

UnMURDERED!

By Edith Weiss

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To Christofer and Gretchen.



UNMURDERED!

By EDITH WEISS

CAST OF CHARACTERS (In Order of Appearance)

	<u># of lines</u>
DASHIEL REZNOR.....young mystery novel writer; very full of himself	115
EUPHEMIA STRYX.....hardhearted owner of the artist retreat	45
AMELIA EASBYhardworking, no-nonsense cook	33
BETTINA SIPE.....Euphemia's gentle sister; tries hard to please	34
ADDALINDA SWEMrecently widowed young maid; emotional	28
EUSTACE HUTHEeyore-like, mirthless butler	38
ANNA MARIA MANGIONIseemingly cranky old woman, but actually Dash's girlfriend HAYLEY in disguise	27
MADELYN.....Anastasia's frazzled caretaker and sister	20
PRINCESS ANASTASIAyoung, deluded woman who thinks she is the last of the Romanovs	21
ANTELOPE TWOMEYartsy, dramatic poet; claims to be the poet laureate of Wyoming	20
ASTRID TORVALDSDOTTIR....interpretive New-Age dancer and choreographer; passionate	21
VIOLA VAZ.....young, innocent dancer	14
VIVIAN VAZ.....her sister, also a young dancer	11
VERONICA VAZanother dancing sister; sometimes talks without thinking	13
LURVYuneducated, simple handyman	27
DETECTIVE BINNIX.....dry, efficient, and understated detective	32

SETTING

Time: Present.

Place: The main lobby of the Bygone Days Artist Retreat.

The lobby is cozy and old-fashioned. UP RIGHT is a reception desk. Next to the STAGE RIGHT door there is a coat tree. DOWN LEFT is a small couch. Scattered across the stage are easy chairs and perhaps some small tables UP LEFT, also with chairs. Additional optional furnishings and decorations add to the cozy atmosphere.

There are four entrances: STAGE RIGHT leads to the outside, UP CENTER leads to the kitchen and back porch, UP LEFT leads to the servants' quarters, and DOWN LEFT leads to the guest rooms.

UNMURDERED!

1 LIGHTS UP in front of the CURTAIN, where DASH dances to MUSIC playing on his phone, until it is interrupted by the PHONE'S RINGTONE. DASH looks at the phone, rolls his eyes, and answers.

DASH: (*Forces enthusiasm.*) Hayley, hi! I thought you agreed that you weren't going to call me anymore when I'm writing? (*Listens.*) Yes, you did say that. Your specific words were, "Fine, Dash, I won't ever call you again when you're writing." (*Listens.*) No, I haven't actually written anything, but that's beside the point. (*Listens.*) No, I'm not lazy. I still have this darn writer's block! It's torture! (*Listens.*) You're going to what audition? (*Listens.*) Oh, that... right. (*Listens.*) No, no, I didn't forget. I know it's an important— Look, Hayley, I can't do this right now. I've got to get back to this book. (*Rolls his eyes. Listens.*) An artist's retreat? Really? (*Thinks.*) Huh. Yeah, that could be just what I need... (*Listens. Perfunctory.*) Love you, too. (*Ends the call, then EXITS RIGHT. CURTAIN UP on the lobby of the Bygone Days Artist Retreat. EUPHEMIA, BETTINA, and AMELIA are UP RIGHT at the reception desk, looking through a sheaf of papers.*)

EUPHEMIA: Our guest should arrive in an hour.

AMELIA: Dashiel Reznor, the writer!

20 **BETTINA:** A famous person! We've never had a famous person here before.

AMELIA: I'm so excited! My favorite book was "Aunt Maggity's Dark and Stormy Night." I love that feisty rodeo clown!

BETTINA: I loved "No Body to Murder" with the terrible mime Bernard.

25 **DASH:** (*From OFF RIGHT, jiggles door handle. Knocks.*) Hello? Is anybody there? (*Bangs on the door.*) It's freezing out here! Hello! Would someone get the door? (*Bangs on the door again.*) Hey! Open up! I have a reservation!

EUPHEMIA: He's so early!

30 **BETTINA:** We have to let him in!

AMELIA: Not before we're ready! (*Puts the papers in the reception desk.*)

EUPHEMIA: (*Calls OFF LEFT.*) Eustace! Addalinda! Come on! He's here!

DASH: (*From OFF. Demanding.*) I hear voices in there. Let me in!
35 It's Dash Reznor! I'm freezing! (*EUSTACE and ADDALINDA ENTER DOWN LEFT. ADDALINDA is looking through a sheaf of papers.*)

ADDALINDA: He's here already? He wasn't supposed to get here 'til eight!

EUPHEMIA: Addalinda, put that away!

40 **ADDALINDA:** But I have to—

- 1 **BETTINA:** It's too late now! Put it in the reception desk. (*ADDALINDA puts the papers in the reception desk.*)
- DASH:** (*From OFF. Angry.*) Hellooo! I can't feel my feet!
- EUSTACE:** Bit of a whiner, isn't he?
- 5 **AMELIA:** Is everyone ready? (*ALL do something small to get ready— deep breathing, vocal warm ups, shaking out their hands, etc.*)
- EUPHEMIA:** Places, please.
- BETTINA:** Places! (*ADDALINDA EXITS UP LEFT. EUPHEMIA, AMELIA, and BETTINA get in a servant line. EUSTACE opens the door.*)
- 10 **DASH:** (*ENTERS RIGHT, very angry and carrying a suitcase.*) I am frozen! It is so cold out there! (*Stomps his feet to get warm.*) Aah! Aah! My feet are completely numb. I probably have frostbite! Aah! Aah!
- EUSTACE:** It's wintertime. We're high up in the mountains. What did you expect?
- 15 **DASH:** (*Slaps his body to get warm.*) A better way to get up here than a ski lift?
- EUSTACE:** That's part of the charm, Mr. Reznor. You can only get to the Bygone Days Artist Retreat by ski lift.
- AMELIA:** Plus the guests have no access to phones or television. We
- 20 think it's charming.
- DASH:** (*Ignores her.*) And then I get here, and the door is locked! To an inn! Locked! And although I hear voices, no one lets me in for an hour!
- AMELIA:** An hour? Well, it wasn't an hour. To be sure, it was a minute
- 25 at most.
- DASH:** It felt like an hour! Did I mention the frostbite?
- EUSTACE:** May I take your jacket? (*Takes DASH'S jacket and hangs it on the coat tree.*)
- EUPHEMIA:** We do apologize, but we thought it best to keep the door
- 30 locked.
- BETTINA:** Yes. For there's been—
- EUSTACE:** No, no. He doesn't need to know.
- DASH:** Need to know what? Because I have a feeling I do need to know.
- 35 **AMELIA:** Someone's been lurking outside.
- EUPHEMIA:** I'm sure it's nothing to worry about.
- BETTINA:** Of course not. But why not live on the safe side?
- DASH:** Someone's lurking—
- EUSTACE:** Your cell phone, please.
- 40 **DASH:** What?

1 **EUSTACE:** Everyone who stays here has to give us their cell phones.
It's in the agreement.

DASH: Fine. (*Hands over his cell phone. EUSTACE puts it in his pocket.*)

ADDALINDA: (*ENTERS UP LEFT.*) Oh, Mr. Reznor! I am your biggest fan.

5 **AS** was my late husband. Your writing is just so brilliant!

DASH: Yes.

AMELIA: We're eagerly awaiting your next work. It's been a while,
hasn't it?

EUSTACE: He did write a couple that were badly reviewed, as I recall.

10 **DASH:** I'd rather not talk about work.

EUPHEMIA: Introductions are in order. I am Euphemia Stryx, the
owner of the establishment. Here is Amelia Easby, the cook. This
is my sister, Bettina Sipe. I have no idea what she does.

BETTINA: Really, Euphemia, that's uncalled for.

15 **EUPHEMIA:** The butler is our own little ray of sunshine, Eustace Huth,
and Addalinda Swem, your biggest fan, is the maid.

ADDALINDA: (*Tears up.*) And a widow. So young. We were very much
in love. (*Sobs.*)

EUPHEMIA: That's quite enough, Addalinda. This is neither the time
nor place. I'm sure there's something that needs dusting.

20 **ADDALINDA:** Of course. I'm sorry. (*Starts dusting the reception desk,
sobbing softly.*)

BETTINA: That's a bit harsh, Euphemia.

EUPHEMIA: Compassion is not in my character. Addalinda, please

25 don't let your tears fall into the furniture polish. It will dilute the
polish and ruin the wood.

BETTINA: Not a whit of compassion.

EUPHEMIA: I have just enough compassion to let you live here, don't
I, Bettina? Rent-free?

30 **BETTINA:** I'm your sister! And I help run the place.

EUPHEMIA: Do you? Really?

DASH: Could you stop your bickering? I need to check in and go to my
room and get in front of that fireplace.

EUSTACE: Uh oh.

35 **DASH:** Uh oh? What "uh oh"?

EUSTACE: There's a bit of a problem with your room.

EUPHEMIA: What problem, Eustace?

EUSTACE: Anna Maria Mangioni won't leave.

BETTINA: She's one of the other artists staying here. She was an

40 opera singer.

- 1 **DASH:** Who cares? She's in my room.
ADDALINDA: She was my husband's favorite. (*Whimpers.*) He died.
He's dead.
- EUPHEMIA:** Eustace, didn't I tell you to tell Anna Maria to leave? She
5 hasn't paid her bill in months.
EUSTACE: Yes, you told me, but—
ANNA MARIA: (*ENTERS DOWN LEFT.*) If you want me to leave, then
make me leave.
EUPHEMIA: Go on, Eustace. Make her leave.
- 10 **ANNA MARIA:** Don't talk about me in the third person like I'm invisible!
EUSTACE: (*Ignores ANNA MARIA.*) No, Euphemia. I'm not going to kick
her out. She's old, and it's below zero out. It would be murder. You
kick her out.
EUPHEMIA: Oh, no. Not me. That's why I hired Amelia. To do my dirty
15 work.
AMELIA: You hired me to be the cook. I'm not doing your dirty work.
EUPHEMIA: You kick her out, Bettina. Do something to earn your
keep.
BETTINA: You're the worst sister anyone could have!
- 20 **EUSTACE:** Maybe Mr. Reznor should make her leave.
DASH: Me? Why me?
EUSTACE: You're a hard-boiled detective type, aren't you?
DASH: No. I'm a writer of detective mysteries. That doesn't make me
hard-boiled.
- 25 **ANNA MARIA:** He's a weenie!
DASH: I'm a what?
EUSTACE: A weenie. You're the one who needs a room. You should
kick her out.
DASH: I'm a guest! I shouldn't have to be the one to throw the old
30 lady out!
ANNA MARIA: Who are you calling an old lady, writer boy? Rude writer
boy! (*Hits him with her purse.*)
DASH: Ow! Hey! She hit me!
ADDALINDA: She's not as frail as she looks.
- 35 **DASH:** Miss Stryx.
EUPHEMIA: It's Mrs. Stryx. I, too, once had a husband who died, but
you don't see me going on and on about it.
ADDALINDA: Perhaps because he died over twenty years ago.
EUPHEMIA: And who is showing a lack of compassion now?

- 1 **DASH:** Mrs. Stryx?
EUPHEMIA: Yes?
DASH: My girlfriend prepaid for the room. Is that not correct?
EUPHEMIA: That's correct.
- 5 **DASH:** And yet I don't have a room.
ANNA MARIA: He's quick, this rude writer boy.
DASH: Isn't it your responsibility to have a room for me?
BETTINA: I believe he's right, Euphemia.
DASH: Of course I'm right!
- 10 **ANNA MARIA:** I have no money! I have nowhere to go!
EUPHEMIA: No money? That necklace alone is worth thousands!
ANNA MARIA: This necklace was a gift from Enrico Caruso, the
greatest tenor who ever lived.
DASH: Enrico Caruso? How old are you? (*ANNA MARIA hits him with
15 her purse.*) Ow! Don't you know who I am? (*MADELYN runs IN DOWN
LEFT, closely followed by ANASTASIA.*)
EUSTACE: Oh, no.
MADELYN: (*Runs away from ANASTASIA.*) You cannot beat me! We are
in America! You can't just beat people!
- 20 **ANASTASIA:** I am a princess, a direct descendant of Czar Nicholas! If
you need to be beaten, I will beat you.
MADELYN: No one needs to be beaten! You're insane!
BETTINA: Now, Anastasia dear—
ANASTASIA: Princess Anastasia!
- 25 **AMELIA:** Princess Anastasia. Madelyn's right. You just can't go around
beating people.
ANNA MARIA: Yes, you can.
EUSTACE: Well, maybe if you're a hundred years old. (*ANNA MARIA
hits him with her purse.*) Ow.
- 30 **ANNA MARIA:** Never tell a lady's age.
EUSTACE: You're the devil. Or at the very least as old as the devil.
(*Moves away to avoid getting hit.*)
ANNA MARIA: That's the pot calling the kettle a banana.
DASH: A banana? That doesn't even make sense!
- 35 **ANASTASIA:** Madelyn has stolen all my jewels!
MADELYN: You don't have any jewels, you poor-as-dirt, pretend
princess. And you never had any because you're not really a
princess.
ANASTASIA: In my country, you would be dead right now.

- 1 **MADELYN:** In your country, you would be dead right now like all the rest of the Romanovs, who were killed in 1918.
- ADDALINDA:** Oh, Madelyn, that's just harsh.
- MADELYN:** It's the truth.
- 5 **ANASTASIA:** You're fired, nasty Madelyn! If I can't beat you or have you executed, at least I can still do that! (*Storms OFF DOWN LEFT.*)
- ADDALINDA:** Poor Madelyn!
- MADELYN:** She's crazy as a loon, but she's my sister, and I would do anything for her. (*EXITS DOWN LEFT.*)
- 10 **DASH:** Could we get back to my lack-of-a-room situation? Like now?
- EUPHEMIA:** Anna Maria, perhaps you'd consent to sleep in the servants' quarters and let Mr. Reznor have his room?
- BETTINA:** What a lovely compromise!
- ANNA MARIA:** No. You're not shutting me away in a smelly servant's
- 15 room!
- EUPHEMIA:** I'd love to shut you away permanently. I will get you out of that room if it's the last thing I do! (*There is a very tense, silent moment before the ANTELOPE and the DANCERS—ASTRID, VIVIAN, VIOLA, and VERONICA—ENTER DOWN LEFT. ASTRID carries a purse.*)
- 20 **ASTRID:** Antelope, stop. We cannot enter. Do you feel the bad energy in here? It's everywhere. I must banish it. (*Takes a number of sage sticks from her purse. Hands one to ANTELOPE and to each of the DANCERS.*)
- ANTELOPE:** I do feel it. It's the very antithesis of the creative spirit.
- 25 (*Waves her sage stick.*)
- ASTRID:** Out, out, bad energy!
- DANCERS:** Out, bad energy!
- ANTELOPE:** It actually feels like a soul-killing vibe.
- ASTRID:** Out, out, soul-killing vibe!
- 30 **DANCERS:** Out, soul-killing vibe! (*ASTRID hits DASH'S backside.*)
- DASH:** Ow! Watch out! What is it with you people? Show a little respect!
- ASTRID:** Out, out, cruel and murderous spirits!
- DANCERS:** Out! Flee! Go!
- EUPHEMIA:** This is a bit excessive. (*The DANCERS stop waving their sage sticks.*)
- 35 **ANTELOPE:** The room is cleansed. Thank you, all of you. Now let's begin the poetry and dance recital. Take your seats, everyone.
- DASH:** No! I want to be in my prepaid room! Right now!
- ANNA MARIA:** (*Kind.*) You know what I'm going to do right now?
- 40 **DASH:** Let me have my room?



1 **ANNA MARIA:** Not a chance. I'm going up for a nap. (*EXITS DOWN LEFT.*)

AMELIA: She needs her rest, poor dear.

DASH: What about poor me? I'm a tortured artist who doesn't have a
5 room! This is intolerable.

EUSTACE: That is not intolerable, Mr. Reznor. What is truly intolerable is the recital we're about to witness. (*DANCERS clap their hands in rhythm as ANTELOPE moves to her place. The OTHERS sit and stand around the room to watch the performance.*)

10 **ANTELOPE:** I am Antelope Twomey. I am the poet laureate of Wyoming. (*Joins the clapping.*)

VIOLA: (*Strikes a pose.*) I am Viola Vaz. (*Resumes clapping.*)

VIVIAN: (*Strikes a pose.*) I am Vivian Vaz. (*Resumes clapping.*)

VERONICA: (*Strikes a pose.*) I am Veronica Vaz. (*Resumes clapping.*)

15 **ASTRID:** (*Strikes a pose.*) And I am Astrid Torvaldsdottir. We will interpret the poetry with dance.

DASH: I don't believe this.

ANTELOPE: Our latest collaboration is called "Portrait of the Artist as the Dancer of the Vegetation." (*Using their scarves as props, DANCERS move with exaggerated expression and movement as ANTELOPE recites.*) I am the dancer of Wyoming vegetation. The tumbleweed, the scrub grass—my womb of gestation. The prairie married poetry in literary celebration, Joining words together like a verbal conjugation.
20 My couplets, my stanzas—a syllabic collaboration, Like the bee that doth suck honey—a poetic pollination. I am moved! I sway! I am part of the earth. Let movement and words together give birth To the Artist! To Life! To the little bee on the new rose.
25 And as the rose's sap rises, so my creativity grows. (*ALL applaud.*)

EUPHEMIA: That was astonishing.

ANTELOPE: Thank you.

EUPHEMIA: To be astonished isn't necessarily a good thing.

ANTELOPE: Then we are doubly honored.

35 **BETTINA:** Listening isn't your strong suit, is it?

AMELIA: Brava! Brava!

DANCERS/ANTELOPE: Thank you.

ASTRID: Come, Antelope, we have to rehearse part two.

EUPHEMIA: Oh, there's more. Goody. (*ANTELOPE and the DANCERS EXIT DOWN LEFT.*)
40

- 1 **AMELIA:** What we have to do now is figure out where to put Mr. Reznor, our esteemed guest.
- DASH:** Don't bother. I'm leaving.
- BETTINA:** You can't. I'm sorry. The last train left the village an hour
- 5 ago.
- DASH:** What?
- ADDALINDA:** The last train left—
- DASH:** I heard her! It was a rhetorical "what"! (*ADDALINDA collapses into sobs.*)
- 10 **EUSTACE:** Now look what you've done, you dastard.
- DASH:** (*Takes out a small notebook and writes.*) Dastard! What a great word. A contemptible coward doesn't really apply to me, but it's still a great word I haven't heard in ages. (*Beat. ALL stare at DASH. ADDALINDA continues to cry.*) What?
- 15 **EUSTACE:** You're insensitivity just astounds us a bit, that's all.
- EUPHEMIA:** (*Crosses DOWN LEFT to the couch. EUSTACE follows with his suitcase.*) Mr. Reznor, all we can offer you for the night is this couch. With my sincerest apologies.
- ADDALINDA:** I'll bring some bedding. (*EXITS UP CENTER.*)
- 20 **DASH:** (*Crosses to couch.*) I hope you're all prepared for a lawsuit.
- AMELIA:** Mr. Reznor, can I get you a glass of warm milk to help you sleep?
- DASH:** No! Who drinks warm milk? That's disgusting.
- AMELIA:** I like warm milk.
- 25 **EUPHEMIA:** As do I. In fact, I think I'll make some for myself right now. Shall I make you some, Amelia?
- AMELIA:** No, thank you. I'm just going straight to bed.
- BETTINA:** As am I.
- AMELIA/BETTINA:** Good night, Mr. Reznor.
- 30 **DASH:** A good night for you. I'm sure you have a bed. (*AMELIA and BETTINA EXIT UP LEFT.*)
- EUPHEMIA:** Eustace, make sure you lock up. (*EUSTACE locks the door at RIGHT.*) Good night, Mr. Reznor. (*EXITS UP CENTER.*)
- EUSTACE:** Sleep tight, Mr. Reznor. (*EXITS DOWN LEFT.*)
- 35 **DASH:** It's like they're taunting me.
- ADDALINDA:** (*ENTERS UP CENTER with bedding, crosses to the couch, shakes out the sheets, and plumps the pillows.*) There you go, Mr. Reznor. You'll be as cozy as a bug in a rug. Good ni—
- DASH:** Don't even say it!

- 1 **ADDALINDA:** I'm sorry! I don't even know what I've done wrong, but I'm sorry! (*EXITS UP LEFT.*)
- DASH:** I don't know what she's crying about. I'm the one who has to sleep on a couch. (*Tries to get comfortable on the too small couch, tossing and fussing. He finally finds a comfortable position, but then there is a ferocious POUNDING on the door at RIGHT. DASH bolts upright.*)
- LURVY:** (*From OFF RIGHT.*) Hey! Let me in! Open up!
- DASH:** (*Calls OFF.*) Miss Euphemia! Amelia! Eustace? Anybody?
- 10 **LURVY:** (*From OFF.*) I'm like to momentarily freeze to death out here!
- DASH:** (*Runs to the door and shouts through it.*) You could be an axe murderer just lurking—
- LURVY:** (*From OFF.*) Open up!
- DASH:** But I'm just a guest. I don't know if—
- 15 **LURVY:** (*From OFF.*) Open up!
- DASH:** (*Opens the door.*) Okay! All right! (*LURVY stands in the doorway with an axe in his hand.*) You are an axe murderer! (*Runs and hides behind the couch.*) Don't hurt me!
- LURVY:** (*ENTERS the room and stomps his feet from the cold.*) Aah!
- 20 Aah! Woo! Brrrr! What is wrong with you? You almost let me freeze to death out there. That's not right.
- DASH:** It's not my responsibility to let people in. I'm a guest. What's with the axe?
- LURVY:** I was chopping firewood.
- 25 **DASH:** I don't see any firewood.
- LURVY:** That's 'cause it's down by the shed. I can't carry it up alone. Come on, let's go.
- DASH:** Me? But I'm Dash Reznor. I'm a writer, and I'm—
- LURVY:** Come on, soldier!
- 30 **DASH:** I should put on my jacke—
- LURVY:** Move it! (*Shoves DASH OFF RIGHT and follows him OUT, closing the door behind them. EUSTACE ENTERS DOWN LEFT, holding Anna Maria's necklace. He looks around, then hides it in the couch under the sheets.*)
- 35 **EUPHEMIA:** (*ENTERS UP CENTER.*) Is it done, Eustace?
- EUSTACE:** It is. You?
- EUPHEMIA:** Yes. Lock the door. (*EUSTACE locks the door at RIGHT. EUPHEMIA and EUSTACE EXIT UP LEFT. A couple of beats of silence pass.*)

1 **DASH:** (*Screams from OFF RIGHT.*) No! Oh, no! No! No! Help! Help!
(*Frantically knocks on the door at RIGHT.*) Open up! Open the door!
Help! Help! Open up! Open up! (*AMELIA and BETTINA run ON UP*
5 *LEFT, and open the door at RIGHT. DASH runs IN RIGHT, followed by*
LURVY. DASH continues his ragged, terrified breathing.)

BETTINA: Mr. Reznor! Lurvy! What were you doing out there?

AMELIA: And without a jacket?

LURVY: We were getting firewood.

DASH: Oh, the horror! And it's so cold! The horror!

10 **AMELIA:** What is it, Mr. Reznor? Do you have a splinter?

DASH: A splinter? No! I was following Lurvy to the shed—

LURVY: Except he walked by the back porch, so he didn't follow me
exactly.

15 **DASH:** (*Gets hysterical.*) I couldn't see anything! I don't know my way
around here, and there was more light by the porch!

LURVY: Is he always this hysterical?

DASH: (*Hysterical.*) I'm not hysterical! I found a body! I practically fell
over it! A body! A dead body! (*Collapses into a chair.*)

LURVY: I told you to follow right behind me.

20 **AMELIA:** I don't think that's the point, Lurvy.

BETTINA: A dead body?

LURVY: Oh yeah. Dead as a doornail and stiff as a board. It's thirty
below outside!

25 **BETTINA:** I'm calling the police! (*EXITS UP CENTER. ANTELOPE and the*
DANCERS ENTER DOWN LEFT.)

ANTELOPE: Attention, everyone. Something has happened.

VIOLA: It might be something awful. We're not sure.

VIVIAN: We were in the hallway, rehearsing—

VERONICA: A new piece. "The Autumn, The Fall, The Dying Leaf."

30 **ASTRID:** Suddenly, in the midst of a leap, land, look to the left move,
I felt a chill.

AMELIA: Oooh. It's that extra-sensory thing you have, isn't it?

35 **ASTRID:** No. Anna Maria's room was to my left, and the door was
open. When I went to look in on her, I saw her window was open
too. The wind was blowing cold and hard into her room. And she
was nowhere to be found.

VIOLA: Anna Maria Mangioni has disappeared.

AMELIA: How awful! The poor dear! That must be her, lying dead out
in the snow right now!

1 **DANCERS:** What? (*Ad-libbed consternation.*)
ANTELOPE: She's fallen out her window. The Autumn, The Fall, The Dying Leaf. How life mirrors art!
BETTINA: (*ENTERS UP CENTER.*) They're sending a detective.

5 **AMELA:** Good, because the dead body is Anna Marie.
BETTINA: Oh no! Did she fall out her window?
VIOLA: Did she fall, or did she jump?
ASTRID: But why? Why would she jump?
VERONICA: Did she jump, or was she pushed?

10 **ALL:** Pushed?
VIVIAN: Who would push her?
VIOLA: A murderer would push her.
ALL: A murderer!
VIVIAN: A murderer? Among us?

15 **VIOLA:** Maybe.
VERONICA: My muscles are tensing up.
ASTRID: Dancers, stretch! Never tense up! Stretch!
AMELIA: Let's not jump to conclusions, now. Ha! Jump to conclusions!
How ironical! (*DANCERS spread out and stretch. EUPHEMIA,*

20 *ADDALINDA, and EUSTACE ENTER UP LEFT.*)
EUPHEMIA: What is all the noise in here?
AMELIA: You'd better sit down.
EUSTACE: Uh oh.
AMELIA: Anna Maria Mangioni is dead.

25 **EUPHEMIA:** Well, she was very old. I, for one, am not surprised.
BETTINA: There is a point where the lack of compassion enters the realm of the sociopath.
EUPHEMIA: Oh, be quiet, Bettina.
LURVY: We were getting firewood, and this guy here—

30 **DASH:** The name is Dash.
LURVY: Stumbled over her body in the snow.
ASTRID: We should bring the body in, before it gets covered by snow. Come on, dancers.
AMELIA: I'll help. Come on, Eustace.

35 **BETTINA:** I'll man the door. (*EUSTACE, AMELIA, and the DANCERS EXIT RIGHT. BETTINA stands at the door at RIGHT.*)
ANTELOPE: I will write a poem to honor her. I'll present it at our next recital.

1 **EUPHEMIA:** That's not necessary, is it? I mean, there are so many
death poems. Why don't you memorize one and do it silently.

ANTELOPE: She would have wanted a poem just for her. And she
would not have wanted it to be silent. Then it's not a poem at all,
5 is it? Then it's just silence.

BETTINA: You're right, Antelope. I think that's a lovely idea.

BINNIX: (*From OFF RIGHT.*) Open up! We're coming through! (*BETTINA
opens the door at RIGHT. DETECTIVE BINNIX ENTERS RIGHT,
followed by the DANCERS, AMELIA, and EUSTACE, ALL carrying a*
10 *body wrapped in a bedsheet.*)

BETTINA: Who's this then?

BINNIX: Take her into the kitchen! I'm Detective Binnix. (*EXITS UP
CENTER with those carrying the body.*)

DASH: Would it be awfully insensitive of me to move into my room
15 now?

ADDALINDA: How could anyone misconstrue that as being insensitive?

DASH: You're being sarcastic.

ADDALINDA: Yes.

BETTINA: As our dear Anna Maria would have said, you're very quick,
20 insensitive writer boy.

DASH: It's just that it's really my room... paid for... and she won't be
needing it... (*Long pause as EVERYONE stares at DASH. BINNIX and
the OTHERS ENTER UP CENTER.*) I'm not saying I should profit from
her accident, but why not take my room?

25 **BINNIX:** It was no accident. A murder has been committed. (*EVERYONE
is horrified.*)

VIOLA: I knew it! She was pushed to her death!

BINNIX: No. She was not pushed to her death. She was strangled to
death. With something metallic, it seems. I'll do a search for the
30 murder weapon. Then she was wrapped in a bed sheet, probably
to blend in with the snow, and thrown out the window.

VERONICA: Horrible, horrible! But how can you be sure she didn't just
fall?

BINNIX: Because it would be very difficult to wrap oneself in a bed
sheet and then accidentally fall out of a window. One couldn't
35 walk—one could only take tiny hops. Like this. (*Demonstrates.*)
And it would be impossible to heave oneself out of the window.

VERONICA: I see that now.

BINNIX: It's a high window. What that tells us is that the murderer is
40 tall and strong.

ADDALINDA: You mean strong like a man is strong?

- 1 **ASTRID:** Mr. Reznor is strong.
DASH: I'm not all that strong.
BINNIX: Are you hiding something?
DASH: No!
- 5 **VERONICA:** Dancers are strong too. We're very strong! We can heave things! We heave each other all the time.
VIVIAN: Veronica, what are you saying, and why are you saying it?
VERONICA: I'm just saying that we are very strong. Oh, oh, I see what I'm saying, and I see what you're saying about what I'm saying. So
10 I'm going to stop now. I'm not going to say anymore.
VIOLA: Good thinking, Veronica.
BINNIX: I'll have to question all of you as to your whereabouts at the time of the murder.
LURVY: Not everybody is even here.
- 15 **ADDALINDA:** The Princess Anastasia and her sister Madelyn are not here. In fact, we haven't seen them in a while. Mr. Reznor, do you remember if they went up before Anna Maria? Because they could have been lying in wait!
DASH: I don't remember.
- 20 **BINNIX:** I thought writers were supposed to be observant.
DASH: I just didn't notice, okay?
BINNIX: (*Points at the DANCERS.*) You strong, scarvy people—
VIVIAN: Scarvy's not even a word. We're dancers. Dancers who use scarves.
- 25 **VIOLA:** In the tradition of the great dancer Isadora Duncan. Hence the scarves.
EUSTACE: Wasn't she strangled by her own scarf?
VIOLA: We prefer not to dwell on the negative, Eustace.
BINNIX: Can you bring this Madelyn and Anastasia here?
- 30 **VERONICA:** Of course. They have the room right next to ours. (*EXITS DOWN LEFT with VIOLA and VIVIAN.*)
BINNIX: What sort of establishment is this, exactly?
EUSTACE: It's an artist's retreat. Artists come here to refuel themselves. Many, like Mr. Reznor here, are just empty of ideas.
35 Used up losers whose talent has left them.
DASH: Hey!
ADDALINDA: That explains why he notices nothing.
DASH: Hey!
AMELIA: He hasn't written a book in some time.

1 **DASH:** So I have writer's block. All writers get it!
BINNIX: Or you're hiding something.
DASH: (*Jumps up.*) I'm not hiding anything!
BINNIX: Sit down. (*DASH sits on the couch.*)

5 **BETTINA:** It's so warm in here, Detective. Can I take your hat and coat?
BINNIX: No, thank you.
ANASTASIA: (*ENTERS DOWN LEFT with MADELYN, followed by the DANCERS.*) Why have I been summoned here? The last time a
10 Romanov was summoned somewhere, it ended very badly.
MADELYN: Princess, these people are not Russian revolutionaries out to get you. We've been living here for months, and haven't they been perfectly nice to us?
ANASTASIA: They're not as subservient as I would wish.

15 **MADELYN:** That could be because it's the twenty-first century, and we're in a free country.
ANASTASIA: Whatever. (*To DASH.*) Get off.
DASH: Excuse me?
ANASTASIA: I said get off. When a princess wishes to sit, then you
20 get off.
DASH: This is my couch. My bed-couch. Even though my room is prepaid, this is all I get. And I'm not giving it up!
EUSTACE: He's hiding something.
DASH: No, I'm not!

25 **MADELYN:** Then just get up! (*DASH gets up, and ANASTASIA sits on the couch. MADELYN sits next to her.*)
BINNIX: So. What have you been doing upstairs?
MADELYN: We've been sleeping.
ADDALINDA: Someone murdered Anna Maria and threw her out the
30 window! And Mr. Reznor found the body when he and Lurvy were bringing in firewood.
MADELYN: No!
ANASTASIA: (*Shifts her weight on the couch.*) Oh.
BINNIX: You're not shocked, Anastasia?

35 **ANASTASIA:** Princess Anastasia!
BINNIX: I'm not going to call you—
MADELYN: Just say it. Seriously, it makes it easier.
BINNIX: You're not shocked, Princess Anastasia?

- 1 **ANASTASIA:** When your entire royal family is taken out and executed and you're the sole survivor, well, nothing much shocks you after that. (*Shifts her weight uncomfortably.*) Ooh. (*MADELYN gets out of ANASTASIA'S sight to signal to BINNIX that she is crazy.*)
- 5 **BINNIX:** This is an artist's retreat. Before you came here, what did you do, Princess?
- ANASTASIA:** I was an actress.
- BINNIX:** Ah. It all makes sense now.
- ANASTASIA:** (*Shifts her weight, uncomfortable.*) Oh! What is that?!
- 10 **DASH:** See, Mrs. Stryx? It's uncomfortable! No wonder I couldn't sleep!
- ANASTASIA:** (*Pulls the necklace out from under the couch cushion.*) There! I knew it was something. Like the princess and the pea, I am. A true princess is very sensitive.
- 15 **AMELIA:** It's Anna Maria's necklace!
- ADDALINDA:** Yes, the one Enrico Caruso gave her!
- BINNIX:** Most probably the murder weapon. Found hidden in your couch, Mr. Reznor?
- EUSTACE:** I told you he was hiding something!
- 20 **DASH:** But I'm not. Why would I? I'm being set up!
- EUSTACE:** Being set up! Did you hear that?
- EUPHEMIA:** The oldest excuse in the book. The detective isn't going to fall for that.
- MADELYN:** Detective Binnix? Isn't it possible that Mr. Reznor tossed her out the window, then ran outside, strangled her with the necklace, and then brought the murder weapon back inside? And he had to stash it in the couch because Lurvy showed up? And then he acted all surprised when he "stumbled" on the body?
- 25 **DASH:** If I murdered her, why would I have called attention to the body before I had a chance to hide the murder weapon?
- 30 **ADDALINDA:** Because you're a narcissist?
- DASH:** I am not a narcissist! Or a murderer!
- BINNIX:** Prove it.
- DASH:** I am innocent until proven guilty!
- 35 **EUSTACE:** That's a trite saying. Maybe it's better that he's not writing.
- DASH:** Wait! The dancers said they were practicing in the hallway. If I was the murderer, they would have seen me sneak into the room!
- BINNIX:** Dancers, did you see anyone go into Anna Maria's room?
- VIVIAN:** No. But we weren't in the hallway the whole time. We were in our rooms before the rehearsal.
- 40

1 **LURVY:** So the dancers could have done it! They already said they were strong. They heave people.

ASTRID: Why would we kill her? We don't have a motive!

ADDALINDA: Euphemia has a motive. Anna Maria hasn't paid rent in
5 two months.

DASH: Aha! And didn't she say she'd get Anna Maria out of that room if it was the last thing she did?

BETTINA: Money is a powerful motive.

EUPHEMIA: Et tu, Bettina?

10 **ANTELOPE:** Wait a minute. Anna Maria went upstairs before the recital. And the first people upstairs after that...

DASH: ...were Madelyn and the princess!

MADELYN: Why would we harm Anna Maria?

DASH: As you keep telling us, the princess is crazy. Does she need
15 a motive?

ANASTASIA: I have a motive. I wanted her tiara.

MADELYN: That doesn't mean you killed her.

ANASTASIA: Yes, I killed her. I wanted that tiara.

MADELYN: So why didn't you take it? It's still on her head!

20 **ANASTASIA:** Is it? Can I have it?

DASH: We have a confession! Case solved!

BINNIX: Don't be ridiculous. She thinks she's a Romanov. She wouldn't personally kill anyone. She'd have people do that for her.

DASH: But she's not a Romanov! They're all dead and have been for a
25 hundred years! And she's crazy.

BINNIX: Did anyone see Princess Anastasia come downstairs and put the necklace in the couch?

ALL: No.

DASH: Wait a minute! Amelia!

30 **AMELIA:** I'm innocent. Look at me. I'm too small to toss someone out a window.

DASH: Didn't you tell me there was someone lurking around outside?

AMELIA: Yes, there has been a stranger lurking around.

BINNIX: The proverbial stranger. That plot line's been used way too
35 many times.

DASH: You have to look into it!

BINNIX: I'm going upstairs to check out Anna Maria's room for clues. Accompany me, Mr. Reznor. I need to keep an eye on you. (EXITS DOWN LEFT with DASH.)

- 1 **ANTELOPE:** Dancers, I am revising the poem. Right now, in my head.
I will now spontaneously recite. It is dedicated to Anna Maria.
Dancers, dance for Anna Maria's life!
- EUPHEMIA:** Oh, dear. Must you? Couldn't you take a break?
- 5 **EUSTACE:** We could all take a little break, actually, before (*Motions upstairs.*) they—
- ASTRID:** (*Strikes a pose.*) We're artists. We don't just stop being artists.
- VIOLA:** (*Strikes a pose.*) That's what commitment means.
- 10 **VIVIAN:** (*Strikes a pose.*) We should be thanking Antelope for her need to express herself.
- VERONICA:** (*Strikes a pose.*) And for her gift of spontaneously bursting into poetry.
- ANTELOPE:** Thank you, dancers. And now, "The Autumn, The Dying,
15 The Falling Mangioni." (*As before, DANCERS move expressively with their scarves as ANTELOPE recites.*)
- ADDALINDA:** Does no one else find this a bit macabre?
- ANTELOPE:** (*Recites.*) A leaf will fall but the tree stands tall
As its leaves flutter and float so free.
20 Who tears you from the tree?
Whither and why, oh little leaf?
You fall to the ground, but you feel no grief!
Leaves don't protest for they all know,
Though they crumble and rot on the soil below.
25 They just nourish the life that is yet to grow.
Dear Anna Maria Mangioni.
Yes, she might have been a little bony—
But her voice!—so authentic, never phony.
May her legacy fall on ground that's not stony,
30 And the nourishing of young artists be her testimony.
- LURVY:** I loved it! That was hilarious!
- ANTELOPE:** It wasn't meant to be funny, Lurvy.
- LURVY:** Oh. I'm sorry.
- ASTRID:** Pay him no mind. It was beautiful and very sincere. (*A
35 SCREAM comes from OFF LEFT, followed by a THUD. ALL react.*)
- EUSTACE:** Uh oh. (*DASH runs ON DOWN LEFT.*)
- DASH:** What happened?
- ADDALINDA:** We should ask you the same thing.
- MADLYN:** Where's Detective Binnix?

- 1 **DASH:** *(Almost hysterical.)* She was right there, then I turned around, and she was gone. And the window was open! And I looked out—I could hardly bear it! There she was! In the snow!
- LURVY:** Oh, good night, no! Not another murder!
- 5 **DASH:** I didn't! I swear! *(DANCERS, ANTELOPE, and LURVY run OFF RIGHT. EUPHEMIA, BETTINA, and EUSTACE run OUT UP CENTER. ADDALINDA, AMELIA, ANASTASIA, and MADELYN run OFF DOWN LEFT.)* Don't leave me alone. Something is so very wrong here. Hello? Come back. Don't leave me alone. *(ADDALINDA, AMELIA,*
- 10 *ANASTASIA, and MADELYN REENTER DOWN LEFT.)*
- MADELYN:** Detective Binnix is not anywhere upstairs.
- DASH:** I just told you. She— *(EUPHEMIA, BETTINA, and EUSTACE ENTER UP CENTER.)*
- EUSTACE:** Detective Binnix is lying in the snow!
- 15 **ANASTASIA:** No! *(DANCERS, LURVY, and ANTELOPE ENTER RIGHT, carrying the lifeless BINNIX.)*
- LURVY:** Here's the detective, dead as a bag of stones!
- DASH:** No! Why is this happening to me?!
- LURVY:** Let's take her through the kitchen. Put her on the back porch
- 20 with Anna Maria. The cold will keep the bodies nice and fresh. And we have to call the police. Again. They're not going to take kindly to our killing their detective. We're just a small village, after all. *(DANCERS, LURVY, and ANTELOPE EXIT UP CENTER and then REENTER without BINNIX. They stand by the reception desk UP*
- 25 *RIGHT and look accusingly at DASH.)*
- EUSTACE:** I suppose you're going to try to tell us that she just threw herself out the window?
- EUPHEMIA:** That you had nothing to do with it?
- DASH:** I had nothing to do with it.
- 30 **LURVY:** I think we ought to restrain this man.
- VERONICA:** We have two corpses out there! That is two too many corpses.
- VIOLA:** She's right. Most houses don't have any corpses.
- VIVIAN:** That's what's considered normal. No corpses at all.
- 35 **DASH:** I don't know what is going on here. I think I'm losing my mind. It's like I'm in a play where everyone has a script but me! *(Beat. EVERYONE looks at each other and then at DASH. Suddenly, DANCERS, ANTELOPE, and LURVY blow whistles, kazoos, and noisemakers. ALL applaud and cheer while DASH stands stupefied.*
- 40 *Someone throws a handful of confetti.)* What's happening?



- 1 **EUSTACE:** (*Crosses to the kitchen door UP CENTER, opens it, and yells through.*) I think he's got it!
- ASTRID:** We thought you'd catch on sooner, but you're a bit thick, aren't you? (*ANNA MARIA ENTERS UP CENTER.*)
- 5 **DASH:** Anna Maria! Not dead!
- ANNA MARIA:** Good eye. (*BINNIX ENTERS UP CENTER.*)
- DASH:** Detective Binnix! Not dead!
- BINNIX:** Not dead. Not a real detective, or a real opera singer. We're actors.
- 10 **DASH:** But I saw you lying in the snow!
- BINNIX:** You saw my coat and hat. I was standing on the ledge.
- MADELYN:** Welcome to our murder mystery! We're all actors, and this is our theatre.
- DASH:** Actors?
- 15 **ANASTASIA:** Usually, people come to watch us act in a murder mystery and try to guess who the killer is.
- ADDALINDA:** But your girlfriend wanted something different. She wanted you to think this was all really happening. So, together we wrote a new script. I was still studying it when you arrived.
- 20 (*Shows him the script stowed in the reception desk.*) It's called "Unmurdered!"
- EUSTACE:** We left all kinds of clues for you. When you first got here, why was the door locked?
- LURVY:** When we left to get firewood, the door was locked. Why would
- 25 a hotel have doors that are kept locked?
- ANASTASIA:** Why did the detective keep her hat and coat on?
- DASH:** Never thought to ask.
- BINNIX:** How did the detective get here so quickly from the village? Well, of course I didn't come from the village. I was in the kitchen
- 30 the whole time. I just walked out the back porch and in the front door.
- ASTRID:** The body in the bed sheet was a bunch of pillows with a wig and a tiara pinned on them.
- EUPHEMIA:** Which was in the kitchen, and when I was supposedly
- 35 getting warm milk, I just shoved it off the back porch.
- AMELIA:** And the lurking stranger? A red herring. Every good murder mystery should have one.
- MADELYN:** But surely by now you've figured out who Anna Maria's murderer is.
- 40 **DASH:** (*Blank.*) Umm...

- 1 **ASTRID:** Anastasia flat out gave you the motive! And Detective Binnix gave you the clue when she said, “She wouldn’t personally kill anyone. She’d have people to do that for her.”
- DASH:** So it was you, Madelyn! Of course! But Binnix’s murder?
- 5 **ASTRID:** That was just for fun, really. To give you a scare.
- VIVIAN:** He needs to be shaken out of his lethargy, your girlfriend said. Get him out of his comfort zone.
- VERONICA:** My boyfriend needs some inspiration, she said.
- VIOLA:** Put him in the middle of a murder mystery, she said.
- 10 **ANNA MARIA:** *(Takes off her glasses.)* He takes me for granted, but I love him and want him to be happy, I said. *(Takes off her wig to reveal she is HAYLEY.)*
- DASH:** Hayley?!
- HAYLEY:** So you do know my name! You certainly never used it here.
- 15 I was just your “girlfriend.”
- DASH:** I had no idea that was you. This is my girlfriend!
- ALL:** We know.
- DASH:** But you were acting like the actors were. I didn’t even recognize you.
- 20 **HAYLEY:** I’ve told you I want to be an actress. Remember, I go to auditions? But you never take me seriously. And to think of all I’ve sacrificed, all the work I’ve been doing for you to help your career.
- EUPHEMIA:** She was wonderful, wasn’t she?
- HAYLEY:** Thank you. You were all so good. Such commitment.
- 25 **DASH:** Which is exactly what I’ve been lacking! Commitment! I see that now.
- HAYLEY:** Really? Oh, Dash, finally! I’ve been waiting for you to commit to—
- DASH:** *(Doesn’t hear her.)* I feel energized, inspired! All these wonderful
- 30 characters! I’m going to write again! And the title of my new novel will be “Unmurdered!”
- ANTELOPE:** And his focus is right back to himself again.
- ASTRID:** As he steals Hayley’s idea!
- HAYLEY:** That’s it. Dash, I can’t be with you anymore.
- 35 **DASH:** Wait, what? You’re breaking up with me?
- ASTRID:** As Anna Maria would say, you’re quick, rude writer boy.
- DASH:** But I’m Dashiel Reznor, celebrity author. We’ve been together for years.
- HAYLEY:** Yes. And what a waste it’s been, waiting for you to commit
- 40 to me. Dash, I saw a side of you here I’ve never seen. Or maybe

- 1 I just ignored it. Your whining. Your insensitivity. Your unkindness.
And you never once said my name to anyone.
- ADDALINDA:** He can't help it. What with him being a narcissist and all.
- 5 **DASH:** We don't need your help here, Addalinda. If that's your real name.
- ADDALINDA:** No, of course it's not. We're all playing characters with very old-fashioned names. Apparently you didn't notice that either.
- DASH:** Come on, Hayley, you can't leave me now just as I'm ready
10 to write another book! Let's not quibble about the title! You're my editor! My proofreader! My spellchecker! My girlfriend!
- HAYLEY:** Not anymore.
- EUPHEMIA:** There's a train leaving the village in half an hour.
- DASH:** But you said—
- 15 **EUSTACE:** We lied. Again, it was all acting. Here's your cell phone.
- LURVY:** Here's your suitcase. Here's your jacket. And there's the door.
- DASH:** I'm not leaving. Hayley, let's talk without all these—
- VERONICA:** Don't forget, we can heave people.
- VIVIAN:** Out of doors.
- 20 **VIOLA:** And down mountainsides.
- DASH:** Hayley?
- HAYLEY:** Goodbye, Dash.
- DASH:** Your loss, Hayley! (*EXITS RIGHT.*)
- HAYLEY:** So. In one fell swoop, I've lost both my job and my boyfriend.
- 25 **ANTELOPE:** You are waaaay better off without him.
- BETTINA:** Would you like to join our acting company? We've seen you can act, but most of this script was your idea, too. You're a good writer.
- HAYLEY:** Really? I would love that!
- 30 **BINNIX:** And I'll make sure that Mr. Reznor knows that this script is yours, and that he can't steal it. That lazy writer boy!
- HAYLEY:** And I've got an idea for another script. "The Phantom Fiancée," about a man who gets engaged to women who then mysteriously disappear.
- 35 **AMELIA:** Come on, everybody. Into the kitchen. We can talk there while I make a midnight snack for everyone.
- LURVY:** (*Crosses UP CENTER and holds the door open as BETTINA, EUPHEMIA, BINNIX, and AMELIA EXIT UP CENTER.*) I want to play a corpse. Then I wouldn't have to learn as many lines. And you

1 just can't have enough corpses in a murder mystery. (*EUSTACE, ADDALINDA, ANASTASIA, and MADELYN EXIT UP CENTER.*)

ANTELOPE: I'm composing a poem. In my head. Right now. It's called "The Spring, The Rebirth, The Rising Hayley." (*EXITS UP CENTER, followed by DANCERS, waving their scarves.*)

HAYLEY: I'm going to like it here. (*EXITS UP CENTER, followed by LURVY.*)

END OF PLAY



PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE

Reception desk with papers, small couch, easy chairs, small tables with chairs, coat tree.

PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

Cell phone, suitcase, notebook, pen (DASH)

Sheaf of papers, dustcloth, bedding (ADDALINDA)

Purse with sage sticks (ASTRID)

Axe (LURVY)

Anna Maria's necklace (EUSTACE)

Body wrapped in a bedsheet (DANCERS, AMELIA, EUSTACE)

Whistles, kazoos, noisemakers, confetti (DANCERS, ANTELOPE, LURVY)

SOUND EFFECTS

Dance music, ringtone.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

With the exception of DASH, ANNA MARIE (HAYLEY), EUSTACE, ANASTASIA, and LURVY, all roles can be played as either male or female with just a few simple word changes.

COSTUME DETAILS

DASH wears a jacket when he arrives at the lodge.

ANNA MARIA wears over-the-top attire including a necklace and tiara, glasses and wig. She carries a purse.

The DANCERS wear clothes that are comfortable to dance in and each has his or her own colorful scarf.