

NOBODY INN

By Luke Fruin

A play in two acts
Second Edition



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Nobody Inn was first Performed at the Arden Theatre, Faversham, on
19th August, 2019, with the following cast:

Mr Hynes Luke Fruin

Flora Butterwell Sue Bailey

Bianca Butterwell Vicky Gatward-Warner

Jane Baker Sophie Payne

Stephen Baker Tim Gatward-Warner

Ted Monday James Manning

Directors Mick Bennell and Sophie Payne

Designer Luke Fruin

Lighting Designer Mick Bennell

Characters

In order of appearance

Mr Hynes, the mysterious proprietor of the Hynes Hotel where the story takes place. He can sometimes be an unsettling presence and has an almost supernatural ability to read a room and the people in it. He is often happiest as a passive observer.

Flora Butterwell, an elderly, wheelchair-bound lady. Her innocent appearance acts as the perfect cover for her compulsive, mild criminal behaviour. She prefers to be in control and acts up when that control is challenged.

Jane Baker, a seemingly quiet woman, wrestling in her mind with the temptation of chasing the life she wants even though it would hurt her husband and oldest friend. She must learn how to balance her desire to please everyone with her need to please herself.

Stephen Baker, Jane's devoted husband and oldest friend. A fan of murder mysteries. He has a secret plan to breathe new life into his dwindling relationship but may have taken it a few-dozen steps too far. His desperate actions spell trouble for everyone.

Ted Monday, a broken man running from the life he feels he has destroyed. He is a dry-witted, recently unemployed alcoholic with a painful secret. It is possible he is overreacting and risks causing more damage still by running away from his problems.

Bianca Butterwell, Flora Butterwell's long suffering granddaughter. She often finds herself toeing a fine line between caring for her grandmother and staying on the right side of the law.

Act One

Scene One

The stage is empty. There is a furious lighting storm raging outside the Hynes Hotel.

MR HYNES enters with wooden boards and a hammer which he sets down and begins scrutinising the main doors to the hotel as if measuring them up. He takes one of the boards and holds it in place across the doors and begins reaching for the hammer. It is out of reach. Eddie, a small stuffed toy, is perched on the reception desk.

HYNES (To Eddie) I do hope you are sitting quite comfortably(!)

HYNES begins straining himself as he reaches for the hammer, holding the board now by his fingertips.

HYNES You know, you'd be a great deal more useful around this hotel if only you were proactive. For example, you could nudge the hammer my way. Don't just sit there, old boy.

HYNES drops the board and, rather frustrated, takes the hammer from the desk.

HYNES Why must you look at me like that, Eddie? You know very well why it has come to this. Well, you're no help, are you? You *are* looking rather peaky today.

He places the board once more against the door. He readies the hammer but lingers solemnly.

HYNES I know. It's no use reminding me. This is a last resort. My only remaining option.

As he prepares to swing the hammer the phone begins to ring. He doesn't answer the phone, he simply stares at it. When the phone rings off, he looks to Eddie and then to a hanging photograph.

HYNES No, I shan't. I never have, I won't say it again. I certainly have no intention of changing habits now. I wish to hear no more about it.

He lowers the board from the door.

HYNES There are some tasks I am most unequipped for. We both have our specialties- you and I. I am certain one day soon I shall find mine.

His attention turns back to the door. He readies the hammer for a swing. At that moment, the photograph falls from its place on the wall. HYNES is startled.

HYNES If this is your doing, I think I'd rather you didn't meddle. I liked that photograph where it was. I do try my best. If you think you can do better then why don't you? You have been rather inactive of late and now you decide to rearrange. It won't save the hotel, of course. What's done is done and that's that, I'm afraid. We really must close now.

He turns his back to the door and looks to the now empty space on the wall before picking up the broken picture frame. As he does, the doors fly open. Hynes is startled again, cutting his hand on the broken glass of the frame.

In wheels FLORA, wrapped in a coat and scarf with a second coat (belonging to JANE) held over her head. JANE is trying her best to keep up with FLORA who is defiantly wheeling herself. She is wearing an oversized men's jacket over her shoulders.

FLORA Good Lord, what a miserable dump! I tell you, I wouldn't board a rabid dog h-

HYNES jumps to attention behind the desk, hiding the broken frame and bleeding hand behind the desk.

FLORA -Hello! Nice place, do you own it?

HYNES Yes. Yes, we do.

FLORA We?

HYNES Horrible weather.

FLORA Nice and dry in here, though. Stroke of luck, really, that we stumbled upon your hotel. Flora Butterwell, nice to meet you.

HYNES Pleasure. Mr Hynes.

FLORA Ah, Mr Hynes of the *Hynes* Hotel. What an honour.

HYNES Indeed. *(To Jane)* And you are?

JANE Wet.

HYNES Wet?

JANE -and cold.

HYNES I see.

FLORA Where has that young man got to with my bag?

Stephen enters without a coat, dragging a case and carrying flora's heavy looking bag in his free hand.

JANE *(Semi-sarcastically)* My hero. Is that everything?

STEPHEN *(Giving Flora her bag)* Not quite. There's a couple more.

JANE Alright. I'll come and help you then.

STEPHEN No, you stay here in the warm. Someone needs to look after Flora anyway.

FLORA No *someone* doesn't! I am perfectly capable of looking after myself. Probably a hell of a lot more capable than with you dopey pair trying to navigate me around. A job shared is a job halved, so both of you hop it and stop haunting me.

JANE Is it still raining?

STEPHEN Raining isn't the word. It's cats and dogs.

JANE I'll just grab my coat. I'll be fine.

JANE looks at FLORA, clearly hoping for her to offer to return the coat.

JANE Would you mind if I-?

FLORA Here, take your coat, dear. You'll catch your death out there.

JANE *(Taking the coat)* Thank you.

STEPHEN leaves, followed by JANE.

FLORA Thank the Lord, they've gone.

HYNES Family can be trying, can they not?

FLORA Family? Oh good God, they are *not* family.

HYNES No?

FLORA Total strangers! Found me out in the cold. Thought they needed to help the vulnerable, little old lady. *(She scoffs)* I'll be needing a room, dear.

HYNES *(Flustered)* A room?

FLORA Well, of course. A room.

HYNES I'm afraid I won't be able to provide a room. You see, I am closing the hotel. For good, I regret to say.

FLORA This won't do at all. Can I ask *why* you are turning guests away?

HYNES I am afraid, under the current circumstances, I cannot continue to run the hotel.

FLORA Your dropping rating?

HYNES (*Surprise*) I beg your pardon?

FLORA Are you referring to your dropping ratings? This used to be a five star hotel, am I right?

HYNES Well- uh- yes. (*Looking to Eddie*) Yes, but that was some time ago, I'm afraid. You are knowledgeable about hotels?

FLORA (*The hard sell begins*) Oh yes, I can see it in your eyes. You'd like a five star rating again, wouldn't you?

HYNES (*Solemnly*) I would.

FLORA I think I could help you there. I am a hotel critic.

HYNES (*Excited*) I see.

FLORA It's awfully quiet. Are you on your own?

HYNES As of very recently, yes.

FLORA Ah. I suppose if you're so set on closing, you wouldn't need staff, would you?

HYNES Precisely!

FLORA Now, where would I find the bar? I need a little something to warm me up.

HYNES Please, do follow me. Anything you desire shall be yours.

FLORA I desire a gin. You are *well* on your way to a five-star rating, Mr Hynes!

MR HYNES leads FLORA off towards the bar. In the resulting silence, JANE and STEPHEN re-enter from the rain. JANE is empty handed, save for the jacket she is using to shield her from the rain. STEPHEN is dragging a small suitcase while holding JANE's handbag in his other hand.

JANE I wish you'd let me carry something.

STEPHEN No need, I managed.

JANE I could at least have taken my handbag. It's not a good look for you.

STEPHEN *(Modelling the bag)* No? I don't know. I think I could make it work.

JANE Hand it over, before I die of embarrassment.

STEPHEN *(Giving her the bag)* No one can see. There's no one here.

JANE Stephen, *I* can see.

STEPHEN Jane. You really are beautiful in this light.

JANE In the dark, you mean? Thanks, Stephen.

STEPHEN Not the dark. The lightning. The way the flash dances in your eyes.

JANE *(Unimpressed)* Lightning. Stephen, please stop trying to compliment me before I get a complex.

STEPHEN What's wrong with that?

JANE You make me sound like a Hammer horror film, Stephen!

STEPHEN *I* think there's something beautiful about lightning. It's mysterious and complicated. I could watch lightning for hours.

JANE So I'm complicated now?

STEPHEN Tell you what- I'll probably give it up. I've never been very good at compliments. I always say something wrong, don't I?

JANE I really meant what I said, you know. I know you think I didn't want to go. I'm sorry this came up and spoiled everything.

STEPHEN I said it's fine. The hotel has refunded most of my deposit so it wasn't a total loss. It was such a last minute cancellation, it was nice of them to give us anything back. In a way, everything worked out.

JANE What do you mean?

STEPHEN We can still have a nice weekend away. We've just ended up in a different hotel.

JANE A hotel straight out of a horror film. We can't stay here.

STEPHEN It's not that bad.

HYNES enters, heading to his place behind the reception desk to check his guests in.

HYNES Still raining, I see.

JANE *(Shaking herself dry)* You could say that.

HYNES You'll be needing a room?

JANE Uh- I think we'll probably-

STEPHEN Yes, please.

JANE *(Defeated)* Oh for goodness- With a shower, if possible.

STEPHEN *(Joking)* And a sea view.

HYNES I'm afraid we are not situated close enough to the sea to provide a genuine sea view.

STEPHEN Oh- no, I was just-

HYNES However, I *can* offer a room with a framed painting of the sun setting over the sea. It even has a little boat.

STEPHEN (*A beat*) Right. Perfect! Sounds wonderful.

JANE Are there tea and coffee making facilities?

HYNES Indeed there are. You'll find tea and coffee in the rooms. Some of the rooms even have a mini bar. The contents are including in the price of the room. Unfortunately, they are currently empty.

JANE Oh.

HYNES But of course I can stock them for you. Will you be needing a double bed, or two single beds?

JANE hesitates and looks at STEPHEN.

STEPHEN Double, please.

HYNES You should probably get out of those wet clothes.

JANE (*A beat*) Can we have our key first, please?

HYNES Of course! Your names, please.

STEPHEN Jane and Stephen Baker.

HYNES writes in his book before turning it to STEPHEN.

HYNES Please fill in your details.

STEPHEN You should probably call whatshername while I'm doing this.

HYNES hands the key to JANE.

JANE Of course. I'll meet you up in the room.

STEPHEN You're not going to wait for me?

JANE You just told me to call Bianca!

STEPHEN Well, I thought you'd do it here.

JANE My phone died on the way here. I'll need to charge it first.

STEPHEN Oh. Mr Hynes, can we use your phone?

HYNES *(Sharply)* No! I'm afraid it's broken.

JANE Oh, that's a pity. I'll only be upstairs, Stephen. I won't be far.

STEPHEN I love you.

JANE begins to leave.

STEPHEN *(Louder)* I love you.

JANE *(A beat)* You too.

JANE exits toward the rooms, taking only her hand bag from the luggage pile. STEPHEN turns his attention to the registration book.

HYNES I am afraid I have made an egregious error.

STEPHEN Oh?

HYNES There are no towels in your room. I shall fetch some for you immediately.

HYNES exits in a hurry. STEPHEN finishes filling in the book, gathers the remaining luggage and, with some difficulty, exits toward the rooms. HYNES returns with towels and is surprised to find an empty foyer.

HYNES Ah! They seem to have left. I shall leave these with you, Eddie. See to it that Mr and Mrs Baker get these towels.

FLORA enters from the bar.

- FLORA Ah, Mr Hynes- who are you talking to?
- HYNES (A beat) Myself, I'm afraid.
- FLORA (*In jest*) First sign of madness, you know.
- HYNES Or- indeed- loneliness.
- FLORA Quite right, Mr Hynes.
- HYNES There are few other scenarios in which madness is preferable to such a degree.
- FLORA I quite agree, Mr Hynes. I quite agree.
- HYNES Ah, I see you have made a selection. I must say, this is not the choice I'd have expected from someone such as yourself.
- FLORA Well, one must learn to appreciate the low hanging fruit to truly understand what makes the fruit at the very top so much sweeter. Would you like me to pay for it now or will you add it to the bill?
- HYNES (*Aghast*) Mrs Butterwell, your stay at the Hynes Hotel will be- as they say- on the house.
- FLORA That is very kind, Mr Hynes.
- HYNES If your stay at the Hynes Hotel is limited by the amount in your pocket, how could I expect you to experience all we have to offer?
- FLORA I like your thinking, Mr Hynes. Hold this for me.
- FLORA hands the bottle to HYNES and pulls a much bigger bottle from her handbag.*
- HYNES Now *that* is a fine choice.
- FLORA I'm ready for my room, Mr Hynes.
- HYNES Wonderful! You shall have the finest room in the hotel. The penthouse, overlooking the beautiful rolling hills.

Act One | Scene One

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FLORA Where is it?

HYNES Keep going up the stairs to the- (*Catches himself*) But perhaps you'd rather a different room. No stairs. I'm afraid there is only one room on the ground floor.

FLORA I'm sure it's wonderful.

HYNES I'm afraid not. The room is small. It has no windows and no bathroom, you would have to use the staff facilities past the dining room.

FLORA Ah, well- it'll have to do.

HYNES I shall make up for the disappointment.

FLORA Where is this room, then? Room one, I think I saw-

HYNES There is door just before the bar. That is the room.

FLORA Ah! Near the bar! You know, I thought that was a cupboard.

HYNES No, it is *my* room. It hasn't been a cupboard for over twenty years.

FLORA I couldn't help but notice that room one is on the ground floor.

HYNES I'm afraid I do not have the key to room one.

FLORA You've lost the key? You ought to have the lock changed.

HYNES You don't understand. I do not possess a key to room one because room one is off limits. No one is to step foot in that room.

FLORA I see- on the bright side- *my* room is near the bar.

HYNES Allow me to show you to the room.

FLORA No need. Let's go to the bar instead.

FLORA exits, followed by HYNES. STEPHEN enters past them. He is looking for JANE.

STEPHEN Jane?

He takes one of the towels and begins drying himself. TED enters from the rain and shakes himself off. He too takes one of the towels and begins drying himself. HYNES enters and is immediately taken aback to find TED using JANE's towel.

HYNES *(To Eddie)* But I said- *(To Ted)* Sir, that towel is not for you.

TED It'll do.

STEPHEN That towel is for my wife.

TED My apologies.

TED throws the towel at STEPHEN, covering his face.

TED *(To Hynes)* I'd like a room, please. Nothing fancy. I'm not staying long.

HYNES *(Growing uncomfortable with the number of people in the hotel)*
You'd like a room? Yes- of course.

JANE enters, phone in hand.

STEPHEN There you are! You weren't in the room.

JANE No. I wasn't. The signal was rubbish in the room. I had to stand near the window in the corridor to make the call. It's probably the weather.

STEPHEN Right. Well, let's not hang around here. Let's get comfortable.

JANE Good idea..

JANE and STEPHEN exit.

HYNES A single room for you, sir?

Act One | Scene One

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TED Please. Cheapest you've got. I'm a simple man.

TED spots Eddie.

TED What's this? The mascot?

HYNES I'm sorry?

TED The scruffy looking teddy. On the desk.

HYNES Oh! Uh- yes.

Ted takes a newspaper from the nearby table.

TED You should get better signs for this place. Or light it up or something. It's not an easy place to find, out in the middle of nowhere.

HYNES Perhaps. Your name, please?

TED Uh- Monday. Mr Monday.

HYNES First name?

TED Ted.

HYNES *(A beat)* Short for Edward or-?

TED Yes. Everyone calls me Ted.

HYNES I see. Ted. Room 15. Please fill in the rest of your information.

HYNES hands a key to TED and turns the book towards him. TED disregards the book and turns to leave as FLORA wheels herself in.

FLORA You look like you could do with a drink.

TED Blimey you're good. Do you read palms?

FLORA *(Giving TED a bottle from her bag)* There you are. Get that in you.

TED looks bewildered, then appreciative, then exits.

FLORA Mr Hynes, are you sure about me having *your* room?

HYNES Of course. I hope you'll be comfortable.

FLORA But where will you be sleeping?

HYNES I have the entire hotel to choose from. I have found somewhere else to sleep for the night. I shall be quite alright.

FLORA Well, if you change your mind- I'll probably spend a bit longer in the bar with my crossword.

HYNES Goodnight, Mrs Butterwell.

As FLORA exits, HYNES locks the doors to the hotel and climbs on the reception desk to sleep.

Scene Two

Sounds and light transition us to the dead of night. HYNES is present, sleeping on the desk throughout.

JANE sneaks into the silent lobby. She is baffled to find HYNES asleep on the desk but continues quietly past him to the window.

JANE opens the window but finds it doesn't open very far.

JANE *(Whispered)* Bianca?

BIANCA comes to the window.

JANE I can't open it any wider.

BIANCA Can't you open the doors?

JANE Keep your voice down. The owner is asleep behind me.

BIANCA On the desk? Why is he- never mind. Why don't you get the key from him?

JANE checks HYNES for a key.

JANE I can't see any keys on him.

BIANCA Check his pockets.

JANE I don't want to wake him up.

BIANCA Then do it *carefully*.

JANE checks HYNES' top pocket and finds a set of keys.

She goes to the doors and tries the keys, one by one. One of the keys works. She opens the doors and BIANCA comes in.

BIANCA Where is she?

JANE Nice to see you too.

BIANCA Is she here?

JANE Of course.

BIANCA Does anyone know anything?

JANE About what?

TED stumbles in from the bar, drink in hand.

TED What's going on in here?

JANE Nothing, go back to bed.

TED takes a seat.

TED Back to bed? I haven't been to bed yet. What's the time?

TED turns his wrist to look at his watch, spilling his drink into a potted plant and reacts loudly. HYNES wakes with a start. TED moodily puts his bottle on the floor behind the plant and takes his jacket off to hang on the chair.

STEPHEN enters hurriedly, reacting to HYNES' screaming.

STEPHEN What is it? What have you found?

FLORA What's all the noise about?

BIANCA There you are!

FLORA Oh bugger!

FLORA exits as quick as she can manage. BIANCA pursues angrily. There is silence for a moment.

HYNES Who is that?

STEPHEN She's a friend of ours.

HYNES Ah, a friend. Wonderful. Does she have a name?

Act One | Scene Two

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JANE Bianca. She sent us to find her grandmother.

HYNES Have you had any luck?

JANE What?

HYNES Finding her grandmother. Have you had any luck?

JANE Flora is her grandmother.

HYNES Oh, I see. Will she be needing a room?

TED Hang on a second. How did she lose her grandmother?

FLORA reenters, still pursued by BIANCA

FLORA Don't ever have kids!

TED Sounds like advice from the heart! I'll drink to that.

FLORA What are they good for? They bleed you dry, ruin your fun, then they do away with you.

BIANCA Oh, here we go.

HYNES Would you mind-

FLORA How did you find me?

HYNES Excuse me.

BIANCA Never mind that, Nan!

HYNES Could I possibly-

BIANCA What are you doing all the way out here?

HYNES Just a moment of your time.

FLORA That's my business!

HYNES *(Loudly)* Excuse me!

The lobby falls silent.

HYNES My deepest apologies, only- I'd like to take your name.

BIANCA What?

HYNES To check you in. You see, I need your-

BIANCA I'm not staying. I'm only here to collect my runaway grandmother.

FLORA I'm not going anywhere!

BIANCA Pity you're on wheels!

BIANCA seizes the wheelchair and wheels FLORA toward the exit.

FLORA Oh, you rotten child!

JANE You can't leave!

BIANCA stops, leaving the wheelchair facing the back wall, much to the disgust of FLORA who eventually turns herself around.

BIANCA Why not?

JANE Well- it's so late. It must be gone midnight by now.

TED Twenty-to-two.

JANE You don't want to be driving, especially with the weather like it is. We're staying until the morning. Why don't you get a room for the night?

BIANCA Fine. I could do with a bit of sleep, but we *are* leaving first thing.

HYNES Your name?

BIANCA Bianca Butterwell.

HYNES Funny.

BIANCA Funny?

HYNES The name is strangely familiar, that's all.

Everyone looks from HYNES to FLORA. Everyone seems to decide in unison not to comment.

BIANCA Funny.

FLORA If anyone needs me, you'll find me in the penthouse suite.

FLORA exits.

BIANCA You gave her the penthouse suite? On the top floor?

HYNES I believe she is exaggerating the prestige of her room to evoke some amount of jealousy in you. You will find her in the cupboard.

BIANCA *(Aghast)* The cupboard?

HYNES Once a cupboard, repurposed to be a room.

BIANCA You put guests in a cupboard? You put *my grandmother* in a cupboard?

HYNES Ah, your grandmother! Of course, I remember now. That would explain the familiar name!

BIANCA Why is my grandmother in the cupboard?

HYNES It is most unusual for a guest to occupy that room. It is *my* room. Your grandmother is a unique case.

BIANCA That's one way to put it.

HYNES If you could please fill in the rest of your details. I'm afraid I have some mess to take care of.

HYNES takes a broom from upstage and makes to begin sweeping up the broken glass from earlier. The phone rings. HYNES drops the broom and stares at the phone. Everyone stare at HYNES in bewilderment.

TED Are you going to answer that?

HYNES does not answer. He continues to stare.

BIANCA Mr Hynes?

The phone rings off.

HYNES Yes?

TED Get a lot of nuisance calls?

HYNES Yes. Quite, Mr Monday. Quite.

BIANCA *(About the registration book)* Is this alright?

HYNES goes to examine it. JANE picks up the broom and begins sweeping.

HYNES Quite satisfactory. Shall I put you in the room next to your friends?

BIANCA No! Thank you. In fact, I'd like the room furthest from it.

HYNES Ah, the penthouse.

BIANCA God no, I'm not made of money.

HYNES Please. There will be no need for you to pay for your stay.

BIANCA Oh! Right.

TED Why doesn't *she* have to pay?

HYNES Her grandmother is *my* guest. Any family she may have, by extension, shall be *my* guests.

BIANCA Why does Nan get special treatment?

HYNES She is a special guest.

FLORA enters.

HYNES Ah, how is your room, Mrs Butterwell?

FLORA I'll let you know when I'm able to see it.

HYNES I beg your pardon?

FLORA The door to my room is stuck.

TED I'll have a look at it.

TED exits.

FLORA Most kind. Lovely man.

JANE Would you like any help getting your luggage upstairs?

BIANCA I've only got the one bag.

JANE The offer still stands.

BIANCA Look, if you want to see the penthouse suite, just say so.

JANE grins and nods excitedly. BIANCA picks up her bag. TED enters and taps HYNES on the shoulder, gesturing in the direction of the stuck door. TED and HYNES exit together.

STEPHEN I wonder what that's about.

JANE What do you mean?

STEPHEN He looked like he'd seen a ghost.

FLORA Mr Hynes?

STEPHEN No. The other one. What's his name?

BIANCA Mr- Monday?

STEPHEN Him. He didn't look alright.

JANE Right. Shall we head upstairs now? *(The grin returns)* To the penthouse.

STEPHEN I don't know about anyone else, but I'm feeling a bit restless now.

BIANCA The penthouse. In a place like this. Why do I have a horrible feeling it'll be like a dusty old loft?

HYNES *(Off)* Oh!

TED returns alone. He is silent.

BIANCA Is everything okay?

JANE makes to investigate but TED stops her with an arm, shaking his head.

HYNES *(Off, struggling)* I seem to have resolved the issue.

HYNES drags a 'body' onto the stage. There is panic.

JANE Oh my God! That's a body! Take it away! Get rid of it!

STEPHEN That really was a dead body. A person dead in this hotel. Wrapped up in sheets. Did you see that?

HYNES turns around and takes the body off.

BIANCA What is going on here?

FLORA Looks like murder!

HYNES enters.

- HYNES Ladies and gentlemen! I am afraid I have made a most disturbing discovery!
- TED Poor bastard was blocking the door to Flora's- cupboard.
- HYNES A most unfortunate state.
- TED *(Looking at the bottle)* I have to sympathise because I'll probably be in a similar state come morning time.
- BIANCA This is no time for joking!
- HYNES looks for his keys. He cannot find them. JANE panics and throws them onto the desk. BIANCA gives her a stern look.*
- JANE Mr Hynes, if you're looking for your keys- I think you left them on the desk.
- HYNES *(Dubiously)* Ah, yes- of course. Silly me.
- HYNES locks the doors.*
- BIANCA Excuse me, Mr Hynes. What are you doing?
- STEPHEN It's obvious, isn't it? There's a killer on the loose.
- HYNES I'm afraid Stephen would seem to be right. We are now at the scene of a murder. By locking the doors, I am confident I have trapped the villain responsible.
- STEPHEN The killer could be long gone by now.
- HYNES Impossible. That room was empty before you all arrived. The killer must have arrived around the same time.
- JANE So you've trapped us in the hotel with a murderer!
- HYNES It would appear that way.

STEPHEN Unless the killer was already here and escaped using our arrival as a distraction.

HYNES Did anyone see a face earlier that they don't see now?

All shake their heads and mutter.

STEPHEN So the foyer was busy. Perfect time to slip out the back.

HYNES Every other external door and window remains locked.

JANE Why?

HYNES I'm afraid I do not know. I've never had those keys.

FLORA But you're the owner.

HYNES *(Proudly)* Yes, I am.

STEPHEN Look, there's only one thing for it. We have to find the killer.

JANE What? How do you suggest we do that?

STEPHEN Oh, come on, Jane. How many murder mystery nights have we been to? If anyone can deduce the killer's identity, it's us!

JANE Stephen! Listen to yourself! Those killers were actors! They had a script! They planted obvious clues! This is real! We should call the police!

BIANCA No!

JANE What?

BIANCA We can't call the police.

FLORA No. Quite right.

JANE We can't *not* call the police, Bianca! Someone here is a killer.

Act One | Scene Two

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BIANCA Please, Jane. We can't call the police unless we're sure!

JANE Have you gone mad?

BIANCA I'll explain it to you later. For now just- trust me. Please.

TED For what it's worth- I'd prefer to stay under the radar. If we could delay the police, I'd appreciate it.

JANE What?

FLORA Probably best to leave it, dear. We've no reason to waste their time.

JANE Waste their time? There is a dead body!

BIANCA We don't know how that body ended up there. It could have been natural causes.

TED Jolly helpful of him to wrap himself up in a neat little bundle before he popped his clogs of natural causes.

BIANCA I thought you *didn't* want to call the police!

TED I don't!

BIANCA Shut up, then!

JANE None of you want to call the police?

HYNES Perhaps it would be best to handle matters on our own.

JANE I don't understand.

STEPHEN I think we should start by looking for clues. Jane, are you with me?

JANE No. No, I'm not.

HYNES I shall help to gather evidence.

STEPHEN Right. Well, we'll start at the source.

HYNES Indeed.

STEPHEN exits, followed by HYNES.

FLORA *(Clearly shaken)* I could use a drink.

TED Couldn't have said it better myself.

BIANCA I'm going to have a snoop around as well. If one of us is a killer, I don't know how much I trust our Holmes and Watson.

TED and FLORA exit to the bar. BIANCA shoots JANE an apologetic look and follows to other two to the bar.

JANE goes to her handbag for her phone. She cannot find it and so sits, defeated and bewildered.

She looks up at the hotel's phone. She has an idea. She starts to approach it.

HYNES enters.

HYNES What are you doing?

JANE *(Startled)* Oh! I just- I needed to make a call.

HYNES I'm afraid that phone is broken.

JANE Really? It seemed fine earlier. It rang.

HYNES I'm afraid it is a rotary phone.

JANE Why is that a problem?

HYNES It requires a wheel in order to dial a number. I'm afraid this phone is missing it's wheel.

JANE No it isn't.

The wheel falls off in Jane's hand. HYNES takes and pockets the wheel and exits. JANE watches him leave, mixed emotions etched onto her face.

After a moment, TED returns for his jacket.

Act One | Scene Two

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TED You look like you've seen a ghost.

JANE Do I?

TED Why don't you come for a drink? Don't stay in here on your own.

JANE I'd prefer to keep my head clear.

TED A clear head is nothing but trouble if you ask me. I like to keep mine permanently fuzzy. Keeps the murderous thoughts at bay.

JANE backs away from him.

TED It was a joke. A bad joke. I shouldn't have said it. *(Laughs)* The look on your face.

JANE Don't say things like that! I can't trust any of you.

TED Well, we can't all be murderers.

JANE Oh, can't you? Why is it none of you want to call the police?

TED Ah.

JANE We've just seen a dead body wrapped up in sheets and none of you want to call the police.

TED Look- as I see it- the killer has offed their target. They probably just want to lie low now.

JANE And leave the witnesses alive?

TED We didn't see anything though, did we?

JANE Of course we did! We saw the body.

TED Oh, that's nothing.

JANE Okay, well tell me this. Why don't you want the police called?

TED I'd rather keep that to myself.

JANE *(Going to her handbag)* Fine!

TED Alright! Alright, leave your phone alone, I'll talk. What do you want to know?

JANE I want to know why you're hiding from the police.

TED I'm not hiding from the police. Not really.

JANE *(Going for her phone again)* So you won't mind if I call them then.

TED Please. Don't do that. Look, it's complicated.

JANE Enlighten me.

TED It's probably just my imagination, anyway.

JANE Well, if it's just your imagination-

TED I might be a missing person.

JANE *(A beat)* What?

TED That's it. I might be a missing person. I'd prefer not to be found.

JANE What are you hiding from?

TED It would be easier to list the things I'm not hiding from.

JANE So you're not a killer?

TED Do I look like a killer to you?

JANE I don't know what a killer looks like, do I?

TED Do I look capable of murder?

JANE To be honest, you look like someone who could accidentally commit and cover up a murder and then forget about it.

TED Christ! I've not had that much to drink.

JANE When did you start drinking?

TED My seventeenth birthday, I think.

JANE No, I meant-

TED Oh, I see what you mean. About lunchtime, I think. A couple of days ago.

JANE You've been drinking continuously for two days?

TED If I wanted to be judged, I'd have stayed at home.

JANE Is that what you're hiding from?

TED I don't want to talk about it anymore. All you need to know is I'm being reborn. I'm like a phoenix, you see. I'm all burned up but from the ashes I'm going to start fresh. The drink is just to cloud up the old memories. I'm making room for the new ones.

JANE Some fresh start it'll be if you get murdered. Maybe we should call the police.

TED You just don't give up, do you? What about your friend? She seemed pretty keen to keep away from the rozzers.

JANE I know. But there is a *killer*.

TED It's your call but if you decide to call them, I'm not here.

JANE looks for her phone. She can't find it anywhere.

JANE I can't find my phone.

TED Lost it?

JANE I'm sure I had it. I don't think I left it upstairs. I tried the hotel phone but it's broken. Do you have a phone on you?

TED I certainly do. The battery is flat, though.

JANE Of course. Why wouldn't it be?

TED produces an old mobile phone and hands it to JANE.

JANE Jesus, what is that?

TED My phone.

JANE Where did you get it? An antiques shop?

TED Go ahead, you can laugh but this phone doesn't have GPS like modern phones. At least, I don't think it does.

JANE A lot of use it is to me with a flat battery!

TED I thought of that. Fortunately, I had the foresight to bring the charger.

JANE All is *not* lost!

JANE takes the phone and charger. She plugs it in behind the desk.

TED Now we just have to avoid being murdered while it charges.

JANE For goodness sake! Can you not take this seriously for a moment?
Does it take long to charge?

TED Not that long. Give it a few minutes.

JANE Good.

There is now an awkward silence. Neither knows what to say now. TED uses this time to slowly pull his jacket on.

TED Fancy a drink while we're waiting?

JANE No. Thank you. You shouldn't have one either.

TED No?

Act One | Scene Two

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JANE Your liver must be in an awful state.

TED Suits me.

JANE You'll kill yourself if you carry on like that.

TED There are worse ways to go.

JANE I'm serious. This fresh start of yours will be short lived.

TED Yeah- well-

JANE *(Looking at the phone)* How long did you say it needs to charge?

TED Give it a minute. It takes a while to get going.

JANE Need me to shovel coal into it?

TED You're funny, aren't you? It just needs a few minutes, that's all.

JANE Ah, bless.

JANE tries the phone.

JANE Nothing.

TED You haven't given it a chance yet. Relax.

JANE Relax? There's a murderer in this building.

TED Maybe. There isn't one in this room though.

JANE Isn't there?

TED Well, I bloody hope not. Nothing you're hiding, is there?

JANE No there isn't!

TED Well then. There are no murderers in this room.

JANE Presumably.

TED It does make you think though.

JANE Think of what?

TED Well, you seem to be the only person in this hotel who wants to call the police.

JANE No need to remind me.

TED Your friend and her grandmother are firmly on the side of not calling them.

JANE Well, Bianca says she has her reasons.

TED I'm sure she does.

JANE What are you implying?

TED I didn't imply a thing. Your husband seemed awfully comfortable with the idea of not involving the law.

JANE Did he?

TED In fact, he seemed to jump at the chance to go all 'Poirot'. Mr Creepy took it all very well also.

JANE What are you talking about?

TED Let me ask you something. How did you find this place?

JANE We sort of- stumbled upon it. We were looking for Bianca's grandmother. Stephen saw a building through the trees.

Act One | Scene Two

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TED How?

JANE How?

TED In the dark and the rain. This place is impossible to find.

JANE If it's impossible to find, how did you end up here?

TED I'm in hiding, aren't I? I asked around. I didn't end up here by accident. Suspicious.

JANE I suppose. A bit.

TED Until we find out who's responsible, we may want to keep an eye on everyone. Make sure they aren't just out to clear up the evidence.

JANE You've got a point. I don't think we should be in groups of less than three either. Two people being alone together- well, it leaves us open to the chance of one of us being alone with the killer.

TED Try not to turn your back on anyone.

JANE *(Picking up the phone)* It's working!

TED Why do you sound so surprised?

JANE I just didn't expect this relic to show any real sign of life.

TED I'll have you know, there's nothing wrong with that phone.

JANE *(Frustrated)* The dial button is stuck.

TED Except that.

JANE Perfect! Just perfect!

JANE opens the window and throws the phone outside in temper.

TED What did you do that for?

JANE It's useless!

TED We could have sent a text message!

JANE Oh for goodness sake!

JANE sinks to the floor against the desk.

JANE I really thought, for a second there, we could have called the police.

TED *(Yawning)* What exactly was wrong with the hotel phone?

JANE It's broken. The wheel fell off in my hand. I have a feeling Mr Hynes broke it on purpose. He acts very suspicious around it. Did you see his face when it rang?

TED is already asleep by this point.

JANE Now, we're trapped in here. No one else is even willing to *consider* calling the police. We're trapped in this creepy looking hotel with a murderer.
What if the killer didn't have a motive? What if it's just a hobby?
What if they do this often?

BIANCA enters. JANE leaps to her feet.

BIANCA What's wrong with you? Why are you being so jumpy?

JANE Bianca, we're trapped with a killer!

BIANCA Now, we don't know that. The killer could be long gone. It might have happened before any of us arrived.

JANE You heard Mr Hynes! The body hadn't been there long and the killer couldn't have left unnoticed.

Act One | Scene Two

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BIANCA Well, I got in.

JANE Yes! With help! And you were not unnoticed!

BIANCA Jane! Jane, calm down. Everything will be okay.

JANE You don't know that!

BIANCA Nothing is going to happen to you.

JANE We need to call the police. Bianca, we *need* to call them.

BIANCA You know I can't do that.

JANE But I don't know why! Please, Bianca! Where's your phone?

BIANCA *(Hesitates)* I don't know. I was wondering that myself.

JANE Your phone is missing?

BIANCA Well, I've left it somewhere. You know what I'm like, I'm always leaving stuff laying around and forgetting where-

JANE Bianca, my phone is missing too.

BIANCA It's probably upstairs where you left it.

JANE I don't think I did leave it upstairs.

BIANCA Then- where else would it be?

JANE Same place as yours.

BIANCA Nobody has taken our phones, Jane, you're overreacting.

JANE Wait- please tell me you didn't have something to do with it.

BIANCA Something to do with what?

JANE The murder!

BIANCA No, Jane. of course I had nothing to do with it.

JANE Then why didn't you want me to call the police.

BIANCA I have my reasons, yes, but nothing to do with murder.

JANE Then tell me!

BIANCA For goodness sake. *(A beat)* It's Nan!

JANE What do you mean?

BIANCA Nan doesn't have the best relationship with the police.

JANE Why not?

BIANCA I don't want to talk about this here. Maybe when we're alone, okay?

JANE We're alone now.

BIANCA *(Indicating TED)* No, we're not. Later, Jane. I promise.

JANE When?

BIANCA Do you trust me?

JANE You're hiding something.

TED is awake but doesn't stir.

BIANCA *(Taking JANE's hands)* Do you trust me?

JANE I don't know, Bianca.

BIANCA *(A beat)* I love you.

JANE I love you too.

TED is visibly annoyed.

BIANCA Well, there you go, then.

FLORA *(Off)* So, Tommy and Tuppence. What have you found?

BIANCA We'll talk about it later.

JANE nods in response. STEPHEN enters, followed by HYNES pushing FLORA.

STEPHEN So far, nothing.

HYNES I'm afraid the killer left very few traces, if any.

TED How interesting. You found nothing? So, we're dealing with a professional?

JANE and BIANCA are startled by TED. FLORA hands him a bottle.

HYNES Perhaps.

TED Although, the guests in your hotel seem pretty bloody good at hiding things. What's to say someone hasn't been hiding evidence?

STEPHEN That could be a possibility.

TED Always here to help.

FLORA What have you been saying to people, you horrible child?

BIANCA I haven't said a word.

STEPHEN About what?

BIANCA Never mind.

FLORA Yes, keep your nose right out of my business.

HYNES Mrs Butterwell-

FLORA Please, Mr Hynes. Call me Flora.

HYNES Mrs Flora. Shall we converse in the bar? I have some questions.

FLORA Why not?

HYNES Why not indeed.

HYNES takes FLORA to the bar.

STEPHEN Ted. You said guests have been hiding things.

TED When there's a killer around, you can't be too careful. I'm not keen on the idea of becoming the next victim so I'm keeping my ear to the ground.

STEPHEN So, you know something?

TED Maybe I do.

STEPHEN What do you know?

TED Hey, I'm looking out for myself. You want to know what I know, dig for it yourself. Try talking to people. Maybe start with your wife.

STEPHEN Are you suggesting Jane is the killer?

TED I didn't say that.

STEPHEN Well, it sounded a lot like an implication.

TED I implied nothing. I said what I said and I don't want to say a word more.

STEPHEN Leave Jane out of this. I'm warning you.

TED Oh, you're warning me, are you?

STEPHEN Yes. I am, as it happens!

JANE Stephen! Just leave it!

STEPHEN Leave her alone.

JANE escorts STEPHEN toward the bar.

TED *(Unheard by STEPHEN)* Oh, I'll leave her alone.

BIANCA shoots a worried look at TED.

BIANCA You were listening? What you know?

TED I know people like *you* tear families apart.

BIANCA What do you mean?

TED Spare a thought for the poor sod who loses. There are gentle ways to break a heart.

BIANCA Keep out of my business!

BIANCA, frustrated, turns and exits. TED drinks the remains of the bottle and makes himself comfortable. For a moment, he is asleep again. The phone rings. He is startled awake and tries to answer it- but answers the empty bottle instead. When he realises his mistake, he stands to go for the phone. HYNES enters.

HYNES Leave it.

TED The phone is ringing.

HYNES Ignore it.

TED It might be important.

HYNES We will never know.

The phone rings off. HYNES gives a look to Eddie.

TED Why don't you answer the phone?

HYNES looks at TED and exits slowly.

TED Huh.

TED exits toward the bar. The phone rings again. HYNES enters just before it rings off. He stares until it is silent.

HYNES Persistence will get you nowhere in this instance. It's almost as if I am expected to answer just to silence the noise. I find patience is sufficient.
Eddie, I am quite sure I am almost ready to reveal my findings. My investigation can be concluded, but of course you knew that. You figured it out before I did, I'm sure.

BIANCA enters.

BIANCA How's the investigation?

HYNES I believe I am close to a conclusion.

BIANCA But you said you haven't found any evidence and you've only questioned my grandmother.

HYNES I had a quiet word with her.

BIANCA About what?

HYNES She is a hotel critic.

BIANCA Oh, for goodness-

HYNES There has been a murder. I wished to know it's implications with regards to her review.

BIANCA Well, the thing about Nan is-

FLORA enters. TED isn't far behind with another bottle. He has clearly had enough to drink.

FLORA My ears are burning!

HYNES I think it is time I speak to everyone. It is time for truths to be uncovered.

Act One | Scene Two

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TED This should be interesting. What truth do we uncover first? What about the forbidden lovers?

FLORA What forbidden lovers?

BIANCA Ted! Please!

FLORA What is he talking about?

TED Did you sneak in during the night to commit murder? Or adultery?

BIANCA Shut up! I'm warning you!

FLORA What in God's name is he talking about?

TED I'm talking about her and Jane!

STEPHEN enters. He is furious.

STEPHEN What about Jane? What are you saying this time?

BIANCA Stephen, don't-

STEPHEN No, I want to know what he's been saying! He has got it in for my wife and I want to know why!

TED I didn't say a word.

STEPHEN Don't lie to me! What were you saying about her? I'm interested! Come on, I'm all ears!

TED doesn't answer. BIANCA exits in a hurry.

STEPHEN Nothing to say for once?

STEPHEN exits.

FLORA What did you mean, Ted? My granddaughter? With a married ma-
woman.

TED Forget I said anything.

HYNES Mrs Flora. Please wait a while in your room. I have something important to discuss with Mr Monday.

FLORA exits solemnly.

HYNES Mr Monday. I know.

TED Know what?

HYNES I know what brought you here.

TED How could you possibly know that?

HYNES I listen. I see it in your eyes.

TED You think you're a mind reader.

HYNES I don't need to read minds. I read people. Might I make a suggestion?

TED I'm listening.

HYNES Take inventory of your life. Know what you have and what you had. Decide which is greater. You may just have a choice yet. Am I making sense?

TED How do you do that?

HYNES How do I do what?

TED Read minds.

HYNES I read *people*. Fetch Bianca and Jane.

TED You really think I'm the best person to send?

HYNES Because you revealed their secret?

TED Yes.

HYNES Might I ask why? Why was it you chose to reveal a secret that was not yours to reveal?

TED I don't know. Spite. You tell me. You're the mind reader.

HYNES I see. Well, I must speak to them at once. Please.

TED exits. HYNES takes Eddie from his pocket and sits him on the desk.

HYNES Poor man. My task is more complicated than it may have seemed. I know what I'm doing. I know why. It's all wrong.

BIANCA *(Off)* Oh, just piss off, you pathetic drunken mess!

JANE and BIANCA enter.

HYNES Thank you for joining me.

JANE Is this about the murder?

HYNES It is about- you.

JANE Me?

HYNES Yes. Well, both of you.

BIANCA What do you mean?

HYNES Are you- happy?

JANE What?

BIANCA What is that supposed to mean?

HYNES I assure you, there is no hidden meaning to my question. Are you happy?

JANE *(Hesitates)* No.

HYNES But you know how to be happy.

JANE What do you mean?

HYNES You know what I mean.

BIANCA You aren't making any sense.

HYNES You tell yourself that because I *am* making sense. What doesn't make sense is *how* I'm making sense. Am I making sense?

BIANCA No.

HYNES Someone stands between you and happiness. Both of you.

BIANCA I don't understand.

HYNES I believe Jane understands.

BIANCA Do you?

JANE I think so.

HYNES You really must learn to be honest with yourself, Miss Butterwell. Also, consider extending that honesty to others. Hurt can be hard to avoid but easily limited. Now, fetch your grandmother for me.

BIANCA That's it?

HYNES Oh yes! Off you go.

BIANCA embraces JANE and they exit.

HYNES *(To Eddie)* I'll have you know, old boy, my investigation is going incredibly well. I have quite the reveal brewing. I'm sure you'll be impressed. They won't be expecting it, of course.

FLORA enters.

HYNES Ah, Mrs Flora!

Act One | Scene Two

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FLORA My review is shaping up, Mr Hynes. With this review- from Flora Butterwell herself, of course- you could be gaining another star or two.

HYNES Wonderful. I did not, however, summon you to discuss the hotel.

FLORA You didn't? Oh, the murder?

HYNES I wish to *tell* you something.

FLORA Oh!

HYNES I have learned a great deal. My investigations have lead to some interesting discoveries. You yourself have made discoveries, have you not?

FLORA *(Not pleased)* You mean about my granddaughter. Yes. I have.

HYNES It may be wise to remember the positions of power we hold. We have great influence over lives but we don't always realise to what extent. Some people wish only to please us, sometimes with the sacrifice of their own pleasure.

FLORA I see.

HYNES The challenging of our beliefs is the perfect foundation for growth, don't you think?

FLORA What do you mean?

HYNES Let the thought stew. I need to speak to Stephen now. Would you send him my way?

FLORA exists, visibly confused.

HYNES I do worry that I am making little sense to these people. My hope is to plant a seed in their minds. It may not make an impact in the present but seeds grow. I can only hope they flower at the proper moment.

STEPHEN enters.

HYNES Ah! Stephen. How is *your* investigation going?

STEPHEN I think we need to think outside the box. Our killer has been clever.

HYNES Very clever indeed. Perhaps we should gather our suspects. I'm sure a little conversation will bring us closer to resolution.

STEPHEN You're right.

HYNES I do have a question.

STEPHEN What's that?

HYNES Could it be possible that bias has impeded our investigation?

STEPHEN What do you mean?

HYNES I take it you have ruled out your wife.

STEPHEN Yes. Jane didn't do it.

HYNES You know that for certain?

STEPHEN Yes. Jane isn't a killer.

HYNES Wonderful. However, she is not the only person excluded from suspicion. It goes without saying that we haven't volunteered ourselves as suspects.

STEPHEN Why would we suspect ourselves?

HYNES You can never be too careful. It is, after all, often easiest to hide in plain sight.

STEPHEN What?

HYNES I think it's time to gather the suspects.

STEPHEN walks to the exit for the rooms and stops.

STEPHEN *(Aggressively)* Everyone! Get down here!

HYNES stares at STEPHEN.

STEPHEN I thought I'd be bad cop.

HYNES I see.

FLORA arrives quickly.

FLORA What's going on now?

STEPHEN You'll find out soon.

HYNES Bad cop, I think it would be best if you *went* to fetch the others.

STEPHEN I'd prefer to stay and keep watch over the suspects.

HYNES The 'suspects' are currently elsewhere. Find them.

STEPHEN Why don't you-?

HYNES Stephen. Go. Please.

STEPHEN sulkily exits. Shortly after, BIANCA enters.

BIANCA What's all the shouting about? I thought I heard Stephen.

FLORA You!

BIANCA What now?

FLORA Don't even speak to me!

BIANCA What's wrong with you?

FLORA No, Bianca. What's wrong with you? What have you been doing?

BIANCA Well, not a lot! I don't know whether you've noticed, but my search for you has landed me in the middle of nowhere, locked inside a creepy old hotel with a murderer! There hasn't been much to do!

FLORA And yet you found plenty. I can't even look at you. I'd rather have stayed where I was.

BIANCA Then why didn't you?

FLORA And be one of societies cast aways? Human refuse? No thank you! How was I to know I'd find out my favourite grandchild was- like *that*?

BIANCA is taken aback. She doesn't know how to respond. JANE enters.

HYNES Ah, welcome, Mrs Baker.

JANE What's happening?

FLORA Oh, good gracious! It's the other one!

JANE What?

BIANCA She knows.

JANE She what?

FLORA Yes, I know! Your sinful liaison!

JANE Oh God!

FLORA Don't blaspheme, friend of Satan!

BIANCA Nan!

FLORA You pair of raging-

BIANCA That's enough! For goodness sake, Nan!

FLORA Even the thought of it back in my day-

BIANCA Two-hundred years have passed since then!

TED enters.

STEPHEN Shut up!

TED Are you going to keep telling me what to do? Or are you fond of having front teeth?

HYNES I have made some deductions.

BIANCA Do you have suspicions about anyone in particular?

HYNES Oh yes.

STEPHEN Really?

HYNES Yes.

STEPHEN I didn't think we'd reached any conclusions.

HYNES I hope you won't be offended, Stephen, if I say that I have been investigating alone. I couldn't very well investigate *you* if you were helping me to investigate.

STEPHEN Me? But- I'm not a suspect.

HYNES There isn't a person in this room who isn't a suspect. Including me.

FLORA Jesus, Mary and Joseph! He's the killer!

HYNES I assure you, Mrs Flora, I have not committed a murder.

FLORA Thank God!

HYNES You believe me?

FLORA Well- I thought I might.

HYNES Don't. Why would you take me at my word?

JANE Who do you think did it?

HYNES Who do I think did what?

JANE Which one of us do you think is the killer.

HYNES Ah, I see. None of you.

General sounds of quiet confusion erupt among the guests. Everyone seems suddenly nervous in the presence of HYNES.

TED So- you think it was someone else?

HYNES The poor soul who met this unfortunate end- oh goodness, what was their name?

JANE We never caught the name.

HYNES Does anyone know?

Slowly everyone begins shaking their heads.

HYNES Was it a man or woman?

BIANCA We don't know.

HYNES Did nobody think to check?

JANE No.

HYNES Wrong. I checked. It was the first thing I did.

TED What was it?

HYNES I beg your pardon?

TED Man or- woman? *(A beat)* Neither?

HYNES I'd like to show you something.

HYNES exits through the front doors.

- JANE What's this all about?
- STEPHEN *(Concerned)* I don't know.
- BIANCA I thought you and Hynes were playing at Cagney and Lacey.
- STEPHEN He didn't say anything to *me* about this. I thought we were going to question you all, I didn't think he'd come to some kind of conclusion.
- TED Looks like you're in the dark just like the rest of us. In fact, I'd say even more so.
- STEPHEN Maybe there's a reason for that.
- TED Yeah, like your wife not telling you the big news.
- STEPHEN *(Oblivious)* No, I think Hynes has been keeping me distracted. Something he said made me think.
- FLORA What did he say?
- STEPHEN He said we hadn't been suspecting ourselves. That we couldn't be too careful. Also, he seemed pretty keen on making us suspect him just then. What do you mean, "big news"?
- TED I didn't expect her to have told you.
- BIANCA Ted, shut up!
- STEPHEN Told me what?
- FLORA Maybe this isn't the way, Ted.
- STEPHEN What does he mean?
- FLORA Maybe just leave it, eh? Let them sort it out on their own.
- STEPHEN Sort what out?

Act One | Scene Two

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JANE I'll kill you for this, Ted.

TED Would I be your second victim? How many times have you killed?

JANE I beg your pardon! I haven't killed anyone. Tempted though I might be!

STEPHEN Can someone please tell me what's going on here?

JANE *(She snaps)* Alright, Stephen! This is not how I wanted you to find out!

STEPHEN Find out what?

BLANCA reaches out to hold JANE's hand.

JANE I'm- Me and Bianca- We're-

FLORA They wear comfortable shoes.

TED What?

STEPHEN is silent.

JANE I'm sorry, Stephen. I didn't want to hurt you.

The phone rings. TED answers

TED Hello. Hynes Hotel.

JANE Stephen. Please say something.

STEPHEN I feel sick.

JANE Maybe not that. Stephen, let's just talk about this.

TED Just one second please. You two! Go somewhere else if you want to argue. I'm on the phone. Sorry, could you say that one last time?

The attention is now on TED.

FLORA Who's he talking to?

TED I see. Thank you for telling me. Yes, you too.

TED hangs up the phone.

FLORA Who was that calling at this time of night?

TED I don't know who they were. They just said it was important. Said they've been trying to get through for a couple of days.

FLORA So, what was so important?

TED It's Mr Hynes.

BIANCA What about him?

TED He isn't.

JANE Isn't what?

TED Mr Hynes is dead.

FLORA What are you babbling about? He's been here the whole time.

TED Has he?

FLORA Well, yes. We've seen him. We've all seen him.

BIANCA That isn't really Mr Hynes?

STEPHEN is suddenly paying attention.

STEPHEN What?

TED Remember what he said. The killer couldn't have escaped without being noticed. So what if the killer never left?

JANE Oh my God!

Act One | Scene Two

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BIANCA Then we know who the body is.

FLORA That might explain why My Hynes doesn't have the key to room one.

BIANCA What?

FLORA That must be the real Mr Hynes' room. That's why the fake Mr Hynes doesn't have the key! That's why he's been sleeping in the cupboard.

BIANCA You didn't think to mention this before?

FLORA It didn't seem important until now.

JANE What did they say, exactly, on the phone?

TED They just said they've been trying to call to say that Mr Hynes is dead.

STEPHEN We've got to get out. Quickly. While he isn't here. Come on, Jane.

STEPHEN makes to exit. At that moment, HYNES appears at the door, dragging the body. He presents the body to them.

HYNES This body is a fake! It isn't real! I suppose you could say theres-"Nobody Inn". With two 'N's. It's a play on words.

All eyes are fixed on HYNES who seems very pleased with himself. No one moves. They are completely frozen to the spot. HYNES suddenly seems serious.

HYNES Why are you all looking at me like that?

**CURTAIN
END OF ACT I**

Act Two

Scene One

Lights up. HYNES is discovered by the desk. He seems almost as if he is waiting. He takes a momentary glance at the space on the wall where the photograph used to be and starts to remove his bandage.

HYNES I suppose you find this amusing. An awful mess you made. Well, I've had quite enough of mess for one lifetime. In fact, it could be time to clean up the mess. Untruths are messy. The truth has a certain way of tidying itself, don't you think? Though I find it is often untidy to begin with. I think you're right, Eddie. It is, indeed, time for the truth. Perhaps not before breakfast. It is quite unwise to do anything before breakfast.

HYNES makes to exit toward the rooms. At the exit, he stops.

HYNES Breakfast!

He exits. After a moment, Flora wheels herself cautiously into the lobby. When all is clear, she wheels herself out and returns with the other guests. They are sticking together for safety. It is obvious they haven't slept.

FLORA There, see? I told you there was nothing to worry about.

TED Yeah- well, better safe than sorry.

FLORA Safe? I put my neck on the line for you people.

TED Someone had to.

FLORA But why me?

TED Well, you were the obvious choice. You've got the speed, haven't you?

FLORA You cheeky f-

BIANCA Don't start, you two! We need to- well, I don't exactly know what we need to do! But I know we can't stand around here arguing.

JANE Mr Hynes called-

TED Sorry, who?

JANE Mr Hynes.

TED Mr Hynes won't be doing much of anything. Our friend made sure of that.

JANE Can't we just *call* him Mr Hynes for the sake of convenience?

TED Absolutely not. If we reinforce the lie, we might forget the truth.

JANE Well, I'm not calling him- *that*?

TED It's as good a name as any.

BIANCA I'm sorry, what is it we are supposed to be calling him?

TED You missed the discussion, it's your fault you don't know the new name.

BIANCA Don't be so pathetic. I had to go.

TED I told you, you should have held it.

JANE Do you make a living out of being a prat or is it a hobby?

FLORA He thinks we should call him Lurch.

BIANCA Why?

FLORA Out of the Munsters.

TED Addams Family.

JANE The man formerly known to us as Mr Hynes, despite seemingly not actually being Mr Hynes- called us for breakfast.

FLORA Oh good, I'm starving.

BIANCA What if it's a trap?

JANE Exactly.

FLORA What are you talking about?

TED What reason would he have to kill us all now?

JANE We are witnesses!

TED Witnesses to what exactly? The body was fake.

JANE But why does he have a fake body?

TED I don't know. It's probably some sort of sick game. He's obviously not quite with it.

JANE Now we know he isn't really Mr Hynes.

TED But if you keep your lips firmly buttoned, he doesn't need to know we know!

FLORA How do we know he isn't really Mr Hynes?

JANE Because he's *dead*!

FLORA He could be a ghost.

TED Oh, good God!

JANE Why would he parade a fake body in front of us like that?

BIANCA To frighten us? Maybe he wants us at our most vulnerable. Then he'll kill us.

FLORA Or he wanted us to blame each other for the murder of the real Mr Hynes. If we were trying to point the finger at each other, we'd have worked out his story for him. He could frame one of us, whichever one of us seemed the most likely.

TED Then why would he reveal the body as a fake?

BIANCA Well, I don't know, to confuse us? Maybe he is trying to drive us mad.

JANE Wait. Stephen. Stephen is amazing at this kind of thing. He always used to take me to these murder mystery things. These posh events. They serve you dinner but then you become part of the story, you kind of become the detectives. Stephen was so good, we almost always won. Stephen, maybe you have some idea?

STEPHEN's eyes light up with the renewed hope of saving his relationship with Jane. He springs into action.

STEPHEN As a matter of fact, I do have an idea. Answer me this: Who found the body?

TED It wasn't a body, detective. It was fake. But I found it.

STEPHEN And where did you find it?

FLORA He found it in my room!

TED That's right, the cupboard.

STEPHEN Whose room?

TED Flora's! Are you deaf?

STEPHEN Is it Flora's room, though?

JANE It's Mr Hynes' room.

TED Oh, very good, detective, only- this is his hotel. Every room is his room.

STEPHEN Ah, except, that cupboard is his personal living space. That is where he sleeps, keeps his personal belongings, et cetera.

BIANCA Of course.

STEPHEN Why did you go to Flora's room, Ted?

TED Because she couldn't get in.

STEPHEN Because?

TED Because the door was stuck, wasn't it?

STEPHEN Or blocked by the body.

TED It wasn't a body.

STEPHEN Wasn't it? Did anyone else notice that Mr Hynes seemed to be boarding the hotel doors shut when we arrived?

FLORA He was!

STEPHEN Now, why would he do that?

FLORA He said he was closing the hotel for good.

STEPHEN Perhaps because he had just murdered the proprietor of the hotel and needed time to dispose of the body.

TED But the body wasn't real.

STEPHEN Where did the body go after you discovered it?

TED Mr Creepy took it.

STEPHEN Did anyone see where he took it to?

BIANCA I don't think so.

JANE I certainly didn't.

Act Two | Scene Two

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BIANCA It was toward the bar, I know that much at least.

STEPHEN And no-one has seen it since?

JANE No.

STEPHEN Let's consider for a moment that the fake body he presented to us may not be the same one he removed.

BIANCA You think there were two bodies?

STEPHEN I think it's possible. I think it is possible that our fake Mr Hynes removed the body, which we may assume is the real Mr Hynes, and replaced it with the fake cadaver he showed to us. Funny. It's like de ja vu.

BIANCA What do you mean?

STEPHEN You remember, don't you, Jane?

JANE Remember what?

STEPHEN Where have we seen that before? A body removed and replaced with a fake. You remember, don't you?

JANE No. Did it happen on one of the murder mystery evenings we went to?

STEPHEN You don't remember?

JANE Stephen, we went to so many.

STEPHEN The third of June. Ring any bells?

JANE Not really.

STEPHEN It was our first wedding anniversary.

JANE Oh.

STEPHEN You figured it out before I did, remember?

JANE Stephen- I'm sorry, I don't.

The hope vanishes from STEPHEN altogether. He is a defeated, hollow man.

HYNES enters with a large kitchen knife. The room reacts in terror. HYNES looks for a moment, somewhat confused.

HYNES Breakfast.

TED What?

HYNES Breakfast. The most important meal of the day. I have been preparing you a much deserved breakfast.

FLORA Oh, lovely. Isn't that lovely? Thank you, Mr Hynes.

HYNES I need perhaps ten more minutes. Would you care to join me in the dining room?

ALL No!

FLORA No, thank you, Mr Hynes. We will join you soon, only- well-

BIANCA We were just talking. We won't be able to talk if we're all sat on different tables.

HYNES I see. Can I bring you tea while you wait?

FLORA That would be very nice of you, Mr Hynes.

HYNES Wonderful.

HYNES exits toward the bar.

BIANCA I'm all for leaving, I don't know about anyone else.

JANE The doors are probably still locked.

TED *(Trying the doors)* Doors are still locked.

JANE See?

FLORA So, what do we do?

HYNES enters, unnoticed.

BIANCA I have no idea, but any suggestions you might have would be most welcome.

HYNES I might have some suggestions.

FLORA Oh, Mr Hynes!

HYNES Of course, my ability to provide suggestions is entirely dependant on whatever it is you're hoping to achieve.

FLORA Well- we're just a bit bored, to be honest. We were thinking of playing a game.

HYNES Ah, well with the resources available- perhaps you could play musical chairs.

HYNES exits.

TED *(Mocking)* What a good idea. We don't have any music though. Never mind, one of us will have to sing.

BIANCA Forget musical chairs. Nan wins by default.

TED Alright then, hide and seek.

JANE Why don't you do us all a favour and shut up.

TED Who replaced your batteries?

HYNES enters with a pad and pen.

HYNES Breakfast is almost ready to serve.

FLORA No tea, Mr Hynes?

HYNES The water is just getting hot.

FLORA Lovely, I'm gasping.

HYNES Now, breakfast. Anyone for bacon?

FLORA, TED, BIANCA, and STEPHEN all make sounds to imply 'yes'.

HYNES *(To Jane)* None for you?

JANE No thank you.

HYNES Sausage?

FLORA, TED, BIANCA, and STEPHEN, again, all make sounds to imply 'yes'.

HYNES *(To Jane)* No sausage for you?

JANE No. Thank you. I don't eat meat.

STEPHEN She used to!

STEPHEN exits sulkily. The room stands in stunned silence.

HYNES Toast?

FLORA, JANE, and BIANCA nod.

TED Can you make it a fried slice?

HYNES Indeed I can.

TED And I don't suppose there are any baked beans going?

HYNES I'm afraid there are no baked beans.

TED You are kidding.

HYNES I'm afraid not.

Act Two | Scene Two

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TED Bit funny, isn't it?

HYNES No.

TED Your name is Hynes.

HYNES I am aware of that.

TED And you don't have beans.

HYNES *(Amused)* Ah, I see. Very funny. *(Deadpan)* I'm afraid my name is spelt quite differently. My supply of baked beans is also quite different. I shall fetch the tea.

HYNES exits.

BIANCA Really?

TED What?

BIANCA If you keep going with jokes like that, my money's on you for his second victim.

TED Who's to say he hasn't already killed more than once?

JANE For goodness sake, shut up! What's the plan?

TED I can't think on an empty stomach. Can't we discuss it after breakfast?

JANE What if there is no breakfast? What if he's planning on killing us now?

TED *(Sniffing)* Can you smell that? That's bacon. Fried slice. Mushrooms if I'm not very much mistaken. Breakfast is coming and I, for one, can't wait.

BIANCA Maybe we could just wait and see. I hate to agree with Ted, but I'm hungry too. If there is any chance breakfast is on its way I'm willing to chance it.

FLORA Well, as they say, the early bird catches the worm. I took the liberty of having a look in room one.

TED I thought you said the door was locked with no sign of a key.

FLORA Well, I managed to find the key, didn't I?

BIANCA Nan! Tell me you haven't.

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

BIANCA Where is it?

FLORA What are you talking about?

BIANCA Turn out your pockets.

FLORA Don't be ridiculous.

TED Am I missing something?

BIANCA How did you really get into that room?

FLORA I told you, I found the key!

BIANCA Oh, I see. Where did you find that, then?

FLORA It was- well, it was- alright, I picked the lock.

FLORA reluctantly hands over her lock picking set.

BIANCA Thank you.

FLORA Anyway, I found these.

FLORA produces hospital wristbands. BIANCA takes one.

BIANCA Mr Edward Hynes. You found these in room one?

Act Two | Scene Two

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FLORA Yes. It's lovely in there. Great big four-poster bed.

BIANCA Do you think room one was the real Mr Hynes' room?

FLORA Maybe. The thing that bothers me is- the fake Mr Hynes said that cupboard was converted into a bedroom more than twenty years ago.

BIANCA And?

FLORA I believe him. That room has been lived in. I think our killer might have been a disgruntled employee who didn't like sleeping in a cupboard.

BIANCA I think you might be on to something, Nan.

JANE It's all starting to add up.

FLORA Now, I know it may be none of my business, Jane dear, but what ever happened between you and your young man?

BIANCA Nan!

FLORA Shut up, Bianca, I didn't ask you. So, what happened?

JANE Well- it's complicated.

FLORA Relationships often are. How long have you been married?

JANE Two years I think.

FLORA A happy two years?

JANE Well, it's been- disappointing. It's not his fault.

FLORA Okay, well talk me through it. There's nothing that can't be helped by talking about it.

JANE Well, like I say- it's complicated.

HYNES returns with tea. During the conversation he hands around the cups and pours tea for everyone.

FLORA I'm all ears.

JANE Look- I've known Stephen- well, all my life. We've been close friends since we could walk.

FLORA Childhood sweethearts. You'd have to be a monster to tear up something so precious.

BLANCA and FLORA glare at each other.

JANE It was never a romantic kind of thing. We were just friends. We actually lost touch for a few years. I think one of his parents got a new job, had to relocate. He told me at school one day. I'd never seen him so- upset.

FLORA He loved you, my dear.

JANE He did. Actually, he told me. It was the last thing he said to me before he left.

FLORA But you found each other again.

JANE We went to the same college. He moved back just to go to that college. I don't know why, it was a rubbish college.

FLORA Well, he came back for you, obviously.

JANE I suppose he did. I had my first girlfriend at college. I didn't tell Stephen.

TED Old habits.

JANE It didn't last long. None of my relationships ever did. I think every girl I fell for either had a boyfriend or wanted one. Stephen didn't seem to have much luck either, so we ended up spending more and more time together. It didn't help my case that everyone assumed we were a couple.

Act Two | Scene Two

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FLORA Do you think he saved himself for you?

JANE No. I don't think so. Well, maybe. It doesn't matter. We made a plan. If we were both single by our thirtieth birthday, we'd marry each other... and we did.

FLORA How romantic.

BIANCA Not really, Nan.

FLORA You stay out of this.

BIANCA Jane has been living a lie.

FLORA Well, it's a respectful lie.

BIANCA You are unbelievable.

HYNES Milk anyone?

BIANCA No thank you. Lactose intolerant.

TED That's a joke, right?

BIANCA Why would that be a joke?

TED Miss Butterwell is lactose intolerant.

HYNES leaves the milk for them and exits. They share the milk around.

FLORA This is what I need, a lovely cup of tea!

TED You can say that again. I've got sixty grit sandpaper where I'm sure I used to have a tongue.

TED raises the cup to his lips.

BIANCA Stop! Don't drink that!

TED Oh for crying out loud! Why not?

JANE You think he could have poisoned the tea?

TED Why would he be cooking us breakfast if he was planning to poison us now?

BIANCA Murderers don't eat breakfast?

TED Fine! What do you suggest? I'm parched, I need this. Can't one of us try it first? See if it's safe for the rest of us?

BIANCA Go on, Nan.

FLORA What do you mean, "go on, Nan"? I'm not trying it! It should be someone less important.

BIANCA Less important? Can you hear yourself? Who on Earth would you consider to be less important?

STEPHEN enters, drinking tea.

JANE Stephen!

STEPHEN *(Low energy)* What?

TED Stephen. How are you feeling?

STEPHEN Horrible. I feel like my heart has been torn out of my chest and walked all over.

TED Yeah? How's the tea?

STEPHEN The tea? It's- fine- thanks. What's going on?

TED How does it taste?

STEPHEN It's alright.

TED No funny taste? No strange almond smell?

STEPHEN It's just- ordinary English breakfast tea. It's lovely.

FLORA It's not poisoned!

FLORA begins drinking. TED is about to follow suit but pauses when STEPHEN speaks.

STEPHEN Of course it's not poisoned! Why would it be poisoned?

TED Your wife's girlfriend thought Hynes might have poisoned it to kill us off.

STEPHEN Hynes didn't make mine. I made it myself.

FLORA gags on her tea and goes limp.

BIANCA Nan!

TED *(Putting his cup down)* It was poisoned then.

HYNES enters.

HYNES Oh dear!

BIANCA What did you do?

HYNES I merely wanted to inform you that breakfast is served. What seems to be wrong with Mrs Flora?

FLORA springs to life and seizes HYNES.

FLORA I've got him!

BLACKOUT.

Scene Two

HYNES is discovered tied to a chair, centre stage. TED is rummaging behind the desk.

- HYNES You strike me as a man trying to find something.
- TED Funny that.
- HYNES Might I ask what it is you're looking for?
- TED You may not.
- HYNES Oh, go on. You never know, I could even help you find it.
- TED You'd help me find it, would you?
- HYNES If I'm able.
- TED Alright. Where do you keep the key for the front doors?
- HYNES That isn't what you're searching for, not really.
- TED I assure you, that is exactly what I'm looking for.
- HYNES We both know you are searching for something greater. Perhaps you do not yet know what it is.
- TED What are you talking about? Do *you* even know?
- HYNES Oh yes. I select my words very carefully.
- TED Where are the keys?
- HYNES I'm afraid I couldn't possibly tell you.

TED Why not? I thought you could help me find what I'm searching for.

HYNES Oh, I do hope so- only I couldn't allow you to find the keys.

TED Why not?

HYNES Because then you'd leave.

TED That is exactly the point! Why won't you let us leave?

HYNES If you all leave, however would I get out of this chair?

TED So, if I let you go- you'll let me have the key?

HYNES I'd certainly consider lending you the key, yes.

TED And you'd let us all walk out of here?

HYNES If that is what you would like to do, I wouldn't stop you.

TED I don't believe you.

HYNES I wouldn't expect you to.

TED Why do you talk like that?

HYNES Like what?

TED Like you know everything. Like you know everything about us.

HYNES I would never claim to know everything about you. I know a great deal about you all, yes. Everything? No.

TED How did you come to know so much about us?

HYNES You can learn a lot from books. A library holds a great deal of information for our consumption.

TED You're telling me you read about us in books? Now, why do I find that so hard to believe?

HYNES Of course not. I have been at this hotel for many, many years. This hotel has become my library. A room can become as easy to read as a book, and this hotel has many rooms. The guests within it are the pages. Every word spoken, every facial expression, the smallest twitch of a finger- they are the paragraphs.

TED So, what do you know about me?

HYNES You are difficult to read.

TED You're not as clever as you think then.

HYNES It's as if your page is blank, but it wasn't always that way. Like you're trying to erase it but the faint marks of the life you left behind are still barely visible.

TED seems unsettled by HYNES' remark; it was a little too close to home.

TED So you know nothing about me.

HYNES I can deduce enough to know why you are here. I'm afraid I can only guess whatever it is you're running away from.

TED Who says I'm running away from anything?

HYNES There are subtle hints. You seem aimless. Everyone is here for a reason, with a goal to reach- except you. You are here in the absence of a reason. This is your blank slate.

TED I have no idea what you're talking about.

HYNES I know how very hard it is to lose someone you care about.

TED I haven't lost anyone. You see? You don't know a thing.

HYNES No, you may not have lost anyone- but who has lost you, Ted?

TED What?

HYNES Take some time to think. I have a feeling I shan't be moving for a while. I'll be here to talk if you want to.

TED stares at HYNES. He is silent. HYNES is busying himself by looking at the walls and floor. This goes on until TED has gathered his thoughts.

TED My family.

HYNES I'm sorry?

TED That's what I'm running away from.

HYNES Oh, I see. You are ready to talk?

TED You're right. This is my fresh start. This hotel. Somewhere far from home, out of the way. Somewhere they won't find me.

HYNES I'm sure you have your reasons.

BLANCA enters but stops by the door to listen.

TED Of course. It wasn't something I wanted to do. I made a mess of things. They don't deserve that.

HYNES Messes can be tidied.

TED I don't think this one can. I lost my job.

HYNES Easily remedied.

TED I couldn't afford to lose that job. I was spending money much quicker than I could earn it. I was struggling to keep my head above water even with the job.

HYNES How did you find yourself in that position?

TED Some would say careless spending but I did it from a place of care. I promised my wife a life of luxury. We could have had it back when

we were first married. We both had thriving careers. My income was superfluous. Then it all went wrong.

HYNES What happened?

TED We had a baby. We didn't mean to. I always wanted children. My wife didn't. Suddenly, our income was halved but our financial commitments doubled. I couldn't forget the promise.

HYNES Maybe you didn't have to. Did you ever think that the life you had built, despite not being the one you'd imagined, could have been the life you promised anyway?

TED No. I didn't. My failure landed us in debt up to our eyes. The best thing I could do for my wife and little girl is disappear and take the debts with me.

HYNES Or you could have simply opened up to them as you have me. Families are the strongest support structure we have. Don't underestimate them. If you allow yourself to lose them, you'll never forgive yourself.

TED I wanted to tell her. I was going to. It turned out I wasn't the only hiding something. She'd been seeing someone else. There was another man.

TED gives HYNES a solemn look. HYNES returns a smile. TED takes a photograph from his wallet. STEPHEN appears at the door, silently stopped by BIANCA.

TED This is them. My family. That's Lisa, my wife. Ex-wife. And- that's little Jaz. Jasmine. My daughter.

HYNES I take it that one is you?

TED Yes. That one is me, yes.

HYNES Only, I didn't recognise you with the smile. You all look very happy.

TED It was probably put on. She didn't smile much after the baby was born. Neither of us did.

HYNES However could you bring yourself to walk away from such a beautiful family?

STEPHEN forces his way past BIANCA.

STEPHEN You did what?

TED You were listening? This is personal.

STEPHEN You won't mind if I take it personally then!

TED What?

BIANCA Stephen, stop!

STEPHEN You had it all!

TED I had it all?

STEPHEN Everything I have ever wanted! You had it and you just walked away!

TED You're one to start talking happy families!

STEPHEN Exactly! I'd have given anything for what you had but that choice was taken from me!

TED You don't understand!

STEPHEN No? Then tell me!

TED I don't have to tell you anything.

STEPHEN Explain it to me! Go on!

TED It was hell!

STEPHEN Is that right?

TED I woke up every morning wondering why I should even bother!

STEPHEN Well, I suppose you're so much better off stumbling into some dingy old hotel stinking of cheap booze! Drinking your life away!

TED It doesn't matter! I'm finished!

STEPHEN How do you think your wife feels? Does she know you walked away from her? Or does she lie awake at night imagining you dead in a ditch somewhere?

TED She walked away from me! She left me for the man she'd been sneaking around with! Of all people, you should understand!

STEPHEN's rage is gone.

STEPHEN That's why you were so hard on Jane and Bianca. I thought you were just being a dick.

A beat.

STEPHEN Do you think your daughter will be happy growing up without a father?

TED I don't know.

STEPHEN Whatever the situation was- however bad things were- I guarantee things were better when you were around. How old is your baby?

TED She's about two and a half.

BIANCA *(Gently)* Ted, I don't know your- uh- ex-wife. You said she didn't want children. Did having the baby change her mind?

TED God no. I hoped it would but she became- so cold. She didn't want to spend any more time with Jaz than she had to.

STEPHEN Then you took away the one loving parent she had.

TED I didn't even think of that.

STEPHEN No, because you don't think.

TED stops for a moment. He thinks then has a small chuckle to himself.

TED You're right. All of you. Nothing's broken that can't be fixed.

HYNES Precisely. If only you're willing to put in the work.

TED Funny.

STEPHEN What is?

TED Me and you. It's almost like we should switch places.

STEPHEN I don't understand.

TED Well, me- I ran away from what I really should have been holding onto- but you need to learn to walk away.

STEPHEN doesn't answer, but he agrees with TED.

BIANCA I'll leave you to it.

BIANCA exits.

HYNES What a fulfilling chapter.

TED Well, if I'm going back- and I will be going back- I'm doing so on one condition.

STEPHEN What's that?

TED I'm never having another child.

FLORA wheels in.

FLORA Will you keep it down?

TED That's one way to do it.

TED and STEPHEN laugh. STEPHEN makes to exit.

TED Stephen. Thanks, mate.

STEPHEN smiles and exits.

FLORA What were you all getting so vocal about?

TED Just- family stuff.

FLORA Oh, that explains it.

TED Flora. If this is too personal a question to ask-

FLORA I'll tell you to mind your own business, pervert.

TED You've had kids.

FLORA Obviously.

TED Do you have any advice?

FLORA You never get good at it. Even when you think you're figuring it all out. Children- they do this awful thing.

TED What?

FLORA They grow up. They change with every passing month- sometimes much more than the month before. All you can do is try your best to keep up. And you know what?

TED What?

FLORA You'll never be able to, no matter how hard you try.

TED What did your husband do to help you?

FLORA As he was told.

TED smiles as FLORA exits.

HYNES The keys are in my coat pocket. Right hand side.

TED What?

HYNES You'll no doubt be wanting to pick up where you left off. You'll struggle with that if you're trapped in this hotel. Right hand pocket.

TED searches the pocket and pulls out the keys.

TED Thank you.

HYNES Of course- I just have one favour to ask of you.

TED You want me to untie you.

HYNES I couldn't possibly ask you to do that. I would simply ask that you bring Eddie to me. He look awfully lost and alone sat on that desk.

TED takes the stuffed toy from the desk and deposits it in HYNES' lap. He unties HYNES before making his way toward the door.

HYNES Don't you have any luggage to take with you?

TED All in the car.

HYNES Well- then I wish you the very best of luck.

TED unlocks the doors, swings them open and takes a deep breath.

TED I'll write to you. I know where to find you.

HYNES Indeed.

TED exits. HYNES stands up and to stretch his legs. He looks at Eddie.

HYNES Whatever do you mean "it's a pity he won't get far"? Oh, of course. Well, his car won't very well start if someone has removed the spark-plug.

HYNES exits after TED.

Scene Three

BIANCA enters. She is shocked to find the lobby empty and the doors open. HYNES is no longer tied to the chair and TED is missing.

BIANCA Ted? Ted? Jane? Jane, come here!

JANE enters. She too is stunned.

JANE Where is he?

BIANCA I don't know. I came to take over.

JANE Who was watching him?

BIANCA Ted. Ted was watching him.

JANE So, where is Ted?

BIANCA To be honest, Jane, I'd rather not even think about it.

JANE You think Hynes might have killed him?

BIANCA Ted knew too much.

JANE He only knew as much as the rest of us.

BIANCA No, Jane. Ted answered the phone. Hynes seemed pretty keen on keeping us away from that phone. When Ted finally answered it, we found out that the real Hynes was dead. That's why Ted isn't here.

JANE But we were all there. We all know.

BIANCA If you were Hynes, who would you have killed first?

FLORA enters.

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FLORA Bit draughty in here. Finally done something about the imposter then?

BIANCA No, Nan- we think Hynes has killed Ted.

FLORA Oh Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Oh, I wish my Reg was here.

JANE Would he have been able to protect us?

FLORA No, he was a pansy but he had a way of making me feel safe.

BIANCA We should go. I'll make a run for the car. I'll bring it round the front. You be ready to bring Nan as soon as you see me.

JANE No, I'll come with you. He could be anywhere. He might ambush you.

BIANCA Okay, fine. Nan, be ready for when we get back.

FLORA Right you are.

JANE and BIANCA exit in a hurry. FLORA begins making herself comfortable. STEPHEN enters.

STEPHEN What's going on? Where is everyone?

FLORA Ted's dead, Hynes has gone missing, and the lady lovers have gone for the car.

STEPHEN Oh God!

STEPHEN rushes out after them.

FLORA Good riddance. It's about time I got some peace and quiet.

FLORA relaxes in her chair and falls asleep. After some time, HYNES sneaks back into the hotel behind her. He approaches her, reaching around to cover her with a blanket- then he exits toward the bar. JANE and BIANCA rush back into the hotel, slamming the doors behind them, startling FLORA awake.

FLORA What in heaven's name is going on?

JANE The cars wouldn't start! We tried both of our cars! Nothing!

FLORA Stephen went out there looking for you.

BIANCA We have to board the doors shut! Pass me that hammer.

JANE What about Stephen?

BIANCA Forget Stephen!

JANE Jesus, Bianca!

BIANCA Listen to me. What if Stephen was in on it?

JANE What?

BIANCA What if he's working with Hynes?

JANE Why would he-?

BIANCA You think he wouldn't have the motive?

JANE Killing us would be a bit extreme.

BIANCA Oh, come on, Jane! He's obsessed with murder mysteries! He's like a child full of e-numbers over the idea of being involved in one.

JANE I agree, but I don't think he would really take it that far.

BIANCA Why not? The pair of them have been parading this hotel like Batman and Robin, supposedly solving this case. Did you notice how they found no evidence? Then they suddenly revealed the body was fake all along.

JANE You think they were hiding the evidence?

BIANCA That's exactly what I think. Not only that, they hid the body. You heard Stephen when he just so happened to give away the entire plan when he saw what he thought was an opportunity to impress you- a plan that just so happened to be almost identical to the plot of your anniversary murder mystery.

JANE Oh my God, you're right.

BIANCA I know I'm right. Give me the hammer.

JANE passes the hammer to BIANCA and proceeds to hold the wooden board in place while BIANCA hammers in the nails. Once the board is in place, the pair embrace.

FLORA Stop that! Stop it!

BIANCA Look, Nan, I've had just about-

JANE Bianca. Calm down. She probably didn't mean anything by it, it's just that we need to plan our next move.

FLORA No, it's because it's wrong.

JANE Wrong?

FLORA Unnatural!

BIANCA Nan!

JANE Right, you need to mind your own business! Who are you to say what's right or wrong? This is what we want. We are in love and there's nothing you or anyone else can do to change that! Do you understand me?

FLORA But- it's-

JANE Do you understand me?

FLORA looks defeated.

FLORA I don't have a problem with- your kind- as such.

JANE What kind would that be?

FLORA Well- you know.

JANE I know what?

FLORA Look- I don't mind homosexuals.

JANE scoffs.

BIANCA You're not convincing me, Nan.

FLORA It's just- you were my only hope.

BIANCA What?

FLORA One last big white wedding. I wanted you to have my dress. The patter of tiny little great-grandchildren feet. You're my only grandchild.

BIANCA No I'm not.

FLORA You are!

BIANCA What about Liam?

FLORA Your brother doesn't count! I'm sure there are laws against him breeding!

BIANCA Nan, there could still be a big white wedding. Two brides, Nan. That would mean two dresses.

FLORA I thought one of you would have to wear a suit.

BIANCA No, Nan. I could still wear your dress. And you could still end up babysitting great-grandchildren.

FLORA How the devil would that work?

BIANCA There are ways. We could adopt.

FLORA But you'd never be accepted by the church.

BIANCA Well, there's no hope of me being accepted by the church in any case. As long as I'm accepted by you, I don't care.

There is a knock at the door. Everyone is silent.

BIANCA *(Whispered)* Who is that?

JANE If I could see through doors, I'd tell you.

BIANCA Whoever it is, they can't get in.

STEPHEN appears at the window, startling everyone. He pushes it open as far as it will go (not very far) and presses his face into the opening to speak.

STEPHEN Can you let me in, please? I found out why the cars weren't working. Someone took the spark plugs.

JANE Stephen, where is Ted?

STEPHEN I have no idea. Flora said he was dead.

FLORA More than likely.

BIANCA Where is his car?

STEPHEN I don't know. Maybe he isn't dead. Maybe he took his car and left.

BIANCA But someone took the spark plugs.

JANE How did you know the cars wouldn't start, Stephen?

STEPHEN What?

JANE How did you know?

STEPHEN I tried earlier.

JANE When?

STEPHEN Well- earlier. But I just figured out why it wouldn't start.

The sound of a door closing somewhere in the hotel.

FLORA What was that? Someone closed a door.

BIANCA Ted?

STEPHEN shakes his head gravely.

JANE Hynes?

STEPHEN nods slowly.

JANE Hynes is in the hotel.

BIANCA Oh God. Wait here.

BIANCA moves to exit in search of HYNES.

JANE Where are you going?

BIANCA To find Hynes.

FLORA Not on your own.

BIANCA exits, pushing FLORA who protests.

STEPHEN Jane. Please let me in.

JANE Why?

STEPHEN Because I'm no use out here.

JANE Good.

- STEPHEN Jane! Like it or not, you'll need the boards off of that door. What if you need to make a quick getaway?
- JANE I'll find another exit.
- STEPHEN If there was another way in or out of this hotel I wouldn't need to ask you to let me in. Every other door is locked.
- JANE *(A beat)* Did you have anything to do with Ted disappearing?
- STEPHEN No. Jane, I really do think there's a good chance he just left.
- JANE Why?
- STEPHEN To go home to his daughter. We talked sense into him. Just ask Bianca, she was there!
- JANE I don't trust you. I've got this feeling you're up to something.
- STEPHEN What can I do to convince you I can be trusted? I'm freezing out here.
- JANE Let me tie you to the chair.
- STEPHEN Deal.
- Using the hammer, JANE removes the board from the door. STEPHEN enters.*
- STEPHEN Thank you.
- JANE Sit in the chair.
- STEPHEN I thought you were joking.
- JANE No, Stephen, I'm not. I don't know how but I've got a horrible feeling you're involved in everything.
- STEPHEN I haven't done a thing.
- JANE Sit in the chair!

STEPHEN If I was a danger to you I'd have attacked you by now.

JANE Sit!

STEPHEN Fine! If it'll make you trust me, I'll sit in the chair.

STEPHEN sits in the chair. JANE ties him to it.

JANE It won't, but at least I know you can't go anywhere.

STEPHEN Jane, I'm on your side.

JANE Okay. Well, we'll see, won't we.

STEPHEN I hope so.

JANE Bianca and Flora went looking for Mr Hynes. I'd better go and help.

STEPHEN Of course. I'll stay here. Make sure he doesn't escape through the front door.

JANE Okay. Good luck.

STEPHEN You too. I approve, by the way.

JANE What?

STEPHEN You and Bianca. I approve. I hope you'll be happy together.

JANE *(A beat)* Thank you.

JANE exits.

HYNES enters from the bar, looking around suspiciously.

HYNES I do believe, under the circumstances- it is time to come clean.

HYNES takes the hammer.

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STEPHEN No, please. Not now.

HYNES I'm afraid, Stephen, it is time.

STEPHEN I'm begging you.

HYNES Begging won't help. I'm afraid this has become quite a mess. It's time to tidy.

STEPHEN Mr Hynes, please. Just- give me time.

HYNES I have given you time. Time is up.

STEPHEN Please!

JANE enters, followed by BIANCA and FLORA.

JANE Stop! Don't kill him!

HYNES I beg your-

JANE Who are you?

HYNES Who am I? I don't understand.

BIANCA Who are you?

HYNES I am Mr Hynes.

BIANCA Don't lie to us!

JANE We know! You might as well admit everything!

HYNES I assure you, I have no idea-

JANE *You are not* Mr Hynes!

HYNES I *am* Mr H-

JANE Mr Hynes is dead!

HYNES *(He hesitates)* What?

BIANCA Oh don't try to deny it! That's why you killed Ted!

HYNES Killed Ted? But-

BIANCA You killed him because he found out!

HYNES I truly do not know-

BIANCA He found you out! They told him! On the phone! He answered the phone and they told him that Mr Hynes is dead!

HYNES almost questions this but his mind catches up. He knows what this means. For a moment he almost covers his pain behind a smile but then breaks. He braces himself against the desk.. He gently pushes the phone off of the desk and stares at the place it landed. As quickly as the episode began, it is over and HYNES composes himself.

HYNES *(Broken)* Would anyone like a cup of tea?

JANE Mr Hynes?

HYNES exits toward the bar. BIANCA notices something on the floor. She takes it.

BIANCA He dropped this.

JANE What is it?

BIANCA A photograph.

JANE Is that Mr Hynes?

BIANCA turns over the photograph to read the note on the reverse.

BIANCA “The Hynes brothers at the newly inherited hotel”

JANE He has a brother?

BIANCA He *had* a brother.

HYNES returns.

HYNES I'm sure you all have questions.

No one speaks. They look at HYNES sympathetically. HYNES unties STEPHEN and gives him a pat on the shoulder.

STEPHEN I have confessions to make.

JANE Confessions?

STEPHEN You're right, Mr Hynes. It is time.

HYNES Indeed I believe it is.

JANE Confessions? Plural?

STEPHEN I planted the fake body.

JANE What? How? When did you manage that?

STEPHEN When you disappeared on the phone to Bianca.

BIANCA But why did you do it?

STEPHEN I thought it might relight the flame between us, Jane. Remind you of our murder mystery days. I thought I could be your *hero*.

JANE I'm going to be sick.

STEPHEN It is a bit sappy, now that I think about it.

JANE Someone could have been hurt! It was stupid!

STEPHEN Yes, it was. I can see that now.

HYNES Hindsight is twenty-twenty.

JANE So, it was you who stole our phones.

STEPHEN Yes, it was.

BIANCA Actually- that was me.

JANE What?

BIANCA I took the phones because I couldn't risk anyone calling the police.

JANE But why? We could have been in trouble.

BIANCA Nan has a bit of a past. Well, past- present- and I'd put good money on a future of- funny business.

JANE What kind of funny business?

BIANCA She's a pathological liar, kleptomaniac, a nursing home escape artist, she guilty of countless cases of assault and at least thirteen known cases of fraud.

FLORA But, other than that, I'm squeaky clean.

BIANCA I couldn't risk you calling the police because I couldn't be certain she wasn't in the middle of some criminal plot here.

JANE Aside from claiming to be a hotel critic?

HYNES You mean you aren't a hotel critic?

FLORA I bloody well am a hotel critic!

JANE So, where are the phones now?

BIANCA I can't remember where I put them.

STEPHEN I took them. Nothing would have spoiled the plan like the police getting involved.

JANE Surely getting tied to a chair threw a spanner in the works.

STEPHEN Alright, don't go on about it.

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BIANCA What happened to Ted?

STEPHEN I honestly have no idea what happened to Ted. Me and Bianca had words with him- about family. I didn't see him again after that.

JANE His car is missing.

HYNES Oh yes, he took his motorcar with him. He went home to see his family. Fortunately, I had seen what Stephen had done to the cars previously. I was able to recover the spark-plugs from their hiding space. Ted was more than capable of replacing the thing and so I bid him farewell.

STEPHEN How much did you know?

HYNES I watched your entire plan unfold. It was a most peculiar stunt and I'm afraid I am guilty of being rather curious.

STEPHEN You knew from the start?

HYNES Mostly.

BIANCA So, that's it? That's the big mystery?

HYNES It would seem so.

BIANCA Bit of an anticlimax, to be honest.

JANE Well, we're all alive.

BIANCA That's what I mean. We've been stuck in a murder mystery with no deaths.

HYNES And for that, I believe- we can count ourselves lucky.

FADE TO BLACKOUT.

Scene Four

The lights fade up on STEPHEN passing round everyone's phones. JANE and BIANCA have their luggage packed and ready to go. FLORA is using her phone.

JANE *(To Stephen)* You'd better grab your things.

STEPHEN I'm not ready to go just yet.

JANE I can see that. Go and grab your things. You can get yourself set up in the spare room for as long as you want. We aren't in any hurry to get rid of you.

STEPHEN Thank you- but I think I'm going to leave you to get on with life. You won't want me hanging over you.

JANE Honestly, Stephen. It's not a problem.

STEPHEN All the same, I'm going to start a fresh. Go my own way.

JANE I see. So- this is goodbye?

STEPHEN I think so.

JANE embraces STEPHEN, a friendly goodbye, for the last time.

FLORA If that means you have a room going spare- I'd rather not go back to that awful place. I'd much rather come home with you, if it wouldn't put you out.

BIANCA What do you think, Jane?

STEPHEN If it's got anything to do with me, I vote Flora gets the spare room since I won't be using it.

JANE You're sure you won't mind living in a house of sin?

FLORA I can see how happy the two of you are. Why would I not want to share in that?

BIANCA I'll put a call into the home first thing tomorrow morning. Tell them you'll be staying with us. *(Sarcastically)* That'll please Mum and Dad.

FLORA You can tell them from me: I am not going back to that shit-hole!

JANE gives STEPHEN a smile and begins pushing FLORA toward the exit.

BIANCA It's been- different.

FLORA Thank you ever so much, Mr Hynes. Wonderful hotel. Lovely service.

HYNES You are most welcome, Mrs Flora.

BIANCA I won't be forgetting this experience in a hurry.

JANE No, nor me.

HYNES Have a safe journey home.

JANE, BIANCA, and FLORA exit, saying their final goodbyes.

STEPHEN Well. That's that.

HYNES What a wonderful time we've all had.

STEPHEN Something like that. *(Sigh)* There she goes. The woman of my dreams. It's all over, just like that.

HYNES picks up the photograph from the desk. He smiles, pats Eddie on the head and sets the photograph down.

HYNES Things are going to be rather quiet around here from now on.

STEPHEN It's a nice photograph. You and your brother.

HYNES Happier times. Edward, my brother, always said that happy times always shine brightest after darker times. This photograph, for

example. Our dear uncle had recently departed. A very dark day indeed. He raised us in this very hotel. In his will, he left the hotel to us. In a way, it was like he never left.

STEPHEN So, you ran this place together. Just the two of you?

HYNES Oh yes. Unfortunately, business never did thrive. We had very few guests and often rather far between. Often the type of person who didn't like to answer questions so Edward didn't like to *ask* questions. I never could satisfy my curiosity about the people who walked through those doors until I learned to answer my own questions without the need to ask them. People tend to give away more than they mean to without ever knowing it.

STEPHEN Is that how you knew about the body?

HYNES Precisely. Well, of course- there was also the fact that the corpse weighed very little.

STEPHEN If you knew, why did you play along?

HYNES If I'd have given the game away, I'd never have known why someone would plant a fake body in the first place. Curiosity.

STEPHEN I suppose that makes sense.

HYNES Well, of course it does. Now, I must get on. So much to do!

STEPHEN Anything I can do to help?

HYNES Yes, of course! You can move on. Oh, before I forget!

HYNES fetches a framed painting of the sun setting over the sea.

HYNES A parting gift. Your sea view.

STEPHEN What a lovely sea view it is too.

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- HYNES It even has a little boat. Now go! Discover the next chapter of your life. Live while you have the chance.
- STEPHEN Well, I've been thinking. What if the next chapter of my life is right here?
- HYNES Whatever do you mean?
- STEPHEN Sorry if this seems insensitive- but I assume you have an opening here. I'd like to apply for the job.
- HYNES Oh, I see. Well, I'm afraid, Stephen- it is time for the doors to this hotel to close for the last time.
- STEPHEN Why?
- HYNES The business failed to thrive in the far more capable hands of my elder brother. When he became ill, the hotel began to fade with him. I am incapable of keeping the heart of this hotel beating. It would be an insult to the memory of my uncle and now- my brother- if I were to even make an attempt to do what they did so well.
- STEPHEN But what if we could turn things around?
- HYNES If only we could. I'm afraid Edward is- never coming back and this hotel is just as well empty without him.
- STEPHEN It isn't your fault, Mr Hynes. This hotel is very hard to find.
- HYNES I'm afraid the grounds became very hard to maintain as Edward's health began to fail him.
- STEPHEN Mr Hynes, we could turn this place around, you mark my words. Together, we could make your uncle proud. Your brother too.
- HYNES I should like that very much.
- STEPHEN Hey, "happy times always shine brightest after darker times". Then let's not give up until we've given it a try. Look.

STEPHEN shows his phone to HYNES.

- STEPHEN I took the liberty of making the hotel a website.
- HYNES Most impressive.
- STEPHEN Look, we've even got a review.
- HYNES I don't believe it.
- STEPHEN We have, look. From F. Butterwell.
- HYNES Mrs Flora! Well, I suppose this means she truly is a hotel critic.
- STEPHEN I suppose so.
- HYNES Only three stars?
- STEPHEN Well, never mind that. Look, I've put a map on the website- I even described it as a hotel with a secret location. Sounds exciting, right?
- HYNES Indeed it does!
- STEPHEN I was thinking. If we had a USP, we could really make something of this place.
- HYNES Yes, of course! (*A beat*) What is a USP?
- STEPHEN A unique selling point. Something that makes this hotel stand out. Something that makes us different.
- HYNES Ah, I can see you have something in mind.
- STEPHEN I had a bit of an idea, yes.
- HYNES I can hardly endure the suspense.
- STEPHEN A murder mystery hotel!
- HYNES Excellent! Utilise your expertise! What would we call it?

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STEPHEN You wouldn't keep the name?

HYNES I thought- perhaps a fresh coat of paint. Hynes and Baker Mystery Hotel.

STEPHEN I like the direction- but I think we need something snappier. Something catchy.

The pair take a moment to think and then, in unison, they gasp. The idea comes to them both.

BLACK OUT.