

# **WHOLLY GHOSTS!**

**BY**

**Pamela Munson Steadman**

# WHOLLY GHOSTS!

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WHOLLY GHOSTS!

*Dedicated to my dear husband, Wayne*

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(The role of 6 Characters are switched in Act 2)

MIRANDA/RANDA IVERSON...20's, a frustrated playwright

LILLIAN GOLD IVERSON KENNEDY ALONSO...60+ overly-critical, thrice married, over-sexed mother of Miranda.

JUSTIN THYME...40+ flaming gay song-and-dance apparition from the 1930's.

NORMA SNOCKERZ...Well-endowed 25+ ditzy Marilyn Monroe-wannabe apparition from the 1950's

DORIS SCHUTT...Another apparition. 50+ grouchy German nanny for the Iverson Family during the 1940's.

BOOMING VOICE-OVER...Woman's voice of a much 'higher realm' perhaps?

DELIVERY BOY...20-something sulker with little personality

MIA DIVA...late 60's, theater director

FLEX HAMM...30's, egotistical body builder

DR. ADELE FARMER...50's, high brow Professor of Poetry

LOTTA BAGAUGE...50's travel agent and actress intent on having a fling with Flex Hamm

WINK ATCHA...20's, irritating stand up comedian

*The single unit set features an empty room with only a small kitchen table, several folding chairs, an old-fashioned radio, large empty moving boxes, and an old sofa.*

*The stage is stark, representing an older Brownstone apartment.*

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*It is morning in an shabby, empty Manhattan Brownstone apartment. The sound of keys is heard and an entrance door opens as MIRANDA IVERSON slowly enters a large room full of unpacked boxes. Dressed in a pair of jeans and an oversized sweatshirt, she's hugging a large cardboard box filled with a laptop, a newspaper, a six-pack of water bottles, 2 bottles of wine, a towel and washcloth, and an NYU nightshirt. She stands there for a few seconds, taking the room in with complete and utter awe. Shaking her head in despair, her phone rings and she drops everything on a kitchen table while rummaging frantically through her purse. A couple of chairs, along with a disheveled sofa, are the only other furniture.*

**MIRANDA.** Caroline, can I call you back later? I'm in the midst of another aftershock. No, trust me, you don't want to know. Okay. Bye. *(Tossing her cell onto the table, she sits down on a chair, head in hands, and heaves out a sigh. A BUZZER is heard. Miranda gets up slowly and walks back over to the door, pushing another button next to it and calls out loudly.)*

**MIRANDA.** Yes...who is it?

**DELIVERY BOY.** I'm here with your...uh bed.

**MIRANDA.** *(Pushing button)* Come on in. I'm here on the main level. *(Miranda opens the door and waits a few seconds for the Delivery Boy to enter. He drags a folding cot with sheets and a pillow stuffed into it into the room and gives the place a once-over.)*

**MIRANDA.** Welcome to *Mansion Les Misérables*...my very own heaven here on earth. Isn't this place just delightful?

**DELIVERY BOY.** *(Shrugging.)* I thought these brownstones were big bucks. I mean it's okay, I guess. Maybe ya can just fix it up nicer.

**MIRANDA.** You're warning me not to expect miracles though, right?

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**DELIVERY BOY.** *(Shrugging again.)* Where do ya want me to put this?

**MIRANDA.** Does it matter? *(The delivery boy brings his hands up in the air waiting for an answer.)* Over on the other side of the room is fine...whatever.

**DELIVERY BOY.** *(Dragging the cot and then setting it up.)*

Uh, not to be nosey or nuthin', but you don't got a bedroom?

**MIRANDA.** Nope. Not yet. The top two floors are rented out. I have to wait until the leases are finished before I can make this place my own...if I choose to live that long. For now, I just have this 'Home Beautiful' studio to call my very own.

**DELIVERY BOY.** *(Looking around and scratching his head.)*

You got a fridge hiding somewhere? I never been to a place with no fridge.

**MIRANDA.** What was actually over in the corner and I got rid of was called an icebox, circa 1940's. A refrigerator is on my to-do list...if I decide to stay.

**DELIVERY BOY.** So you ain't married?

**MIRANDA.** *(Frowning at him.)* No. So that's a good thing or bad thing?

**DELIVERY BOY.** Hey. Whatever floats your boat.

**MIRANDA.** Would you like a bottle of water? It's muggy out there.

**DELIVERY BOY.** Yeah. That would be nice. *(Miranda takes two bottles of water out of the cardboard box and hands one to the delivery boy.)*

**MIRANDA.** Take a seat. *(Both sit quietly for a minute or so, looking around the room with glum faces.)* My great aunt died two years ago and my attorney somehow was remiss in informing me that I had inherited this overstated jackpot.

**DELIVERY BOY.** I'd sue your attorney. Ya got taken for sure.

**MIRANDA.** Supposedly, great Aunt Izzy first laid eyes on me at a Bar Mitzvah of my Uncle Bernie's oldest son. I must have been around five back then. I don't remember her at all. She was my grandfather's oldest sister. According to my mother, she and my grandfather despised one another so much that when they were younger, my grandfather tried twice to run her down with his Model T.

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**DELIVERY BOY.** Model T, huh? The only piece of crap I drive is my Pop s shitty delivery truck from Canarsie to the other boroughs, and then back again. My life ain t no ball of wax either.

**MIRANDA.** I don t even have a driver s license. I ve lived in the city all of my life and never really thought about driving...

**DELIVERY BOY.** All the roads suck big time anyway...you ain t missin much.

**MIRANDA.** Right now I m missing living with my mother in Astoria. OH MY GOD! I actually said that? (*Looking up at the ceiling and folding her hands together dramatically.*) I so deserve a large slap from a hundred wet egg noodles!

**DELIVERY BOY.** Maybe your ma will come here and live wid you instead?

**MIRANDA.** Dear God! Be still your lips!

## SCENE 2

*Lights come on. Miranda is now in her NYU nightshirt, folding a sheet across the top of the cot. Her cell phone rings and she runs over to the table to answer it.*

**MIRANDA.** (*Looking at her watch.*) Hi Ma....Yeah, just swell. If I had a pet rat, I might dress it up, put it on a leash, and take it for a walk....Let me call you tomorrow...It s past midnight already....No...not yet...well, tell Aunt Esther that we ll meet somewhere...No Ma! Not until I get this rat trap in order. Yeah, I m sure the entire family wants to make it their business to see what great Aunt Izzy left me. Put that excitement on hold. No...no...I ll call you tomorrow. Make sure you lock all of the doors tonight Ma. Sleep tight. (*Lights dim as Miranda sets her cell on the floor next to the cot. She climbs in and covers herself, tossing to-and-fro, trying to get comfortable. About a minute passes and she is heard snoring softly. Suddenly, a booming FEMALE VOICE-OVER is heard quoting a Bible*

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verse.)

**BOOMING VOICE-OVER.** BUT IF ANYONE DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR HIS RELATIVES, AND ESPECIALLY FOR MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD, HE HAS DENIED THE FAITH AND IS WORSE THAN THE UNBELIEVER.” *(Miranda sits straight up in shock.)*

**MIRANDA.** *(Sleepily.)* What the hell?

**BOOMING VOICE-OVER.** “IT IS NOT GOOD THAT MAN SHOULD BE ALONE!”

**MIRANDA.** Who’s there? Is somebody else in this place? Come out right this minute! I have a cell phone. I’ll use it if I have to! *(Lights up. The Charleston is heard in the background. JUSTIN THYME makes his entrance, dancing to the song for about a minute’s time. Dressed dapperly, with a top hat and a red silk scarf about his neck while carrying a dancing stick, he stops part way through the song and takes a gander at Miranda. She’s in shock and pulls the covers over her head.)*

**JUSTIN.** Hot socks and all that jazz, but say, aren t you the spiffy Sheba!

**MIRANDA.** OH...MY...GOD!

**JUSTIN.** Not sure who s cracking out the big voice, but it s not me, in case you re wondering, dearie.

**MIRANDA.** *(Rubbing her eyes and motioning Justin to go away.)* If you re a renter upstairs, I m going to have you arrested for breaking and entering! *(Justin twirls around her and takes off his top hat and bows to Miranda.)*

**JUSTIN.** Justin Thyme at your service, kiddo. Don t look so shocked. I m just a gentle song and dance man wanting to rub elbows. I m afraid that I m unable to skidoo like this *(Snaps his fingers.)* ‘Just not that easy due to...how shall I put it...my present...or, shall I say, past condition. *(Miranda jumps up out of her cot, picks up her cell phone on the floor, and stands in front of him angrily.)*

**MIRANDA.** One call! That’s all it s going to take!

**JUSTIN.** Say! Just what in tarnation is that contraption you re waving about?

**MIRANDA.** GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! *(Justin, grinning, throws his top hat onto the kitchen table and pulls up a chair, sitting on it backwards.)*

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**JUSTIN.** I wish it were that easy. I m an apparition if you must know. The last time I appeared, this funny old bird with a cane and a rotten attitude hit me over the head with a brick! It didn t hurt me whatsoever. I d been long gone since 1939...the casualty of futzing around with the Ethel of a grungy gold-digger while we were all at the gin mill. Took two bullets right in the...well, that hit *did* hurt!

**MIRANDA.** (*Closing her eyes tightly and pressing fingers into her temples.*) What are you talking about? I m not hearing this. I m not.

**JUSTIN.** I m trying to tell you that I m dead. Kaput! I can t hurt you even if I wanted to. (*Studying Miranda s nightshirt now.*) Say, may I beg your pardon for a moment? Does NYU” mean New York University?

**MIRANDA.** (*Quickly wrapping the blanket around her now and walking over to sit.*) Of course it does. I suppose you re going to tell me that you got your Masters in Song and Dance and your P.H.D. in Bull Shit?

**JUSTIN.** Begging your pardon?

**MIRANDA.** What s your story and why the hell are you into mine? Just a quick answer and I ll allow you to go back from whence you cometh, without having to find a brick, or a bullet.

**JUSTIN.** That s my baby! I think it s grand that you re not a wet blanket.

**MIRANDA.** Please stop calling me your baby and kiddo. It s demeaning.

**JUSTIN.** Well, how about you re the cat s meow? Or, better yet, you re the tops! (*He stands up and starts to sing Cole Porter s “You re the Tops” to Miranda.*) You re the tops. You re the Coliseum. You re the tops. You re the Louvre Museum. You re a melody from a symphony by Strauss. You re a Bendel bonnet, a Shakespeare sonnet... (*Justin stops after the look Miranda is giving him.*)

**JUSTIN.** Cole Porter. *Anything Goes*. Broadway. The Alvin Theater. I remember it well.

**MIRANDA.** It s now The Neil Simon.

**JUSTIN.** The Neil Simon?

**MIRANDA.** Hello! (*She suddenly realizes that Justin does not know who Neil Simon is.*)

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**MIRANDA.** Neil Simon is only one of the most famous playwrights here in America. The old Alvin is named after him. He s won Tonys and Oscars.

**JUSTIN.** Now you re on the trolley! I remember the Oscars, and Bette the Bitch. She had a fling with my Johnny-Cakes out in LA for several months while trying to snag that Gary. Johnny was never the same after she finished with him. Say doll, a gentleman such as me cannot control having glorious warm affections concerning all of these Tonys and Neils. Do you understand my plight here?

**MIRANDA.** You re gay. I get it. Not a big deal. My cousin Myron’s gay. So s half this city.

**JUSTIN.** Gay huh? Say, that s a swell way of putting it!

**MIRANDA.** My last roommate was a lesbian. She and her partner moved to New Orleans. Judy plays the trumpet in a jazz band and Lynn has sung in a couple of my plays. I had to move in with my mother because I couldn t afford to pay the rent over on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Why the hell am I telling you all of this anyway? It s the middle of the night...morning...and, I m schmoozing with a song and dance man from the ’20 s!

**JUSTIN.** You write plays! How irresistible. I m once again hobnobbing with a swanky swell!

**MIRANDA.** Well, let s put it this way: I m no Wendy Wasserstein nor a Nora Ephron, but I ve made good connections. One of my plays *The Will to Sleep* is in production upstate. I get small stipends and have a few grants. Of course, a lot of credit goes to my writing partner, Wassers aka Jeffrey Wasserman.

**JUSTIN.** I d love to see your plays, dearie. It s just too bad that I m not around anymore. Our Heavenly Father gave me the will to sleep several decades ago.

**MIRANDA.** (*Pondering while examining Justin up and down*) Am I going to wake up and find out that you re the result of the lousy meal I had at Cervetos this evening?

**JUSTIN.** Oh my goodness. I ve been likened to INDIGESTION!

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### SCENE 3

*LILLIAN is seated sipping coffee from a paper cup and staring at a top hat. Another cup is on the table. Miranda slams the door, making a face.*

**MIRANDA.** *(Sarcastically.)* Adios, good riddance, fare-thee-well, get lost, get the hell outta here... *(To Lillian.)* You just *had* to bring them all by today, didn't you? I asked you not to until I get some order to this chaotic mess I've inherited.

**LILLIAN.** *(Sipping and looking the other way.)* Oh please. You? Order? *(Picking up the top hat.)* A prop for another one of your plays?

**MIRANDA.** *(Snatching the hat while scratching her head. She tosses the hat across the room.)* Yes. Do you care, Ma? Truly?

**LILLIAN.** Come finish the coffee that I brought you and then we need to discuss how you're going to decorate this dump.

**MIRANDA.** *(Pacing back and forth.)* Ma, I don't decorate. I just exist. And I write. For a living. This reminds me that I do have a deadline. Not that I'm rushing you off or anything...

**LILLIAN.** Nonsense! Bree says she's looking forward to helping you decorate this dump. In fact, why don't you just let her do it all for you? She and David bought an incredible piece of art from The Gainsboro Gallery up on 101<sup>st</sup> just last week. What colors! She's amazing. Everything matches the purples and browns in their exquisite living room.

**MIRANDA.** *(Rolling her eyes.)* Those colors ought to beautifully complement little Max's thrown Spaghettios, Ma.

**LILLIAN.** Your nephew, my smart little Maxie, doesn't throw his Spaghettios anymore. You'd know that if you visited them more often.

**MIRANDA.** I do the best I can with the time I've got. I don't have a cleaning lady, and I don't like having tchotchkes over the place.

**LILLIAN.** Why must you begrudge your brother's and sister-in-law's success all of the time? David works hard at what he does. He's one of this city's finest real estate attorneys. Bree's got beautiful taste.

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**MIRANDA.** I m thrilled for them both. They *do* work hard at their professions. It s just too bad that David couldn t have counseled great Auntie Izzy before she died concerning the upkeep of my inherited House of Horrors!

**LILLIAN.** (*Shrugging.*) Ya know, for some strange reason, your father s aunt actually *liked* you.

**MIRANDA.** Wow! Thanks for the vote of confidence, Ma.

**LILLIAN.** You know what I mean. You must have somehow impressed her when you were small. Personally, I was very surprised that she didn t leave your brother anything other than some old watches and cufflinks. I wasn t even mentioned in her will. I think she thought I spoiled David too much.

**MIRANDA.** Gee, how d she ever think that?

**LILLIAN.** Suddenly, I see a real connection between you and Izzy now.

**MIRANDA.** (*Sitting down now.*) How s that?

**LILLIAN.** You don t seem to care what anybody thinks of you. You never did. I certainly didn t bring you up that way. Lord knows I tried my best. Izzy didn t care about how she affected people either. She just *had* to be the center of attention. Ms. Schmaltzy in her finest hour. Oy vey!

**MIRANDA.** Ha. I m the furthest thing from a party person. Come on now...

**LILLIAN.** But you re artsy-fartsy like Izzy was...always going to plays and mingling with that crowd of yours.

**MIRANDA.** So what? Playwrights like to mingle. I love being artsy-fartsy. My brain leans to the right!

**LILLIAN.** You should have gone into medicine. You had a much bigger brain when you were in school. I suppose I ll just have to learn to accept the fact that you ll never be interested in finding a nice young man and giving me my just-due grandchildren.

**MIRANDA.** Just-due grandchildren? You already have little Max from David and Bree.

**LILLIAN.** And, what grandchild do I have from you? How much longer does a mother have to wait to become a Bubbe *again*?

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**MIRANDA.** Probably forever.

**LILLIAN.** You never told me what happened between you and that nice Wasserman boy.

**MIRANDA.** That nice Wasserman boy found that nice Zuraski boy.

**LILLIAN.** He adored you! You let him get away.

**MIRANDA.** I did no such thing! He s always been gay Ma. You just didn t want to see that.

**LILLIAN.** But so handsome!

**MIRANDA.** Yeah, but you can t win em all. Besides, he and I are working on another script. He s incredibly talented, and still my very best friend. There s a large theater upstate that wants to produce our script in the spring. *(Looking at her watch.)*

**LILLIAN.** *(Shaking her head and throwing up her hands into the air)* Feh! My father, your grandfather, would not have believed the daughter that I ve raised. What have I done so wrong to you that you don t want to make babies? You can still write when you re a mother.

**MIRANDA.** Ma, I love kids. Just not mine yet.

**LILLIAN.** *(Taking hold of Miranda s arm now and looking straight into her eyes.)* You don t have any, uh, sugar in your britches, do you?

**MIRANDA.** No Ma. I m straight as an arrow. I love men...handsome men, hairy men, over-sexed men, older men, younger men, Jewish men, Italian men, Scandinavian men...

**LILLIAN.** BE STILL MY HEART! Your father was Scandinavian. Trust me; you do *not* want to marry a Swede!

**MIRANDA.** Is that why you and Pops divorced? Because he was a *Swede*? What s wrong with being a Swede?

**LILLIAN.** The man could eat! I think the only reason he married me is because my mother, God rest her soul, made the best braided Challah this side of Brooklyn.

**MIRANDA.** Pop was skinny as a rail. That s a poor excuse to divorce a man. Or, is it because his Aunt Izzy liked to party too much and you were jealous of her. Or, maybe it s because I look just like Pop?

**LILLIAN.** So you re the know-it-all now? Y ou want that I should tell you

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the *real* truth? Your father, Sven Richard Iverson, bored me to death.

**MIRANDA.** He gave you two children. Something must have excited you along the way.

**LILLIAN.** (*Pointing her finger at Miranda now.*) Ya see, that s the very thing I m talking about. You got a fresh mouth just like your father and his side of the family. It s that same expression that he and his Aunt Izzy would have on their faces. That s it in a nutshell!

**MIRANDA.** Ma, we both know it wasn t his family s expressions. And, it certainly wasn t his family s money. You walked out on Pop. You never told me why.

**LILLIAN.** I did it because your father was a meshugener, He was off his rocker! What man buys a new car every year while living in the city, only to pay high parking rates? His family was loaded. He wasted it.

**MIRANDA.** So, Pop was boring, gave you anything you ever wanted, bought a new car every year, and you decided to walk?

**LILLIAN.** (*Pulling out a compact from her purse now and checking out her lipstick.*) Yes. I walked...right down South Side Boulevard each and every day...and, finally, into the arms of that Irish cop that stood on the corner of Feldman and Fifth for years on end.

**MIRANDA.** Patrick.

**LILLIAN.** My one and only true love, Patrick Magee Kennedy.

**MIRANDA.** But you didn t love Pop just a little bit?

**LILLIAN.** I did at first. But he came from Westchester County and I came from the borough. My family had nothing to speak of. They were immigrants, right off of the boat. We struggled to make a better life for ourselves. Maybe it *was* your father s family s money that I wanted so badly, who knows?

**MIRANDA.** (*Softly now.*) It couldn t have been easy with so many brothers and sisters and other family members living in a tiny cramped apartment for so long. I guess I can see a bit why you married for money.

**LILLIAN.** Your father and I grew apart. Our families had nothing in common. A Jew and a Swede.

**MIRANDA.** I was eighteen when you married Patrick Kennedy. A Jew

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and an Irish Catholic.

**LILLIAN.** (*Shrugging*) Nah, that part didn't bother me. It was the fabulous sex that we had that sent us both over-the-moon!

**MIRANDA.** And, then he left you for a girl who worked in the lingerie department at Saks.

**LILLIAN.** Yeah, but I had him during his prime. Oh, did I ever!

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### SCENE 4

*It's afternoon and MIRANDA is seen stretched out on a sofa talking on her cell phone.*

**MIRANDA.** She s getting worse, Caroline...Eight people were here and I had asked her nicely not to bring the entire tribe over until I m settled in...Yep...Yep...No...Not at all...Of course she knows this, but she doesn t care...Yep...Wassers and I are heading upstate. We ll find a B&B, Troy s coming too...His costume ideas are terrific...Yeah...he s up for that film as well, and Wassers thinks he ll get the award...Oh, how we want our play to succeed!...No, you know how Ma is...She could care less...Yeah, I ask myself the same question, *Why* couldn t my mother have been a stage mother?

**BOOMING VOICE-OVER.** “BUT THE WOMAN WAS GIVEN THE TWO WINGS OF THE GREAT EAGLE, SO THAT SHE MIGHT FLY FROM THE SERPENT INTO THE WILDERNESS AND TO THE PLACE WHERE SHE IS TO BE NOURISHED FOR A TIME.” *(Miranda cowers into the sofa now, her arms covering her head. She speaks softly on the phone.)*

**MIRANDA.** That voice is back! That awful booming voice! *(Miranda stretches her arm out, holding her phone.)* Did you hear that Caroline? Tell me you did or I'll go stark-raving mad right here and now! You heard it, right? *(Hopping off of the sofa, Miranda now starts to pace back and forth around her apartment, looking behind pictures, underneath the table and the back of the sofa, etc. Screaming at the top of her lungs.)* WHO ARE YOU? ANSWER ME RIGHT THIS INSTANT! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS NONSENSE, SO COME OUT FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE HIDING! I CAN HAVE A BOOMING VOICE TOO YA KNOW!

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### SCENE 5

*Nanny DORIS SCHUTT slowly walks across the stage, holding tightly to her cane as she raps it hard against the floor. A German Drinking song is heard in the background and she is murmuring in German. Suddenly, a door opens and MIRANDA comes onstage brushing her teeth, wearing her nightshirt. Both women stop and stare at one another for a few seconds.*

**MIRANDA.** For crying out loud! Who the Sam Hill are you?

**DORIS.** *(Speaking English with her German accent. )* I am Doris Schutt, and I lived here with the Iverson family years ago. I was their nanny.

**MIRANDA.** Well, I m very sorry, but I don t believe you live here now. How did you get into my place?

**DORIS.** I walked. How else?

**MIRANDA.** *(Taking Doris my her arm now; however, Doris rudely pushes Miranda away)*I m only saying that if you got into the wrong apartment, I ll help you get back to your own.

**DORIS.** I do not need any help! Why do you think I have a cane?

**MIRANDA.** *(In a gentle tone.)* Then do me a favor before you fall. Kindly sit down on my sofa.

**DORIS.** *(Studying the sofa carefully.)* Is it clean? I do not think so.

**MIRANDA.** Look, I m trying to be nice. I don t want to have to call the police, but I need to sleep and I have no idea who you are or why you roam my space.

**DORIS.** *(Peering up into Miranda s face now and examining her carefully.)*You are one of *them*. I am in the right place.

**MIRANDA.** One of whom?

**DORIS.** The Iversons! Who else would I be talking about?

**MIRANDA.** Well, as a matter of fact, yes. I m an Iverson. I m Miranda Iverson.

**DORIS.** *(Muttering.)* I knew it! You have the same chin and determined look. And, those eyes. I know those eyes!

**MIRANDA.** You do?

**DORIS.** But of course! You are *trouble*. Please do not tell me that you are

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that brat Jame's daughter!

**MIRANDA.** That brat James?

**DORIS.** The one who picked over all of his food. the one who never wanted to take a bath. The one who would spit out his window. The one who always punched his brothers. The one who got everything he ever wanted...

**MIRANDA.** That had to be my Great Uncle Richard's son. It's the only Jimmy Iverson that I know of.

**DORIS.** I insisted on calling him James. Jimmy is a strange name for that evil lad!

**MIRANDA.** It sounds like he got your goat all right. I could make you happier and tell you that he's dead now... 'shot right through the forehead by *Lucky Fat Chance* Venuzzio, one of the crime bosses back then in Chicago.

**DORIS.** (*Nodding her head and waving her finger at Miranda.*)

James Iverson's just-due. I always knew that boy would end up no good.

**MIRANDA.** (*Looking at the audience now.*) Yet another 'just due!' She sounds like my mother!

**DORIS.** I am nobody's mother. I never had the chance to become a mother.

**MIRANDA.** Uncle Jimmy, James, had older brothers. Did you like any of them?

**DORIS.** The Iversons were good to me, until that brat came along. Pampered and so disrespectful. I knew your Great Uncle Richard. He killed my family in Germany. I had to pretend it did not bother me, but it did. I so wanted to go back home but never had the money to do so.

**MIRANDA.** So you took your spite out on his son? We were fighting a war. It was his duty to fight the Germans.

**DORIS.** The love of my life would not marry a cripple. I would never allow it! I was marked!

**MIRANDA.** A cripple? But what does that have to do with my great uncle and his son?

**DORIS.** (*Angrily.*) James pushed me down the stairs! That fall broke about every bone in my body! (*Miranda puts her hand over her own mouth.*)

Isabelle Iverson, and her other brother, Leif, paid for all of my surgeries. I spent months in the hospital, all thanks to that no-good lad.

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**MIRANDA.** Leif Iverson was my grandfather. But why on earth would Uncle Jimmy purposely push you down that awful flight of stairs?

**DORIS.** *James*, I tell you! It was late in the day. Richard had not yet returned from the war, and Sarah was out shopping for some fancy fete. I was in the midst of making a wonderful noodle goulash for supper. I had also made brownies. I called the boys and they all came down the stairs except for James. So, I went up to get him and he demanded brownies instead of a proper supper. I dragged him by his collar to the stairwell. Before I knew what hit me, James did! With all of his ten-year-old might, this horrible young man shoved me right down the stairs!

**MIRANDA.** Oh, I m so very sorry! He pushed you because you wouldn t give him another brownie?

**DORIS.** Of course not. He wanted the entire batch! *(Long pause.)*

**MIRANDA.** *(Shaking her head, she lowers it now into her hands.)* Okay. I need to get something straight. A few nights ago I had a visit in the middle of the night from a song-and-dance man.

This evening, it s a nanny. What s going on?

**DORIS.** You are part of the family now.

**MIRANDA.** The family?

**DORIS.** You live here do you not?

**MIRANDA.** None of you apparitions are my family. I don t know any of you. Why do you presume that we re related?

**DORIS.** Each one of us has shared a memory of being in this house.

**MIRANDA.** Miss...I m sorry, I can t remember your name.

**DORIS.** Nanny Doris Schutt.

**MIRANDA.** You do know that it s getting late. How long are you, uh, staying?

**DORIS.** As long as it takes.

**MIRANDA.** As long as it takes for what exactly?

**DORIS.** As long as it takes for you to remember us all when we do leave.

**MIRANDA.** May I ask how many of you I m going to have the pleasure of making an acquaintance?

**DORIS.** *(Snapping at Miranda)* That is up to you! *(Miranda gets up and paces frantically.)*

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**MIRANDA.** It s very late and I need to get up early...

**DORIS.** Be thankful that you *can* get up!

**MIRANDA.** I truly don t want to be mean, but you so need to just leave.  
Now.

**DORIS.** No. I do not go away until you hear my story. It is important that you do. (*Miranda lets out a long deep sigh and sits back down upon the sofa. Doris picks up her cane, taps it on the floor, and walks to the stage steps, sitting down quite slowly.*) I was ten-years-old when I came by boat to this country from Berlin. We had lived well in Germany, but my father and his brother wanted a new life here in America. They had been manufacturers and ended up making cigars once we left the island. Oh, that awful island. So dirty! My mother, she got very ill, but my father and my uncles managed to give enough money to the medical officers to keep her in hospital until she was well enough to take the Battery boat with us to our dwelling on the lower East side. What a dump it was! I lost a sister to pneumonia because we had no heat for a few months at a time. My mother did laundry on the side. She had never had to work in Berlin. It was a cruel new world for us all. I swore to my mother that I was going to leave and go back home to Berlin, but I never had enough money...I always had to go to pay the bills. My father got ill and my uncle lost the cigar business. I'd enough good schooling in Germany and could speak broken English at best, so I went to the very rich and applied for nanny work. The Iverson Family hired me right away. I was so very young. I was *not* used to boys. Believe me, I got used to them very quickly! So many parties in this house. Isabelle ignored Prohibition laws. There was liquor coming in and out of every crevice of this house. The downstairs parties right here where we are now, were quite rowdy at times. Loud music, dancing, carousing, gambling...Oh, I could tell you so much more... I was upstairs with the boys all of the time. I would read to them and tell them stories of being a young girl in Germany. All was well except with James, who often got bored and would sneak down to sit upon the stairs to watch the partiers. One evening, I went to fetch him and he let out a terrible shriek. He kicked and screamed at me. A few of the men came up the stairway to see what was happening. James insisted that I had hit him

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hard. I told the men that I was only trying to put the Iverson boys to bed. When they heard my German accent, they started to accuse me of being a traitor to this country. Believe you me, I was interrogated for many days. The looks! Those insinuations! It was Richard and his wife who insisted that I was a good nanny. Your grandfather, Leif, and Isabelle treated me fairly, but I am not sure that they believed I did not have some association with Germany still. I stayed; I fell in love with a young man who was a cook on a steamer. The Second World War came and the accusations against me got worse, of course. I was getting much older and was hoping to marry so that I could have a life of my own. My young man was ready to propose marriage when I was pushed down the stairs by James and left a cripple. My young man married a passenger on a steamer headed to London. I stayed for years with your family. But my life had been ruined. *(Doris slowly picks up her cane and walks back to Miranda)*

**DORIS.** So you see, my story is now your story my dear. Guten Morgen!

### SCENE 6

*No person is on stage. A spotlight follows a blonde Marilyn Monroe look-alike. NORMA SNOCKERZ is coming up to the stage from the back of the audience singing. She is in an over-kill slinky and tight dress, and is comically well-endowed. She saunters up towards the stage, stopping to wink at any men in the audience, using many of Monroe's gestures. When she reaches the stage, she talks to herself.*

**NORMA.** Ooop Boop Be Doop! *(Turning again to the audience and walking towards the front of the stage with a breathy voice...)* ‘Guess I’m supposed to be back here for some reason, huh? I mean I usually don’t get a call-back unless somebody has royally screwed up their role! Wow. Lucky me. *(Looking around the stage.)* Oh, the good times I’ve had in this place, especially with that small bit film director, Eddie Peabody. For some reason, he just loves to audition me in that upstairs bedroom. Well, it *is* for guests. His ideas are a bit unusual to say the least. I give him all that I have and more, but Monroe always gets the part at the end. Marilyn and I

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have the same birth name. Norma. She's Norma Jean and I'm Norma Hazel. I kept my own name because I'm not ashamed who I am. Mama was a sweet home maker, and Daddy died too young in life. He worked as electrician. He was a wonderful husband, and father. But he wasn't a good electrician... *(She violently shakes her body all over as indicating electrocution.)* BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ! *(A door opens and Miranda comes in, wearing her nightshirt and brushing her teeth)*

**MIRANDA.** Oh, for crying out loud, not again! *(Looking at her toothbrush now.)* I'm so wondering if this toothpaste has gone bad and is giving me these freakin hallucinations?

**NORMA.** *(Taken back as she walks over to gaze at Miranda)* Hello. Don't tell me *you're* the one sleeping with Eddie now? The little rat! Well, as much as I'd like to tell you that you won't ever get a part dressed like that, maybe I ought to just let you find out the hard way. *(Miranda sighs and points to the cot.)*

**MIRANDA.** Does it look like this Eddie and I could make love on *that* contraption?

**NORMA.** *(Covering her ears now and shaking her head)* You can't say those words *make love!* No. No. No! I so wanted Marilyn's part in *Let's Make Love* with that sexy Frenchman, Yves Montand! And, it wasn't as if I didn't get a second glance from Yves either!

**MIRANDA.** *(To the audience.)* I fasted for most of today, so this whole thingy can't be a food allergy.

**NORMA.** *(Studying Miranda closely.)* Oh. I get it now. You're auditioning for the part in *Plain Jane Does it All.*

**MIRANDA.** Thanks. Thanks a lot.

**NORMA.** Fess up then. Is Eddie hiding under your bed?

**MIRANDA.** Gosh, oh gee...he just might be...wanna take a look? Be my guest!

**NORMA.** Oh, never mind. He's not worth it. Marlon told me that lots of times. Marlon knew best, ya know.

**MIRANDA.** Marlon? Like in Brando?

**NORMA.** No, silly. Marlon Marshall. He was the stage hand for our production of *Lady on the Lam.*

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**MIRANDA.** Here in the city?

**NORMA.** Heavens no! It was back in high school back in Avella. I played the maid. I wanted the role of *Margaret*, but Harry Ridgeway, who played the butler, gave me a case of the giggles and I blew it! Judy Morgan got the role. Of course I know how *she* got the role. She always flirted with our English teacher and would call him ‘Cupcakes’ behind his back; and, probably when he was flat on his back too! *(A long pause.)*

**MIRANDA.** Let s cut to the chase. Just what lesson are you here to teach me this early morning?

**NORMA.** *(Shrugging.)* I’m not a teacher. I’m an actress. Do you think my dress looks tight enough? Men like tight behinds. That’s a known fact.

**MIRANDA.** Damn it! Who the hell are you? I need to sleep!

**NORMA.** I m Norma Snockerz, understudy to Marilyn Monroe, who should really be the understudy to me! Who are *you*? *(Looking up with her arms stretched out and her hands folded in prayer.)* Hey, Booming Voice! Some words of wisdom, please!

**BOOMING VOICE-OVER.** *(Norma can t hear it or respond.)* IF ONLY YOU WOULD BE ALTOGETHER SILENT. FOR YOU, THAT WOULD BE WISDOM. THERE IS MORE HOPE FOR A FOOL THAN FOR SOMEONE WHO SPEAKS WITHOUT THINKING.”

**MIRANDA.** *(To the audience.)* Interesting! A verse for me, and another one for the dumb blonde.

**NORMA.** I am *not* a dumb blonde!

**MIRANDA.** Is that your natural color?

**NORMA.** I find it highly insulting that you come in here and insult my intelligence!

**MIRANDA.** *(To the audience again.)* What’d I tell you? Okay, what is the capital of Texas?

**NORMA.** *(Struts back and forth across the stage)*

I know the answer to this one...hmmm...uh, could you repeat that?

**MIRANDA.** What is the capital of Texas?

**NORMA.** *(Grinning now)* The capital of Texas is T!”

**MIRANDA.** *(Shaking her head in disbelief.)* And, you re supposed to be teaching me something?

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**NORMA.** Okay, Miss Smarty Pants. Tell me who *you* are!

**MIRANDA.** I'm a playwright named Miranda Iverson. My great aunt has ruined my life; my mother wants me to give her grandchildren; all the guys in my life are gay, especially the good-looking ones; my brother and his wife are successful and powerful overachievers; I've got tenants upstairs whom I haven't met yet; I keep hearing Bible verses coming from a booming voice; I've had the undeniable displeasure of meeting three apparitions in the last couple of days... a hyped-up vaudevillian, a disturbed nanny, and a Marilyn-wannabe; I still have to revise the last ten pages of a script; I need to get some sleep because my writing partner and I are driving to upstate New York tomorrow early in the morning.

**NORMA.** Wow! An honest-to-goodness playwright. See, being in the movies is great, but being on stage makes a person high class. Arthur Miller is high class.

**MIRANDA.** Arthur Miller is dead.

**NORMA.** (*Shocked.*) I wonder if Marilyn knows about this?

**MIRANDA.** She doesn't. Marilyn Monroe died in 1962. Arthur Miller died in 2005. This is 2013.

**NORMA.** (*Shrugging*) Some things just can't be explained I guess.

### SCENE 7

*Now, only JUSTIN TYME, DORIS SCHUTT, and NORMA SNOCKERZ are sitting on the sofa and laughing. An older radio is on a table. Justin sits between the two women. Justin and Norma raise their wine glasses and Doris raises the wine bottle.*

**JUSTIN.** Here's to the gay 20's and the swinging 30's! I toast Hellzapoppin, straw boaters, and pleated trousers! Who'd a thunk my ravishing Ramón would come to Papa here looking so dapper?

**DORIS.** (*Glaring at Justin.*) You and your lover Ramón will be punished!

**NORMA.** Aw, golly gee, Doris. Can't ya just once give a guy a break?

**DORIS.** (*Sternly to Norma.*) I gave this silly man a hit with a brick once!

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**JUSTIN.** (*Hugging Doris*) I love you, you old bird. I never felt a thing.

**DORIS.** (*Pulling away.*) In the old country, nobody would allow us in the same house together!

**NORMA.** And, that s why it s called *the old country*. It s time to kick up our heels and raise some fresh hell!

**JUSTIN.** (*Hugging Norma now.*) ‘Atta girl! That s my bearcat for you! (*Looking at Norma s breasts now.*) I m blotto on them bubs. They re the real McCoy all right!

**DORIS.** I thought you were an odd duck? Odd ducks do not stare at those...those...things!

**JUSTIN.** Absolutely, but this one s a heavy vamp and is sending me blotto!

**NORMA.** Does this mean that I have to now sleep with you Justin? I mean, if you really like me and could get me a part in the movies...or on stage. Well, I just might think about it.

**DORIS.** WENN SCHWEINE FLIEGEN!

**JUSTIN.** She just said, When pigs fly. My bell-bottomed futz , Freddie Steinheimer, used to spout that out all of the time.

**DORIS.** And, just what is a bell-bottom may I ask?

**NORMA.** Hey! My bottom is kind of like a bell? What do you think, Song-and-dance man? (*Norma wiggles quickly over to Justin and turns herself around a few times.*) Oop Boop Be Doop!

**JUSTIN.** (*To Norma.*) Look kiddo. You re no dumb Dora by any means. I may check out your chassis, but I m still an old fruit who s only interested in an Oliver Twist.

**DORIS.** (*To Justin.*) Why do you never speak so that I can understand you? Speak in English!

**NORMA.** (*To Doris.*) Well, that s a silly thing to say. You speak French.

**DORIS.** (*Infuriated.*) French? You think that I speak that horrible native tongue? GEGEN DUMMHEIT GIBT ES SKEINE PILLEN!

**NORMA.** Did you just say something naughty, Nanny?

**DORIS.** Here is my German-to-English translation for you, you over-stuffed fake fraulein:, n o medicine will ever cure stupidity!

**NORMA.** Well, all I can say is that that doesn t sound very nice. (*Justin*

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*goes over to a radio and turns on some music. It s RAP. All three of them come closer to the radio with horrible expressions now)*

**DORIS.** What the hell is that? Turn it off this instant! *(Music fades.)*

**NORMA.** *(In a stupor.)* The playwright said Arthur Miller died in 2005.

**DORIS.** Who is this Arthur Miller?

**NORMA.** Another man who loved Marilyn. She got them all. Not fair!

**JUSTIN.** Say, this music was awful goofy. How can one operate the smooth moves listening to this stuff anyway?

**NORMA.** If it s the year 2005, then Arthur Miller must like this music. I bet he and Marilyn dance to it. So, why can t we? *(She jiggles her body and saunters about.)*

**DORIS.** FIND ME A POLKA! 2005? What is that? It is 1943.

**JUSTIN.** *(Justin keeps on turning the knob on the radio. No music is heard.)* My dear old fraulein, the year is 1938. Where are Porter and Gershwin? I don t understand this...

**NORMA.** *(To the audience.)* I got me a bell bottom for sure! How about that! Ooop boop be doop!

**DORIS.** *(Raising her cane in the air now while swaying back and forth, singing in her German accent.)* "It was just one of those things...just one of...of..."

**JUSTIN.** *(Dancing and singing now in front of the women.)* Oh, yeah...just one of those fabulous flings...Dear man, that Cole Porter!

**ALL THREE.** *(Joining arms, singing and kicking as though in a chorus line as they go out a stage door.)* 'Hoping we meet all again...

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