

PREVIEW

Murder at the Mirage Hotel

By Joseph Fields

PREVIEW

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: And Here We Are!

The year is 1985. It's a cool December evening in Swan Lake, New York, where the Mirage Hotel resides. A blizzard rages outside causing the windows and doors to shutter. The hotel's lounge, where the play is set, is illuminated with a warm amber hue. The lounge is overly furnished; featuring a desk, a sofa, a bar cart, a chess table, and a smattering of chairs and small tables. Suddenly, the clock strikes six, and **Oswald Rich**, the Hotel's overseer enters through the front door carrying a large bouquet of murky red roses. **Oswald**, a middle-aged man, carries an air of sophistication that is unmatched by anyone else in the play. When he is with a guest he is very professional, but when speaking to **Marie** he is quite vehement.*

Oswald: *(Speaking with a proper British accent.)* Marie...? I'm back, despite the snow. The motorway was caked in ice. You may want to stay the night, unless you want to play Dodgem Cars with the other drivers. (...) Marie?

(Slight beat. Suddenly, the phone rings!) And so it begins...

(Answering - very professional.) Hello, this is the Mirage Hotel, Oswald speaking, how may I be of service to you? Oh, good evening, Mr. Goldfinch. Yes, sir, your room is still available - we'll be able to check you in at any time. Yes sir, have a pleasant evening, and drive safe!

(Hanging up. He jots down a note in the large book on the desk.)

Goldfinch. Room 301. 6:01 PM. Note: Late check-in. And... logged!

(Calling off stage, colloquially.) Marie, the honeymooners in 301 have requested a late check-in! Take the Chateau Margaux back to the cellar.

Marie: *(O.S.)* Very well, sir. Just a moment!!

Oswald: And Marie, where is Virginia, she has her little show tonight, correct?

Marie: *(O.S.)* I said just a moment! *(To someone else.)* Take care, dear. I'll be in the lounge if you need me.

(Marie Blanchfield enters, descending the stairs carrying an empty cocktail tray - cursing and muttering under her breath. Marie is a frantic, old woman. She is also very, very Irish.)

Marie: *(cont.)* Do you see Virginia, Oswald? If not, she's at home safe and warm, like every other sensible person.

Oswald: Hello Marie. Glad to see you're as effervescent as usual.

Marie: Oh, hush! You're especially dogged, Oswald. Who put your knickers in a bunch?

Oswald: I shouldn't have to call for you like the cat, Marie. When I give orders you must listen!

Marie: Oh, pipe down. You've never been an admiral, Oswald. When do I not do my job?

Oswald: Shall I fetch my diary?

Marie: Every other cook you've had has run out screaming after the first day. Never to return. But not I - headstrong for twenty-odd years. I keep this ship tight Oswald.

Oswald: Tight as a leaky barrel.

Marie: *(They sit on the sofa.)* Oh, come off it. No need for all that. Did you see that Miss Lisa is here? She's earlier than usual.

Oswald: No, she's right on time. Tomorrow's the anniversary. She'll probably leave early in the morning to visit Mrs. Sarah. No doubt Madame will be here any moment.

Marie: Oh, poor thing.

Oswald: Miss Lisa checked in late last night. In her old room. But she doesn't want him- *(gesturing up)* - to know. So don't tell.

Marie: God? I'm sure he knows, they don't call him all seeing for nothin'?

Oswald: No! *(Gesturing up, pointedly.)* Him...!

Marie: Oh!! Of course, that bastard shouldn't be in her life anyhow. Not ever since he-

Oswald: Shush! Come off it, Marie. I don't hold the man in high esteem, believe me. But you can't bite the hand that feeds.

Marie: Like hell, I can't. That man has treated my bloomers like a schooner for years, only to discard me when he's done. I can call the man what he is. A big fat arse!

Oswald: Thank heavens we don't have guests...

Marie: Don't be a prude, Oswald. *(Looking at the letter counter.)* What's that?

Oswald: It's a letter he wanted me to give to Miss Lisa once she arrived.

Marie: So, why haven't you?

Oswald: Oh, can you imagine? On today of all days! *Here you are dear, a letter from your estranged father whom you haven't spoken to for nearly ten years. Would you like some salt to rub in the wounds as well? Perhaps a loaded gun?* Forgive me for having a conscience, Marie.

Marie: Hop off it, Oswald. I get your point. Is that why you got those flowers?

Oswald: Yes. Not very pretty ones. Still, I thought it would be something nice.

Marie: Aw, look, he does have a heart. I'll get them to 'er. *(Going.)*

Oswald: Thank you, and I'll take the wine back to the cellar. *(Looking at the bar cart.)* Where is the wine?

Marie: Oh, it's that damned girl in 206. She's been running me ragged all day.

Oswald: Still?

Marie: Yes! I went up there six times in just three hours!

Oswald: What could she possibly need now?

Marie: She ordered her *fourth* bottle of wine! The girl's off her trolley, Oswald. Soon she'll be as stoned as a witch.

Oswald: *(Dryly.)* We'll check her into the cellar in that case. It'll save you the trip.

Marie: Fine by me! Can't stand the sight of her!

Oswald: You can't be too upset with her, dear, she must be awfully lonely-

Marie: Oh, believe me, she's *not* lonely - not lonely at all.

Oswald: How do you mean?

Marie: I heard a man's voice in her room...

Oswald: Oh, clutch your pearls, Marie!

Marie: Don't you understand, she checked in by herself, didn't she?

Oswald: Did you see a man in the room?

Marie: No, 'e must have hid. The bathroom light was on!

Oswald: It's her business, Marie. Pay no mind to it. Now get back to work!

Marie: You're right. It's the *proper* thing to do. (...) A *man's* voice, Oswald...

Oswald: That's enough! Marie, bring these flowers to Miss Lisa. Then I need you to—
(Lightbulb.) There are no *male guests* in the hotel...

Marie: *Now* you're interested!

Oswald: Who could that be? The last one checked out at four - *Unless* - No!!

Marie: I believe so...

Oswald: Disgusting!

Marie: Any woman who sleeps with him needs to have her eyes checked. I can tell you that...

Oswald: Didn't you have an affair with him?

Marie: Yes, but cataracts run in my family, dear. Genetics. *(Doorbell rings.)* We'll come back to this. *(Going to the door.)* Hello, sir. How do you do?

(Professor Patrick Parr enters with a large satchel and an oversized trench coat. Parr is a very awkward man with a meek temperament.)

Parr: *(Frenzied.)* Oh, Thank you so much- I thought I was going to freeze out there.

(He gives Marie the coat. She runs the coat off stage, and re-enters.)

Oswald: You're quite welcome, sir. Please, have a seat.

Parr: Thank you. *(Regaining composure.)* Sir, what is this place? I couldn't see the sign, just the lights.

Oswald: Well, sir, this is the Mirage, the Mirage Hotel—New York's finest hotel and lounge. I am Oswald, the hotel's overseer, and this is Marie, the cook.

Parr: Well, it's nice to meet you both, I'm Professor Patrick Parr.

Marie: Fan of alliteration, are we?

Parr: I beg your pardon?

Marie: Never mind...

Oswald: Well, sir, if you would like, I can get you a room. We have a few suites still available.

Parr: Yes, I'd love one.

Oswald: Great, I'll-

(Phone rings.)

Marie: Allow me- it's probably our friend, with the *loose drawers-*

Oswald: Marie! Guest- *(Handing Parr a key.)*

Marie: Hello, this is the Mirage Hotel. How can I help you? Oh, *hello dear...* Yes, I'll be right up.

Oswald: So...?

Marie: The *lonely* lass wants a steak dinner for *two*. On the house, I imagine. *(Turning to leave.)*
All over the house. And in the sheets. *(Exits.)*

Oswald: Marie!

Parr: She seems like a character.

Oswald: Oh, she is...

Parr: And she's the cook?

Oswald: Yes, but a word for the wise, the lobster bisque is an acquired taste. Unfortunately, no one has ever acquired it.

Parr: Noted. Thank you for the room!

Oswald: Not a problem, sir. Your room's up the stairs, first door on the right. I'll bring up the bill shortly.

Parr: Thank you!

Oswald: And would you care for a drink?

Parr: Thank you for the offer, but my pocket book's a little lean these days.

Oswald: It's complimentary.

Parr: In that case, I'll have a Dirty Shirley - but hold the vodka.

Oswald: Very well, sir...

Parr: Nice place you got here. I was surprised to find it open - what with the storm and all.

Oswald: It's my responsibility to keep the doors open no matter what. *(Handing Parr his soda.)*
Here you are, sir. Your- *Showered Shirley...*

Parr: Thank you.

Oswald: Of course. *(There's a knock on the door.)*

Debbie: *(O.S.)* Excuse me, *(entering)* could you help me with my car? I'm stuck.

Oswald: Yes, ma'am, just a moment. *(To Parr.)* Excuse me. *(Exits.)*

(Parr is now alone. He begins to explore the room picking up items he should not be touching. What a child. Suddenly, Lisa emerges from the top of the stairs. Lisa is a beautiful young woman, aged with grief.)

Lisa: *(Dryly and abruptly.)* Don't touch that...

Parr: *(Almost dropping the object.)* Oh, god! You scared the living daylights out of me! It's nice to meet you.

Lisa: I'm sure it is.

Parr: Sorry about that, I was just... uh... looking around.

Lisa: Touching-

Parr: I beg your pardon?

Lisa: Touching. Looking requires the eyes, you were using your hands. That's touching.

Parr: Sorry.

(Lisa goes to the bar cart. Parr joins her.)

Parr: *(cont.)* Sorry about that strange introduction. I'm Patrick.

Lisa: I know you. You work at the museum in town...

Parr: How do you...?

Lisa: I've seen you around.

Parr: Oh... And you are...?

Lisa: *(Dryly.)* A figment of your imagination. Goodbye. *(Crossing to leave.)*

(Oswald enters followed by Debbie - blocking Lisa's exit. Debbie is handsomely dressed. She is strong and witty, but never overbearing.)

Oswald: I am very sorry about your car, Ms. Smith. I'll call a mechanic first thing in the morning. In the meantime, I'll get you a room,

Debbie: And can you tell the boss I'm here for my appointment.

Oswald: Of course. He shouldn't be very long.

Debbie: Thank you, Oswald. *(To the room.)* You get stuck too?

Lisa: Not if I can help it.

Oswald: Miss Lisa, you should stay out with us. It's not good to sit in your room all day.

Lisa: I'd rather not, I got what I came for - *(holding up her drink)* goodnight. *(Exiting upstairs.)*

Oswald: Wait, may I- *(Offering the roses and the letter to Lisa.)*

Lisa: Thanks for the roses, Oswald. I know why you got them, but I don't need any half condolences.

(Marie enters.)

Lisa: *(cont.)* These flowers are a band-aid on a broken neck, and you're not the one who needs to give these to me anyway. Thanks for the gesture, maybe if someone dies soon I can put them on their grave. It'll save me the trip! *(She leaves without the flowers or letter.)*

Debbie: *(Beat. Making a drink.)* Is everything alright? Why is she so upset?

Marie: *(Abruptly.)* Oh, because her mother was murdered.

(Parr chokes on his drink.)

Oswald: That's enough, Marie!

Marie: He asked a question, and I answered!

Parr: Oh, that's horrible!

Marie: *(Now sitting too close to Parr. Oswald tries to interject.)* It was ten years ago today, as a matter of fact. Her mother, Miss Sarah, was found dead in this very hotel. The scene was quite a sight! Blood on everything. Can't imagine seeing that as a babe. Her mothers head layin' limp like a Raggedy Ann-

Oswald: That's enough, Marie!! May I speak to you in the kitchen for a moment? *(Saving face.)* Excuse me! *(Exiting with Marie.)*

Debbie: *(Pregnant pause.)* My- that was quite a lot...

Parr: Yes... Poor girl.

Debbie: Yeah...

Parr: Yeah..... *(Opens his bag and pulls out 'And Then There Were None'. Reads.)*

Debbie: You like murder mysteries?

Parr: Huh?

Debbie: Your book-

Parr: Oh! I do. I adore mysteries.

Debbie: Have you watched that new series on CBS? I think you might like it. It's called *Murder, She Wrote*. I've heard great things about-

Parr: Oh, no, no, no. Far too modern. I like the classics. That's where the meat is. Hammett, Sayers, Doyel- But my real favorite is Agatha Christie. She is the master.

Debbie: She's good. If not a little fantastical.

Parr: Fantastical!? What do you mean? Her work is utterly grounded in truth! In culture! In grandeur! It's very rich.

Debbie: I just don't find it very believable. Ten absurd people come into one setting and then a murder occurs. Then some out of touch idiot savant plays detective and they solve the crime with no tangible evidence. In the meantime, there's a subplot about a broken marriage or blackmail and you forget that there's a corpse in the basement. By the end, I care more about the Russian heiress and her forbidden love than the person that was murdered!!

Parr: It's called a cozy! That's the point!

Debbie: Look, as someone who lives with murder, I don't care for the fake ones.

Parr: You live with a murderer??

Debbie: No! I'm an investigative journalist. I've helped to solve murders.

Parr: Oh, my! I'm sorry- Detective-

Debbie: No. Not a detective, just a journalist.

Parr: (*Foaming at the mouth.*) Still! That's so exciting. What I would give to meet a real detective! Oh, it's a dream. ... But you're still very interesting! What have you worked on??

Debbie: Just some small cases. Ranging from theft to murder.

Parr: Exciting! What cases?

Debbie: I worked on the heist at the New York Mint.

Parr: Love it!

Debbie: The ballerina murders.

Parr: Watched it!

Debbie: The robbery of the Swan Lake Museum.

Parr: Lived it!

Debbie: What?

Parr: I am the curator at the museum.

Debbie: Ah, the new one!

Parr: Yes, I stepped into his position after he was-

Debbie: Incarcerated.

Parr: Right.

Debbie: Did you ever find the artifacts he stole?

Parr: No... All of it's still missing.

Debbie: I just want to know what he was doing with all that cold case memorabilia. It's like he was playing detective in his free time...

Parr: *(Laughing, very uncomfortable.)* Yeah... Something like that...

Debbie: You worked with him, is that why he did it?

Parr: *(Standing. Adding vodka to his drink.)* Not sure. I didn't talk to Rick much. Anyway, tell me about *Murder... She... Writes*. Do you like it??- *(He bumps into Debbie, spilling his drink on her.)*

Debbie: Oh, gosh!

Parr: Sorry! So sorry!

Debbie: It's fine- It's fine. I'll tidy myself up. *(She exits.)*

(Oswald enters through the kitchen door followed by Madame. Madame is an elegant older woman who carries an air of warmth with her. She has a withered Proper British accent.)

Oswald: She's upstairs. She must have locked herself in her room by now. You can take my key. Put it on the desk when you get back.

Madame: Thank you, dear.

Oswald: Call me if you need anything. Oh, and before I forget, take this letter, *he* left it for her. She ran off before I could give it to her.

Madame: I see... Rather timely. And he made you do his dirty work?

Oswald: I'm afraid so...

Madame: And now you're pawning it off to me?

Oswald: No, it's just that-

Madame: It's all in jest, Oswald. I'll give it to her when the time is right. My little peanut needs her Nana.

Oswald: Of course.

Madame: Good night, Oswald. *(She exits up the stairs.)*

Parr: Is it always this busy at this time of night?

Oswald: Well- *(The doorbell rings.)* I suppose that answers your question-

(Robert and Charles enter, both dressed in strapping tuxedos. Robert is a straight shooter. Charles is a scaredy cat.)

Robert: Hello, is this the Mirage Hotel? We have a reservation.

Oswald: Ah, yes, you must be Mr. Goldfinch.

Robert and Charles: Yes!

Charles: That's gonna take some getting used to.

Robert: I'm Robert, I made the reservation.

Oswald: Yes, follow me, sir.

(Robert and Oswald go to the desk. Robert hands his black rain cloak to Oswald. Oswald puts the coat in check. Charles joins Parr on the sofa.)

Charles: *(Talking to Robert.)* I'll be over here if you need me, Robert. *(He picks up a magazine. Small beat.)* Hi, how are you?

Parr: Fine, you?

Charles: *(While reading.)* I'm alright. Just tired. Long car trip.

Parr: *(Warm.)* Well, you can rest up tonight. The best time to sleep is in the cold.

Charles: Yes, I guess that's true.

Debbie: *(Reentering, door slams.)*

Charles: *(Yelps!)*

Debbie: Well, hello, Char. Glad to see you're as jumpy as ever.

Charles: Deb!

Debbie: You're a sight for sore eyes. How'd the wedding go?

Charles: It was wonderful! It was common law as all hell, but that's fine by me. Hitched is hitched. I wish you were there, Deb.

Debbie: I know. I'm just as busy as the day is long. We miss you at the *Times*.

Charles: I know. But someone has to do hair, and I know it's not gonna be you, Deb.

Debbie: I'll have you know that I like my hair.

Charles: Well, I'm glad you do. *(They share a laugh. Parr joins in late and unwelcomed.)*

Debbie: Well, congratulations, Char. I'm just so happy you finally got married.

Parr: *(Rudely joining.)* Congratulations! Who's the lucky lady?

Robert: *(Budding in.)* Charles - our room is on the second floor. Can you grab my bag? Oh, hi, Debbie! *(Starting to ascend the stairs.)*

Debbie: Hi, Robert!

Charles: *(Chuckling.)* Yes, excuse me. *(Starting to exit up the stairs, followed by Oswald.)*

Debbie: Charles, I'll tell you what, I'll come up to your room in the morning and we'll have some mimosas to celebrate!

Charles: Definitely. Sounds lovely!

Debbie: Fantastic!

Parr: Nice meeting you. Sleep well!

Charles: I don't think we'll be sleeping very much, but thank you! *(Wink. Exiting with Robert.)*

(Major enters from the stairs, walking past Robert and Charles. Major is dressed in an open, green Army uniform. She is a sloppy, playful drunk. Major floats over to the sofa, standing behind it, unnoticed by Debbie and Parr. In this stage of the play, Major's movements are very exaggerated and comical. As the play continues she sobers up and subdues.)

Debbie: Oh, Char, he's such a card. *(She crosses and kicks Parr's bag. A box falls out.)* Oh, I'm sorry! What's this?

Parr: That?? Oh, that's a new addition to the museum's collection. It's very private.

Debbie: Oh, okay. Here-

Parr: Thank you. Aren't you curious? It's a very interesting box...

Debbie: Not really. You said it was pri-

Parr: Please, don't twist my arm! It's a secret, so you mustn't tell anyone.

Debbie: Cross my heart.

Parr: Lot 2456. A new addition to the collection. *(Opening the box.)* It's from the murder of Florence Rockefeller in 1922. The only thing they found was this dagger. A rare dagger supposedly owned by a Frenchman, due to the inscription of "liberté" written on the blade. They don't know who did it. They don't know why they did it. Or how they did it.

Debbie: I can assume how. They stabbed her.

Parr: Yes, but the room was locked and she had a guard dog that didn't bark at all that night. It's a fascinating crime that remains unsolved.

Debbie: So strange.

Parr: I know! So many missing pieces. Those detectives didn't know anything! But if I was there I could have ended the mystery once and for all.

Debbie: Right...

Parr: But alas, we're only left with this-

Debbie: A rusty knife.

Parr: No! This! *(Wielding the dagger)* **The Liberté!**-

Major: *(Abruptly and drunkenly.)* What's dat? *(Snatching the dagger from Parr.)*

(Parr and Debbie yelp.)

Parr: Oh, dear god!

Debbie: Where on earth did you come from!?

Parr: Give me that!! *(Regaining control of the dagger.)*

Major: I've been so lonely since he's been gone fur so long. Thought I'd see wat's going on down 'ere...

Parr: I'm going to put my bag in coat check. I don't want anyone touching anything. Excuse me!
(Exits.)

Debbie: (To Major, indignantly.) Hello...

Major: Hiiii! Nice to meet you- I'm Margret. "Major Margret" officially. But that's a little stuffed shirt if you ask me. My friends call me Margie- You can call me Margie if we're friends. Are you my friend?? Would you like to be?!

Debbie: You're having a good time, aren't you?

Major: Absolutely! Shame I won't remember much of it in the morning...

Debbie: Why don't you have a seat?

Major: I'm fine!! I've been sitting all evening. Sitting and waiting for him to come back. He left my room so long ago, and I haven't seen him since. If you find him, remind him that I'm in room 206, just up the stairs.

Debbie: Who have you been waiting for?

Major: My boyfiend...

Debbie: Does this *boyfiend* have a name?

Major: Oh, he does. He has a name I will treasure for the rest of my life, a name that puts music in my ears...

Debbie: Then what is his name?

Major: (Slight pause.) Todd! - I think. Or Tony. Maybe Ted. I dunno, it starts with a T... I think.

Parr: (Entering.) Is she gone? Is she gonna try and stab me again?

Debbie: No she just needs a coffee and a shoulder to cry on. She's harmless.

Charles: (Entering, now in a robe. Almost frantic.) What's going on down here??

Robert: (Also entering in satin pajamas.) Yes, we heard screaming.

Parr: That was ages ago - what took you so long?

Robert: Getting dressed. **Charles:** Couldn't find the light switch-

Charles: What happened!? I thought someone was murdered.

Debbie: Oh, the lush scared us. That's all. Nothing to worry about.

Robert: Well, we'll just head back to bed now. Good night. *(Turning to leave.)*

Debbie: Goodnight.

Major: *(Abruptly.)* Leo-

Parr: I beg your pardon?

Major: Leo, Leo Lark - that's the man who had dinner with me. Wadda sweetheart...

Charles: Leo Lark, do you mean Leonardo Lark?

Major: Maybe, same difference. Leo - Leonardo... Tomato - Potato... *(Saying them the same way.)* No, Potato - Potato, dammit! What I mean is-

Robert: Stop! He's here right now??

Major: I think so. I haven't seen him in a while though.

(Rise in tension.)

Parr: Why is he here?

Major: I think he owns the place - that's what he said.

(Overlapping.)

Robert: Oh, god. I can't do this. Not now.

Parr: I've had enough, I'm leaving!

Charles: Robert, we need to get out here!

Major: Why are we yelling?!

(Oswald enters from the kitchen.)

Madame: *(Entering with Lisa.)* What's with all the commotion?

(This is a quick sequence with high stakes and room for reactive ad-libs.)

Robert: *(To Charles.)* Did you know he was here?

Debbie: *(To Parr.)* Someone should hide the sharp objects.

Charles: *(To Robert.)* I had no idea!

Parr: *(To Debbie.)* I put my dagger away. Should I hide the pens too?

Lisa: *(To Madame.)* If someone doesn't answer me. I'll scream.

Major: *(To Oswald.)* Butler, can I get a gin fizz? I love the fizz- Bubble. Bubble. Bubble.

Madame: *(To Lisa.)* -I can't sleep with all this noise.

Oswald: *(To Major.)* You may not. You need a meal... at another hotel!

Marie: *(Entering. To All.)* I made jellies!!

Parr: *(To Debbie.)* If Leo sees me, my goose is cooked.

Lisa: *(To Madame.)* Can someone pass me the gin, please??

Debbie: *(To Parr.)* I think we need to relax and get some food. Or a sedative.

Madame: *(To Lisa.)* This is a hotel, not a nightclub! Hush up!

Major: *(To Oswald. Singing, standing on a table.)* 'Ohhh. Leo, Leo, Leo. How I love him so!
-Yes, I do. That I know!-

Robert: *(To Charles.)* Charles, I don't know what to do. Oh, god. Please.

Oswald: *(To Major.)* Stop singing! And get off the table!

Charles: *(To Robert.)* We need to relax!

Robert: Oh, don't tell me to *relax!*

Madame: QUIET! *(Silence.)* There is no need for all of this squabbling. Now can someone please calmly explain the issue?

Robert: Leo Lark. He's here! Here on MY honeymoon. Charles, please we need to leave. I can't do this.

(Slowly Lark enters at the top of the stairs. He stops and looms in the back.)

Charles: Robert- we can't. The snow.

Robert: Charles, this was supposed to be a fresh start. I could scream. Why is this happening to us?!

Parr: That man is an ass. Pure and simple.

Charles: I need to sit down.

Madame: I think we just need to relax.

Robert: No! Stop telling me to relax. Not here. I can't stay in the same building as that... that...

Lark: As what? What? What are you trying to say, Robert? I'm sure many vulgar words are swirling through your head right now. But isn't that funny? At one point you would never have said anything bad about me. In fact, you would have called me a friend. A life saver! Wouldn't you?

Lark: *(cont.)* I suppose things have changed. But I don't know how. Don't act like an ass in front of your new friends, Robbie. Besides, your hands aren't as clean as you claim. Aren't they? Oh, yes... I knew it was you. I've known it was you this whole time. Good luck!

Oh, Robbie. You have no right to judge me so harshly, and yet you do. *(To all.)* Your noses are held so high, I'm shocked you can't smell the clouds. But isn't it wonderful that this blizzard has brought us all to the same place; all of my old *friends*? You know what they say, *everything happens for a reason*. Now, I've already heard some of Robert's grievances, but I'm sure there are more. If anyone else would like to air out their dirty laundry, I'll be sure to extend the clothesline. I'll be in my office. I should have an appointment coming soon, anyhow.

Debbie: *(Peaking.)* That would be me, sir.

Lark: Ah, yes, come this way, Ms. Smith. It's lovely to see you again. *(Exits. Followed by Debbie.)*

Charles: *(Beat.)* What. Is. Happening?!? This has to be a joke.

Robert: I don't care. I don't care. Let's just get outta here!

Oswald: I'm afraid you can't!

Robert: And why the hell not?!

Oswald: You won't get very far.

Robert: Is that a threat?

Oswald: *(Professionally.)* Not at all, sir. The snow has doubtless caused all of the roads to close. If you leave now you could catch your death of cold. Besides- *(Suddenly the lights flicker, and the sound of a tree falling is heard, followed by more flickering.)*

Madame: What was that?

Oswald: *(Looking out the window.)* A tree fell, blocking the drive entrance. We're trapped! Pay her no that, we are fine! We have food, water, and blankets, and besides we still have power. *(The lights flicker, then shut off.)* Oh, bollocks.

Lisa: I was right, we're in Clue. If I die, I'll haunt you all!

Oswald: (*Lighting a candle, illuminating only his face.*) No need to worry, why don't we go into the dining room and have some supper to keep us warm? Dinner is best served by candlelight anyhow. Perhaps we can all have a glass of wine?

Major: Sounds good...

Oswald: Never mind. (*Everyone exits.*)

(*End of scene one.*)

PREVIEW