so I didn't notice much. But by 1938 it was clear. My father applied for visas to America, Canada, the United Kingdom so we could emigrate, but there were so many of us, and so few visas, that it was very, very hard. And just like now, many people in those countries didn't want

refugees, didn't trust refugees.

Finally, he got a visa, but for himself only. Britain needed his skills. He wanted to turn it down, but my mother insisted he go. He could try to get us over once he was there and had found a home for us. Kristallnacht arrived just before he was due to leave.

Crystal What happened?

Danny We could hear the rioting in the distance. The breaking glass, the shouts, the screams. You could tell the mob was getting bigger as it came closer. "Juden raus! Juden raus!" We turned out the lights and crouched in the living room of our apartment.

Suddenly, the window shattered! My mother screamed, I screamed, but my father motioned us to be quiet. The rock lay in the middle of the floor, surrounded by broken glass.

I could see there was a piece of paper tied to it. Without even thinking, I stretched over and picked up the rock, and untied the paper.

My father snatched the note from me. He didn't want me to read hate. But as he read, his face changed.

"What is it, Albert?" my mother whispered.

My father read out the note. It said that the Nazis were arresting Jewish men and taking them away, and he should leave, and hide now.

Crystal Was he able to?

Danny He knew of a deserted warehouse nearby. He grabbed a few things and left by the back alleyway.

Crystal And you and your mother?

Danny Not long after, the sound of heavy boots came thundering up the stairs, and there was a loud banging on the door. I stuffed the rock into my pocket and clutched it in my fist. My mother answered the door. Three Nazi soldiers came in.

"Check all the rooms," one of them said to the other two. The one that stayed stood there with his gun pointed at us. He looked at my mother – oh, that look! I will never forget it, never. Then he turned his eyes on me. Cold, grey eyes. I have never felt such hatred, aimed at me like a bullet from his eyes. Hatred for me, just a young boy. I felt hot piss run down my legs. I had done nothing wrong but I felt guilty and ashamed and terrified of punishment for what, I didn't know.

The others came back and reported there was no one else in the apartment.

"Where is your husband?"

My mother looked at them calmly, though she must have been as terrified as me. "The bastard has deserted us," she said. "I don't know where he is."

"And you? Do you know where your father is?"

I managed to shake my head.
He did this (*indicates "let's go" tilt of the head*) to the others, they turned and left without another word.

Crystal Did your father come back?

Danny No. We could only wonder whether he had escaped.

Crystal Did you get out? What a stupid question, you're here. I mean, did you escape then as well?

Danny There was a scheme called "Kindertransport", "Children Transport". People in other countries could sponsor a child to come to safety and live with them. There was the Depression on still, of course, and sponsors had to pay to support the child. So, not so many. But Kristallnacht shocked the world, and more people offered. My mother eventually got me on a ship to Britain. She was going to follow as soon as she could, but it was too late. She was sent to Auschwitz.

Crystal Oh my god, Danny.

Danny I lived with my kind sponsors for a while. I had to learn English.

Crystal Your parents?

Danny My father did make it to England. He managed to track me down with the help of the Red Cross.

Crystal What a day that must have been for you both. And – your mother? Did she – was she –

Danny My mother survived, just. When we were finally reunited, I didn't recognise her. That was very hard for her. She had lost her teeth, her hair. So thin and sick. But alive.
I still had the rock. I had been carrying it around with me as, I don't know, a kind of lucky charm to get my family back together. I mean, it had saved my father. I thought of that unknown person who threw it as our "Kristallnacht Angel".
We came to Australia in 1956 and built a new life here.

Crystal Danny, what a story. I'm not surprised you don't talk about it much.

Danny (*Holds up the rock*) I kept this rock at first because it saved us. But I held on to it through all these many years because it reminded me that at one moment, someone made a decision.
Trying to be blindly optimistic will get you nowhere, Crystal. Giving in to pessimism will get you nowhere either. Both of those things are like

shrugging your shoulders and saying, “This is how things are, my only question is to decide whether to like it or to not like it. But –

He looks at her

Crystal But –?

Danny But it’s the wrong question. The only question a person needs to ask themselves is this: “What do I do at this moment, with the rock that is in my hand?”

Crystal How do you mean?

Danny Each and every one of us has a hand to play in making the future. So, if you have a hand to play – whether that’s an actual rock like my Kristallnacht Angel, or anything else big or small, ask, what is the kind, human thing to do, right now? That is what Life needs from you, expects from you. And that’s enough.

Danny picks up his water, stands, and holds it up, as though giving a toast.

Danny L’chaim!

Crystal What does that mean?

Danny To life! Yes to life – in spite of everything.

Crystal *(Standing, smiling and raising her own water bottle)* Yes to life, in spite of everything. That’s a great line, Danny.

Danny It’s not mine. It’s the great Viktor Frankl’s. He was in Auschwitz too. And now, time to go.

He goes to put the rock back in the wheely walker but stops as Crystal suddenly speaks.

Crystal I know what *you* have to do. Now. With the rock in *your* hand.

Danny looks at her.

Crystal You have to hand it on. *(She holds out her hand.)* To someone who will remember your story.

Danny You would remember?

Crystal I will remember, and I will keep your rock safe, and give it to my son along with its story. I will ask him to keep it, and pass it on.

Danny places the rock in Crystal’s outstretched hand, then wraps both of his old hands around her young one, gently closing her fingers around the rock.

Danny Thank you, Crystal. *(He chuckles)* My Crystal-Day angel! Now come, come, don't keep poor Dave waiting any longer.

Danny starts to exit during the last line, as Crystal picks up her bag and puts the rock in it.

Crystal *Calling after him.* I am coming to visit you, by the way. In the old people zoo.

Danny Bring George. I can be old squishy monkey's uncle! *(They laugh.)*

The lights dim to blackout as they exit.

Applications to perform this play should be addressed to Joy Hinckley at cookiecussack@hotmail.com

The Gift

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Characters: **Crystal** a community in-home care worker. Age 20s – 30s
Danny an old man, one of her clients. He could have a slight residual trace of a German accent.

Setting: *A park overlooking a view. A bench.*

Danny and Crystal enter, with Crystal trailing Danny. Danny walks slowly with the aid of a wheely walker. Crystal is talking quietly into her mobile phone.

Crystal Have you looked under his bed? Honestly Dave, I've no idea. Just keep looking. Yes, I'm nearly on my way. Well, I might be a little bit late. I know, but – I'll be home as soon as I can. Put on his favourite video.

Danny glances back, frowning. Crystal gives him a "Be right there" wave, and he gives his head a little shake and continues towards the bench.

Crystal *Into phone.* Look, I'm at work, OK? I've got to go. *She ends the call, and catches up with Danny as he arrives at the bench.* Here we are, Danny. Let's get you sitting down. It's hot, isn't it? Can't believe it's nearly Christmas already.

During the above, Danny sits, hand to chest as he regains his breath. Crystal hands him his water bottle, and takes hers from her bag. They sip.

Danny That's better. That path has gotten steeper! Thank you for stopping. I used to come here with my Ruthie. We would just hold hands and look at this view and think about how lucky we are. *Looks down at his watch.* But Crystal, I'm being selfish! Your time with me is up for today.

Crystal Don't you worry about that, my lovely. Let's just sit for a bit.

Danny But you won't be getting paid.

Crystal *Laughs.* Don't worry. They barely pay me as it is. *She looks out.* Beautiful. I can see why you and your wife loved it here.

Danny On a clear day you can see everything, everything! The islands, the mountains over there (*gesturing, then peering*). Ha, well, I used to see everything. Now my sight is useless, even on a crystal clear day like this.

Crystal Can you see the way the sunlight makes lovely shadows on the grass over there? Oh, a butterfly! It's huge.

Danny I see it! *He laughs.* And just like that, you distract me, so I see what I can see now. You're too clever for me. I'll miss you very much when we can no longer spend this time together.

Crystal Oh?

Danny I'm old, Crystal. I love my home with all its treasures and memories, but it's time for me to sell it and put myself into the old people zoo.

Crystal You're still doing ok. You have these home care visits. I'm sure there are other services you can access to stay at home.

Danny There's just me now. I have to be my own bossy grown up child, and make sensible decisions. I have a lifetime's worth of stuff! I must go through it all, and what the charity shop won't take, goes in the skip.

Crystal *(Sadly.)* Oh, Danny. You have no relatives?

Danny No, no. And most of my friends are dead or as useless as me. *(He chuckles wryly.)* Don't be sad. We're missing this lovely park! See, there's a tiny bird in the grevillia. And another! Honeyeaters.

Crystal I could come and visit you.

Danny I would like that very much. But you're busy, busy.

Crystal *(Sighs.)* That much is true. Hey, how do you know I'm busy, busy?

Danny You look tired. Bags under your eyes.

Crystal *(Laughs)* Thanks. *(Professionally)* I'm fine.

Danny Crystal, I know we're only friends for the space of time we spend together each week, but I can see you're tired. And anxious. You don't need to pretend with me.

Crystal Since Dave – my husband – lost his job because of the pandemic, I've been taking every shift they can throw at me. Luckily he loves being at-home Dad with George, at least we don't have to pay for child care.

Danny And how old is your young Master George now?

Crystal Three. He's a regular handful, especially when he loses his old squishy monkey, but we love him!

Danny So young George is not one of the sources of your worry at least.

Crystal No. Well yes, in a way. I worry every day about the kind of world we've brought him into. What might he have to face in his lifetime? Some days I feel – I don't know. I go on Facebook and some of my friends are posting these bright

colourful positivity sayings, whatever, and some are all doom and gloom – the house is on fire and just getting worse, billionaires getting richer while people struggle. How do I react to the world as it is now? Do I try to be optimistic? Isn't that just unrealistic and naïve? Do I give in to pessimism, which is the same as giving up on my boy's future?

Danny Shall we have a peppermint?

Crystal *(Startled but not fazed by the sudden change in subject)* Why not. Will I get them for you?

Danny Thank you.

(As Crystal has the lid of the wheely walker open looking for the mints) There's a black bag in there. Could you get that too, please, and take out what's in it?

Crystal *(Handing him the mints, then doing as he asks)* This bag is a sock. You have a rock in a sock.

Danny I take it everywhere with me. *(He holds out the peppermints and she takes one, still holding the rock.)*

Crystal OK. It's just a rock.

Danny I think that the story of my rock might help you with the answer to your question. But it's not an easy story to hear. It's from a time even stranger than this. A dangerous, mad time.

Crystal Now you've got me hooked. You'll have to tell me.

Danny You're sure?

Crystal *Smiles.* I'm sure. Squishy monkey can wait a bit longer.

Danny *Holding up the rock.* This is – a souvenir, if you like. *(Grows serious.)* Of a night in Germany in 1938. Kristallnacht.

Crystal I think I've heard of that.

Danny It was the night the Nazis went on a mad rampage, destroying Jewish synagogues, businesses, homes. The word "Kristallnacht" means "Crystal Night", because the next day all the cities and towns glittered like crystals from all the broken glass.

Crystal And this rock?

Danny This rock was thrown through the living room window of my family's apartment.

Crystal *(Looks at the rock in horror as though it is toxic.)* This rock? You mean Nazis threw this actual rock? You mean Nazis touched this rock? *(She hands it to him quickly, then reaches into her bag for her hand sanitiser.)*

Danny Relax, you can't catch Nazism that way, it's OK.

Crystal But still.

Danny Anyway, a Nazi didn't throw it. Or if it was a Nazi, it was a Nazi with a conscience.

Crystal Crystal Night. Oh my god, whenever you say my name you must get like, flashbacks or something.

Danny Honestly? When you introduced yourself that first time, I wondered if I could send you back and ask for somebody else! But now, when I say your name, all I think of is how I'm going to have a lovely outing, do my shopping, maybe go to lunch or even sit on a bench with a lovely view.

Crystal You don't talk about the past much. I mean, I knew you were born in Germany, but I never added up what that might mean. *(Beat.)* Will you tell me about Kristallnacht? *Danny hesitates.* It's OK, you can.

Danny Well, after Hitler came to power, things got slowly worse for us Jews. I was only little then, so I didn't notice much. But by 1938 it was clear. My father applied for visas to America, Canada, the United Kingdom so we could emigrate, but there were so many of us, and so few visas, that it was very, very hard. And just like now, many people in those countries didn't want refugees, didn't trust refugees. Finally, he got a visa, but for himself only. Britain needed his skills. He wanted to turn it down, but my mother insisted he go. He could try to get us over once he was there and had found a home for us. Kristallnacht arrived just before he was due to leave.

Crystal What happened?

Danny We could hear the rioting in the distance. The breaking glass, the shouts, the screams. You could tell the mob was getting bigger as it came closer. "Juden raus! Juden raus!" We turned out the lights and crouched in the living room of our apartment.

Suddenly, the window shattered! My mother screamed, I screamed, but my father motioned us to be quiet. The rock lay in the middle of the floor, surrounded by broken glass.

I could see there was a piece of paper tied to it. Without even thinking, I stretched over and picked up the rock, and untied the paper.

My father snatched the note from me. He didn't want me to read hate. But as he read, his face changed.

“What is it, Albert?” my mother whispered.

My father read out the note. It said that the Nazis were arresting Jewish men and taking them away, and he should leave, and hide now.

Crystal Was he able to?

Danny He knew of a deserted warehouse nearby. He grabbed a few things and left by the back alleyway.

Crystal And you and your mother?

Danny Not long after, the sound of heavy boots came thundering up the stairs, and there was a loud banging on the door. I stuffed the rock into my pocket and clutched it in my fist. My mother answered the door. Three Nazi soldiers came in.

“Check all the rooms,” one of them said to the other two. The one that stayed stood there with his gun pointed at us. He looked at my mother – oh, that look! I will never forget it, never. Then he turned his eyes on me. Cold, grey eyes. I have never felt such hatred, aimed at me like a bullet from his eyes. Hatred for me, just a young boy. I felt hot piss run down my legs. I had done nothing wrong but I felt guilty and ashamed and terrified of punishment for what, I didn’t know.

The others came back and reported there was no one else in the apartment.

“Where is your husband?”

My mother looked at them calmly, though she must have been as terrified as me. “The bastard has deserted us,” she said. “I don’t know where he is.”

“And you? Do you know where your father is?”

I managed to shake my head.

He did this (*indicates “let’s go” tilt of the head*) to the others, they turned and left without another word.

Crystal Did your father come back?

Danny No. We could only wonder whether he had escaped.

Crystal Did you get out? What a stupid question, you’re here. I mean, did you escape then as well?

Danny There was a scheme called “Kindertransport”, “Children Transport”. People in other countries could sponsor a child to come to safety and live with them. There was the Depression on still, of course, and sponsors had to pay to support the child. So, not so many. But Kristallnacht shocked the world, and more people offered. My mother eventually got me on a ship to Britain. She was going to follow as soon as she could, but it was too late. She was sent to Auschwitz.

Crystal Oh my god, Danny.

Danny I lived with my kind sponsors for a while. I had to learn English.

Crystal Your parents?

Danny My father did make it to England. He managed to track me down with the help of the Red Cross.

Crystal What a day that must have been for you both. And – your mother? Did she – was she –

Danny My mother survived, just. When we were finally reunited, I didn't recognise her. That was very hard for her. She had lost her teeth, her hair. So thin and sick. But alive.
I still had the rock. I had been carrying it around with me as, I don't know, a kind of lucky charm to get my family back together. I mean, it had saved my father. I thought of that unknown person who threw it as our "Kristallnacht Angel".
We came to Australia in 1956 and built a new life here.

Crystal Danny, what a story. I'm not surprised you don't talk about it much.

Danny (*Holds up the rock*) I kept this rock at first because it saved us. But I held on to it through all these many years because it reminded me that at one moment, someone made a decision.
Trying to be blindly optimistic will get you nowhere, Crystal. Giving in to pessimism will get you nowhere either. Both of those things are like shrugging your shoulders and saying, "This is how things are, my only question is to decide whether to like it or to not like it. But –

He looks at her

Crystal But –?

Danny But the only question a person needs to ask themselves is this: "What do I do at this moment, with the rock that is in my hand?"

Crystal How do you mean?

Danny Each and every one of us has a hand to play in making the future. So, if you have a hand to play – whether that's an actual rock like my Kristallnacht Angel, or anything else big or small, ask, what is the kind, human thing to do, right now? That is what Life needs from you, expects from you. And that's enough.

Danny picks up his water, stands, and holds it up, as though giving a toast.

Danny L'chaim!

Crystal What does that mean?

Danny To life! Yes to life – in spite of everything.

Crystal *(Standing, smiling and raising her own water bottle)* Yes to life, in spite of everything. That's a great line, Danny.

Danny It's not mine. It's the writer Viktor Frankl's. He was in Auschwitz too. And now, time to go.

He goes to put the rock back in the wheely walker but stops as Crystal suddenly speaks.

Crystal I know what *you* have to do. Now. With the rock in *your* hand.

Danny looks at her.

Crystal You have to hand it on. *(She holds out her hand.)* To someone who will remember your story.

Danny You would remember?

Crystal I will remember, and I will keep your rock safe, and give it to my son along with its story. I will ask him to keep it, and pass it on.

Danny places the rock in Crystal's outstretched hand, then wraps both of his old hands around her young one, gently closing her fingers around the rock.

Danny That is the best, best gift you could give me. I'll buy a Christmas tree and a crystal angel to hang on it, and I'll hang lights in my tree so my crystal angel shines. And that will be the only Kristallnacht Angel I need from now on.

Crystal Do you do Christmas if you're Jewish? I thought you had Hanukkah.

Danny Sure. Hanukkah, Christmas, Diwali – we all find ways to show light and love. Come, don't keep poor Dave waiting any longer.

Danny starts to exit during the above lines, as Crystal picks up her bag and puts the rock in it.

Crystal *Calling after him.* I am coming to visit you, by the way. In the old people zoo.

Danny Bring George. I can be old squishy monkey's uncle! *(They laugh.)*

The lights dim to blackout as they exit.