

SILVER THAW

A Mystery in Two Acts

by Schatzie Schaefer

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SILVER THAW

Silver Thaw was originally produced by Anchorage Community Theatre in Anchorage, Alaska in October of 2017 featuring the following cast:

Peyton.....Paul Randall
Deena.....Amanda Cantrell
Helen.....Jan Jones
Shelly.....Devan Hawkins
Menard.....Jim Haacke
Svetlana.....Mary Claire Letourneau
McLean.....Todd Sherwood
Trooper Jim.....Evan Carson
Owens.....Tae-nyun Kim
Vanderbilt.....Jill Sowerwine
Elwood.....Oliver Siemans
Mayzie.....Farrah Green-Palmer

Radio Announcer....Bill Jordan (recorded)

CHARACTERS

PEYTON	Male, 40-60. Front desk attendant on the overnight shift. A stubborn know-it-all.
DEENA	Female, mid-30s. Housekeeping manager. Physically strong and sharp-witted.
HELEN	Female, early 70s. Kitchen hostess. Friendly, eccentric and becoming a bit daffy.
SHELLY	Female, early 20s. The Innkeeper's daughter, on her first shift as manager-on-duty. Close friends with Deena.

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MENARD	Male, 50s. A hotel guest. A nice enough guy, but sneaky and mysterious.
SVETLANA	Female, 30s or 40s. A disgruntled housekeeper. Speaks Russian. Impatient but hardworking.
MCLEAN	Male, late 50s. A hotel guest. Marketing executive for Mellaco. Warm and affable.
TROOPER JIM	Male, late 20s. A Washington State Trooper. Folksy and jovial.
OWENS	Male, early 30s. A hotel guest. Marketing executive for Mellaco. Cocky and often rude.
VANDERBILT	Female, 50s. A hotel guest. Very snobby and prone to constant complaining.
ELWOOD	Male, mid-50s. A hotel guest on his honeymoon. Pious, pleasant and very much in love with Mayzie.
MAYZIE	Female, mid-50s. Elwood's wife. Pious, pleasant and very much in love with Elwood.
RADIO ANNOUNCER	Voice of a male news announcer. Mature, credible.

SETTING: The lobby and great room of the Landry Channel Lodge, a charming country inn located in the small tourist town of Landry, Washington, somewhere north of Seattle.

TIME: Late September of 1982.

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THE STAGE SET

Upstage right is a set of glass doors that serve as the entrance to the inn. Upstage left is the door to the office, and the check-in desk sits in front of this. In the center of the room is a lounging area with a coffee stand, water cooler or pitcher, and small waste basket. There are exits both stage left and stage right that lead offstage to the guest rooms and other areas of the inn. Downstage extreme right is a swinging door exit to the kitchen. Downstage extreme left there is a small reading area, referred to as the library, which is largely hidden from view from the upstage areas such as the front desk.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play takes place during an ice storm. Ice storms are deceptively quiet weather events. Their danger comes from ice-covered roads and the weight of ice breaking tree limbs and power lines, rather than from heavy wind. Thunder and lightning are possible, though not essential to the atmosphere.

This mystery relies heavily on the precise movement of characters into and out of the lobby. The stage directions have been carefully crafted to preserve the logic of the plot, so productions are encouraged to follow them as written.

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

About 5pm on a Wednesday. At rise, the lobby is empty. PEYTON enters through the main doors. He hangs up his coat. He begins to cross to the front desk, but stops when he notices something high up on the downstage "wall." He stares at it a few moments before continuing to the front desk. He turns on the radio, turns the dial through static, music, commercials, etc, until he finds a station in the midst of a news report. He settles in behind the front desk and busies himself with paperwork.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. ...from her week-long visit to the Soviet Union earlier this month. *(Pause)* In a televised news conference at the White House today, President Reagan said that U.S. Marines have begun arriving in Beirut and will remain there until Israeli and Syrian forces are withdrawn from Lebanon. Mr. Reagan said he was reasonably optimistic that both Israel and Syria will withdraw their troops as quickly as possible to their own borders.

PEYTON. Ha! Fat chance of that, Ronnie.

RADIO ANNOUNCER. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin has requested an independent judicial inquiry into the mid-month Palestinian massacre in West Beirut.

(DEENA enters from SR, pushing a Hoky sweeper around the lobby.) Officials from Sony have announced the introduction of a new product, the CDP-101, also known as the compact disc audio player. Compact disc audio players are expected to hit the U.S. market in November at a price of approximately seven-

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hundred fifty U.S. dollars. *(Deena stops suddenly when she sees the wall. Stares at it a few moments.)* An early winter cold front, creating freezing rain conditions and making its way west across the northern U.S. has now reached as far as Spokane. Seattle area businesses are closing early, and thoroughfares are jammed as unprecedented low temperatures are expected to hit later this evening. *(Pause)* This has been a KWST news report, I'm Don Shepherd. Join us again next hour for news and weather together on the eights. *(A KWST jingle plays, followed by elevator music which plays underneath the following dialogue.)*

DEENA. When did this happen?

PEYTON. Beats me. I just got here.

DEENA. Has Shelly seen this?

PEYTON. Couldn't tell you. Just got here, like I said. Can you believe this weather?

DEENA. Did you see anyone? Outside?

PEYTON. Nope.

DEENA. Probably kids pulling a prank.

PEYTON. That's one hypothesis. *(HELEN enters from the kitchen. She is dressed in clothing that is far more youthful than her age, along with legwarmers that do not match her outfit. (Peyton nods in Helen's direction.)* Or it could have been this nutjob.

HELEN. What coulda been? *(Sees wall)* Oh! Would you look at that!

DEENA. Helen, have you seen Shelly?

HELEN. She called, says she's on her way. *(Continues to examine the wall.)* Isn't that something? *(Giggles. Deena goes behind the front desk and snaps off the radio.)*

PEYTON. Hey! I was listening to the news.

DEENA. People don't need to hear that stuff, it's depressing.

HELEN. Isn't it, though? So much sadness in the world these days.

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PEYTON. I think folks want to stay informed.

DEENA. Our guests don't come to the inn to stay informed, Peyton. They come here to get away from the rat race.

HELEN. What a terrible year it's been. All the violence and destruction. And can you believe how many celebrities we've lost? Grace Kelly, Henry Fonda, Ingrid Bergman...

PEYTON. Ayn Rand. Thelonious Monk.

DEENA. John Belushi.

HELEN. Oh, I never cared for him.

PEYTON. Not everyone comes here for a getaway. See? *(Referring to the guest ledger.)* We've got two refinery men coming in tonight. Bet you dollars to donuts they'd like to stay on top of current events.

HELEN. *(Reading at the ledger.)* Oh, Mr. McLean's checking in! I just adore him.

PEYTON. Try not to molest the poor man, Helen.

DEENA. *(Grabbing the ledger from Helen.)* One stayover, Mr. Menard. He's been here, what, three weeks? He's an odd duck. But look who I'm talking to. Let's see... got a couple in the honeymoon suite, I better put some chocolates in there. Oh, no!

HELEN. What is it?

DEENA. Genevieve Vanderbilt.

HELEN. Ooh! Mr. McLean and Ms. Vanderbilt in one night? I'd better dab on some lipstick. This is a special occasion.

DEENA. She's a hassle, Helen.

HELEN. She's famous! Or at least related to famous people.

PEYTON. How do you know?

HELEN. How many people do you know named Vanderbilt? And she's so... you know... fancy! *(Exits into the kitchen.)*

DEENA. With any luck, she'll cancel.

PEYTON. It could happen. Looks like a freeze-up on the way. *(The phone rings.)*

DEENA. God willing, that's her now. *(Takes the Hoky sweeper and exits SL. SHELLY enters through the main doors.)*

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PEYTON. Landry Channel Lodge, this is Peyton. *(Pause)* Yes, sir. Oh, yes, it's pretty rough going out there. *(Shelly sees the wall and lets out a shriek.)* Best to stay off the roads in these conditions. *(Pause)* Thanks for calling, we appreciate it.

DEENA. *(Enters, nearly running into Shelly as she races off, clutching her stomach.)* I take it she saw the wall.

PEYTON. Apparently, so. She's a bundle of nerves, that one.

DEENA. Her first night on her own and this happens.

PEYTON. Should we call George?

DEENA. Nah. Shelly can handle it.

PEYTON. Well, she's too young to act as on-duty manager, if you ask me.

DEENA. *(Inspects the wall again.)* How did someone get up that high? You'd need a ladder.

PEYTON. Could've been Helen, she knows where we keep the ladder. That woman's getting daffier every day. I'm telling you, it's all that Tab she drinks.

DEENA. The caffeine?

PEYTON. The saccharin! It's deadly stuff.

DEENA. I do wish she'd stop hugging the guests. It's embarrassing.

PEYTON. You should tell her that.

DEENA. George thinks it's charming.

MENARD. *(Enters carrying a newspaper. He is dressed in outdoor recreation clothing, but it's all very crisp and new, suggesting he hasn't actually done any hiking or fishing in them. As he crosses to the library, he sees the wall and stops.)* Oh, my.

PEYTON. Evening, Mr. Menard. Don't mind the wall.

MENARD. Vandals?

DEENA. Kids, probably. The closer we get to Halloween, the more you see things like this.

MENARD. I swear, kids these days get away with murder.

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DEENA. They're not allowed to go out trick-or-treating like normal kids, so they pull pranks around town instead.

MENARD. No trick-or-treating?

DEENA. They outlawed it years ago. The story is there was some mean old lady who handed out poisoned candy one year, killed some kids and a few of their parents.

MENARD. That's awful!

DEENA. Can you even imagine what kind of sick mind operates like that? To want to randomly kill a bunch of people, including strangers?

PEYTON. It's hogwash.

DEENA. What do you mean?

PEYTON. There's no evidence it ever happened. In fact, there's never been a single case of poisoned Halloween candy in history. Not in Landry, not anywhere.

MENARD. Is that so?

PEYTON. No razor blades in apples, either. Pure fiction. Actually, I take that back. One reported case in Texas in 1974. A father who poisoned his son's Halloween candy to collect on a life insurance policy. That man's still on death row.

DEENA. How on earth do you know all that?

PEYTON. I stay informed.

SHELLY. *(Enters, looking sickly.)* Oh, Mr. Menard. I'm so sorry about the... the wall.

MENARD. Not to worry. Kids will be kids. Well... if you'll excuse me. *(Crosses to the library area to read his newspaper. This makes him not visible from most of the lobby.)*

SHELLY. *(To Deena)* Kids?

DEENA. Who knows?

SHELLY. It looks like blood.

DEENA. Spray paint. Fresh, I can still smell it.

SHELLY. Think it'll scrub off?

DEENA. Doubtful.

SHELLY. Dad's gonna lose it.

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DEENA. Not if he never sees it. Call around tomorrow, I'm sure we can get someone over here to clean it.

PEYTON. Clean it? They'll have to sand down the wood and re-stain it. It'll cost a pretty penny, I assure you.

SHELLY. But the guests! Oh my God, Deena.

DEENA. Relax. Not much you can do about it tonight.

SVETLANA. *(Enters, rolling a housekeeping cart. She sees the wall and stops.)* Chto eto? Ya ne sobirayus' eto ubirat' yesli vy tak dumayete. *(WHAT IS THIS? I'M NOT CLEANING IT UP, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK.)*

DEENA. Are the reserves ready?

SVETLANA. Konechna! Ya kto-lentyayka, kotoraya zanimayetsya odnim tuneyadstvom? *(OF COURSE! WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE, A SLACKER?)*

DEENA. I was just asking, jeez. Everyone's so sensitive today.

SHELLY. Maybe we could... paint over it?

PEYTON. And damage the wood even further? That'll cost you even more.

SHELLY. Great. Vandalism and dangerous road conditions. This is all I need.

SVETLANA. Vy, amerikantsy, vseгда prevrashchayete vso v velikuyu dramu. *(YOU AMERICANS ARE ALWAYS TURNING EVERYTHING INTO A BIG DRAMA.)*

DEENA. She's right, Shelly. It's a twelve-room lodge, not the Hilton.

SHELLY. How do you understand each other?

SVETLANA. Uborschchike imeyut sekretnyy yazyk. Eto vso v intonatsiye. *(HOUSEKEEPERS HAVE THEIR OWN SECRET LANGUAGE. IT'S ALL IN THE INFLECTION.)*

DEENA. Exactly.

SVETLANA. Posmotri, chto ya nashla v sto shestnadsatom nomere. *(LOOK WHAT I FOUND IN ROOM 106.) (Pulls a Rubik's Cube from the housekeeping cart.)*

PEYTON. What's that doohickey?

SHELLY. It's a Rubik's Cube. You've never seen one?

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PEYTON. As in Erno Rubik? The Hungarian architect?
(*Svetlana shrugs and hands it to Peyton.*) What do you do with it?

DEENA. It's like a puzzle. You move the parts around until each side is all one color.

PEYTON. Fascinating. But how do you solve it?

DEENA. Beats me. (*To Svetlana*) Okay, what's left to do?

SVETLANA. Kuchu gryaznovo bel'ya. Naverno ye mne pridetsya vse samoy sdelat'. (*A TON OF DIRTY LAUNDRY LEFT. I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO DO IT ALL MYSELF.*)

DEENA. I'll help you if you promise to lighten up a little. (*Exit Deena and Svetlana with cart, as MCLEAN enters through the main doors. He carries luggage and a briefcase.*)

SHELLY. Mr. McLean! Welcome back.

MCLEAN. Please, Shelly, call me Bill. Great to see you.
(*Removes his coat and is shaking it off when he notices the wall.*) Some interesting new artwork you've got there.

SHELLY. I'm so sorry, Mr. McLean... Bill. It just happened today and I haven't had a chance to—

MCLEAN. (*Laughs*) No worries. I'm just glad to be home. My second home, that is. Is George around?

PEYTON. He's away until Monday. Shelly here's in charge.

MCLEAN. I see. Someday this will be all yours, huh?

SHELLY. No guarantee of that. How was I-5?

MCLEAN. Like a solid sheet of ice.

PEYTON. What did I tell you? Freeze up. Maybe even an ice storm.

MCLEAN. This early?

PEYTON. Perfect conditions for it.

MCLEAN. Hopefully Mr. Owens will make it in.

SHELLY. Yes, let's hope so.

PEYTON. (*Consulting a list of refinery employees.*) Remind me, are you with Shore or Mellaco?

MCLEAN. Mellaco.

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PEYTON. Ah, here you are. Just your initials here, please. You'll be in room 106. *(McLean signs as Peyton gets him a room key.)*

MCLEAN. End of a very long junket for both of us. Two nights here and we're back to Seattle for a long while.

SHELLY. I'm sure Mrs. McLean will be happy to have you home.

MCLEAN. No guarantee of that. *(Pointing to the Rubik's Cube.)* My son can solve one of those in less than three minutes.

PEYTON. No kidding?

MCLEAN. Ten years old. I can't figure the darn thing out myself.

HELEN. *(Enters from the kitchen, drinking a can of Tab and carrying a plate of cookies.)* Mr. McLean! Aren't you a sight for sore eyes? *(Sets down the cookies, and rushes over to hug McLean. He warmly returns the embrace.)*

MCLEAN. Helen Wheels! You look fantastic as always.

HELEN. I've been going to Jazzercise!

MCLEAN. I can tell.

HELEN. Gotta watch my figure, you know. Which is why I'm not even touching these cookies. But you should have some. They've just cooled off. *(Takes the cookies and fills a glass jar, which sits on a table in the lobby next to a coffee pot, creamers, etc.)*

MCLEAN. I'd love to, but the wife's got me on a diet.

HELEN. You? You're fit as a fiddle!

MCLEAN. Hardly. She makes me drink this diet stuff. *(Pulls a thermos out of one of his bags.)* Gotta haul it around everywhere I go.

HELEN. Would you like a Tab? I've got a fridge-full.

PEYTON. Are you trying to kill the man, Helen?

MCLEAN. Thanks, I never really cared for pop.

HELEN. How about some coffee, then?

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MCLEAN. Ah! Now you're talking. Don't mind if I do.
(Crosses to the table and helps himself, as TROOPER JIM enters through the main doors.)

TROOPER JIM. Howdy, folks! Everything hunky-dory around here?

HELEN. Trooper Jim! *(Races over to hug him.)*

TROOPER JIM. Hello, Helen. *(Sees the wall.)* Whoa. What happened here?

SHELLY. We think it was kids. I mean, who else? *(Jim, Shelly & Helen cross downstage to inspect it.)*

TROOPER JIM. When?

HELEN. Less than an hour ago, I guess. The lobby couldn't have been empty for more than a few minutes.

TROOPER JIM. No kids out there tonight. You can barely walk through the parking lot. And we've got cars going off the highway all up and down I-5.

PEYTON. I suspect it was an inside job.

TROOPER JIM. 'Scuse me?

PEYTON. As in someone already in the hotel.

TROOPER JIM. Do you want to file a report, Shelly?

SHELLY. I'm hoping we can take care of it before my father gets back on Monday. No need to upset him. If you don't mind.

TROOPER JIM. Got it. Mum's the word.

MCLEAN. Consider me sworn to secrecy.

HELEN. I think it's a very convincing likeness.

MCLEAN. Helen Wheels! *(Helen and McLean giggle.)*

SHELLY. I wish I could see the humor in it.

TROOPER JIM. This oughta cheer you up, Shelly. I brought you a little something.

SHELLY. What's that?

TROOPER JIM. Your favorite. Reese's Pieces! *(Whips out a large bag of the candy.)*

SHELLY. Thanks, but I'm not feeling so good today.

TROOPER JIM. Hope it's not that crud that's going around.

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SHELLY. No, just an upset stomach.

PEYTON. You didn't drink one of Helen's Tabs, did you?

HELEN. What's wrong with Tab? It's healthy.

PEYTON. About as healthy as battery acid.

HELEN. I'm watching my figure!

PEYTON. Yeah, well, nobody else is.

HELEN. What say I put these in a nice dish for the guests?

(Takes the bag of candy and exits to the kitchen.)

TROOPER JIM. Sorry you're not feeling well, Shelly. But I'm glad you're here. I was really hoping I'd get a chance to see you because— *(OWENS enters through the main doors.)*

MCLEAN. Owens! You made it.

OWENS. Just barely. It was white-knuckle the whole way. Gave me one hell of a headache.

MCLEAN. How was Chicago?

OWENS. Dirty. How was Alaska?

MCLEAN. Just the opposite. All that...*(inhales)* fresh air.

OWENS. All that...*(inhales)* isolation.

TROOPER JIM. As I was saying, when you're feeling better, maybe... *(But Shelly pays no attention to Jim. Her focus is entirely on Owens.)*

OWENS. I don't know how you can stand these god-forsaken places.

MCLEAN. Well, you're more of a city boy at heart.

OWENS. Really, couldn't they've just built the refineries a little closer to Seattle? They don't even have a McDonald's here.

PEYTON. No franchises. It's a town ordinance.

OWENS. Primitive. *(Notices the wall.)* Speaking of primitive... Nice cave art.

MCLEAN. Yes, apparently there was some recent vandalism.

OWENS. I'd call it an improvement on this dump.

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HELEN. *(Enters with the candy dish, now full of Reese's Pieces. She sets it on the front desk and crosses to Owens.)*

Welcome!

OWENS. Spare me the hug, Lady.

HELEN. Oh!

MCLEAN. I'm afraid my colleague here is not a hugger.

PEYTON. Nothing wrong with that. *(To Owens)* I take it you're also with Mellaco?

SHELLY. Yes. Mr. Owens has stayed with us several times. Good to see you again.

OWENS. Yeah. Hi.

PEYTON. Initials here, Mr. Owens. You're in 102. *(Hands Owens a room key.)*

OWENS. I was hoping we could get together for dinner later.

SHELLY. You were?

OWENS. I was talking to Bill.

SHELLY. *(Embarrassed)* Oh. Of course.

OWENS. Maybe that place with the prime rib and seafood? What's it called?

PEYTON. Landry Prime Rib and Seafood.

OWENS. Catchy.

MCLEAN. Dinner sounds great. And how about some drinks afterward?

OWENS. Is there a decent bar in this town?

MCLEAN. Right here. *(Reaches into one of his bags and pulls out a bottle of high-quality bourbon.)* We can enjoy some fine bourbon and look out at the Channel.

OWENS. Sounds like a real party.

MCLEAN. *(Crosses downstage to look out at the channel.)* Oh! Hello. Didn't see you there. *(Menard just nods, a brief smile.) (To Helen)* Okay if I leave this here for later?

HELEN. Of course. I'll fetch some really fancy drink glasses for you from the kitchen. Antiques.

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MCLEAN. Thank you, Helen. You're the best. *(Helen exits to the kitchen, swooning. McLean sets the bottle down on the table in the lounge area.)*

TROOPER JIM. I'm on patrol tonight, of course. But I have the next two nights off and I was wondering— *(While Trooper Jim is speaking, Owens takes a handful of candies from the dish and pops them into his mouth.)*

SHELLY. It's great to have you back, Mr. Owens. I do believe you left something behind on your visit a few weeks back.

OWENS. I did? What was it?

SHELLY. Your... shirt. I believe it's in housekeeping. I'll be sure and find it for you and perhaps later we can... I can give it to you.

OWENS. Um... sure. Thanks. *(To McLean)* Meet me down here at, say, seven-thirty?

MCLEAN. You got it, partner. See you then. *(Owens exits SL and McLean exits SR.)*

TROOPER JIM. Well, I suppose I'd better get back out there. I'll, uh... check on you folks later.

PEYTON. Take it easy out there. *(Trooper Jim lingers for just a brief moment, but Shelly doesn't notice. She is looking in the direction of Owens' exit. Trooper Jim exits.)*

SVETLANA. *(Enters from SR, holding a dirty, ratty toilet brush.)* Otvratitel'na! Kak ya dolzhna vypolnyat' svoyu rabotu so starym, iznoshennym oborudovaniyem? *(DISGUSTING! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DO MY JOB WITH OLD, WORN OUT CLEANING SUPPLIES?)* *(As she's complaining, Svetlana holds the dirty brush close to Shelly's face. Shelly begins to gag and runs off SL with her hand over her mouth. (To herself)* Bednaya devchonka. Ana nye spravitza. *(POOR LITTLE GIRL. SHE WILL FAIL AT THIS JOB.)*

(Peyton turns the radio back on, sits, and becomes absorbed in the Rubik's cube. The radio is playing elevator music, which now comes through with intermittent static. Svetlana is about to exit again, frustrated, but she stops when she sees the liquor bottle. She sees that Peyton isn't paying attention to her, so she

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picks up the bottle, looks it over, impressed. She looks tempted... but she puts it down and exits. VANDERBILT enters through the main doors, pulling a rolling suitcase. She wears a fur coat and too much jewelry. She and Menard cannot see each other throughout this scene, as he is still sitting in the library area. Peyton doesn't notice Vanderbilt's entrance, as the radio is getting more static and he's fussing with it. Vanderbilt looks around, notices the wall.)

VANDERBILT. Oh! How obscene! *(At her loud reaction, both Menard and Peyton are startled. Menard suddenly looks terrified.)*

SHELLY. *(Enters from SL, running in to see what's happening.)* Is everything... Oh, Ms. Vanderbilt! So good to see you again.

VANDERBILT. Who are you? Where is George? And what is the meaning of this?

PEYTON. I think it's supposed to be a depiction of a—

SHELLY. Peyton! *(To Vanderbilt)* I'm so sorry about the wall. It's terrible, I know. We were vandalized earlier today, and—

VANDERBILT. *(Referring to the radio)* Oh, do shut that thing off!

PEYTON. *(Shuts it off.)* I was just trying to get an updated weather report.

VANDERBILT. I want to speak to George!

SHELLY. George is out of town for a few days and unreachable. I'm his daughter, Shelly. *(Extends her hand, but Vanderbilt does not shake it.)*

VANDERBILT. I find it hard to believe that George would leave an impertinent little girl in charge of his inn. I wasn't even properly greeted when I arrived.

SHELLY. I apologize for that. Everything's a bit chaotic today with the road conditions and—

VANDERBILT. Oh, yes! Can't you call someone to do something about that? My vehicle nearly ran off the road into a

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ditch! *(During this, Menard is cringing in the library, holding a newspaper up to hide his face. The phone rings.)*

SHELLY. If you'll excuse me, Peyton will get you settled in. *(Goes behind the desk to answer the phone.)* Landry Channel Lodge, this is Shelly. How may I help you?

VANDERBILT. Shouldn't she be in school?

PEYTON. We have a room for you on the first floor, room 105.

SHELLY. *(On phone)* I'm sorry to hear you won't be joining us. What name was the reservation under?

VANDERBILT. Ha! She *should* be in school. Listen to her grammar.

SHELLY. No worries. Better safe than sorry in these conditions.

HELEN. *(Enters carrying port wine sippers. She sees Vanderbilt, sets the glasses down, and rushes over to hug her.)* Oh, Ms. Vanderbilt!

SHELLY. *(To Helen)* No! *(Into phone)* Sorry, not you. I was... *(Pause)* Thank you so much for letting us know. Hope to see you again soon. *(Hangs up the phone.)*

HELEN. Why did you yell at me?

SHELLY. I'm sure Ms. Vanderbilt doesn't want to be hugged, Helen.

VANDERBILT. At least she's well-mannered enough to greet me!

HELEN. Ms. Vanderbilt, it's always an honor to have you stay with us. What brings you to Landry this time?

VANDERBILT. Oh, well, another antiquing trip. I'm hoping to find something... special to take home.

PEYTON. Here's your key, ma'am. Your room is on the north end. *(Deena enters from SL.)*

VANDERBILT. Isn't someone going to take my bags? George always takes my bags.

DEENA. I'll take them for you, ma'am.

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SHELLY. She's in 105.

DEENA. Right this way, ma'am. *(Shelly mouths 'thank you' to Deena as Deena and Vanderbilt exit.)*

HELEN. She and I have so much in common. I just love antiques.

PEYTON. That's because you are one.

SHELLY. Peyton...

PEYTON. Look at the glasses she brought out. For bourbon!

HELEN. What's wrong with these?

PEYTON. Those are port sippers, you nincompoop. *(Helen takes the glasses and exits to the kitchen in a huff.)*

SHELLY. I wish you two would stop bickering.

PEYTON. Don't you think it's time to put her out to pasture?

SHELLY. You know how my father feels about loyalty.

PEYTON. I thought you young people were supposed to bring in fresh ideas. Out with the old, in with the new. Right? *(The phone rings again.)*

SHELLY. I'll take that in the office. If anyone comes in, please remember to greet them. *(Exits to the office.)*

MENARD. *(Nervously peers around the corner and sees that the lobby is empty except for Peyton.)* Excuse me, is there a way to get to the second floor from that end of the building? *(Points SL.)*

PEYTON. Sure, there's another staircase at the end, and an elevator just down the hall. But your room's the other direction, so I don't see why you... *(Grabbing a handful of candy on his way out, Menard ignores Peyton and quickly exits SL. Peyton continues to play with the Rubik's Cube. Shelly emerges from the office just as Deena enters from SR.)*

DEENA. Any more check-ins on the way?

SHELLY. Just the couple in the honeymoon suite. Unless they cancel. Which they probably will. *(Bursts into tears.)*

DEENA. Hey... You can't control the weather.

SHELLY. No, it's not that.

SILVER THAW

DEENA. You mean whatsername? Vander-hoozits? Don't let her get to you.

SHELLY. It's not that, either.

DEENA. Oh, the wall. I almost forgot. It's kind of growing on me.

SHELLY. (*Wipes her eyes, straightens up.*) You and Svetlana should leave before the roads get any worse.

DEENA. We're just finishing up laundry. Sweetie, is there something else bothering you? (*THE TETHERMANS enter through the main doors.*)

ELWOOD. Wait, wait. Gotta do this right. Go back.

MAYZIE. Elwood, it's freezing.

ELWOOD. I'll keep you warm, my love. (*They set down their bags and go back out the door. A few seconds later, they enter, with him carrying her across the threshold, somewhat clumsily.*)

SHELLY. You must be Mr. and Mrs. Tetherman. Welcome! (*He sets her down and they both laugh.*)

MAYZIE. Oh, I like the sound of that! I'm still not used to it. (*They see the wall and simultaneously gasp.*)

ELWOOD. Goodness gracious!

MAYZIE. Heavens to Betsy! (*They both cross themselves. Deena stifles a laugh at this.*)

SHELLY. I'm so sorry about that. Some kids got in here earlier today and—

PEYTON. We don't know that for a fact.

DEENA. Can it, Peyton.

SHELLY. We're hoping to have it removed by tomorrow.

MAYZIE. It's just so... distasteful.

ELWOOD. Don't look at it, Mayzie. (*The Tethermans both avert their eyes.*)

PEYTON. How were the roads coming in?

MAYZIE. Treacherous. We were praying to the Lord the whole way.

SILVER THAW

ELWOOD. Oh, you should know there's a large tree branch in your driveway. We were able to get around it, but...

PEYTON. Uh-oh. Trees snapping. That's an ice storm, all right.

SHELLY. Well, you're safe and sound now, thank goodness. We have a lovely honeymoon suite all ready for you.

MAYZIE. What about church services?

SHELLY. St. Anthony's is just down Main. Services are at 7pm on Saturday, and 10am on Sunday.

ELWOOD. After seeing that... image... I'm afraid we may need to go to confession. (*The Tethermans cross themselves again.*)

HELEN. (*Enters from the kitchen with a pair of brandy snifters. Crosses to The Tethermans, hugging each of them while still holding the glasses.*) Welcome, welcome!

ELWOOD. Oh, hello.

MAYZIE. Bless you.

SHELLY. Helen, this is Mr. and Mrs. Tetherman. They're staying in the honeymoon suite.

HELEN. So romantic! Don't you kids do anything I wouldn't do. (*The Tethermans giggle, uncomfortably.*)

PEYTON. Those are brandy snifters, you old bat.

HELEN. Oh, phooey! (*Exits to the kitchen with the snifters.*)

MAYZIE. Everyone in Landry is just so charming. You're all very lucky to live here.

PEYTON. Oh, no one who works here can afford to live here anymore. Everyone commutes.

MAYZIE. Really? What a shame.

PEYTON. Well, everyone except for Shelly. Because her father is wealthy and owns several properties in town, including the lodge, so—

DEENA. Peyton.

PEYTON. Used to be a great place to retire.

ELWOOD. So, what happened?

SILVER THAW

PEYTON. Yuppies happened.

MAYZIE. What-ies?

PEYTON. Yuppies. A term coined by Joseph Epstein in American Scholar magazine. 'Course he writes under the pen name Aristides.

ELWOOD. But what does it mean?

PEYTON. Young, upwardly-mobile professionals.

SHELLY. I thought it was young *urban* professionals.

DEENA. Again, why do you store up all this useless information?

MAYZIE. I think it's very interesting. (*Peyton gives Deena a smug look.*) So what did they do? The yuppies.

PEYTON. They're still at it. Buying up all the property, renovating the houses. Taxes are sky high now.

ELWOOD. Gosh, I never thought of something like that. I suddenly feel very guilty.

MAYZIE. We're hardly yuppies, dear.

SHELLY. Would you like some cookies? Helen made them fresh this afternoon.

MAYZIE. Oh, how nice. (*The Tethermans go to the table and surreptitiously stuff several cookies into their pockets, purse, etc. Meanwhile, Shelly crosses to the desk to discreetly scold Peyton.*)

SHELLY. You're making the guests feel bad.

PEYTON. I see no point in shielding them from the truth.

SHELLY. How about if you show the Tethermans to their room? I'm sure they'd like to get settled in.

PEYTON. Me? I'm in charge of the front desk.

DEENA. Why don't you set down your toy and help out for a change?

PEYTON. It's not a toy, and I'm not a bellhop.

SHELLY. (*Crossing down to The Tethermans.*) Peyton is going to escort you to the honeymoon suite. (*Grudgingly, Peyton takes their bags and leads them off.*)

SILVER THAW

ELWOOD. Thank you.

PEYTON. *(Exiting)* This room is perfect for honeymoon couples. Very sound-proof.

MAYZIE. *(O.S)* Oh my!

HELEN. *(Enters with martini glasses and starts to cross downstage.)* Whoops! Looks like there's a cookie craze today! *(Sets down the martini glasses and exits again to the kitchen.)*

DEENA. There's something not right about those two.

SHELLY. Peyton and Helen?

DEENA. Well, them, too. But I meant the honeymooners.

SHELLY. What? They seem nice enough.

DEENA. I don't buy it. Something's off.

SHELLY. You think something's off with everyone. You're too suspicious of people.

DEENA. I've been in housekeeping for twelve years, Shelly. I see people's dark sides. Ask Svetlana. She can tell you some stories that'll make your skin crawl.

SHELLY. Except I won't be able to understand her. *(Svetlana enters from SL, wearing her coat and carrying a large purse.)*

DEENA. Speak of the devil.

SVETLANA. Mogu ya teper' ed ty, rabovladelets? *(CAN I GO NOW, SLAVEMASTER?)*

DEENA. Hey! Don't call me that.

SVETLANA. Ne nazyvay menya d'yavolom. *(DON'T CALL ME THE DEVIL.)*

DEENA. It's just an expression.

SVETLANA. Blin! Mne nuzhno poyti domoy i vypit'. *(UGH! I NEED TO GO HOME AND HAVE A DRINK.)*

DEENA. Go ahead, I'm right behind you.

SHELLY. Be careful out there, Svetlana.

SVETLANA. Poshela ty na fig, ty bogachka. *(SCREW YOU, LITTLE RICH GIRL.) (Exits through main doors.)*

OWENS. *(Enters.)* What's going on with the cable?

SHELLY. Sorry?

OWENS. I can't get ESPN. I have money on the Tigers game.

SILVER THAW

DEENA. Could be the storm knocked it out. *(The phone rings.)*

SHELLY. Excuse me a moment. *(Picks up.)* Landry Channel Lodge, this is Shelly. How may I help you?

OWENS. Well?

DEENA. I'll go take a look.

OWENS. Yes, do that. *(Deena exits.)*

SHELLY. Actually, he's right here. *(To Owens)* It's for you, a Mr. Davis. Should I transfer the call to your room?

OWENS. Uh... *(Looks around)* No. I'll take it here.

SHELLY. Can I speak to you for a moment? It's important.

OWENS. This isn't a good time.

SHELLY. But I've been trying to—

OWENS. *(Grabs the receiver from Shelly.)* This is Owens. *(Pause)* Davis, hello! *(Pause)* Yes, we're both here, just checked in a little while ago. Uh...hang on. *(To Shelly)* Can you not stand there gawking at me, please? *(Upset, Shelly turns and exits into the office. Owens glances around again to make sure McLean isn't around.)* No, I don't think he suspects anything. In fact, the poor idiot thinks we're celebrating. *(Helen enters with a tray of cookies. During Owens' phone call, she re-fills the glass jar, overhearing his conversation.)* What do you mean, second thoughts? We went over this. *(Pause)* Look, Davis, you gave me this promotion because I'm a guy who gets things done. You said it yourself. And now you want to pussyfoot around? *(Pause)* Exactly, that's the problem. The guy's a relic. *(Pause)* So what if people like him? We're not in this business to make friends. *(Pause)* He's a liability! *(Svetlana enters through the main doors. Owens continues to speak less audibly during the next several lines. Occasional no's, uh-huh's, etc.)*

SVETLANA. Ya podskal'snolas'. Doroga perekryta! YA zastryal zdes'! YA zastryal zdes'! *(I FELL IN THE PARKING LOT. THEN I SEE THAT THE ROAD IS BLOCKED. I'M STUCK HERE! I'M STUCK HERE!)*

SHELLY. What? What's going on?

SILVER THAW

SVETLANA. (*Rubbing her rear end*) O, moya zadnitsa! (*OH, MY BUTT!*)

DEENA. (*Enters.*) The cable's out in the whole building.

SVETLANA. My vse zastryali! (*WE ARE ALL STUCK HERE!*)

SHELLY. What's she saying?

SVETLANA. Na dorage valyayutsa povalyonniye derev'ya! (*THERE ARE TREES ALL OVER THE ROAD!*) (*Peyton enters from SL.*)

DEENA. (*To Shelly*) Some trees are down. The road's blocked.

PEYTON. Ha! What did I tell you? (*Races over to the radio. Turns it on but gets nothing but static. Turns the dial, trying to get a signal.*)

HELEN. Looks like we're having a slumber party tonight!

OWENS. Hey! I just got cut off.

SHELLY. What?

OWENS. The. Telephone. Isn't. Working.

DEENA. Let me see that. (*Checks the phone, tries different lines, etc.*) It's dead. (*The rest of the dialogue in this scene is rapid-fire, chaotic, with loud radio static throughout.*)

VANDERBILT. (*Enters.*) Excuse me.

OWENS. You can't be serious. No cable, no phones...

PEYTON. No radio signal.

SVETLANA. Nevozmozhno ubezhat'! (*NO WAY TO GET OUT!*)

VANDERBILT. Are you aware that my room is located in close proximity to an ice machine?

SHELLY. No. I mean, yes. I mean—

VANDERBILT. It makes this terrible clunking sound. I won't sleep a wink!

HELEN. So, we'll stay up all night and chat. This will be fun! Do you like charades?

SHELLY. Listen—

OWENS. Hey, what about the phones?

SVETLANA. Kak naschet moyey vodki? (*WHAT ABOUT MY VODKA?*)

HELEN. We can all tell ghost stories!

VANDERBILT. I demand a discount!

SILVER THAW

SHELLY. I have a very important announcement to make.

OWENS. That was a very important phone call!

PEYTON. *(To Helen)* Did you bring out those martini glasses?

SHELLY. Everyone, please, if I could just—

HELEN. They're for Mr. McLean and Mr. Owens.

SVETLANA. Eto ad. YA v chistom adu. *(THIS IS HELL. I'M IN PURE HELL.)*

HELEN. They're imported. From Canada.

PEYTON. Just get low-ball glasses! Low-ball glasses, Helen!

OWENS. Oh, forget it. I'm checking out.

DEENA. SHUT UP!!! *(At this, everyone goes silent.)*

SHELLY. The road to the Inn is closed! There's no way out.
(The lights begin to flicker. The power goes out as radio static abruptly stops. Vanderbilt screams. The stage is now near dark, with just faint light pouring in from outside.)

DEENA. Uh-oh.

VANDERBILT. What is happening?

PEYTON. Power's out.

OWENS. Gosh, you think?

DEENA. Helen, do we have candles in the kitchen?

HELEN. Yes, and a few of those little lanterns.

SHELLY. Good. Grab whatever you can find. *(Helen exits to kitchen, feeling her way in the near dark. Deena follows her. McLean enters.)*

MCLEAN. What's going on?

SHELLY. It seems the power lines are down, and the road is blocked by fallen trees.

MCLEAN. I heard a scream.

PEYTON. *(To Vanderbilt)* Yes, why did you scream?

VANDERBILT. I was... frightened. I thought someone was trying to rob me of my jewels.

SVETLANA. Kakaya dura. *(WHAT A STUPID WOMAN.)*

MCLEAN. *(Crosses downstage and looks out at the Channel.)*
Wow! Will you look at that?

OWENS. Look at what?

SILVER THAW

MCLEAN. The Channel, the shine on everything. It's spectacular.

OWENS. Did you hear what she said? We're trapped.

MCLEAN. There are worse places to be trapped.

VANDERBILT. Excuse me, what do you plan to do about this?

SHELLY. Do? Uh...

MCLEAN. Not much we can do about it. Might as well enjoy the view.

VANDERBILT. Preposterous!

SVETLANA. Eto ad. Ad-eto komnata perepolnena noyushchimi amerikantsami. (*THIS IS HELL. HELL IS A ROOMFUL OF WHINING AMERICANS.*)

SHELLY. We'll set you up in a room for the night, Svetlana. (*Helen and Deena emerge from the kitchen with trays full of sturdy candles and some lanterns.*)

DEENA. Okay, everyone take a lantern. (*Owens, McLean, and Vanderbilt take lanterns. McLean looks pleased. Owens looks at his like he's never seen one before. Vanderbilt holds hers like it's a dead bird she doesn't want to touch. Helen and/or Deena place candles all over the lobby.*)

SHELLY. (*To Deena*) Let's put Svetlana in 204. You want first or second floor?

DEENA. I'm fine for now.

SHELLY. You sure?

DEENA. Yep. Rather stay busy. How about if I put some lanterns in the hallways?

SHELLY. Good idea. Thanks.

DEENA. Come on, Svetlana. I'll walk up with you.

SVETLANA. Chto ya budu delat' vsyu noch'? (*WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO ALL NIGHT?*) (*Svetlana and Deena start to exit SR.*)

SHELLY. Wait! The other guests. Can you bring them some candles?

DEENA. So that's... the honeymooners, and the guy in 205?

SILVER THAW

SHELLY. (*Checking the ledger*) Yes, that's everyone.

DEENA. You got it.

SHELLY. You're the best.

DEENA. I know. (*Svetlana and Deena exit SR.*)

VANDERBILT. Well? Aren't you going to give me a different room?

SHELLY. Ma'am, we're dealing with an emergency here. Plus the ice machine is off, now, so...

VANDERBILT. Still, if someone goes to fill their ice bucket that will be noisy as well.

SHELLY. Okay, Peyton, what's left?

OWENS. (*To Vanderbilt*) Hey, don't I know you from somewhere?

VANDERBILT. I very much doubt that.

OWENS. No, really. You seem familiar.

HELEN. (*Aside, to Owens*) She's famous.

OWENS. For what?

PEYTON. 103 is open.

SHELLY. Perfect.

VANDERBILT. What about my things? My luggage?

MCLEAN. I can help you with your luggage.

SHELLY. No, of course not. You're a guest. Peyton, please move Ms. Vanderbilt's luggage from room 105 to room 103.

PEYTON. Fine. But only because these are special circumstances. It's not every day you see an ice storm around here. In fact, they're very rare in the northwest. They're much more common in the—

SHELLY. Peyton! (*Peyton exits in a huff.*)

OWENS. Vanderbilt?

HELEN. Yes, as in *the* Vanderbilts.

VANDERBILT. Which way is 103?

SHELLY. Just down this hallway, on your left.

OWENS. Wait, I know! Not Vanderbilt. Peterson. You're Mrs. Peterson.

SILVER THAW

VANDERBILT. I don't know what you're talking about.

OWENS. I'm Chad Owens. You used to live down the street from my family, in Bellevue. You were my nanny, remember?

VANDERBILT. Nonsense! I've never seen you before in my life. And I live in New York City, always have. Now, if you'll all excuse me. *(Exits, hurriedly.)*

MCLEAN. I don't suppose there's power at the Prime Rib house, either?

SHELLY. I'm sure the power's out all over town.

HELEN. I can whip up all the breakfast items. We've got muffins, juice, yogurt...

OWENS. You cannot be serious.

MCLEAN. That sounds just fine, Helen. Muffins, it is.

HELEN. Give me about an hour, I'll have everything out. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

MCLEAN. I'll just go freshen up. Drinks after dinner, Owens?

OWENS. Yogurt and bourbon. Marvelous.

MCLEAN. *(Laughs)* See you then. *(Exits. Owens begins to exit, but Shelly seizes the opportunity to speak to him alone.)*

SHELLY. Wait! Chad.

OWENS. What?

SHELLY. I've tried calling you. Several times.

OWENS. I was traveling. I literally just came in from Chicago today.

SHELLY. Okay, but now I really need to—

OWENS. Look, I'm sorry if you got the wrong idea.

SHELLY. It's just that... when you visited last month—

OWENS. Spare me. I have a headache. *(Exits.)*

SHELLY. Wait, please, it's important.

PEYTON. *(Enters from SR, rolling Vanderbilt's suitcase.)*

George would never ask me to do this. *(Exits. Shelly bursts into tears. She runs into the office.)*

MENARD. *(Enters with coat on and suitcase in tow.) (Quietly)* Hello?

SILVER THAW

HELEN. (*Enters from the kitchen.*) Oh, Mr. Menard, hello.

MENARD. I'd like to check out as quickly as possible, please.

HELEN. Oh, but the road to the inn is closed. There's no getting out.

MENARD. What? Are you sure?

HELEN. You missed all the hubbub. It's an ice storm.

MENARD. (*Crossing downstage to look out at the storm.*) But I really need to leave. There must be a way out.

HELEN. 'Fraid not. I'll get you some candles. (*Exits to the kitchen. We hear Vanderbilt approaching, talking to Peyton and complaining the whole way. In a panic, Menard dashes into the library area, hiding behind furniture. Shelly emerges from the office, more composed now. Vanderbilt and Peyton enter from SL.*)

VANDERBILT. No, no, no. That room will not do. It's too close to housekeeping. I'll have to listen to maids stomping in and out of there all morning.

SHELLY. I'll ask the housekeepers to be quiet.

VANDERBILT. That's your solution? (*Deena enters from SR.*)

SHELLY. Every first floor room we have is either close to the ice machine or close to housekeeping.

HELEN. (*Enters from the kitchen with candles.*) Here you go, Mister... Where did he go?

DEENA. Where did who go?

VANDERBILT. This is very disappointing. George will certainly hear about this.

HELEN. Mr. Menard. He was just here. Ah, well. (*Exits to the kitchen.*)

SHELLY. I'll comp your room. No charge.

VANDERBILT. That's a start. (*Stomps away SL. Peyton sighs dramatically and follows her. Over the next several lines, Menard quietly emerges from behind the furniture,*

SILVER THAW

unbeknownst to Deena & Shelly. He stays concealed in the library, trying to figure out what to do next.)

DEENA. You need to grow a backbone, Shelly.

SHELLY. Oh, leave me alone!

DEENA. Well, maybe not right this minute.

SHELLY. I'm sorry. You're that last person I should be snapping at.

DEENA. True, but I can take it. *(Shelly stifles back tears.)*

What's going on with you?

SHELLY. Nothing. It's just stress.

DEENA. Liar.

SHELLY. I'm fine. I just... you're the only person I can cry in front of.

DEENA. You're seriously crying over that woman, that phony?

SHELLY. Phony?

DEENA. I don't think she's ever actually paid to stay here. Look it up. She complains until she gets a discount, then she complains some more until she gets a free room.

SHELLY. But why? She's rich.

DEENA. How do you know? Because she wants everyone to think she's rich. So she wears an ugly fur coat she probably got second hand. And that name. Genevieve Vanderbilt? It's obviously made up.

SHELLY. Don't tell Helen that. She'll be crushed.
(Remembering) Oh!

DEENA. Oh, what?

SHELLY. I think you may be right. About her name. Chad... Mr. Owens said her name was Peterson.

DEENA. Well, I'm not sure about that guy, either. What a jerk.
(Shelly starts to cry again.) Really, what is going on? Tell me.

SHELLY. Nothing...

SILVER THAW

DEENA. You've been vomiting and bursting into tears all week. If I didn't know better I'd say you were... Oh, Shelly. No.

SHELLY. Yes.

DEENA. Aren't you on the pill?

SHELLY. I don't trust pills.

DEENA. And look where that got you.

SHELLY. I thought he really liked me. If you could have heard the things he said...

DEENA. I'm sorry. Anyone I know?

SHELLY. No. Just... a guy.

DEENA. Does he know?

SHELLY. I've been trying to tell him. He won't return my calls. He acts like I don't exist.

DEENA. What's his name? I'll kill him.

PEYTON. *(Entering from SL.)* Kill whom?

DEENA. Oh, good, you're back. Helen was just asking for your help in the kitchen.

PEYTON. What, I'm a short-order cook now? *(Starts toward the kitchen but stops on the way to pick up the martini glasses.)* Martini glasses. Just absurd. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

SHELLY. *(To Deena)* Did you bring the Tethermans some candles?

DEENA. They had their D.N.D. sign out.

SHELLY. How about Mr. Menard?

DEENA. I knocked. No answer.

SHELLY. I just want to make sure everyone's all right.

DEENA. You need some rest, Shelly. Why don't you lie down? 104's open.

SHELLY. I don't know.

DEENA. Come on, I can keep an eye on things.

SHELLY. I'll take the cot in the office. I need to be close by in case anything else... you know, goes horribly awry.

DEENA. Deal. Come on, I'll even fluff up the pillows for you.

SILVER THAW

SHELLY. You're the mother I never had.

DEENA. Love you, Hon.

SHELLY. Love you worse. *(Shelly and Deena exit to the office.)*

Menard is now alone onstage, as no one realized he was tucked away in the library. He sneaks out into the lobby. Noticing the bottle, he stops and picks it up, considers taking it, then sets it down and quickly exits SR with his suitcase.)

SCENE 2

Later that evening. Peyton, Helen, Deena, Vanderbilt, and McLean are onstage. They have finished dinner and Helen is putting things back on a tray to take to the kitchen. Peyton sits at the desk, deeply engrossed in trying to solve the Rubik's Cube.

HELEN. Did everyone enjoy dinner?

VANDERBILT. I would hardly call this dinner. But I do appreciate the effort.

MCLEAN. Excellent blueberry muffins, Helen. I'm sorry my colleague decided not to join us.

HELEN. Should we bring something to the others?

DEENA. The honeymooners still have their sign out. I haven't seen Whats-his-name since this afternoon.

HELEN. Mr. Menard? He was here a while ago. He came and went so quickly I didn't have a chance to tell him about dinner.

DEENA. I'll bring him a plate. *(Starts to put together a plate of muffins, etc.)*

HELEN. Should we wake Shelly?

DEENA. No, let her sleep. She's exhausted. *(Exits SR with food. Owens enters from SL.)*

MCLEAN. Ah, there you are. You missed out on dinner.

SILVER THAW

OWENS. What a shame. But really, I don't have much of an appetite. My head's still throbbing. *(Over the next several lines, Owens crosses to the water cooler, pours water into a paper cup. He pulls a bottle of Tylenol from his pocket, takes two capsules, and swallows them along with the water. Tosses the cup in the waste basket.)*

MCLEAN. Still up for a drink or two?

OWENS. Of course.

MCLEAN. I'll just get some ice. *(Exits SR.)*

HELEN. And I'll be right back with some lovely glasses for you.

PEYTON. Here we go again. What'll it be this time, baby bottles? *(Helen exits to the kitchen with a tray full of dinner items.)*

VANDERBILT. Well, then. I suppose I'll settle in for the night.

OWENS. Good to see you again, Mrs. Peterson.

VANDERBILT. Vanderbilt. My name is Ms. Vanderbilt.

OWENS. Oh, come on, Iris. Why play games?

VANDERBILT. I don't know what you're on about, you insolent young man.

OWENS. It's been a long time. But I never forget a face. In fact, I don't think I've seen you since before you went away.

VANDERBILT. I've never seen you before in my life. Now, good night. *(Exits SL.)*

PEYTON. Look at this! I've got one whole side solved. *(Holds up the Rubik's Cube.)*

OWENS. Congrats.

PEYTON. I'm curious, why did you call her Mrs. Peterson?

OWENS. Iris Peterson. Doesn't that name ring a bell?

PEYTON. Maybe...

OWENS. I'll give you a hint... *(Takes a cookie from the cookie jar, takes a bite.)*

PEYTON. Wait... you don't mean...?

SILVER THAW

OWENS. Vanderbilt? What a joke.

MCLEAN. *(Enters from SR with an ice bucket.)*

Way to go, Owens. Looks like you've managed to clear the lobby.

OWENS. You know me, Mr. Popularity. *(He gets a disgusted look on his face and tosses the rest of the cookie in the garbage. Gets more water. Shelly enters from the office)*

MCLEAN: Evening, Shelly.

PEYTON. Feeling better?

SHELLY. A little, thanks. *(Owens crosses into the lounge area, ignoring Shelly. McLean follows and they sit.)*

PEYTON. I solved one whole side!

SHELLY. *(Annoyed)* How are the guests, Peyton?

PEYTON. Just fine, I suppose.

HELEN. *(Enters from the kitchen with champagne flutes.)*
(To Shelly) Hello, dear. You missed dinner.

SHELLY. Who's having champagne?

HELEN. They're for Mr. McLean and Mr. Owens.

PEYTON. They're drinking bourbon, you numbskull.
Bourbon!

SHELLY. Hold on, I'll get some drink glasses. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

MCLEAN. Really, no need to make a fuss.

HELEN. *(Hugs McLean.)* You're such a nice man! Would either of you like a mixer? I have orange juice and Tab.

PEYTON. Saccharin causes cancer in laboratory mice. Read the can!

HELEN. Really? I'll have to remember that next time we have a shrew infestation.

MCLEAN. I think just on the rocks will be fine. How about you, Owens?

OWENS. Whatever.

SHELLY. *(Enters with two short drink glasses.)* Here you go, gentlemen.

SILVER THAW

PEYTON. See that? She's barely old enough to drink and she knows what a low-ball glass is. *(Helen exits to the kitchen with the champagne glasses.)*

MCLEAN. *(To Shelly)* Thank you, m'dear. *(To Owens)* They say a purist would never put ice in bourbon. But I've noticed you always order your drinks on the rocks. Same here, I like it nice and cold.

OWENS. It all goes down the same. *(McLean puts ice in the glasses.)*

SHELLY. Can I get you two anything else?

MCLEAN. How about you grab another glass and join us? Kick your feet up.

SHELLY. No, thank you.

MCLEAN. *(To Owens)* Oh, hey, would you like something for that headache? I have some aspirin in my room.

OWENS. I just took something.

MCLEAN. Anything you shouldn't mix with alcohol?

OWENS. Nah, just a couple Tylenol.

MCLEAN. Good. After all, we've earned these drinks. *(To Shelly)* Sure I can't sweet-talk you into just one drink?

SHELLY. I can't. I mean, I'm not feeling too well, either.

MCLEAN. Uh-oh. Must be something going around.

SHELLY. I think I'll go lie back down, if everyone has what they need.

MCLEAN. We're all set. And by the way, I think you're doing a bang-up job. George will be pleased, I'm sure.

SHELLY. Thank you. I'll be in the office if you need anything. *(She lingers for an awkward moment, then exits to the office.)*

MCLEAN. *(Opens the bourbon and pours it into each glass.)* Look, I know you're not a sentimental guy, but I believe a toast is in order.

OWENS. To the end of a long and tedious travel itinerary!

MCLEAN. To Chad Owens, Mellaco's new Regional Executive Vice President of Refining and Marketing! *(Deena*

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enters from SR, still holding a full tray of food. The men clink glasses. McLean quickly downs his entire drink while Owens only takes a small sip. Deena sees this as she approaches them.)

OWENS. A made-up title at best. You heard?

MCLEAN. Are you kidding? Everyone's talking about it.

OWENS. Well, don't jinx it. It's not official yet.

DEENA. Hi, guys. I was bringing this to another guest, but he didn't answer his door. Want me to leave these here for you?

MCLEAN. I think we're fine, Deena. But, thank you. Why don't you have a drink with us? This is top shelf.

DEENA. Thanks, but I'm beat. Is Shelly around?

MCLEAN. You just missed her. She's resting in the office.

DEENA. Good. Listen, if you need anything, Peyton's on the front desk and I'll be right there in 104.

MCLEAN. Good night, Deena. *(Deena exits SR. McLean pours himself another drink.)* To the future of Mellaco!
(McLean pounds his second drink, while Owens takes a small sip.)

OWENS. I can't get this taste out of my mouth. It's just... bitter.

MCLEAN. You don't like the bourbon?

OWENS. The bourbon's fine. It's those cookies, they're terrible.

MCLEAN. *(Rises, looks out at the Channel.)* Just look at that, would you? That's the irony of an ice storm; that something so beautiful can be so destructive. Some people call it a silver thaw, which sounds much nicer. I mean really, Owens, how can you not love this place?

OWENS. Don't get me wrong, Landry's hot property right now, but I could do without interacting with these locals.

MCLEAN. Hot property?

OWENS. Yes, I've considered investing in real estate here. Buy an old place, renovate, and dump it for a profit. I was

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planning to look into that while we're up here, you know, kill two birds with one stone. But thanks to the, uh, *silver thaw*, that plan's probably shot to hell.

MCLEAN. But is that ethical?

OWENS. I don't follow you.

MCLEAN. That kind of thing, flipping a house for profit, can negatively impact the local economy.

OWENS. It's legal.

MCLEAN. How about a long-term investment? You could buy property and keep it for your family.

OWENS. My family?

MCLEAN. When you settle down, get married, have kids.

OWENS. No offense, but I'd rather eat ground glass. (*McLean laughs. Owens sips from his drink.*)

MCLEAN. You say that now, but...

OWENS. Don't say I'll change my mind. I've never met a woman, not one, who would make me want to settle down. And that goes double for the hags around here.

MCLEAN. You must admit, Shelly's a cutie. If I were a young, single guy like you, I'd go after her in a heartbeat.

OWENS. Wanna know the truth? Been there, done that. (*Sips from his drink again.*)

MCLEAN. You don't say? I thought I sensed some... tension there.

OWENS. It was a misstep, I'll admit. Now I've got to deal with her mooning over me every time I come up to the refinery.

MCLEAN. I wonder if that's why she's so upset. I just assumed it was the storm and the... well, that. (*Refers to the wall.*)

OWENS. (*Laughs*) What does she expect me to do, come swooping in like Richard Gere and take her away from all this?

MCLEAN. She's a nice girl.

OWENS. Bill...

MCLEAN. Sorry, you're right, I'll stay out of it.

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OWENS. (*Sips more of his drink.*) So... There's something I need to discuss with you.

MCLEAN. Don't tell me you want to talk shop right now.

OWENS. Well...

MCLEAN. Because this is a rare opportunity to just relax, you know?

OWENS. It's just... Look, Bill. Things are changing. The whole business is changing.

MCLEAN. Yeah? How so?

OWENS. With that bum out of the White House, the economy is back on track and the tide has turned in our—

MCLEAN. Carter was a visionary.

OWENS. You can't possibly mean that.

MCLEAN. He was ahead of his time, history will prove that one day.

OWENS. His ideologies were crippling us! Alternative energy sources? Gimme a break.

MCLEAN. That's a rather cynical point of view.

OWENS. You call it cynical, I call it progress. Look, I'm getting off track here. My point is, no offense, but you don't exactly have your finger on the pulse. It's the eighties, and there's a new way of thinking.

MCLEAN. Really? I was doing this job while people were waiting in line at the gas stations. I've dealt with challenges you have yet to experience.

OWENS. Exactly. Your pinnacle is behind you. And things are changing faster than you can be expected to keep up with.

MCLEAN. What are you saying, Owens?

OWENS. I'm saying I... (*His breathing becomes labored, and he has trouble speaking.*)

MCLEAN. Yeah...?

OWENS. Because of my new... position...

MCLEAN. Are you okay?

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OWENS. Yes. I've been... speaking with Davis and...

(Clutches his stomach.)

MCLEAN. Owens?

OWENS. Something's not... My head's exploding... dizzy...

MCLEAN. Okay, okay... put your head between your legs... breathe... *(Owens does this, but soon collapses onto the floor.)*

MCLEAN. Owens? Owens? PEYTON!

PEYTON. *(Crosses over near Owens.)* Uh-oh. Looks like someone's had one too many.

MCLEAN. No, something's wrong with him! Owens? *(Owens begins to violently convulse.)*

PEYTON. Oh!

MCLEAN. What do we do? Do you know CPR?

PEYTON. I'll get the manual. *(Runs to the front desk.)*

MCLEAN. Help! We need help out here!

HELEN. *(Enters from the kitchen.)* Yes, Mr. McLean?

MCLEAN. Helen, do you know CPR?

HELEN. Yes, I took a class. *(While Owens convulses, she taps him on the shoulder.)* Annie, Annie, are you all right?

MCLEAN. What are you doing?

HELEN. That's step one.

PEYTON. *(Returns from the front desk with a first aid manual.)* It says here to check if the victim is conscious.

HELEN. I just tried that.

MCLEAN. Deena! *(He runs off SR. We hear him knocking loudly on a door.) (O.S.)* Deena!

SHELLY. *(Emerges from the office, groggy and confused.)*

What's going on?

PEYTON. Next, we're supposed to check his throat for obstructions.

SHELLY. Chad! *(Races over to Owens, just as he stops convulsing. McLean and Deena enter from SR.)*

MCLEAN. He just... collapsed! One minute he was fine and then... *(Deena reaches Owens and deftly checks his pulse.)*

SILVER THAW

SHELLY. I don't think he's breathing.

DEENA. He's dead.

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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