

WEDDING BLISTERS

or Persuasion in Michigan

By Bonnie Milne Gardner

A wedding weekend comedy somewhere in the Great Lakes.

WEDDING BLISTERS

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WEDDING BLISTERS

Dedication

This play is dedicated to my sisters, and our summer adventures at Chippewa Creek. Also to my dozens of cousins, and our gatherings at Gunn farm and Maple Street. And to the brave readers, especially at Camp Beaverdam, who helped shape the final draft.

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WEDDING BLISTERS was selected as a Finalist in the 2022 New Play Fest by AACT-- American Association of Community Theaters. Website for author Bonnie Milne Gardner: bmgardner.weebly.com.

SYNOPSIS: A weekend wedding of surprise and subterfuge. Based very loosely on the ridiculous antics in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

PLACE: Resort, Lesser Kestral Island: in the Huron/Michigan straights

TIME: Present day. September. The Equinox.

Scene 1: Friday. Early afternoon. Ladies Lounge. *Arrivals*.

Scene 2: Friday. Late afternoon. Resort Terrace. *More arrivals*.

Scene 3: Friday. Evening. Ladies Lounge. *Rehearsal madness*.

Scene 4: Friday. Late Evening. Cherry Tarts Bar. *Night cap*.

Scene 5: Saturday. Morning. Ladies Lounge. *Lost Bride*.

Scene 6: Saturday. Afternoon. Cherry Tarts Bar. *Secrets*.

Scene 7: Sunday. Morning. Resort Terrace. *Departures*.

CHARACTERS: 5 women, 2 men.

ANNA 27, single. Middle sister. Compliant. Sensible. Caustic.

MAUREEN 23, married. Youngest sister. Needy. Flighty. Pretty.

LIZBETH 32, twice divorced. Oldest sister. Cultured. Bossy. Stunning.

AUNT RUSSELL 47, married lesbian. The girls' aunt. Confident. Colorful.

LOUELLA 22, a cousin. Southern. Perky. Flirty.

ELLIOT 30, single. Ellsworth family financial manager. Tidy. Polite.

BUBBA 28, single. Louella's date. Attractive. Competent. Outdoorsy.

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SCENE 1

The ladies lounge at a resort lodge on Lesser Kestral Island in one of the Great Lakes. It is late September. The room has a small couch, a couple chairs, a vanity with mirrors. Decorated in “nautical northwoods.” One doorway leads to the lobby, another into the toilets. MAUREEN bursts in the door with a small bag. She is early twenties, attractive, smartly dressed, and clearly angry.

MAUREEN. Jee-zus Pee-zus, piss’n pie!! (*Yells out the door.*) Anna--in here! Don’t forget my water! (*She collapses on the couch, pulling off her light coat.*) ANN-NAA!

ANNA. Coming! (*ANNA enters with many bags. She is late twenties, more casually dressed.*) Damn, girl. Here. (*Hands her a water bottle.*) Really, Maureen, couldn’t we just take the room Lizbeth reserved?

MAUREEN. No, I told her west! Facing west! I cannot sleep with morning sun pouring in the window.

ANNA. There’s a cure for that. It’s called curtains.

MAUREEN. Lizbee did it on purpose. Like when she stuck me at the child’s table for her second wedding. She thrives on . . . on, thwarting me!

ANNA. Thwarting?? Now you’re starting to talk like her.

MAUREEN. Oh, my head feels like petrified oatmeal. Quick, hand me the train case. The train case!

ANNA. You’re the only woman I know with one of these who’s under the age of ninety.

MAUREEN. It’s the most important thing Mother left me.

ANNA. Maureen, you were six. Mother’s dying breath was hardly, “Please, Walter, by all that’s holy, make sure the leather train case goes to little Maureen.”

MAUREEN. Found it! (*Holds up a pill bottle.*) Two of these and I’ll be right as rainbows. Here—you should try one.

ANNA. I’m fine.

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MAUREEN. Well, remember, Anna, if you do begin to feel just a bit queasy, these little green babies—

ANNA. Don't start, Maureen. I said I'm fine.

MAUREEN. What? No, these are mine, I swear. Look—"for sea sickness."

ANNA. Sea sickness? Mo, it was a twenty-minute ferry ride!

MAUREEN. On a Great Lake, Anna. A GREAT Lake. One of the eight wonders of the world. Or the western hemisphere?

ANNA. Oh, Maureen.

MAUREEN. Don't forget—my major was cultural geography.

ANNA. You had a major? (*Looks at her phone.*)

MAUREEN. I happen to know that Michigan is the only state that borders four of the five Great Lakes.

ANNA. You saw that on the sign in the harbor.

MAUREEN. So?

ANNA. Hey, you didn't tell anyone I was coming, did you?

MAUREEN. No, but I don't know why!

ANNA. Rusty called me ten times in the last two days.

MAUREEN. What's the big deal?

ANNA. Oh, it's her duty, I suppose. You know, me being the last unattached niece.

MAUREEN. You're only twenty-seven. What does Aunt Russell care? (*Anna shrugs.*) Well, are you seeing anyone?

ANNA. No.

MAUREEN. What about Elliot? Didn't you guys click at the Festival this year?

ANNA. Sure, he's nice.

MAUREEN. I'll say. He saved my ass when the Boy Scouts were a no show at the Ball.

ANNA. To park the cars?

MAUREEN. Yes, remember? On the verge of disaster, and out of nowhere Elliot rounds up an ultimate Frisbee team. A handy man to have around, Anna.

ANNA. But he's in Indiana, and I'm in Pennsylvania. The state of Ohio forces us to keep our distance.

MAUREEN. I don't get it. Who wouldn't want to date you? You're pretty and smart and have excellent hand-eye coordination.

ANNA. Oh, guys ask me out.

MAUREEN. Yeah? But?

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ANNA. I tell them I'm seeing a Marine named Cuthbert.

MAUREEN. Why?

ANNA. Saves a lot of hassle.

MAUREEN. Don't you ever do something just for kicks?

ANNA. Sure.

MAUREEN. Like what?

ANNA. Rafting. Smitty and I went rafting two weeks ago.

MAUREEN. Smitty?!

ANNA. The Youghiogheny River. She got dumped again and needed cheering up.

MAUREEN. College roommates don't count.

ANNA. Smitty's the best. We sang Beyonce at the top of our lungs.

MAUREEN. She's a sleazy investigator, Anna. Tracks cheating spouses to seedy Econo-lodges.

ANNA. Don't be such a snob. It's all done through the internet these days.

MAUREEN. You spend too much time in front of a computer as it is. What about sex?

ANNA. Nothin' but babies and STDs. I have no need of either just now.

MAUREEN. Oh, I can think of a few other benefits.

ANNA. Honestly, I'd rather spend the night with Netflix and GrubHub.

MAUREEN. Pathetic. Does it look like my feet are swelling?

ANNA. (*Rubbing Maureen's feet.*) Okay, Mo, get serious. What are we gonna do about Father?

MAUREEN. I told you at the airport; he's absolutely determined.

ANNA. Mother was the classiest Squash Queen the county ever saw.

MAUREEN. I don't think Penny is after that title.

ANNA. What do you mean? Is she anti-vegetable?

MAUREEN. Don't know—we only talked a couple times. Nice enough, but kind of a shrinking violet. For some reason, that suits Father.

ANNA. Walter Ellsworth the third? The Baron of the Blisterneck Ball?

MAUREEN. Lizbee thinks she and Father are adorable together.

ANNA. But why get married? He's sixty-two. And she's like what, twelve?

MAUREEN. No—a little older than Lizbee, I think. Most people are married by then.

ANNA. Or divorced by then.

MAUREEN. Well, he's a grown man. If he wants to tie the knot, let him.

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ANNA. But why so suddenly? Hardly a decent amount of time to gather the family.

MAUREEN. Some big surprise. He won't say. "Penny and I will reveal all at the rehearsal dinner."

ANNA. Yes, that's all I could get from him on the phone. But I'm three states away. You live two miles from Kelly Farms.

MAUREEN. No one tells me anything. I don't know why.

ANNA. That's not true.

MAUREEN. Is so! Last week I was stuck at home with the twins—the sitter had a piercing that went bad—so Chuck went to the Foundation meeting without me. Then I couldn't get a word out of him. It was my grandfather that created the Squirrel Preserve.

ANNA. Did Father go?

MAUREEN. Yes, but I'm sure Chuck isn't telling me something. Did you bring anything to eat?

ANNA. Maybe he's worried about Father's state of mind. I am. (*Digging in her purse.*) Airline pretzels and Mango Altoids.

MAUREEN. (*She opens pretzels.*) Are we really the first ones to arrive?

ANNA. Yep. Do you think many others will make it?

MAUREEN. It's an Ellsworth wedding, Anna. People will move mountains to be here.

ANNA. Even with such short notice? Who, for sure? Besides Lizbeth, you and me?

MAUREEN. Well, Aunt Russell, of course—but without Cindy—some dog breeders conference she couldn't get out of. And let's see, on the Kelly side, all of the Chicago hoard, and most of the crowd from Florida and St. Louis. On the Ellsworth side, Mona is gone, of course, but cousin Cheryl's coming, with all her kids. Not sure about Aunt and Uncle Muskie—though I heard little Louella is bringing a date. Sounds like those nuptials could be next. I hope it's in a real hotel. What would you call this décor? "North woods nautical?"

ANNA. Mother loved the look. Tried to recreate it in our sun porch.

MAUREEN. Really?

ANNA. Don't you remember anything about that summer?

MAUREEN. I was like—what, three?

ANNA. We were here for two whole weeks. It was the last vacation we took before Mom got sick.

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MAUREEN. All I remember is a purply, yucky smelling fish—like, on a giant rock somewhere?

ANNA. Black Snake Beach.

MAUREEN. Charming. Is that where our cottage was?

ANNA. Yep. Lizbeth spent every day with older kids from the other cottages. Lots of Baby Oil and bikinis. Once they hid the lifeguard's dinner on the roof!

MAUREEN. Classic Lizbee.

ANNA. They're the ones who first dubbed us the Blister sisters.

MAUREEN. Really? Why?!

ANNA. Lizbeth told them Father was, like, (*dramatically*) “the heir to the Blisterneck Gold dynasty.”

MAUREEN. It's just a squash seed.

ANNA. Yes, but thanks to Grandpa, that little seed paid for Lizbeth's boarding school and your eleven bridesmaids. And our fab vacation here that summer.

MAUREEN. What did you and I do while Queen Lizbee explored puberty with the natives?

ANNA. You begged to go down to the water every morning. My job was to keep the clam shells out of your mouth.

MAUREEN. Well, this time I'll try to restrain myself. Was Aunt Russell there?

ANNA. Yep, and Aunt Cindy, too. They'd only been together about a year, I think. Of course, then, we didn't know they were an actual couple. I was only seven.

(*AUNT RUSSELL bursts in, carrying a small gift basket. She is in her late forties, colorful, robust.*)

RUSSELL. Morning Glory, are you in here? Good! And—Anna! Anna Panda!

ANNA. Hiya Rusty.

RUSSELL. Thank God you've come. (*She hugs ANNA, then pulls away, starts stomping her feet.*) Uh oh. Here it comes. Quick, hold this.

(*RUSTY hands ANNA the gift basket, then starts walking in circles, flapping her arms, fanning her face, panting, gasping.*)

ANNA. Aunt Russell?

RUSSELL. Stand clear! This'll be over in a minute.

MAUREEN. Just let her be, Anna. Believe me, it's best.

RUSSELL. Mid. (*gasp*) Life. (*gasp*) TSUU-NAA-MIII!

(*She starts removing clothes, panting, gasping frantically.*) One, two buckle my shoe. Three, four, shut the door. Five, six, pick up--SHIT! this one's a crusher!

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Seven, eight, lay them straight. Nine, ten, a big fat—ooo—blaaaast ooooff! Oh! Oh! OH! (*Grabs MAUREEN'S water and douses herself.*)

Eleven, twelve, (*slowing*) thirteen, fourteen. There. That's better. (*Deep breath.*)
Hello girls.

ANNA. Rusty—what in the world?

RUSSELL. Change of life, my dear.

ANNA. But you're so young! (*Hands her towels.*)

RUSSELL. I know, forty-six! And the phrase "hot flash" does not begin to describe the prolonged agony! Phew. Anna, I'm so glad you made it.

ANNA. How could I not? Are we really going to watch Father marry this, this vegetable-hater?

RUSSELL. Absolutely not.

ANNA. Oh thank heaven!

MAUREEN. But Aunt Russ, how do we stop it?

RUSSELL. I have no idea. Walter is an old fool. You changed your hair since summer, Anna. I like it. Don't give up the ship, ladies. You inherited Kelly intelligence and Ellsworth fortitude. An incomparable combination of superior DNA. The family line goes back to Cromwell with no sign of inbreeding. We'll think of something.

ANNA. What do you know about her?

RUSSELL. Penny? I know she called the lawyer's office for a copy of the foundation by-laws.

ANNA. The by-laws? Is she making a hefty donation?

RUSSELL. Hardly. Her favorite label is Goodwill.

MAUREEN. I don't think she's ever had a job.

RUSSELL. Something tells me that's the least of our worries.

ANNA. What do you mean?

RUSSELL. (*Sees luggage.*) Are you girls bunking down in the Ladies Lounge? It's the off-season. Surely you can do better than the toilets.

MAUREEN. Lizbee totally screwed up my reservation. We're doomed.

ANNA. Oh, Maureen, they said our room would be ready in half an hour. When did you get here, Aunt Russell?

RUSSELL. Yesterday. Dropped Cindy at the breeder's thing, then drove here and stayed on the mainland. Took the first ferry this morning. I've been pumping the

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resort staff for details. They're stubborn as the door on Grandma Mattie's outhouse. Didn't you get my calls, Anna?

ANNA. Sorry, I've been majorly swamped.

MAUREEN. With what?

ANNA. Work.

MAUREEN. Really? Is there a sudden demand for how-to manuals?

RUSSELL. Technical writing, Mo Glo.

ANNA. Hey, can we please focus on Father. Who is this Penny woman?

RUSSELL. She's old Jasper Dunn's step-granddaughter.

ANNA. That big nosed dude who used to manage Kelly Farms?

RUSSELL. Yes.

ANNA. He scared me.

MAUREEN. I liked him. He always gave me those miniature tootsie rolls.

ANNA. Penny is Jasper's step-granddaughter?

RUSSELL. Her grandmother married Jasper when Penny was a baby.

ANNA. Old Jasper's still alive?

RUSSELL. No, but the grandmother is, and lives outside Somerton. Apparently, she got a bad case of shingles this summer, so Penny came to visit. Did you see your welcome basket?

MAUREEN. (*brightens*) We get a welcome basket? What's in it?

RUSSELL. Here's mine. (*Hands Maureen the basket.*) Just listen to Penny's card. "Dear Family. Wally and me are—"

ANNA. Wally??

RUSSELL. "Wally and me are thrilled you could be here for the sacred union joining our two hearts and our two countries."

ANNA. Two countries?

MAUREEN. She's Canadian.

RUSSELL. There's more. "The Equinox is a special time in the celestial world, when the sun—"

ANNA. Equinox?!

RUSSELL. "—when the sun divides day and night equally—an awesome model for our forthcoming life together."

ANNA. Are we sure she's from this planet?

MAUREEN. Hey look, cookies! Shaped like stars! Frosted stars.

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ANNA. Wait. Let me see that—five points—oh, my god, it's a—isn't that the symbol of—of—Wicca?

RUSSELL. Who?

ANNA. Wiccans. Neopagans. I saw a thing on the Disney channel.

RUSSELL. She's a witch?

ANNA. See the way the frosting is crossed? Pretty sure that's a pentagram! The equinox is when, like, the god of darkness conquers the god of light!

MAUREEN. With bonfires? And chanting?

RUSSELL. Like in a cult?

MAUREEN. Oh lordy. I can feel the hives starting to spread. Where's that lavender oil?

ANNA. Here, lie back. Put a cool towel on your face.

RUSSELL. Where's your adorable husband?

MAUREEN. Chuck can't get away till tomorrow. The twins are with his mother. I came ahead to help corral the relations. Daddy doesn't have the energy he used to.

ANNA. Then why is he marrying someone thirty years younger?! Isn't there a way to put off the wedding? To find out more about the Druid girl? When are they due in?

RUSSELL. This afternoon. Walter had to pick up a license at the county offices.

ANNA. Hey, wait, don't they have to get a blood test?

MAUREEN. No, silly.

ANNA. Didn't you and Chuck? Didn't Lizbeth? Isn't that the law?

MAUREEN. A hundred years ago. Lord, with Lizbee's fear of needles, she'd never have gotten hitched.

ANNA. Well, what about immigration? Isn't there, like, a waiting period?

MAUREEN. I don't know. Ask Lizbeth. She stiffed me twice last week to run off and help "poor Penny" with the arrangements.

ANNA. Where is Lizbeth?

RUSSELL. I believe she and Elliot are driving up together.

ANNA. Elliot's coming?

RUSSELL. Yes, isn't that nice? Did you, ah, bring anyone with you, Anna Panda?

ANNA. Maureen met me at the airport—

RUSSELL. No, I mean, did you bring a—date?

ANNA. No—just me. Mo and I coordinated our arrivals to catch the noon ferry—

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MAUREEN. But that ferry was cancelled—of course. They made us wait in a sucky fish hut for the next boat. No heat, naturally. And it's a good twenty degrees colder here than Indiana. Nothing runs as it should in this wilderness. Must be why it's called Lesser Kestral Island. The resort "shuttle" was a wagon, Aunt Russ, a wagon. Pulled by a HORSE!

RUSSELL. Yes, of course, darling.

ANNA. Motorized vehicles aren't allowed on the island.

MAUREEN. What? You KNEW this, Anna? Was it like that the summer in college you worked here?

ANNA. Well, yeah.

MAUREEN. Why would you keep that from me!?

ANNA. I thought you knew. Lesser Kestral is famous for it.

MAUREEN. What else are they known for? Public flogging?

RUSSELL. Surely you remember the horses, Mo Glo? The driver put you on his lap so you could see them up close.

MAUREEN. And you let him? Sounds downright pervy.

ANNA. Focus, ladies. We have exactly thirty-six hours to get Father to see reason.

MAUREEN. It was kinda weird to get a wedding invitation by text.

ANNA. Why marry at all? What can he possibly think this is going to accomplish?

MAUREEN. Maybe he's just horny.

RUSSELL. Well, yes. But it could be worse. I think Penny is trying to get Walter to liquidate his assets.

ANNA. What?!

MAUREEN. How do you know!?

RUSSELL. There were surveyors on the property last weekend.

ANNA. What for?

RUSSELL. Exactly! I asked Elliot to look into it—discreetly, of course. Hiring him was the smartest thing Walter's done in years.

MAUREEN. Why do you suspect Penny?

RUSSELL. Elliot says that Penny made Walter request a supplemental budget report.

ANNA. Why?

RUSSELL. Walter wouldn't say. Then your father cancelled their monthly finance meeting.

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MAUREEN. Maybe that's why Chuck is being so tight lipped. Last week I saw Penny and Father coming out of the bank manager's office.

RUSSELL. What the hell is going on?

ANNA. Isn't it clear? She's after his money. Have you met her, Aunt Russ?

RUSSELL. Briefly, when she first showed up. But we had our hands full with a new litter of Corgis. The brainless mother decided to birth them in the back of my Hundyai. Don't ever leave your windows open at a dog kennel. Then Cindy got that horrible kidney stone. I was up to my eyebrows in helpless animals. But lately I could swear Walter's avoiding me.

ANNA. There was no sign of her at all when I was back for Festival, and now suddenly, six weeks later they're getting married?

MAUREEN. On the edge of the world!

RUSSELL. Yes, why here? Why Kestral Bay? Anna?

ANNA. Don't look at me.

MAUREEN. Penny says that this is the only spot in the country where, like, you can see the sun rise over one Great Lake and set over another. Probably some ancient pagan voo-doo.

RUSSELL. But why this island? This resort? Did you suggest it, Anna?

ANNA. God, no.

MAUREEN. Why? Is this the place where you worked? Did you clean those very toilets?

RUSSELL. Certainly not. She worked in the administrative offices. Management.

MAUREEN. Did you bunk here at the resort?

RUSSELL. Never mind, Maureen.

ANNA. The dorm for all the staff was an old ice house--on the leeward side.

MAUREEN. Does it have a west-facing room? Can't you pull some strings?

RUSSELL. No, Maureen. Anna doesn't want to do that.

MAUREEN. Why not?

ANNA. The dorm is closed for the season. Just a skeleton staff this time of year.

MAUREEN. Naturally. Next they'll cancel all ferry service, then the lake will freeze over, and we'll be stranded here till Easter.

ANNA. I hear the resort now owns most of the island.

MAUREEN. So we are at their mercy! They could close the ferry, and, and sell us into white slavery!

RUSSELL. And I thought I was hormonal.

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ANNA. (*Reading Penny's note, shaking her head.*) “Wally and me”! “Awesome life together”! Father’s gone mental. I mean, a midlife crisis is one thing, but to marry a virtual stranger with, with, more than a passing interest in solar rituals?

MAUREEN. Lizbee adores the girl.

ANNA. He’s only known her for five minutes!

RUSSELL. I wonder if Lizbeth is aware of Penny’s, um, alternate lifestyle?

MAUREEN. Jezus peezus, I can literally feel my brain swelling. Is there any spring water left?

RUSSELL. Sorry. (*Maureen moans.*)

ANNA. I’ll go find more.

MAUREEN. Thanks, big Blister. You’re my hero.

ANNA. Be right back. Or at the bar. (*Anna exits.*)

RUSSELL. (*Peeks out the door after her.*) Well, Maureen? How is Anna holding up? I never dreamed she’d ever come back to this place.

MAUREEN. Why not? Oh jiminy! Was this the—when she fell for that island boy?

RUSSELL. Shh!

MAUREEN. Father won’t talk about it, but Lizbee says Anna went bonkers! That she and this loser were gonna run off, elope to Greenland, or New Zealand—

RUSSELL. Nova Scotia, I think—

MAUREEN. And you raced up here with Father to haul her ass home—

RUSSELL. Well, it was just so bonkers. One year of college left and out of the blue this, this! We were convinced they were smoking more than lake trout. She was all packed up by the time we arrived. The boy was renting rowboats, for godsakes—

MAUREEN. And Father tore the young lovers apart! Like in *Wuthering Heights*!

RUSSELL. Well, not quite that gothic. The boy had gone out on an all-day charter. Your father was able to persuade her to come home that afternoon. Anna’s always been such a good girl.

MAUREEN. But Lizbee says Anna was a wreck the rest of the summer. I was away at band camp, but the day I got home, Anna went back to Northwestern. Barely spoke two words.

RUSSELL. It was months before I got a civilized syllable.

MAUREEN. And she appears to have stopped dating entirely.

RUSSELL. Oh?

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MAUREEN. I think it's given her a . . . a love allergy.

RUSSELL. Love allergy?

MAUREEN. I'm just sayin'. At every wedding, she totally loses it. Soon as the ceremony starts, she turns a bloodless pale. Pukes up her guts. Hasn't survived an entire ceremony yet.

RUSSELL. Still? I thought she was over that.

MAUREEN. Last year at cousin Henry's wedding she got all the way to the best man's toast before bolting. Perfectly good sushi down the toilet. Literally.

RUSSELL. Oh, Maureen, what can we do? She was such a cheerful little girl. Now she's, she's . . .

MAUREEN. A major buzz kill.

RUSSELL. I offered her one of the puppies last spring. All she said was "Pets only die or run away."

MAUREEN. Poor Anna! Twenty years from now she'll be blogging in a basement apartment, listening to her ovaries shrivel.

RUSSELL. That's a trifle unfair. She's very good to your little girls.

MAUREEN. As far as I know, when Elliot took her to this year's Ball, it was her first date in forever. It must be devastating, returning to the scene of your worst heartbreak.

RUSSELL. Listen, Maureen. You and I must make a pact this weekend. To keep her wine glass full and her buffet plate empty.

MAUREEN. Oh Rusty.

RUSSELL. No really, we must do everything possible to keep her from that stretch of memory lane.

MAUREEN. Why so protective? She's a big girl.

RUSSELL. Just promise me. Don't mention the, uh, episode again. I know she seems tough, but this isn't easy for her, Maureen. You with me? Is it a deal? (*The door opens.*)

MAUREEN. Okay, fine. Deal.

ANNA. (*Enters with bottles of water.*) Well, I found your precious water, but the bar won't open for another hour. However, Mo, I'm happy to report that our room—our west-facing room—is ready.

MAUREEN. Brilliant! (*They gather the bags.*)

ANNA. So, you two have made a deal?

MAUREEN. A deal? (*Chokes on water.*)

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ANNA. A plan? To stop the wedding?

MAUREEN. Oh, right. Penny.

RUSSELL. I wish I knew what her scheme was.

ANNA. Isn't it clear? After they're married, she'll divorce him, and get half of everything.

MAUREEN. Do you really think so?

RUSSELL. Wouldn't be the first to prey on a wealthy widower. And if Penny plays her cards right, she could even get the entire property.

MAUREEN. But—the Farm? the Preserve? The Squirrel and Squash Festival? It's been a tradition in Somerton for like, fifty years!

ANNA. At the very least, she could sell her half to that godawful distribution center that's been after the land.

MAUREEN. No! She wouldn't!

ANNA. Oh, she damn well could.

RUSSELL. Anna, what can we do?

ANNA. Well, I did have one thought. However, it may not be entirely legal. (*She jingles a key.*) Let's go freshen our war paint. (*They exit. Lights down.*)

SCENE 2

Later that afternoon. Cozy terrace just outside the lodge-- rustic rocking chairs facing the audience. LIZBETH enters, a plethora of scarves and bangles. She is thirty something and stunning, but more stern than pretty.

LIZBETH. (*Calling offstage.*) Anna, go back and get some of those blankets. (*Arranges two of the chairs.*) There. Sooo Garrison Keillor. (*Looks around. Calls.*) Hurry, Anna, the view is exceedingly agreeable!

ANNA. (*Anna enters, tosses a blanket at Lizbeth.*) Heads up, your ladyship!

LIZBETH. (*She lets it drop, then picks it up with great disdain.*) Muusst you.

ANNA. You never did excel in the zucchini toss.

LIZBETH. Ah! But what about my team polos?

ANNA. Haute couture?

LIZBETH. Unlike these blankets. What would we call this? Bigfoot plaid?

WEDDING BLISTERS

ANNA. God, I forgot how beautiful it is here. (*Recites*) “. . . a pictur’ that no painter has the colorin’ to mock.”

LIZBETH. Oh yes, mother’s favorite poet. James . . . ?

ANNA. James Whitcomb Riley. “They’s somethin’ kindo harty like about the atmosphere, when the heat of summer’s over and the coolin’ fall is here.”

LIZBETH. You’re unreal.

ANNA. Oh, look, Lizbeth! See the ore boat going through the straits?

LIZBETH. Mmm. Do you think it could take me to Chicago? There’s a trunk show at Nordstroms.

ANNA. This boat’s already full. Iron ore from the upper seaway, probably.

LIZBETH. How can you tell?

ANNA. By how low it’s riding in the water. And see that flag? With the rectangle? It’s called the blue peter.

LIZBETH. Blue peter?! Sounds nasty!

ANNA. It just means the ship is ready to sail.

LIZBETH. Lord, Anna. You work for an appliance company. How could you possibly know that?

ANNA. I dunno.

LIZBETH. No, really, where did you learn all this sailor lingo?

ANNA. Freddy.

LIZBETH. Oh. (*Pause*) Did he own a boat?

ANNA. He wanted to. As a kid, Freddy spent summers on his great-uncle’s tugboat. In Saginaw Bay. They guided the big ships through the--, oh, that river between Erie and Huron—the St. Clair! He took me there on one of our days off.

LIZBETH. Is that where he was from? Saginaw?

ANNA. No. Buffalo. He and his mom. His father left when he was little, so the great uncle in Saginaw sort of helped raise him. Taught him to sail, too. But the uncle died when Freddy started college.

LIZBETH. Did you ever hear from the boy after that summer?

ANNA. Nope. (*Anna plays with a small black stone on a necklace.*)

LIZBETH. You were brave to come, Anna.

ANNA. Oh, hell. We were only kids. I’m fine. (*She stuffs the necklace under her shirt.*)

LIZBETH. Really? You’re not just stiff-upper-lipping it for Father this weekend?

ANNA. It’s all water over the locks.

WEDDING BLISTERS

LIZBETH. Anna, promise me, during the ceremony, you'll move to the back if you start to—feel unwell?

ANNA. Don't worry.

LIZBETH. Cuz we don't want anything to spoil Father's—

ANNA. I'll be fine.

LIZBETH. That's what you said at my wedding.

ANNA. And I was.

LIZBETH. HA. My in-laws thought you disapproved, and ran out to keep from yelling "I object!"

ANNA. I never intend to get sick! It just happens. No matter what I do.

LIZBETH. What do you mean?

ANNA. Before cousin Henry's wedding? I had a foolproof plan—long milk bath, cup of green tea. Stunning linen suit, Mother's drop pearl earrings. All the tools to feel my best.

LIZBETH. And yet I distinctly remember retching sounds from the back of the Lutheran dumpster.

ANNA. I can't help it!

LIZBETH. Does this happen a lot?

ANNA. Only at weddings.

LIZBETH. Have you considered aversion therapy? You know, crash weddings week after week until you are completely desensitized. *(Pause)* Anna?

ANNA. I'm thinking of moving, Lizbeth. To Chile.

LIZBETH. Good lord.

ANNA. I got accepted in a program to teach English for a year.

LIZBETH. What brought this on? I thought you liked your job.

ANNA. It's okay, but not what I dreamed of doing all my life. I wanna see more of the world. And finally use my Spanish.

LIZBETH. But why Chile? Can't you just do a different beach in Cancun every year?

ANNA. No, I wanna immerse myself in the culture. Though it will mean a pay cut.

LIZBETH. And a hellish amount of immunizations! Yeeecchh. *(She holds her arm and shudders.)*

ANNA. No doubt.

LIZBETH. If you do decide to take the gig, don't tell Rusty till you get there. She went apoplectic when you moved to Pittsburgh.

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ANNA. Right. (*Sighs*) Now, tell me everything you know about the bride to be.

LIZBETH. Penny? She's harmless, really. I don't know why Aunt Rooster is being so pissy.

ANNA. It's just that we don't know much about her.

LIZBETH. What do you need to know? Father's smitten and she makes him happy.

ANNA. Well, sure, but—

LIZBETH. She absolutely adores my cockatiels. Babies them whenever I go out on a job. Even made a set of covers for the cage—hand quilted!

ANNA. Any signs of the zodiac?

LIZBETH. What?

ANNA. Does she have any tattoos?

LIZBETH. Who doesn't?

ANNA. Like, stars? Moons? Stuff like that?

LIZBETH. Anna, it's not like we shower together!

ANNA. Do you know what her religion is?

LIZBETH. What is with you?

ANNA. Well, you helped with the arrangements, right? I just wondered what kind of a service it'll be. A minister? A rabbi? A priestess?

LIZBETH. The county clerk.

ANNA. Oh. What about citizenship? Isn't there a waiting period? You know, Green Card and all that?

LIZBETH. Seriously?!

ANNA. Well, what if there's a screw up at the last minute and the whole thing gets scrapped?

LIZBETH. Relax. They just need a copy of Penny's birth certificate.

ANNA. Oh. Do they have a prenup?

LIZBETH. Anna Kelly Ellsworth! What gives?!

ANNA. Well, be practical. Once they're married, she's entitled to half of everything he owns.

LIZBETH. Cold, Anna. Cold. Give Father some credit.

ANNA. Tell me the truth, Lizbeth. Have you heard any talk about selling the property?

LIZBETH. Did Rusty say that? Why can't she keep her fat pituti out of it?

ANNA. I hear Penny has been like, inspecting the books for Father.

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LIZBETH. Why not? Father was always more of a people person. Likes being the face of the Ellsworth Foundation, but hates the financial grind. He asked for her help. That's all. She's incredibly giving.

ANNA. Why not ask one of us?

LIZBETH. Who? I am virtually consumed with the new job, you live in a different time zone, and Maureen can barely operate an ATM.

ANNA. But some of Father's actions are so, well, questionable. We're just concerned about her influence.

LIZBETH. Well, who do you think finally talked him into getting that cataract surgery?

ANNA. Penny?

LIZBETH. Yes! We got nowhere, but Penny can soften the old Baron's resolve. See how good she is for him?

ANNA. Well, is it true they spent a week working a county fair? Actually selling funnel cakes from her RV?

LIZBETH. So she's a free spirit.

ANNA. What does that mean?

LIZBETH. How do I know? She's Canadian.

ANNA. And only two years older than you? Isn't that a little, ya know, "ooky"?

LIZBETH. Get with the century, girl.

ANNA. I know, I know. But this is a man who embraces tradition, routine. Oatmeal in the morning, a nap in the afternoon, James Bond every Friday. Penny was born the year he and Mom got married. What can they possibly have in common?

LIZBETH. Battleship.

ANNA. Pardon?

LIZBETH. Every night after dinner, they play Battleship. (*No reaction*) You know, "D-two, miss!"

ANNA. Is she . . . militant?

LIZBETH. Hardly. She always lets him win.

ANNA. Interesting. Do you think they'll have children?

LIZBETH. What do you mean?

ANNA. Well, could he feel pressured to produce a Walter Ellsworth the fourth?

LIZBETH. Oh, Anna, be serious. Penny is a perfect darling and is doing everything in her power to honor the family. There's a sweet moment at the

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reception when we all toast Mother. She's even going to hide an acorn under someone's chair.

ANNA. A squirrel scatter? But mother started that at her wedding.

LIZBETH. Yes, and isn't it sweet of Penny to continue the tradition?

ANNA. As long as there's no ulterior motive.

LIZBETH. Oh Panda!

ANNA. Maureen says they had some kind of genetic testing.

LIZBETH. Nonsense, it was just a physical.

ANNA. Why? He seems fine.

LIZBETH. Well, his nosebleeds seem to be getting worse. And Penny's right—at his age, problems can pounce without any warning.

ANNA. Well, what about you, Lizbeth?

LIZBETH. Me?

ANNA. What happens after the wedding? Will you stay at Kelly Farms?

LIZBETH. Certainly. It's my house as much as Father's.

ANNA. But she'll be his wife. Mrs. Walter Ellsworth. Mistress of the house. You'll be relegated to step-daughter.

LIZBETH. Don't be an ass.

ANNA. Maureen thinks she'll make us call her Mother Pen.

LIZBETH. Maureen's a paranoid hypochondriac.

ANNA. Even so, I've put in a call to Smitty. Told her to dig around.

LIZBETH. Dig around? Smitty?

ANNA. Background checks. Court records. Just to be on the safe side.

LIZBETH. No! An outsider snooping on the family? Call her off, Anna!

ANNA. But think about it—a virtual stranger appears out of the blue and starts changing everything!

LIZBETH. That's your problem. You can't stand change. You expect everything to stay the same as it was in your rosy little childhood. When father decided to remodel the barn, you couldn't bear it. Ran away to the armpit of the Rustbelt.

ANNA. Not true!

LIZBETH. You're like the child who had a magical day playing in a sunny puddle. Spent a whole afternoon tossing pebbles and building stick dams. But when you went back, the puddle was all dried up. So you pour on water, or dig a deeper hole, but it's not the same. You'll never find that exact puddle, Anna, so get over it! Quit being so . . . so mawkish.

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ANNA. Mawkish?!

LIZBETH. You know what I mean. Chill OUT.

ANNA. I'm just worried about Father. Truly, Lizzie.

LIZBETH. Oh, everything's fine, Anna. Believe me. Elliot's seeing to that.

LOUELLA. (*From off*) Yoo hoo! You twoooo!

LIZBETH. Who is that?

ANNA. Louella. Uncle Muskie's youngest. Just graduated from Duke, or Tulane, or something.

LOUELLA. (*LOUELLA enters in a trendy summer outfit and a man's hoodie. She is very early twenties, very feminine.*) Well, here y'all are!

LIZBETH. Felicitations, cousin Louella.

LOUELLA. The sisters Blister! Where's Maureen?

ANNA. At the spa having a foot bath. How nice that you could make it. Are the folks here, too?

LOUELLA. Well, of course. After y'all made it down for Henry's big do? Mama said she was present at Walter's first, and she wasn't gonna miss his second! So romantic, isn't it? A destination wedding. And some big announcement? Can you give us a hint?

ANNA. We're as clueless as you are.

LOUELLA. NO! Well, it's all too excitin', isn't it? Our whole posse started celebratin' in the pub by the docks. Everything's made from cherries up here! Cherry salsa, cherry jerky, even cherry beer! We sang tunes from Oklahoma all the way up the hill in that cute little hay wagon!

LIZBETH. But this is Michigan. We live in Indiana. Why sing Oklahoma?

LOUELLA. Well, Michigan, Oklahoma, it's all the Midwest, right? Is your gorgeous husband here, Lizbeth?

LIZBETH. Lord, I left him months ago.

LOUELLA. Oh, I am so sorry!

LIZBETH. Don't be, he was abominable.

LOUELLA. Abomin—able? You mean, like a snowman?

ANNA. No, like a big jerk. Lizbee's love of Regency writers has colored her vocabulary.

LIZBETH. Bite me.

ANNA. Usually.

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LOUELLA. Oh! Well, what about your love life, Anna? What's this I hear about a lawyer who's sweet on you? Ellroy somebody?

LIZBETH. His name is Elliot and he's the financial manager for the Ellsworth Foundation.

LOUELLA. Elliot, huh? Is it serious?

ANNA. Not really. *(She's playing with the necklace again.)*

LIZBETH. One never knows. Did he give you that necklace?

ANNA. This? No. *(Stuffs it away.)*

LOUELLA. I see. And did y'all hear about my Bubba?

ANNA. Bubba?

LOUELLA. I met him when I was studyin' abroad last year. He came to Barcelona on business. We met at a sweet ol' tapas bar by the water! Wait till you see his smile.

LIZBETH. How old is he? Anna's quite particular about age differences.

LOUELLA. Well, I don't give a rat's ascot. He's nearly thirty, I think, with dreamy eyes and a monster credit rating.

LIZBETH. Eight whole years, huh?

ANNA. Shut up, Lizard. Ignore her, Lou. Tell us more about Bubba. Did he follow you back to Georgia?

LOUELLA. No, silly, I still had my final semester. He didn't return to the States till August. But we Face-timed all summer.

LIZBETH. Is that legal in the South?

ANNA. Soo, Louella, are you two getting serious?

LOUELLA. Oh, I dunno. He's kinda geeky but in a bad boy sort of way. He might buy a summer place here.

ANNA. When can we meet your bad boy?

LOUELLA. Tonight. Bubba's with the realtor now.

LIZBETH. Summer homes? Maybe I should scope out the area for my boss.
(Looks around critically.)

LOUELLA. Are you workin' again?

LIZBETH. Mmmm. For a professional home stager.

LOUELLA. Home staging? I hear that's super hot right now.

LIZBETH. Yes, I get paid indecent amounts of money—just to live in million dollar properties.

LOUELLA. No kidding?

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LIZBETH. Plus a sweet bonus when the place sells.

LOUELLA. Goodness me!

LIZBETH. Those big mansions--prime targets for thieves if they're empty. And they show better if it looks like someone lives there. So our office provides that service. Just me, my garment bag, and five thousand square feet!

LOUELLA. Kinda like a high-end baby sitter!

LIZBETH. My title is "house valet."

LOUELLA. So do you wash windows and stuff?

LIZBETH. Hardly. When a buyer takes the bait, I provide the custom touches to cinch the deal.

LOUELLA. Like what? Fresh flowers, warm cookies?

LIZBETH. Oh, no, it's extremely scientific. The buyer info is entered into a database and assigned a profile. We get an alert message with their code, and sometimes no more than twenty minutes to make the magic. The wealthy wait for no one.

LOUELLA. So what do you do?

LIZBETH. Well, if the code says HSF, that means "hip single female," so we put crossover country in the sound system, and a bottle of Chilean red on the swim-up bar. Or if the code reads PFK, that's "professional with kids." So we fill the big screen with Pixar, and the jack'n jill tub with bubbles.

LOUELLA. Does that work?

LIZBETH. We move about three palaces a month.

LOUELLA. Impressive.

ANNA. What are you doing now, Louella?

LOUELLA. Oh, still interviewing—the economy sucks! And, like most grads, I'm parked at home.

ANNA. What did you study?

LOUELLA. Marketing. But I'm waiting for the perfect fit. So for now I'm teaching salsa dancing at the senior center. Y'all should see those grey hairs boogie! It's precious, really.

LIZBETH. Lord, what if someone falls and breaks a hip?

LOUELLA. Oh, the squad is just across the street! One adorable old rocker brings daisies to both sessions every week. I think he's got a teensy crush on moi!

LIZBETH. And your parents, Louella, are they well?

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LOUELLA. Oh heck, yeah. Glad to escape the Atlanta swelter, but dang girls, brrr! Doesn't this chilly air get both your bayonets on point? Silly me, all I packed were these lil' ole' camis. Bubba loaned me his hoodie. Miles too big, but it protects the package! Hoo-wee! Will you just get a gander at this view! It's humbling, that's what it is, humbling. One of the Almighty's better efforts.

ANNA. Wait till you see the sunset full-on. Uber-romantic.

LIZBETH. Hmmm. If this island had organic takeout and a freeway exit, any realtor with a pulse could make a killing.

LOUELLA. So . . . who's gonna give up the inside dope on the bride and groom?

ANNA. Like what?

LOUELLA. C'mon, you know the drill. Who is she? How did they meet?

LIZBETH. Her name is Penelope Clayburgh. They met when her vintage Airstream broke down in front of the farm.

LOUELLA. So it was fate!

ANNA. Or it was faked.

LOUELLA. Faked?

LIZBETH. You will all learn to love Penny, mark my words. She's very creative—and entirely selfless. Never too busy to help out with some tedious little task; always happy to accommodate.

LOUELLA. Once they're married, does she get to be the, uh, Lady of Squash?

ANNA. What do you mean?

LOUELLA. Well, isn't cousin Walter the, um, Lord, or is it Earl? The Earl of Blistex?

LIZBETH. Baron. Baron of the Blisterneck Ball.

ANNA. He used to call Mother his little Baronette.

LOUELLA. How cute is that!

LIZBETH. Yes, Anna and mother generally spent all of July doing cute. Carved out gourds for the lanterns. Tied ribbons on seed packs.

LOUELLA. Really?

ANNA. Mother could transform the hayloft with a few dried vines and a string of twinkle lights.

LIZBETH. But Father had the whole barn remodeled about five years ago—air conditioning, surround sound. Now it's the social event of the year. Black tie, red carpet.

LOUELLA. How many show up?

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LIZBETH. About two hundred.

LOUELLA. Gracious! How do y'all manage?

ANNA. Kelly Farms still plays host, but a local committee supervises all the work.

LIZBETH. The Ball is the main fundraiser for the Squirrel Preserve. Last year's total hit twenty thousand.

LOUELLA. All that for a bunch of squirrels?

ANNA. It's three hundred acres.

LIZBETH. Lots of developers have tried to get their hands on it.

ANNA. But Grandpa Kelly loved the property. All of it—woods, fields, wetlands. So before he died, he set up a foundation to create a county park, with picnic shelters and walking paths.

LIZBETH. We even have a part-time ranger who does programs for the local 4-H.

ANNA. And Grandpa's will stipulates that once a year, they host a fall Festival, free for every resident. It's always the week before the Ball.

LOUELLA. What goes on at this Festival?

ANNA. Games, prizes, food. The crowning of the court—Lizbeth made queen at sixteen.

LOUELLA. Well, of course.

ANNA. Mother's favorite event was the poetry wash.

LOUELLA. Wait—poetry wash?

ANNA. We set up a laundry line, and people attach original poems with clothes pins.

LIZBETH. The winners get a "frosted pumpkin" award.

ANNA. We used to plan killer treasure hunts in the woods—especially when the west coast cousins came east. Remember, Lizbeth?

LOUELLA. How many cousins do y'all have on the Kelly side?

ANNA. Thirty-eight. Sometimes there'd be ten or twelve of us out on the sleeping porch.

LIZBETH. Yes, all arms and legs, covered in little else than humidity.

LOUELLA. Maybe I should bring Bubba to that shindig next summer.

LIZBETH. Sure—for the Festival. But it could be difficult to find tickets to the Ball. They get handed down in people's wills.

LOUELLA. For a barn dance?!

LIZBETH. Oh, look, Elliot's here!

LOUELLA. Who?

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ANNA. Father's business manager.

LOUELLA. Oh, that Elliot. What exactly does he manage?

ANNA. Oh, you know, leases, taxes and stuff.

LOUELLA. Peachy luscious. Hetero?

LIZBETH. Down girl. Anna was there first. (*Calling*) Elliot! Over here!
(*ELLIOT enters. He is 30, smartly dressed.*)

ELLIOT. Greetings all! Hiya Anna.

LIZBETH. Well, at last! Be a dear and move this chair for me, would you?

ELLIOT. Certainly. (*He does. Lizbeth sits.*)

ANNA. Glad you could join us, Elliot.

ELLIOT. Honored to be included. Ellsworth dos are legend!

ANNA. This is our little cousin Louella, who came all the way from Atlanta.

ELLIOT. Welcome to Michigan, Louella. Is that ethical? To say "welcome to Michigan," if I was raised in Missouri and live outside Chicago?

LOUELLA. Well, certainly! You are representin' the northern states!

ELLIOT. What a charming way to put it!

LOUELLA. Oh, I can do charm for hours.

LIZBETH. Do sit down, Elliot.

ELLIOT. Not until my duty is discharged. I was told to send Lizbeth and her cousin to the Treaty of Ghent Room.

LOUELLA. Oh, Lord, I forgot. Mama wants you and me to concoct some kinda art collage for tonight's rehearsal dinner. She brought a whole crate of old timey pictures. Y'know, her and Walter as kids holdin' up pumpkins bigger than their heads. You two toddlers and baby Henry playing with kittens, that kinda crap.

LIZBETH. Why me?

LOUELLA. Mama says you have the best handwriting and can I.D. all the faces. C'mon, I promise to commandeer some cocktails.

LIZBETH. Well, if I must, I must. See you two at dinner, then?

ELLIOT. Of course. (*Lizbeth and Louella exit. Elliot looks out at the water. Anna gets up.*)

ANNA. I guess I should go help, too.

ELLIOT. Oh, no, your Aunt Russell gave me strict instructions to entertain you out here.

ANNA. Oh, sorry about that. It's not necessary.

ELLIOT. Happy to. It's a beautiful island. Tell me, is Russell her real first name?

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ANNA. Yep. Russell Kelly. My mother was named Elizabeth, after her mother. But when Aunt Rusty came along, the doctor said they couldn't have any more children. So she got her father's name. Russell. But they were always called Betsy and Rusty.

ELLIOT. Ah! Then your Betsy Kelly married Walter Ellsworth and two of Somerton's most noteworthy farms became one.

ANNA. Well, leased out now. Father never really farmed a day in his life. Just enjoyed the fruits of his father, I'm afraid. And his wife's father.

ELLIOT. Still, quite an impressive operation. Especially since the gas wells went in.

ANNA. Pays the taxes, anyway. (*She stands.*) It's about time to check on Maureen, before her toes begin to pickle.

ELLIOT. Oh, can you stay just a little longer? This is the first chance I've had to look around. And you've been here before, yes? With your family?

ANNA. Long time ago--I was only seven. But I did spend a summer here during college.

ELLIOT. Really? Working?

ANNA. Yep, gift shop, tickets, stuff like that.

ELLIOT. Did you like it?

ANNA. Very much. It was weird at first, away from the farm. But I loved being all on my own.

ELLIOT. Yes? I always pictured a summer like that, but . . .

ANNA. But?

ELLIOT. Well, let's just say it was made very clear that every paycheck must count. No time for adventures!

ANNA. I'm sorry.

ELLIOT. No reason to be! I developed self-reliance and a head for business. And right now I get to share a stunning evening with a beautiful woman.

ANNA. Well, the scenery is stunning, I'll grant you that.

ELLIOT. Never seen such clear water. You half expect an Ojibwa to paddle by in a canoe.

ANNA. Bateau.

ELLIOT. Sorry?

ANNA. Bateau. It's like a canoe but with a flat bottom.

ELLIOT. Ah! I'm all turned around. Is that Huron or Michigan?

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ANNA. Huron. (*Pause*) Elliot, we really appreciate all you've done for my Father. I don't know if Lizbeth has made that clear. She is sometimes remiss in her . . . manners.

ELLIOT. Mmm, a bit . . . distracted, that's all. No offense. Sometimes I do wonder if she was meant for a different century.

ANNA. Father sent her to Kentworth for social polish, but it comes across as cut glass.

ELLIOT. No worries. Why didn't you or Maureen attend Kentworth?

ANNA. Well, mother'd only been gone a year when I was old enough to start. Then Maureen got a bad case of mono, and Grandma Kelly was fading. So I stayed to help.

ELLIOT. That's a shame.

ANNA. Not really. I liked being home then. Mother used to say "I'm happier in these posies."

ELLIOT. How's that?

ANNA. "I'm happier in these posies and the hollyhocks and sich, than the hummingbird 'at noses in the roses of the rich." A poem. Sorry.

ELLIOT. Don't apologize. She meant a lot to you, didn't she?

ANNA. She did. (*Pause*) Elliot, umm, can you tell me if there's a problem with the Ellsworth Foundation?

ELLIOT. What do you mean?

ANNA. Aunt Russell seems to think it's in some kind of danger.

ELLIOT. In what way?

ANNA. Well . . . some unusual, like, interference, by Penny?

ELLIOT. Oh that. Only a hunch, really. I hope I'm wrong.

ANNA. What exactly has she done?

ELLIOT. Nothing. Directly. It's just, well, Walter has never questioned my advice before. I'm worried he's considering actions that might not be, um, in his best interests.

ANNA. I'm worried, too. Lately he's, he's just not himself, is he Elliot?

ELLIOT. I've only known him a couple years. But there has been a—well, a decline.

ANNA. Like what?

ELLIOT. Less energy. But even more than that—a slowing, or, lack of focus?

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ANNA. Oh, Elliot. I wish there was some way we could put off this marriage ceremony!

ELLIOT. Is that possible?

ANNA. I'm working on it.

ELLIOT. Is there anything I could do?

ANNA. Not really.

ELLIOT. Anna, if you do need my help in any way, please don't hesitate to ask. Anything. Really.

ANNA. Thanks.

ELLIOT. So, how do we get down to the water? I'm a hopeless beach comber.

ANNA. The path is over there. This part of the island always had the best driftwood.

ELLIOT. Excellent! Will you show me the way? Please?

ANNA. Why not. *(They exit. Lights down.)*

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