

ACT I

BRASS OVERTURE

Living family comes on stage, downstage in spotlight, rest of stage in darkness, Mother off to side talking on phone, rest of family sings something like

CHESTNUTS ROASTING (small group)

Clock Strikes Twelve

(DEALER speaks the words from the balcony, before descending to the stage and removing dropcloths from picture frames with ghosts in them, who step out)

CALL TO CELEBRATION

DEALER:

Strike, strike the gong of our song
Till soul take fire!
Clap hands and bellow!
Dance, dance, leap higher and longer
And hug each with your fellow.
Up with the windows, raise the shout.
Hang all the hallelujahs out!

MASTERS IN THIS HALL

(As soon as the song finishes, a clang of keys is heard. GHOSTS freeze, then scatter back to their picture frames.)

(Enter CARETAKER with the family: MOTHER, FATHER, TWO DAUGHTERS, and GRANDMOTHER. They look around.)

GRANDMOTHER: Ah, just as I remembered it.

MOTHER: Oh my gosh. Is this the hotel from your stories?

GRANDMOTHER: Yes, and it's also where I grew up. All your old bedtime stories came from right here.

MOTHER: I thought they were a fantasy! *(Stops downstage center, looks out through "window")* Is this the window? The window with the three sisters?

DAUGHTER 1: I remember that story. It was wartime.

DAUGHTER 2: There were soldiers, too.

GRANDMOTHER: Exactly right. And yes, this is the window.

FATHER: *(looking up)* That's a supporting beam.

TWO DAUGHTERS: Can we go upstairs?

GRANDMOTHER: Would you like to see my old bedroom? *(Girls nod excitedly)*

CARETAKER: Let me get the lights.

(He nods to GRANDMOTHER, and the four exit.)

FATHER: What an amazing place. This is master-builder stuff. *(Gazes down)* Just look at the width of these planks. Too bad it's going to be torn down.

(GHOSTS react to this line with concern, looking at each other, and start to advance around MOTHER/FATHER from behind)

FATHER: Or, why not keep this building and just donate all the other land! We could re-open the casino. Put three zeroes on the roulette wheels like they're doing in Vegas... free money!

MOTHER: In the middle of the wilderness! Who on earth would come?

FATHER: Probably the same people who came back in the day. Gamblers, skiers, mountain climbers ... Just an idea. *(wanders away downstage, looking at walls)* This woodwork is insane.

(MOTHER is stunned as she sees GHOSTS advancing, some passing her to get a closer look at FATHER)

GHOSTS [Norah]: Did he say they're tearing down the building?

DEALER: No, no, I'm sure it's nothing. Come on, cheer up, everybody. Sing something.

HERE WE COME A'WASSAILING (Audience to join chorus)

(As GHOSTS sing, MOTHER fades to the sidelines, aghast, while FATHER, oblivious, continues to approve of the design features.)

GHOST [Amy] : They can't be the new owners. Nobody in the family ever wore a life jacket like that! *(Pointing at FATHER, who is still wearing his down jacket)* Is he a buffoon?

GHOST [Andrea]: *(pointing at Mother)* And look at that dress! I wouldn't be caught dead in that!

GHOST [Atif]: *(laughing)* Good one!

FATHER: Shall we check out the rest of the house?

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS, frostily*): I beg your pardon.

FATHER (*thinks she's misunderstood him*): The rest of the house? Check it out?

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS*): You have a lot of nerve.

FATHER: Only a suggestion, my dear.

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS*): Go away!

FATHER: Oh, all right. (*begins to exit*)

MOTHER: Not you.

FATHER: Okay. (*stops and comes back*)

GHOSTS [Loren]: Haha, she acts like she can see us.

GHOST [Darcy]: She can't, can she?

DEALER: Not until midnight.

GHOST [Darcy]: Good!

(*one GHOST prances around MOTHER insolently*)

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS*): Stop that immediately.

FATHER: Stop what?

MOTHER: Not you.

FATHER (*looks around, mystified*): Okay.

GHOST [Bridget]: So. Guys? I think she can see us.

DEALER: No, no. The rules are very specific. Not until midnight.

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS*): It *is* midnight.

DEALER: Poor woman can't tell time. In my day, they taught timekeeping in school. She must be a simpleton.

FATHER: Is it that late? Hoo boy. Maybe we should go to bed.

MOTHER (*to GHOSTS*): Did you factor in daylight savings time?

(*GHOSTS react, check watches, clocks on the wall, mutter to each other*)

FATHER: Daylight savings—what?

MOTHER: Not you!

FATHER: (*scratches his head*) Okay.

MOTHER (*to FATHER*): I'm talking to them.

FATHER: (*looks around again*): Who?

MOTHER: (*gestures to GHOSTS*): Them.

GHOSTS [All]: Us.

FATHER: Okay. (*Takes MOTHER by the arm*) You'll be fine after a good night's sleep.

MOTHER (*to DEALER*): Who are you? And what are you?

(*Waves her hand to push back at DEALER, but her hand doesn't touch anything. Confused, she tries to wave or push at him but DEALER stands still*)

DEALER: (*Mocking*) Can't touch this. (*breaks into MC Hammer dance, other ghosts follow suit*)

MOTHER: (*slowly overcoming stun*) No... it can't be... but it is... I can't believe it! You're the Ghosts of Hilbert's Hotel! Just like in Mother's stories!

DEALER: All present and accounted for, ma'am!

MOTHER: (*to FATHER*): Can't you see them?

GHOSTS [Oriah, Emery, Rita]: (*laughing*) He can't see us! He can't see us! (*they dance around father, flicking his hair, waving hands across his face. FATHER feels something, but not sure what it is*)

FATHER: Who are you talking to?

GRANDMOTHER (*who has been coming from side of stage at end of this dialogue*): The Ghosts of Hilbert's Hotel. Every winter solstice, the spirits that have revelled here in the past are all allowed to return for a night of festivities, feasts, dancing and singing. And no, you can't see them because you are not a blood relative.

FATHER: Really.

(*All GHOSTS fade to background and/or exit.*)

GRANDMOTHER: Really. (to DEALER): Greetings, Farnsworth. Are you up to your old tricks again?

DEALER (bows to GRANDMOTHER): Just fulfilling our merry-making duties, ma'am. Welcome home.

MOTHER: This is not home. By next year this will all be wilderness, when I donate it to the Nature Conservancy. (*Ghosts react*)

HEY, HO! THE GREENWOOD or similar nature song (*MOTHER, DAUGHTERS join in, maybe FATHER, too. After song, they group together with GRANDMOTHER, chatting quietly.*)

DEALER: This doesn't look good. She (*indicates MOTHER*) doesn't seem like a believer.

CARETAKER: Not yet. Let's see what kind of leverage we can get with her mother and the kids. Horatio can take the children to the kids' party. I'll take my old friend to the Rose Room.

DEALER: I'll lead the mother and father around, and see if I can learn more about their plans.

CARETAKER (*awkward air fist bump*): Good luck!.

DEALER: I don't need luck. The house always wins.

(*CARETAKER offers GRANDMOTHER his arm and they exit. FATHER and MOTHER exit also, followed by DEALER. GHOST KIDS run on stage [or run forward, if they're already on]*)

PIONEER CHILDREN SANG AS THEY WALKED (KIDS' song)

(*APPRENTICE and 2 DAUGHTERS watch*)

GHOST KIDS [Oriah and Emery] (*walking toward APPRENTICE*): Horatio, Horatio! (*They stop short, seeing the 2 DAUGHTERS*) Oooh! New Mortals! Hooray! Hooray!

APPRENTICE: Merry Christmas, everyone! Welcome our new guests. They are the daughters of the new owners of Hilbert's Hotel!

GHOST KIDS: Welcome! Welcome!

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER (*to APPRENTICE*): Are these kid ghosts?

KID GHOST 1 (Willhemina): We're not ghosts, we're Spirits!

KID GHOST 2 (Alistair): We didn't die here, we were just here for parties when we were kids!

KID GHOSTS 3 & 4 (Oriah and Emory): And now we get to come back every year and play!

KID GHOSTS 5 & 6 (Anna and Lucy)(*to YOUNGEST DAUGHTER*) Come on!

GHOST KIDS MORRIS DANCE

(*OLDEST DAUGHTER and APPRENTICE move forward on stage for conversation.*)

APPRENTICE: This is my favorite part of the night, seeing the kids having so much fun. So what do you think of the ghosts? Were you scared when you first saw them?

OLDEST DAUGHTER: Not really. Our grandmother told us stories about this place. I guess I thought there were fairy tales, but this is even better.

APPRENTICE: I know, I felt the same way when I came here. Grandpa

Hamish told me some of the stories but I thought it was all a joke. I guess we don't really know everything about this world!

OLDEST DAUGHTER: There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy Horatio.

APPRENTICE: What's that?

OLDEST DAUGHTER: It's from Hamlet.

APPRENTICE: Oh, I can't eat omelets. I'm allergic to eggs.

OLDEST DAUGHTER: No, Hamlet!

APPRENTICE: I can't eat ham either, not after seeing Babe and Charlotte's Web.

OLDEST DAUGHTER: No, *Hamlet*, it's a play by (*notices that he's laughing*). You're messing with me, aren't you?

APPRENTICE: Hey, I was named for the only character still alive at the end of that play. Kind of appropriate, really, considering I work in a house full of ghosts. Mum and Dad are both English professors at CU. Lots of books growing up, not much food.

OLDEST DAUGHTER: Could have been worse. They could have named you "Fortinbras".

APPRENTICE: Good one!

(*Enter DEALER/Farnsworth*)

GHOST KIDS [ALL]: Story! Story!

DEALER: Someone call for a story? Play your cards right, and you'll get a good one.

(Entire CAST on stage to watch this. Maybe some have already entered for the KIDS' DANCE. TBD)

TOMMYKNOCKER STORY

(Kids throughout, as Tommyknockers, sing snatches of I've been Working on the Railroad)

DEALER: Right, let's spin the story wheel, and see where it lands (*mimes spinning a wheel*). A-ha, it says "Tristan and Jago and the Tommyknockers"!

DAUGHTER 2: Tommyknockers? Aren't they supposed to be scary?

DEALER: Only the fictional ones. *Real* Tommyknockers come from Cornwall, in England. They're wee folk, a bit like leprechauns, but without the breakfast cereal connections. They came to Colorado with the Cornish miners seeking their fortunes. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. My story begins in 1859 in Penzance, Cornwall. Two brothers, Tristan and Jago Hilbert, had just been rejected from their dream job as pirates, because of their German last name.

TRISTAN: Aaar! What a bummer!

JAGO: Yes, it was haaaartbreaking.

TRISTAN: I suppose we can stop talking like that, now that our dreams of being pirates have been shattered. At least we can be grateful that the ship was still in Penzance harbor, when they made us walk the plank.

JAGO: Yes, it reminds me of what Mrs. Murphy said, when she moved into her new home with all her children.

TRISTAN: Who's Mrs. Murphy?

JAGO: She's that old woman. You know, the one who lived in a shoe.

TRISTAN: And what did she say?

JAGO: Thank Heaven for small Murphies. (*rim shot*)

DEALER: But even corny jokes couldn't cheer the brothers up. They were feeling hopeless, and dejected.

TRISTAN: I feel hopeless.

JAGO: And I feel dejected.

DEALER: But just then, a newspaper boy ran past.

NEWSPAPER BOY [Peter]: Extree, extree, read all about it.

DAUGHTER 1: What's a New York paper boy doing in Cornwall?

DEALER: Can either of *you* do a Cornish accent?

DAUGHTERS: Well, no.

DEALER: Neither can s/he (*pointing at ghost kid playing paper boy*). You were saying?

PAPER BOY: Extree, extree. Gold and Silver found in Americée.

TRISTAN: (*looking at Jago*) Gold and Silver! You know what this means?

JAGO: We must *rush* there, right away!

DEALER: So Tristan and Jago decided to sail to America, in search of their fortune. And so did the local band of Tommyknockers who snuck into their house while they were packing, and stowed away in the trunk, while they weren't looking. (*Tommyknockers stow away, while T and J have their backs turned. T & J make a big deal out of how heavy the trunk now is*) Eventually, with the help of several crewmembers, the brothers got the trunk on the ship.

(*crewmember collapses, exhausted and gasping*)

TRISTAN: What's the matter with you?

SAILOR: (*pointing at Jago, who is sitting on the trunk*) Heavy!

TRISTAN: He ain't heavy, he's my brother.

DEALER: After a long voyage, during which the Tommyknockers stole everyone's food, and rocked the boat, so they were all seasick (*appropriate motions, Rock the Boat song?*), the brothers arrived in New York Harbor, only to discover that there were no mines in the city.

JAGO: There are no mines here!

TRISTAN: Only bars and Vaudeville houses. And we're much too young, innocent, and pure to frequent those. What do we do now?

DEALER: Luckily for them, famed newspaper man Horace Greeley happened to be passing at that very moment, and he told them where to go.

GREELEY: Go West, young men!

DEALER: So they did, all the way to a small mining town in the Rocky Mountains, Mollyville Colorado, named for the very valuable, but impossible to pronounce, mineral that had just been discovered there.

*Tommyknockers take turns to mispronounce 'molybdenum'.
Willhemina—'Molynum', Anna—'molybenum', Lucy—'molybodium',
Oria—'molynomial', Emory—'molyponium', Rita—'molyjollyhollium',
Peter—'molynomipadium', Alistair—'molypolyfrabjulisticxpialydocium'.*

DEALER: Luckily for you, I'm an expert pronunciationist. It's Molybeedinium.

DAUGHTER 1 (*interrupts, holding up her phone*): I think you're trying to say 'molybdenum', but according to Wikipedia, molybdenum wasn't discovered in Colorado until 1879, and this is supposed to be 1859.

DEALER: Details, details. Poetic license, dear girl. Willing suspicion of disbelief, and all that. Everyone's a fact checker these days. Next you'll be telling me that Cornish immigrants didn't really steal pet cats and dogs to eat them. So, what do you think is in a Cornish pastie? Alright, so, the town was actually Silverville, and it was silver that was discovered there, but where's the fun in that? (*Tommyknockers take turns saying 'silver' all the same way, same order as above*). See? So, the brothers unpacked all their mining gear (*unpacking fun ensues*), and headed for the nearest mine. But the Tommyknockers were way ahead of them. With a whole new mine for them to explore, they set about making mischief, turning off the lights, (*stealing tools, replacing them with rubber ducks, taking bites out of sandwiches*) leading the brothers down dead-end shafts, or back into the sunlight again, without finding any silver. While *they* were having loads of fun, the brothers were getting more and more frustrated, and dispirited.

TRISTAN: I'm frustrated.

JAGO: And I'm dispirited.

DEALER: They even considered packing it all in, and becoming encyclopedia salesmen.

TRISTAN: We could pack it all in.

JAGO: We could become encyclopedia salesmen.

DEALER: But the Tommyknockers started to feel sorry for them.

TOMMYKNOCKER (Alistair): I can't help feeling that their failure is *partly* our fault.

DEALER: It was entirely their fault.

TOMMYKNOCKER (Rita): Perhaps we could help them, for once, before they give up. (*general agreement*)

TRISTAN: OK. We'll give it one more try, before we give up, and become vacuum cleaner salesmen.

DAUGHTER 2: I thought it was encyclopedias.

TRISTAN AND JAGO: Whatever!

DEALER: This time, the Tommyknockers led them, with their knocking and their lights, ever deeper down the mine (*round and round the stage they go*), as it got darker and darker (*lights get dimmer and dimmer*), until they ended up in a cavern they had never visited before. But, just as they arrived, the lights on their helmets went out. Luckily, the Tommyknockers' lights ran on magic, so they lit up the cavern (*lights go on*) to reveal... a massive silver nugget (*boulder is revealed to general oohing and aaahing*).

DAUGHTER 1: It doesn't look that big.

DEALER: That's just the tip of the silverberg. It was, in fact, the largest silver nugget ever found, at more than a ton. In fact, it was so big they had to cut it into three pieces to get it out of the mine. They sold it for a fortune, which they used to build this very hall, which they named "Hilbert's Hotel",

with a magnificent casino, and the best food this side of the Continental Divide. Or maybe it was *that* side of the Continental Divide. I don't remember. All kinds of famous people stayed here: Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, John Denver, Sasquatch, Homer Simpson, Darth Vader, the list goes on and on. I was the croupier for many years, until I met my untimely end at the hand of a jealous one-armed bandit, the infamous Black Jack, who caught me playing strip poker with his French fiancée Roulette Larue (*she really used to make my head spin*). Ah, memories! (*Looks lost in thought*)

TOMMYKNOCKER (Anna): And what about us?

DEALER: What?

TOMMYKNOCKER (Lucy): What happened to us?

DEALER: Ah yes, the Tommyknockers hung around the mines, alternating between trickery and helpfulness. They also made mischief with the railroad workers, the other great Colorado industry at the time. Eventually, when the mines dried up, and the railroads were all built, they adapted to the Rocky Mountain lifestyle, skiing, snowboarding, growing various plants (*for purely medicinal purposes, of course*), and writing computer programs. They also like to visit grand old houses. They say that, if you listen carefully, you can sometimes hear them knocking in the middle of the night. Of course, that could just be the old plumbing, but what would you rather believe?

DAUGHTER 2: Was that true?

DEALER: Every word! Well, most words. At least some words. The part about the one ton silver nugget was definitely true. You can look it up in your Wackypodium. (*DAUGHTER 1 looks about to interrupt*) But enough of that. Storytime is over. Time for some more singing, I think.

DRILL, YE TARRIERS, DRILL

(ALL *non-speaking* CAST exit.)

(CARETAKER and GRANDMOTHER either pantomime or walk through patio doors to what is supposed to be an outdoor balcony. A decorated table can be seen in the room behind them, set perhaps for a small group celebration, bottles, glasses, etc. There is a bouquet of roses on the table (or a large photo of roses on the wall))

CARETAKER: (*pouring some whisky out into two glasses on a tabletop or railing*) It's so good to see you again.

GRANDMOTHER: Here's to old times. (*they toast glasses*) Are these all roses?

CARETAKER: Aye, since the house doesn't need much care I spend a lot of my spare time planting and pruning.

GRANDMOTHER: I never knew you had such a green thumb.

CARETAKER: I thought you would like – well, I mean, the house seems to like, uh, roses (*realizes how lame this sounds and changes the subject*). I have to say, I was worried when I heard that your daughter, and not you, inherited the hall. I thought–

GRANDMOTHER: (*interrupting*) You thought I'd come back as a ghost? Well, I did have a health scare, it's true, and I did change my will and give all this to my daughter, but I'm lucky. I'll be around for a long time.

CARETAKER: And the Hotel? Does she really plan to tear it down?

GRANDMOTHER: Not if we can convince her. She has a good heart, just like her father (*looks meaningfully at Caretaker*). That's why I made sure to bring her here, on the solstice, so she can feel the magic for herself. It will change her mind. I know it will.

CARETAKER: You were always so certain things would work out.

GRANDMOTHER: And then they didn't. (*She is overcome with emotion, and CARETAKER cheers her up*)

SALLEY GARDEN (*This becomes a **duet**, Caretaker beginning, then Grandmother singing, like a conversation, back and forth.*)

(*GRANDMOTHER and CARETAKER exit, Dealer and Mother come on at side of stage. Dealer directs Mother's attention to what happens next*)

SOLDIER 1: Come inside and close that door before we catch our deaths. Again! (*great laughing from the inside group at that line*)

(*SISTER 1, SISTER 2 and SISTER 3 enter, joined by SOLDIER 1, SOLDIER 2 and SOLDIER 3. They all have glasses and are making merry*)

SOLDIER 3: We're here for a song and a dance and we're going to get them.

SOLDIER 1: That's right. Sing us your song.

SISTER 1: Our song?

SOLDIER 3: The one you sang to us so many years ago.

SOLDIER 1: If you can still remember it, that is.

SISTER 2: Come girls. The not-so-faithful apparently need some reminding of the power of spirit. But let's do it right. You three were outside, remember?

(*The 3 SOLDIERS move off to the side*)

SISTER 2: And I was like this, looking out (*she stands looking out the 'window' downstage center*).

SISTER 1: You were crying.

SISTER 2: I was not.

TRIO SONG: 1940's Andrews Sisters-ish song (LET IT SNOW?)

(As the SISTERS look out the “window” and sing, the SOLDIERS mime slogging through the snow, hearing the angelic voices, coming to the house and seeing the SISTERS through the windowpane. They are smitten. Song ends.)

SOLDIER 2: And we almost deserted right there and then.

SOLDIER 3: Oh my heart.

GROUP SONG: Oh Come All Ye Faithful

SOLDIER 3: Well, we all still sound good but this isn't a party if we don't have a dance! Fiddle man, play us a tune!

GROUP DANCE *(starts with large group, people gradually leave, sextet remains, then soldiers depart to war.)*

(LUCY and ANNA enter. As the sisters huddle and look at soldiers' graves, LUCY and ANNA sing.)

THERE ARE ANGELS HOVERING ROUND (LUCY/ANNA Duet)

MOTHER *(thoughtfully, sadly)*: Well. Well, my goodness. That was ...

DEALER: Yes.

MOTHER: My mom told me about the window and the sisters, but it was a story. Just ... a story. Except it actually happened.

DEALER: It did. The memory became a story to be passed down from one generation to the next. Most families have stories like this. Through them we stay connected to each other in life and, er, the afterlife.

MOTHER *(still upset)*: Yes, well, I liked it better when it was just a story. *(Begins to exit, calling for FATHER who is offstage.)* Alex! We're going. *(DEALER follows MOTHER. MOTHER speaks to him.)* No, my mind is made up. Enjoy your solstice celebration. Next year, this will all be wilderness. *(Exit.)*

(DEALER looks after her sadly as CAST enters.)

HARD TIMES COME AGAIN NO MORE

LORD OF THE DANCE

-- END ACT 1 --

– ACT 2 –

ABBOTS BROMLEY DANCE

(Enter Mother and Dealer)

MOTHER: Hm. Well, that was certainly, ahem, interesting. What was it?

DEALER: That was the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, an English tradition performed ever year in the village of Abbots Bromley since, oh, 1225 or thereabouts. (Speaks to Jago and Tristram.) Your great great great grandfather brought it over and it's been performed right here every winter solstice since 1864.

MOTHER: 1864? That's older than the University of Colorado. It'll be a pity for the tradition to end here, but we can't stand in the way of progress, and, they'll still continue the dance over in England. That place will never move forward. They left Europe, and they still have a King!

IRISH WENCESLAS

WESTWARD, HO! (KIDS' SONG)

POEM (Loren)

Westward (excerpt)

by Ellen P. Allerton (1835-1993)

When eastern snows are melting and the south wind softly blows,
The old hives swarm, and westward the Star of Empire goes.

"Westward ho!" is ever the watchword of the spring;
As sure as birds fly northward, is this a settled thing.

Westward, and ever westward, the long, white wagons creep,
Through towns and open country, and forests dark and deep.

Westward—women and children, bearded and stalwart men—
From stern New England hillside, from wild and rocky glen;

Westward—from o'er the ocean a crowd comes pressing on,
Russian, Norwegian, German—all bloods under the sun

Here meet and mingle kindly. As all the world doth know,
When other lands are full, hither rolls the overflow.

Westward, and ever westward, the peaceful army comes—
Workmen for better wages, the homeless seeking homes;

Still they flood and swell our cities, still they spread across the land;
Westward they come, and still we greet them with the clasp of friendly
hand.

DONA NOBIS

(Caretaker, Dealer, Apprentice, and OGG move downstage)

DEALER: Alright everybody, how is our plan working so far?

APPRENTICE: The girls like the other kids.

CARETAKER: The grandmother wants to keep the hotel.

DEALER: What about the father? (*all look at each other, nobody knows. DEALER thinks.*) OK, he's an architect. Let's pique his interest. (*addresses CARETAKER*) Can you show him the original blueprints and maps?

CARETAKER: Aye, I think he'll bite. He's looking a bit bored right now.

DEALER: OK, that leaves us with the big one, the Mother.

OLD GRANDMA GHOST: Why don't I work on her? She reminds me of me; I think she'll listen to what I have to say.

DEALER: Great, let's go out and win one for the unliving! On three, ready? One, two, three, BREAK! (*all clap hands like a football huddle*)

CARETAKER: (*to FATHER*) Mr... ah...

FATHER: Call me Alex.

CARETAKER: Mr. Alex.

FATHER: No, just Alex.

CARETAKER: Mr. Just Alex.

FATHER (*a bit perturbed*): Yes, "Mr. Just Caretaker?"

CARETAKER: Ahem. Alex, I have it in mind to ask you a favor, but I can offer you an enticement.

FATHER: What's the favor?

CARETAKER: I have the original blueprints for the hotel -- could you look at them and determine whether our renovations and upgrades are up to code?

FATHER: Maybe. What's the enticement?

CARETAKER: Some prohibition-era whiskey from Canada, brought here in the 1920s?

FATHER: (*Smiling*) Canadian whiskey? Say no more. Lead the way, my good man. (*they exit*)

SAE WILL WE YET (GHOSTS)

MUMMERS PLAY

Room:

Make way, make way, you spirits all,
Tis time for Mummers to fill the hall.
Room is my name, this room I will fill,
With action, excitement, a tale told to thrill.
Pray give your attention and spare us your time,
Step forth Father Christmas, my partner in rhyme!

FC:

Here come I, Father Christmas is my name,
Old Saint Nick, Santa Claus, it's really all the same.
With my sack of presents, spreading joy is my goal,
But rules are rules, if you've been bad, you're only getting coal!

Kids:

Boo!

FC:

Tough room!
So, now that I'm here, to help with my tale,
Can someone provide me with mighty strong ale?
Those good old boys are drinking whiskey and rye,
But strong ale is the best for a throat that's this dry.

Room:

You're in luck, Daddy C, for our beer fairy brings,

Tommyknocker Ale, from Idaho Springs!

(Enter Beer Fairy—Jim Boyd, wearing a tutu, with Tommyknocker Ale, maybe dancing to tune of Sugar Plum Fairy)

FC:

(Holding up Tommyknocker Ale)

You can keep all your Clydesdales with cheap tasteless beer,
You want holiday spirit? I've got it right here!

Now my whistle is wet, let's proceed with our play.

So bring on the next character, we don't have all day.

(Enter Alferd Packer)

Room:

Ah, who have we here, a strange-looking fellow?

Good sir, what's your name?

AP: (starts to roar) WELL..

FC:

No need to bellow.

AP:

In these parts, I'm well known, I'm a man of great fame.

CU's cafeteria even carries my name.

Colorado's most famous cannibal snacker.

The one, the only, it's me Alferd Packer.

Room:

That bag, labeled "edibles", I shudder to see.

So, what's in those cookies you munch with such glee?

AP:

Don't worry, they're legal, the voters decreed.

These cookies are made with some magical weed.

There is something strange, though no need to fret.

The more that I eat, the hungrier I get.

So, now for my main course, some meat I require.

This barbecued treat should sate my desire. *(turns around to take something out of bag)*

FC:

My stomach is turning, I'm shaken and shook.

Room:

To see what he's eating, I can't bear to look.

AP:

Your shock and disgust are overly hasty,
This foot-long sub is really quite tasty (*takes a bite out of the toes of a foot in a bun*)

FC:

You, sir, are a monster, kids, cover your eyes.

Room:

This might even beat Sweeney Todd and his pies.

AP:

(*Unconcerned*) I'm also a writer. Come here, take a look. (*Takes a book out of his bag*)

It's called "To Serve Man" (*aside*) It's really a cookbook.
For a holiday treat for son, and for daughter,
My Donner Party Kebabs will make your mouth water.

Room:

This terrible man has me most upset.

FC:

Of all our villains, he's the worst one yet.

Room:

We need a hero to vanquish this foe.

FC:

So who can we find, to rescue this show?
(*Enter Sasquatch*)

Sas:

Lots of incoherent grunting

Room:

So who are you? Please tell us your name.

Sas:

More grunting, sounding a bit like "Ig Oot"

FC:

No, I'm still not getting it, it all sounds the same.

(Sas does elaborate charades, pointing at AP's foot-long sub, the other three take a while to get it, saying things like 'sub'(FC), 'hoagie'(Room), 'grinder'(AP), 'poorboy'(FC), 'torpedo'(Room), 'hero'(AP)—which gets an

approving flex from Sas, finally getting ‘foot’, and then Sas mimes big, so they hit on “BigFoot”.)

FC:

Ah, Big Foot. But why didn’t you just point to your own massive foot?

(Indicates Sas’s big foot. Sas hits head to say “silly me”)

AP:

Big Foot? What’s that? Sounds tasty.

FC:

Big Foot is another name for Sasquatch. Isn’t that right?

(Sas makes approving nodding motions and noises)

Room:

(to Sas) Now Squatchy, is it OK if I call you “Squatchy”? (Sas demurs), it’s time to defeat,

This villainous man, before more he can eat.

AP:

Now Squatchy, or Big Foot, whoever you be,

Come look in my book, I need you to see,

When our forthcoming fight is dusted and done,

The scrumptious treat that *you* will become.

(AP shows SAS a page in his book, and SAS cries out, staggers back, and collapses)

FC:

Some hero he was, he didn’t even fight,

One look in that book, and he just died of fright!

(AP pinches Sas’s leg, then takes large salt and pepper grinders out of his bag, and starts grinding them over Sas)

AP:

He’s not at all tender, he’s really quite tough,

I don’t know if these seasonings will be enough.

Room:

Not so fast you foul villain, he was just the appetizer,

Our true Colorado hero is bound to surprise yer.

(Enter Chop the buffalo/bison mascot to the tune of the CU fight song)

AP:

(Laughing) That’s your hero? My gut is now busting,

The Q-Anon Shaman is the one you are trusting?

Chop:

Q-Anon what? No, no, that's all wrong.

I'm a college sports mascot, didn't you hear the fight song? (*Brass plays it again*)

Chop is my name, I'm a bison, or a buffalo,

No-one's quite sure, but when we are, we'll let you know.

FC:

Chop? But I thought it was Chi...

Chop:

(*Cuts him off*) No, it's definitely Chop, that's all I can say.

If we use that other name, CU makes us pay.

This state is quite stingy with funding our college,

Unlike in Nebraska, where the 'N' stands for 'knowledge'.

We have many expenses, that need lots of money,

And the coffers are dry, it's not at all funny.

(*Takes off hat and waves it at audience*) Perhaps these good folks could throw money at me,

The head coach and the quarterback don't come here for free.

Room:

(*Loudly*) Ahem!

Chop:

What?

Room:

This fundraising pitch is quite out of place,

Replace your silly hat, you have a villain to face.

Chop:

(*Replaces hat*) Right you are, I got carried away,

But now I must fight, to save the day (*Brass plays fight song again*).

Come here, you foul villain, run is your race,

Your luck has run out, the music you'll face (*Brass starts to play fight song again, and all characters make them stop, with comical noises*).

AP:

So how do you plan to beat me outright?

You don't look to me like you're up for a fight.

(All cast turn to look at brass warningly, brass shrug and give “we surrender” sign)

Chop:

You’ll soon find out, but before you do,

Let’s have some jerky, it makes quite a chew *(hands AP some jerky, which he eats)*

AP:

Now that’s really good, but one thing’s not clear,

I can’t quite place the taste, is it cow, pig, or deer?

Chop:

The answer *is* clear, and it’s not at all murky,

You just ate, and enjoyed, some prime VEGAN jerky!

AP:

Vegan?! You monster! Cursed be your name!

For eating plant-based jerky, I now die of shame. *(Drops dead)*

Chip:

So here lies a foolish, meat-loving guy.

We all should go plant-based, and I’ll tell you why.

You can take it from Chop, for in wisdom I’m wealthy,

It’s good for the planet, and also quite healthy.

(music and visuals for ‘The More you Know’)

First comes Christmas, then comes Spring,

Like winter, I must die.

Dance, men, the sword dance now for me.

(Sword dance. Chop dies at end and falls to front of stage)

FC:

Alas, poor Chop, you’re too young to go,

We have need of a doctor, to reverse this woe.

Room:

Is there a doctor to be found,

To heal this deep and deadly wound?

(Enter Doctor, dressed as psychiatrist, with pipe and tweed jacket)

Doctor:

Someone call for a doctor? What seems to be wrong?

Best hurry up now, I can’t give you long.

Cast member 1:

(Shouting from the side of stage): Doctor, doctor, I feel like a teepee or maybe a yurt.

Doctor:

Lighten up man, you're too tense.

Cast member 2:

Doctor, doctor, I think I'm a pair of curtains.

Doctor:

Well, pull yourself together then.

Cast member 3:

Doctor, doctor, I keep painting myself gold.

Doctor:

Hm, sounds like you have a guilt complex.

FC:

(Taking Doctor over to Chop, and pointing at him) Doctor, Chop's dead, so what do you think?

Doctor:

Oh, I'm not *that* kind of doctor. I'm only a shrink *(exits)*.

FC:

(Looks around) Any suggestions, to cure this strife?

We need a true genius, to bring him new life.

Daughter 1:

(Waving phone at FC and Room) According to Wikipedia, Nikola Tesla had a lab in Colorado for a year. Perhaps you could ask him?

Room:

Nikola Tesla? The guy who changed Twitter's name to X?

FC:

I wouldn't trust that narcissistic fool to fix a teddy bear, let alone a real flesh and blood buffalo-bison.

Daughter 1:

No, no, that's Elon Musk. Nikola Tesla, after whom the Tesla car company is named, was a *real* genius, who made many groundbreaking discoveries in the study of electricity, like alternating current, which we still use today. He was a Serbian-American immigrant, who, like many other immigrants,

brought his talents to the US to enrich our society. (*The More you Know visuals and sound again*)

Daughter 2:

(*Taking phone from Daughter 1 and reading from it*) Huh. It also says here that Nikola Tesla married a pigeon. And he had a lifelong feud with Thomas Edison. And he was drinking buddies with Mark Twain. And he invented a Death Ray. He was kind of a rock star!

FC:

Sounds like the man to bring us all joy,
Step forth, Nikola Tesla, and reanimate our boy!
(*Enter Nikola Tesla, with pigeon on shoulder, to rock music, AC/DC, or Tesla Girls by OMD*)

Tesla:

I'm Nikola Tesla, my genius unbound,
Resistance is futile, when I'm on the ground.
I rock the world sideways, I like living large,
No matter the subject, I'm always in charge.
From DC to AC, I'll make you volte face,
Your current depression will very soon pass.
I'll get you amped up, no matter what,
In the world of mad scientists, I'm what is hot!
I'm a body electric, with particular views,
A man with a mission, and nothing to lose,
Who means what he says, and says what he thinks,
The Times ran my obit, "Edison stinks!"
My example, for others, was inspirational,
To the world of science, I was transformational.
I'm known as eccentric, just read my memoirs,
I make my own lightning, and radio Mars,
Some call me a nutcase, but what do they know?
For me and me only, my dear pigeon glows.

Room:

Mr. Tesla, I pray, do you think you can save,
Our young hero Chop, from beyond the grave?

Tesla:

Now what kind of beast is this, dead on the floor?

Room:

He's a bison,

FC:

Or buffalo,

Room:

No-one's quite sure.

Tesla:

Don't worry, my friends, my skill is immense,

I can change the past to the future tense.

What once was alive will be so once more,

As what is to come becomes what went before.

To accomplish this feat, I'll use Earth's greatest mystery,

And harness the power of electricity.

For thousands of years, we've beheld with awe,

The flash of lightning, and the thunder's roar.

But now I've tamed it within this orb (*holds up plasma ball*)

This life-giving force, young Chop will absorb.

With a sprinkle of electric yeast,

Megahertz, gigahertz, I raise this beast!

(Lightning sounds and lighting effects, culminating in Chop reviving, as do AP and Sas, Doctor comes out for bow)

IT'S ALIVE!

Chop:

Good morning gentlemen, a-sleeping I have been,

And I've had such a sleep as the like was never seen.

But now I am awake, alive unto this day,

The Mummies' tale is done, and we must be on our way.

Doctor:

We all shake hands, never fight no more,

All be comrades as we ever were before.

Tesla:

A pocket full of money and a cellar full of beer,

And power in your grid, to last you all the year!

FC:

Be there loaf in your locker and wassail in your cup,
A fire on the hearth and good luck for your lot,

AP:

Money in your pocket and a tasty pie in the pot!

Sas:

Incoherent grunting.

Room:

Our play is done, we must be gone, we stay no longer here,

All:

(including Sas grunting) We wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy,
Bright New Year!

MOTHER *(to DEALER)*: That was quite something. A lot of fun.

DEALER: It's a tradition.

MOTHER: Another one? Like the Horn Dance?

DEALER: Exactly. It's part of our solstice revelry. We tell a story every year,
different ones, new ones—it takes us a whole year to come up with them.
Ah me, I'll miss that the most, I think. No more fun stories.

MOTHER *(echoes mournfully)*: No more fun stories. *(Shakes herself.)* But it
seems like such a waste to maintain this house with no one in it.

DEALER *(looking offended)*: A-hem!

MOTHER: No one living in it, I mean.

DEALER: Well, before you decide anything, let me introduce you to your
mother's grandmother. She's the daughter of one of the brothers who found
the silver nugget. *(Beckons OGG over)*

OGG: Hello, my dear. I'm delighted to meet you. We are so glad you're here. (*Takes Mother over to the window*) Have you ever seen so many stars.

MOTHER: This takes Dark Sky to a whole new level. That's the Milky Way, and there's Orion. I can see his belt. Thanks to my mom, it's one of the few constellations I know.

OGG: I'm always amazed that some of the stars we see may have burned out a millennium ago, yet their light still shines. Perhaps we spirits are of the same energy -- energy from something that lived long ago but remains visible. For one day, anyway, on the solstice.

MOTHER: You are definitely visible.

DON'T FENCE ME IN??

MOTHER: All these different people and their stories. Coming here is like walking into a living history book. It's so fun, but ... tell me again what happens if this house gets torn down?

OGG: All us ghosts go with it.

MOTHER: (*sadly*): I was afraid of that. (*miffed*) Oh, phooey, isn't there any way to get around this? I mean, I don't want to be the one to break up the party, but I feel like we don't need another hotel or another casino.

OGG: Perhaps not, but how about a family home?

(*Father comes running/staggering on, waving whisky bottle and blueprints*)

FATHER: This place is amazing. (*To OGG, whom he can now see*) Oh, hello. Excuse me, but (*speaks to MOTHER*) I've been reading this whiskey and drinking these blueprints with that caretaker fellow. Fine fellow, by the way. Solid chap. There's something about his eyes. They remind me of yours. Anyway, what was I saying?

MOTHER: You've been reading the whiskey, er reading the blueprints, and drinking the whisky?

FATHER: Yes, this could be a splendid family home, with a bit of first-rate renovation from tors yuly, er, yours truly. I know you have a different vision for this place, and of course I'll support you pine hundred a cent, er, pine cents a hundred, one-dred percent, but I think we could all be happy here. You could still donate the land, just keep the house.

MOTHER: You mean, live here?

FATHER and OGG (*together*): Why not? (*Father takes another swig from bottle, while OGG continues*)

OGG: The stories housed in these rooms are those of love and belonging and togetherness, shared at a time of year when feelings are the most heartfelt. You have the chance to connect the love of those who came before with those who come after—your daughters, and your daughters' daughters.

MOTHER: One big happy family. You know, I *do* like the sound of that. So, keep the family together, past, present, and future.

OGG: Yes! And perhaps ...

MOTHER: (*wary*) What.

OGG: Maybe you could have a party and invite some new people over. Revel a little. And then some day, we'll get new ghosts for our group. I mean, we all like each other, but we wouldn't say no to new stories.

MOTHER: The more, the merrier. Hmm, I can work remotely from anywhere in the world. It might as well be here.

(*GHOSTS cheer.*)

FATHER: Wait a minute! How come I can see you all now? (*pinches himself*) I'm not dead too, am I?

CARETAKER: Not at all, just happily under the influence of some very special Canadian whiskey. Why do you think they call it 'spirits'?

FATHER: So, let me get this straight, if I want to see the ghosts every solstice celebration, I have to drink more of this whiskey?

DEALER: I'm afraid so. A heavy burden to bear, but worth it.

FATHER: I'll drink to that!

VIVE LA COMPAGNIE

OH HOLY NIGHT

SHORTEST DAY

SUSSEX MUMMER'S CAROL