YOUR GUESTS ARE GHOSTS
A MYSTERY-COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By John Vornholt

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 MEN, 9 WOMEN, SOME DOUBLING POSSIBLE)

LIN FLETCHER (f)........................................ A spirited, clever twenty-two
year-old girl who is putting
herself through law school. (186 lines)

JIM STODDARD (m)................................ A pleasant, good-looking, and
overly practical young man,
also putting himself through
law school. (170 lines)

ZEKE WASHINGTON (m).......................... A grizzled old farmer who lives
down the road from the
Peaceful Rest Retirement
Home, not very bright. (55 lines)

LUCY (f)....................................................... Sweet little old lady who just
happens to have been dead for
twenty years. (77 lines)

HELOISE (f)............................................... A vivacious, gum-snapping
flapper from the Roaring
Twenties. (42 lines)

COLONEL SMEDLEY (m) ......................... Very British colonel from the
colonial days, went down with
the Titanic. (22 lines)
TENDERSON (m) ........................................ Edgar Allen Poe-ish writer and poet who is sort of a deadbeat but has a way with words. (40 lines)

LAVENDER LARUE (f) .............................. Glamorous silent screen movie star, possessed of more vanity than talent. (66 lines)

MYRTLE (f) ............................................. Lavender’s fawning, dowdy maid. (12 lines)

ANDREW ANDREWS III (m) ..................... Roaring Twenties-style, penniless, tuxedoed playboy, charming and witty. (84 lines)

LADY SMEDLEY (f) ................................. The colonel’s snooty, portly wife. (19 lines)

WILLOUGHBY (m) ................................. A hammy Shakespearean actor who really knew Shakespeare and won’t let anyone forget it. (80 lines)

TEX (m) ................................................ A down-home former rodeo star, obviously from Texas. Comes complete with chaps and a cowboy hat. (29 lines)

CIRCE (f) ............................................. A dark-haired spooky witch who was burned at the stake in Salem in 1693. (20 lines)

MR. DARROW (m) ................................. A typical stuffed-shirt government tax-collector, working for the county. (42 lines)
MRS. CANUZI (f)........................................ Mr. Darrow’s partner, even more humorless and business-like than he is. *(47 lines)*

MR. and MRS. PETERSON (m/f)............. Your typical average couple looking for a house. Mr. P is slightly henpecked. Can be played by two of the ghosts not appearing in Act Three, such as Myrtle and Colonel Smedley. *(Mr. P. - 11 lines; Mrs. P. - 7 lines)*

**HAND PROPERTIES**

**ACT ONE**
- Newspaper classified section, room key (LIN)
- Newspaper classified section (JIM)
- Notebook, quill pen (TENDERSON)
- Handkerchief (ANDREW)
- Skull (WILLOUGHBY)
- Lasso (TEX)

**ACT TWO**
- Chess pieces (ANDREW/TENDERSON)
- Ledger book (LUCY)
- Deck of cards, piece of paper (CIRCE)
- Purse, pen (LIN)
ACT THREE

☐ Jackknife, piece of wood (TEX)
☐ Watch, note (from Lucy’s chest) (LIN)
☐ Newspaper, will (DARROW)
☐ Flower vase (LAVENDER)
☐ Wad of paper money (WILLOUGHBY)
☐ Newspaper (MR. PETERSON)
☐ Telegram, envelope and second telegram (TENDERSON)
☐ Chest (LUCY)

SETTING

The entire play takes place in the lobby of the Peaceful Rest Retirement Home, formerly the Peach Blossom Retirement Home. It is a large, archaic house in the country, way out of sync with modern times, and still standing only out of tribute to its noble builders. The furnishings are old and decrepit but suggest the quality and taste of a bygone era. Up center is the main door, ornate and heavy, beyond which is the front porch and countryside; on either side of the door are high arched windows, so gray and dirty no one can see out of them; along the wall up right is a reception desk with a punch bell on it and shelves with cubbyholes for the keys behind it. Down right is an archway exiting to the staircase and upstairs bedrooms; on the wall up left is a bookcase, beside it a table and lamp, and down left another exit, this to the back of the house, back door, and garage. In a cluster up left are a couch, two armchairs, and a coffee table with a vase of flowers on it; down left are two more chairs, a reading lamp, and a card table with a checkerboard on it, and down right two rocking chairs with footstool. Throw rugs, drapes, and knickknacks can be added as desired to round out the effect.

TIME

ACT ONE: Early one evening as the sun is setting
ACT TWO, SCENE 1: The next morning
ACT TWO, SCENE 2: That night
ACT THREE: A few nights later
ACT ONE

AT RISE:
The house is empty, dark, and gloomy, but not so dark that we can’t see. Outside, the sun is setting, and the lighting may grow progressively dimmer. There are footsteps on the porch, and a few seconds later, a meek, hesitant knock at the front door. The knock is repeated, a little louder. Mysteriously, as if by magic (or a string), the door opens by itself, and LIN FLETCHER peers in cautiously. She is dressed nicely and carries a newspaper opened to the classified section. She clears her throat.

LIN: Uh, hello? (A little louder.) Hello? (A loose board suddenly drops to the porch behind her, and LIN jumps into the room with a start.) What was that! (Looks out the door, then behind the door, then walks cautiously downstage, holding her newspaper to her chest.) Excuse me…but is there anybody here? Is this… (Checks the paper.) …is this 949 Peach Blossom Road? (Waits for an answer.) I, uh, take it there isn’t anyone here…is that right? It says on the mailbox that this is 949 Peach Blossom Road, and it says in the paper to come to 949 Peach Blossom Road, so if this some kind of joke, I don’t think it’s very funny. (Waits.) Hello? (LIN shrugs and goes right.) Maybe I should wait. I wonder how that door opened? (Shouts.) Hello! (Listens.) Not even an echo. (Goes to the table down right and begins fingerling some of the knickknacks.) I can’t believe this place is still in operation. What a mess. (As LIN looks around, JIM STODDARD appears in the doorway. He is also dressed for job-hunting and is carrying a newspaper. He watches LIN for a few moments.)

JIM: Hi! (LIN jumps.)

LIN: (Gripping her chest.) What are you trying to do, scare the fillings out of my teeth! Where’d you come from?

JIM: From the road. (Coming center.) There aren’t many other ways to come from.

LIN: Well, I’m glad you’re finally here. I was beginning to get worried. (Crossing to JIM and holding out her hand.) I’m Lin Fletcher!
JIM: (Shaking hands.) Nice to meet you. I’m Jim Stoddard. But how did you know I was coming?
LIN: Well, somebody had to be coming. You can’t very well hold a job interview alone.
JIM: (Puzzled.) No, I guess not.
LIN AND JIM: (At once.) About this job? (They laugh.)
LIN: You go ahead.
JIM: No, you go ahead.
LIN: Well…
JIM: Well…
LIN AND JIM: (At once.) How much does it pay? (They look puzzledly at one another.)
LIN: Don’t you know?
JIM: Don’t you know?
LIN: How could I know?
JIM: Well, how could I know?
LIN: Didn’t you put the ad in the paper?
JIM: No. I thought you put the ad in the paper.
LIN: You mean you’re not the one I’m supposed to come and see?
JIM: You mean you’re not either?
LIN: Of course not. I came to apply.
JIM: I did too.
LIN: (Exasperatedly.) Well then, who are we supposed to see?
JIM: I don’t know. (Reading from the newspaper.) The ad says, Wanted—night desk clerk. Apply in person, Peaceful Rest Retirement Home, 949 Peach Blossom Road…
LIN: (Also reading.) But don’t forget this part— Do not come until after dark.
JIM: Yeah, I know. That’s a little odd, isn’t it?
LIN: That’s not all that’s a little odd. It says in the paper that 949 Peach Blossom Road is the Peaceful Rest Retirement Home. But the sign outside says it’s the Peach Blossom Retirement Home.
JIM: Do you suppose they changed the name?
LIN: They must’ve changed more than that! Take a look at this place. If anybody lives here, I’ll eat their rent receipts!
JIM:  *(Looking around.)* It does look pretty deserted, doesn’t it? But remember, the ad said not to come till after dark. Maybe we’re too early.

LIN:  By the looks of this place, I’d say we’re too late. *(There are footsteps on the porch outside, and JIM and LIN look at each other and turn slowly. ZEKE WASHINGTON, dressed in overalls, peers in suspiciously.)*

JIM:  Hi!

ZEKE:  *(Accusingly.)* What you two doin’ here?

LIN:  Nice to meet you too, I’m sure.

ZEKE:  I asked you a question.

JIM:  Do you own this place or work here, sir?

ZEKE:  You got two seconds to tell me what you’re doin’ here, or I’m gonna call the sheriff.

LIN:  Call him! We’d like to find out what we’re doing here, too!

JIM:  *(Under his breath.)* S-s-h, Lin, take it easy. Excuse me, sir, but have you ever heard of the Peaceful Rest Retirement Home?

ZEKE:  You got one more second.

LIN:  Have you ever heard of a newspaper? If you have, then you’ll know what we’re doing here! *(Crossing to ZEKE and stuffing the newspaper in his hands.)* Right there, where it’s circled, you’ll see a want ad for this place. We’re looking for a job, that’s what we’re doing. And unless you care to help us, your company is not really necessary!

ZEKE:  *(Taken aback.)* Well, I, uh…I, uh, guess everything’s okay then. I guess you folks are all right. But this has got to be some kinda joke or some kinda misunderstandin’. Ain’t nobody lived in this house for nigh onto twenty years. *(LIN and JIM look puzzledly at each other.)*

JIM:  What did you say?

ZEKE:  *(Coming center, studying the newspaper.)* I said, ain’t nobody lived here for twenty years. This newspaper must’ve gotten the dang addresses mixed up.

LIN:  Are you sure about that?

ZEKE:  I oughta be sure about it. I’ve lived a mile down the road from this place for thirty-five years. And I know this place ain’t been operating for at least twenty.
LIN: Then who could’ve put that ad in?
ZEKE: Like I said, the newspaper must’ve made a mistake. Even when this place was runnin’, it wasn’t called the Peaceful Rest. It was named Peach Blossom, after the road.
LIN: Yeah, that’s what the sign said.
JIM: But still, the address is right…949 Peach Blossom Road.
ZEKE: Well, you folks can stay here all night if you want. But ain’t nobody gonna show up to give you a job.
LIN: Maybe they’re going to reopen it.
ZEKE: Apparently, you folks ain’t seen this place in the daylight. It’s a real dump. The land may be worth something, but the house ain’t good for nothin’. My advice to you is get back in your cars and get out of here while you still got time before dark.
LIN: But according to the ad, we have to stay at least until… (JIM pokes LIN in the ribs and rushes to take the newspaper out of ZEKE’S hands.)
JIM: We’ll do just that, Mr….ah…?
ZEKE: Washington. The name’s Zeke Washington. (Going to the door.) Make sure you do get out of here. This ain’t a good place to be after dark.
JIM: Oh, no? Why not?
ZEKE: Aw, no real reason. Let’s just say there are some strange stories about this place. The usual stories an old, abandoned house gets.
LIN: You mean it’s supposed to be haunted?
ZEKE: You said it, I didn’t. I tend to think it’s vandals or kids. That’s why I stopped when I saw your cars out front. (Looking out the door.) You better get a move-on, the sun’s almost down.
JIM: You go ahead, Mr. Washington. We have to discuss what we’re doing about this fake ad.
ZEKE: All right then. But you folks pay heed to what I said. (Exits.)
LIN: Hey, what’s the idea of punching me in the ribs!
JIM: (Moving her away from the door.) S-s-h, I didn’t want him to know about that.
LIN: I should think not. There’s a law about punching people in the ribs.
JIM: No, not about that. I didn’t want him to know that we had to stay till after dark. Obviously, there’s something going on here after dark that Mr. Washington doesn’t know anything about.

LIN: (Sarcastically.) Ooh, obviously! A big mystery!

JIM: It’s not beyond the realm of possibility.

LIN: Personally, I don’t care what goes on here after dark. But I need a job.

JIM: You sound pretty desperate.

LIN: But not that desperate. I’m only trying to put myself through college, that’s all.

JIM: I know how it is. I am, too.

LIN: Oh, yeah? And I suppose you’re going to State?

JIM: As a matter of fact, I am going to State.

LIN: I’m a first-year law student. What are you?

JIM: I’m a first-year law student, too! Isn’t that amazing?

LIN: Oh, very. But come on, you can think up something better than that.

JIM: No, I can’t. That’s…that’s the truth!

LIN: I mean, putting the ad in the paper was fairly clever. I’ll give you credit for that. But making up a lie to go along with everything I say, that’s not too original.

JIM: (Coming toward her.) But…but…

LIN: I warn you, I know karate! (Jumps into a karate stance.)

JIM: I’m glad, but…

LIN: Okay, you’ve got me here! I fell for it! But what are you going to do with me? I warn you, all I’m looking for is a job!

JIM: But you must think…that I! But I wouldn’t do that! I didn’t do it!

LIN: You almost had me fooled. I’ve heard of guys going to great lengths to meet girls, but, brother, you take the cake!

JIM: Wh-wh-what do you think I am? Some kind of gigolo! I didn’t put that ad in the paper!

LIN: Oh, come now, Fred, it’s perfectly clear. You picked an old, empty house and put an ad in the paper saying not to come till after dark. You knew it was the kind of ad that would sound good to a young female-type student. I didn’t figure out what was going on till you lied to that Mr. Washington and got him to go away.

JIM: What did I lie to him about?
LIN: About that. We have to stay here and figure out that fake ad, or something like that. Whew, what a con artist!
JIM: But, Lin…
LIN: Don’t Lin me! Tell me, Svengali, how long have you been planning this?
JIM: But I didn’t plan anything. I only had a hunch that we should stay till after dark…alone.
LIN: Oh, alone, is it?
JIM: Look, all I want is to clear up the mystery about that ad. I happen to think it wasn’t a mistake on the newspaper’s part. Don’t you believe me at all?
LIN: Less than not at all.
JIM: But look! It’s almost sundown! (Runs to the door.) In fact, it’s after sundown. The sun has just disappeared over the horizon.
LIN: Ooh, how romantic!
JIM: It’s officially dark now. Couldn’t we wait just a little while?
LIN: Oh, all right. But I’ll still be surprised if anything happens except that I slap your face. (The lights come up suddenly to full, illuminating the whole room. JIM and LIN look anxiously around.)
LIN: Uh…uh…tell me, Fred …h-how did you do that?
JIM: My name’s not Fred, it’s Jim. And I don’t know how I did that because I didn’t do it!
LIN: Oh. Well then, who did do it?
JIM: That’s what we’re going to stay around here and find out.
LIN: Correction. That’s what you’re going to stay around here and find out! (Rushes to the door. JIM catches her.)
LUCY’S VOICE: (Eerily, perhaps amplified.) Please, my children. Don’t feel you must go away. (JIM and LIN hold tightly to one another.)
LIN: Who said that!
LUCY’S VOICE: Oh, dear me! I keep forgetting you people can’t see me when I’m like this! I’ll have to go back in and come out again, this time making a more conventional entrance. Dear! I’m afraid it might startle you if I materialize right on the spot.
LIN: You ain’t kiddin’!
LUCY’S VOICE: So if you wait right where you are, I'll be right back in. *(She begins humming cheerfully, dodderingly, until the humming gradually fades out.)*

LIN: *(Whispering.)* Is she gone?

JIM: As far as I can tell. Are you all right?

LIN: I think I would’ve fainted, except that you’re holding me up. *(JIM self-consciously lets go of her, and they move apart.)*

JIM: I told you something mysterious might happen.

LIN: Remind me never to disbelieve you again. Goodbye! *(Starts to go out as LUCY enters right.)*

LUCY: Oh my dear, where are you going?

LIN: *(Not turning around.)* Are…are you talking to me?

LUCY: Why, of course I’m talking to you, dear. You did come to answer my ad, didn’t you?

LIN: *(Her voice almost a squeak.)* Why…uh…is that your ad?

LUCY: Why, yes, it is. *(Crossing toward them.)* You needn’t look so startled, dear. We have a very definite need for a night clerk. For the desk, you know. *(At left, COLONEL SMEDLEY enters, escorting HELOISE on his arm. They cross right, as LIN and JIM look dumbfoundedly on.)*

HELOISE: *(Very cutesy-poo.)* Oh, Colonel-kins, you say the cutest things! *(Giggles.)*

COLONEL: Ho-ho! You'll embarrass me, my dear. It's only because I have such lovely company.

HELOISE: Y-know what, Colonel Smedley? I wish I’da had you as my granddaddy.

COLONEL: Why?

HELOISE: ‘Cause then I’da been born British royalty. *(Stops and gestures grandly.)* Lady Heloise Wadzurlinsky! Got sorta a nice ring to it, don’t it?

COLONEL: Indeed it does! It has a better ring than half the chimes of Parliament! A better ring than the Tower of Big Ben. It has a delightful ring to it!

HELOISE: *(Grabbing the COLONEL’s arm and walking again.)* Oh, Colonel-kins, you’re cute! You’re the cat’s meow in my book!
COLONEL: Speaking of cats, did I ever tell you about the ferocious spotted jaguar I bagged in Burma? (HELOISE yawns, but COLONEL SMEDLEY takes no notice. Excitedly.) The beast was perched on the bough of a huge rubber tree overlooking the Wagumba Falls.

HELOISE: Hi, Lucy. How ya doin’?


COLONEL: Yes, er, uh…Good evening. Anyway, it was perched on a gigantic tree limb, ready to pounce. My bearer called to me and said, “Attu wattu bimpo.” Which, loosely translated, means… (They go out right as HELOISE waves back to LUCY.)

LUCY: There, for example, go two of our steadier clients.

LIN: Two of your steadier clients?

LUCY: Well, tenants really. I call them clients because the service we offer is so unusual. I hate to think what most of them would do if it wasn’t for us.

LIN: (In an aside to JIM.) I hate to think so, too.

JIM: Tell me, uh, Lucy, how come you don’t open your, uh…establishment…till after dark?

LUCY: Why should I open it before then? There’s nobody here until after dark. (While JIM confusedly ponders this, TENDERSON enters up center, carrying a notebook and a quill pen.)

TENDERSON: (Coming downstage, lost in thought.) And so the moving pen writes, and having writ… (Pausing to think.) …writes on and on and on…till it runs out of fluid. And the pen, having run out of fluid… (Turns to LIN.) Quickly! What rhymes with fluid?

LIN: (Backing away.) I DON’T KNOW.

TENDERSON: Quickly! Quickly!

LIN: I don’t know. Druid? Woo-ed?

TENDERSON: Of course! (Scribbles excitedly in his notebook, then recites.) And the moving pen, having run out of fluid…attracts a gopher, who eats it…thinking it is foo-id! (Rushing excitedly off left.) That’s it! That’s it! (Stops in the doorway.) You were inspirational, my dear! Inspirational! (Exits.)

LIN: Is that another of your steady clients?
LUCY: Well, he’s fairly steady about everything except his rent. Tenderson’s a poet, you know. A contemporary of Edgar Allen Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and all those chaps. He’s actually very good, though he never became famous.

JIM: I can’t imagine why.

LUCY: Well, he was hoping he’d become famous posthumously, you know, after his death. But he never quite made that, either. It really broke him up, the poor dear. (LIN and JIM look uneasily at one another.)

JIM: Uh, tell me, Lucy, exactly what kind of place is it you run here?

LUCY: A retirement home, of course. I thought the ad said that?

LIN: Oh, it did. But a retirement home for what?

LUCY: (Laughs slightly.) Oh, I see your misunderstanding! You thought it was a retirement home for people! (LIN and JIM shrug and smile amiably.) I must admit, our situation here is a little unusual. You see, the Peaceful Rest Retirement Home is a retirement home for ghosts.

LIN: For what?

JIM: Would you mind running that past us again, Lucy?

LUCY: Of course not. You see, every year more and more old houses are torn down, and more and more ghosts are thrown literally out into the streets, displaced. There is nothing more pathetic than a ghost with no place to haunt. Then there are other ghosts who are simply tired of haunting the same old house night after night, year after year. They want to turn the job over to a younger ghost, someone with more stamina.

JIM: Of course.

LIN: Why not?

LUCY: You young people, having never haunted a house, and in fact, having never even been dead, don’t realize what a terrific burden it is. No days off, up at the crack of dusk every night—it’s quite a strain.

JIM: Yes, I imagine it would be. Are you ready to go, Lin?

LIN: Yes…very! (LIN and JIM start quickly for the front door.)

LUCY: (Calling after them.) I’ll pay two hundred dollars a week for the job! (In unison, JIM and LIN stop and wheel around.)

JIM: Did you say two hundred dollars?
LIN: A week?
LUCY: I most certainly did, children. And there are reasons for my wanting to hire a mortal. There are times—fortunately, not very often—when we must deal with the outside world. Either a curious teenager or a nosy government person, somebody, has cause to molest us.
LIN: If you're ghosts, why don't you scare them away?
LUCY: We could probably do that, of course. But we are ghosts who are all tired of haunting. And we don’t wish to bring unnecessary attention to ourselves. You see, all we want out of life—or, in our case, death—is what the sign outside says…Peaceful Rest.
JIM: Excuse me, Lucy, but we looked, and there is no sign outside that says Peaceful Rest Retirement Home.
LUCY: Of course there isn’t, my dear. Only ghosts can see that sign.
JIM: Yes, umm…that stands to reason.
LIN: (Taking JIM’s arm.) Excuse me, Lucy, but may I talk to my associate in private?
LUCY: Of course you may. I don’t want you to rush into anything rash. (Crossing right.) I’m just going upstairs to make sure all the vents and windows are closed. Some of our clients have a tendency to float away in their sleep. (Exits right.)
LIN: (Dragging JIM down left. Under her breath.) Ghosts shmosts! This place is a home for kooks and dingbats!
JIM: Yeah, but there are a couple things I don’t quite understand. For example, where were all these people when we came?
LIN: Maybe there’s a funny farm in the area and they send them down here for a recreation period. How should I know!
JIM: But it can’t be that simple. I minored in psychology, and I’d like to have a little talk with some of these people.
LIN: Well, you have a talk with them on your own time. All I’m interested in is finding out if it’s safe to work here.
JIM: You mean you still want the job?
LIN: For two hundred dollars a week, I’ll dress up as Napoleon and join right in. (Grandly and dramatically, LAVENDER LaRUE enters up center, followed by her maid, MYRTLE, who continuously brushes the back of her gown, and ANDREW ANDREWS III.)
ANDREW: You’re looking ravishing tonight, Miss LaRue. Simple ravishing!

LAVENDER: Myrtle, please tell that slick, greasy, flea-bitten person that I am not talking to common riff-raff tonight.

ANDREW: (Laughs.) Ho-ho, Lavender, I see you haven’t lost any of that delightful sense of humor of yours.

MYRTLE: M’lady says she ain’t talkin’ to you tonight, Mr. Andrews.

ANDREW: I heard m’lady very well. Would you mind informing her, Myrtle, that should I run across any riff-raff, I will be happy to relay the message.

MYRTLE: M’lady, Mr. Andrews says…

LAVENDER: Mr. Andrews can blow it out his ears.

ANDREW: Why, thank you, Lavender! (As LAVENDER and MYRTLE cross right. ANDREW notices LIN.) Ho-ho! What have we here? Some new additions to our crowd? (Crosses to an amazed LIN and kisses her hand.) And a lovely addition it is! Tell me, my darling, when did you pass away? You look extremely fresh. (LIN runs around and hides behind JIM.)

LAVENDER: (Snootily.) Hmph! Come along, Myrtle. I vant to be alone. (She and MYRTLE exit right.)

ANDREW: Timid, eh? I like timidity.

JIM: For someone who likes it, you don’t seem to have much of it.

ANDREW: And that is precisely why I like it so. Most of the things I like I don’t have much of. Money, race cars, sailing boats. Ah, life is cruel!

JIM: And death is fairly cruel too, isn’t it?

ANDREW: No, death is easy. You no longer have to worry about trivial, mundane things such as eating, paying telephone bills, getting traffic tickets. (HELOISE enters right and stands in the doorway.)

HELOISE: Traffic tickets, huh, big shot! Andrew Andrews III! (Crossing angrily toward them.) You shoulda worried a little more about traffic tickets when you was alive! Do you know what this big shnook went and did…him and his rotten driving?

LIN: No. What?
HELOISE: He went and killed us, that’s what he did! Ran us right into a twenty-foot embankment! Do you know what it’s like to have to haunt a twenty-foot embankment?

ANDREW: I told you, darling, if you hadn’t been trying to do the Charleston in the backseat...

HELOISE: Me! Now it’s my fault! You listen to me, Andrew Andrews III...!

ANDREW: If I had listened to you, I would never have asked you out in the first place.

HELOISE: Well, that’s a fine thing to say to your intended fi-ant-cee. (Sniffling and looking hurt.) That’s not a very nice thing to say at all. Whatd’ya say that for anyway, Andy?

ANDREW: (Putting his arm around her and wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.) There, there, babycakes, you know I didn’t mean it. Why, if I could pick anybody in the whole world to be dead with, you know it’d be you.

HELOISE: Do...do you really mean it, Andy?

ANDREW: As much as I’ve ever meant anything I’ve ever said.

(LADY SMEDLEY enters resolutely up center and marches downstage. She seems to be looking for something.)

HELOISE: Lost him again, eh, duckie?

LADY SMEDLEY: Lost is not the word for that infuriating man. If only he’d remember to keep our appointments. (COLONEL SMEDLEY enters right and snaps to attention.)

COLONEL: Ah, there you are, my dear! I’ve been looking all over for you.

LADY SMEDLEY: Henry, again you left me waiting at London Bridge!

COLONEL: (Crossing to her.) Pardon me, dear, but did you mean the London Bridge in London or the one in Arizona?

LADY SMEDLEY: Now what would I be doing in Arizona?

COLONEL: I don’t know, perhaps your allergies were bothering you.

LADY SMEDLEY: (Taking his arm.) Oh, Henry, you are helplessly hopeless! (They go to the center door.)

COLONEL: You must understand, my dear, it is very difficult these days without a secretary to handle my appointments.
LADY SMEDLEY: Well, if you hadn’t fired our secretary before we took that cruise! *(They exit center.)*

LIN: Who are they?

ANDREW: *(Imitating the SMEDLEY’s accent.)* Oh, that is Colonel Smedley and his lovely wife, Lady Smedley. They were on the Titanic.

HELOISE: I guess they tried haunting it for awhile, but it was too wet and they kept catchin’ cold.

JIM: Who was the other lady, the one with the maid?

ANDREW: You mean you don’t know who Lavender LaRue is! *(Pauses to think.*) No, I, uh, guess that was before your time. She was the greatest silent film star who ever lived...for at least six months.

HELOISE: They say she was done in by her director, Mad Man Yorick Von Schlitz.

ANDREW: Apparently, she couldn’t remember to bat her eyes. *(WILLOUGHBY enters right, holding a skull, and crosses dramatically center.)*

WILLOUGHBY: Alas, poor Yorick…I knew him well.

HELOISE: Lavender haunted old Yorick till he did himself in, too.

WILLOUGHBY: To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune…

ANDREW: Isn’t that from another play, Willoughby?

WILLOUGHBY: I didn’t know you were so well-versed, Andrew.

ANDREW: I read the comic book version.

WILLOUGHBY: But you never saw me perform, did you? Unless you saw me perform Shakespeare, you never saw Shakespeare.

ANDREW: I never saw Shakespeare anyway. He died before I was born.

WILLOUGHBY: Ha-ha! You think yourself a wit.

HELOISE: Yeah, a nitwit.

ANDREW: Be silenced, fair damsel, or I will bust your beanie.

WILLOUGHBY: I personally, do not mind the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. All the world is a stage, and we but players.

ANDREW: Willoughby, they must have cured you for weeks before they let you perform.
WILLOUGHBY: Ah, life, where is thy justice?
LIN: Uh, excuse me, but are you dead, too?
WILLOUGHBY: Death, be not proud! Yes, fair maiden, I am dead...but I'm not proud.
HELOISE: It ain’t nothin’ to be proud about. You’re either dead...or you ain’t.
WILLOUGHBY: Truer words were never spoken! *(Holding up the skull.*) Et tu, Brutus?
HELOISE: I thought his name was Yorick?
WILLOUGHBY: Brutus is his stage name.
ANDREW: *(Taking HELOISE’s arm.)* Excuse us, gang, but we have to go to a coming-out party.
HELOISE: Yeah, a friend of ours is coming out of the family crypt.
ANDREW: *(Going up center.)* He comes from a very good family, but the crypt stinks. Ta-ta!
HELOISE: See you later, alligator! *(They exit center. JIM and LIN exchange troubled glances.)*
WILLOUGHBY: They’re vulgar but good-natured.
JIM: How long have you been dead, Mr. Willoughby?
WILLOUGHBY: That depends. What year is this? What century is this?
LIN: It’s... *(Says the year.)*
WILLOUGHBY: You want to know how long I’ve been dead? Too long! To tell you the truth, I don’t really know. After my name in the encyclopedia, there’s nothing but dates with a bunch of question marks. *(Starting left.)* But anyway, as the Bard so rightly said...time waits for no man. And tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time. And all our yesterdays... *(Exits reciting loudly.)*
JIM: *(Shaking his head.)* I hate to say anything, but this is not your average, run-of-the-mill retirement home.
LIN: You don’t really think...do you?
JIM: That they’re ghosts? Whatever they are, they sure do think they’re ghosts.
LIN: I don’t really like it. But...
JIM: But...
YOUR GUESTS ARE GHOSTS

JIM AND LIN: (Nodding their heads together.) Two-hundred dollars a week.

JIM: We could take the job together, you working a few nights a week and me working the other nights.

LIN: It would sure help out. (TEX enters up center, singing “Home on the Range” and playing with a lasso. He comes center, as JIM and LIN watch him warily.)

TEX: HOME, HOME ON THE RANGE
WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPES PLAY
AND SELDOM IS HEARD
A DISCOURAGIN’ WORD
AND THE SKY IS NOT CLOUDY ALL DAY!
(Warbles loudly on the last “day.”) Oh, hah, pardners!

LIN: Hah! I mean, hi!

TEX: You look like tenderfoots. Whatcha doin’ in these here parts?

JIM: We’re looking for a job.

TEX: A job? Doin’ what? Teachin’ the ghosts to say boo? (Laughs uproariously.)

LIN: They could use some lessons. We haven’t heard a boo yet.

TEX: (Taking off his hat and bowing politely.) Well now, little lady, you probably ain’t about to hear a boo, either. These here are civilized, well-mannered ghosts. They ain’t the kind that go around spookin’ everybody.

LIN: Why not? They’re beginning to destroy all my illusions about ghosts.

TEX: We’re all retired or semi-retired ghosts. We all been through that chain-rattlin’ bit once too often. (He pulls up a rocking chair and straddles it, sitting with the back in front of him.) Take me, I was world champion rodeo cowboy in 1896. Then I went and got myself shot up in a poker game in ____. (Names a nearby town.)

JIM: That’s a dangerous place.

TEX: You ain’t tellin’ me! I had to haunt some dumb, flea-bitten hotel for nigh onto fifty years. If Lucy hadn’ta opened up this place, I don’t know what I’da done. (LUCY enters right.)

LUCY: You talking about me again, Tex?

TEX: (Rising politely.) Yes, Miss Lucy, I was. I was tellin’ these here younguns what a kind and generous lady you was.

JIM: That’s right, he was.
LUCY: Well, I’m glad to be able to help my friends. There’s a definite need for the kind of place we’ve got here. Isn’t there, Tex?

TEX: There sure is, ma’am! Why, if we’d-a had places like this when I was young, my pappy wouldn’t have had to haunt the outhouse. *(LUCY clears her throat embarrassedly.)* He died one night in a terrible storm. Whole thing tipped over...with him right in it. And he never did allow no one to stay in that thing when a wind was comin’ up.

LUCY: Yes, um, Tex, that’s a very interesting story, but I’m sure Lin and Jim are more interested in hearing about the job.

TEX: Maybe. But then again, it might help them to get to know how ghosts operate.

LUCY: Oh, they’ll have plenty of time for that. You see, they’re spending the night. *(Both JIM and LIN do a quick take.)*

LIN: We’re what!

JIM: Now just a minute…

LUCY: Oh, but it’s all settled. We have several empty rooms, and I’ve prepared two of our very best for you.

LIN: That’s very nice of you, Lucy, but…but I’m afraid I’m double-parked! *(Starts hurriedly for the door.)*

LUCY: Don’t worry, dear, I’ve had your cars moved into the garage.

JIM: What!

LUCY: I had Andrew move them in. He loves to drive other people’s cars.

JIM: But my car was locked, and I have the keys!

LUCY: *(Smiles sweetly.)* Dear, when you reach our station in life, you don’t worry about keys and locked doors. *(LIN and JIM exchange uneasy glances.)*

LIN: Uh, what...what if we don’t want to stay?

LUCY: Oh, but, my dear, you simply must stay. How else are you going to find out if you like our establishment and get along with our clients?

LIN: Couldn’t we sort of...guess?
LUCY: Oh, but this is the perfect trial situation. You can even put some time in at the desk. *(Crosses to the reception desk.)* All you have to do is hand out the room keys to our clients. Of course, none of our clients need room keys, but we like to do it anyway. We feel it adds a touch of normalcy to the proceedings.

JIM: *(Looks at LIN and shrugs.)* I guess we might as well. *(Under his breath.)* I think we better!

LUCY: Oh, I’m so glad to hear you’ll stay! Come along with me, Tex, and help me put the mirrors back in their rooms. *(Goes right, with TEX following.)*

TEX: Hey, this is great. I may even be persuaded to play my jew’s harp for ya!

LIN: I can...hardly wait. *(LUCY and TEX exit right. JIM rushes to the front door.)*

JIM: Well, I’ll be! She’s right! Our cars aren’t out there anymore.

LIN: I wouldn’t work in this place for two-hundred dollars a minute!

JIM: Oh now, it may not be that bad. We just have to figure out how much of what they told us is true.

LIN: If any of it’s true, I’ll die!

JIM: I wouldn’t say that. *(Wringing her hands nervously. LIN goes behind the reception desk, as JIM paces down center.)* There has to be some logical explanation for all this.

LIN: Yes...we’re going crazy!

JIM: I considered that possibility.

LIN: Aren’t you a real ray of sunshine!

JIM: But I decided that the odds of both of us going crazy at the same time were phenomenal. When we get back to town tomorrow...

LIN: If we get back!

JIM: If we get back to town tomorrow, I’m going to the courthouse to look up the ownership of this place.

LIN: All I can say is that I hope this is some new place Disneyland just put up.

JIM: I wouldn’t count on it. *(JIM stops suddenly as CIRCE enters left and crosses to the desk. In her long gown, she seems to float across the room.)*
CIRCE: (In a husky, mysterious voice.) Room zero-zero-zero, please. (LIN stares in awe for a moment then snaps out of it, checking the cubbyholes behind her.)

LIN: R-room wh-what?

CIRCE: Room zero-zero-zero. You’re new here, aren’t you?

LIN: Yes, v-very. (Takes down a key.) Here’s your key, m-m-miss…?

CIRCE: Circe. (Takes the key.) I’m a witch. They burned me at the stake in Salem in 1693.

LIN: Y-you’re looking very well…considering.

CIRCE: Didn’t you know, ghosts can look any way they want.

LIN: No, I…I didn’t know that.

CIRCE: Well, now you know. (Crosses to the door right.) I wish to be woken at the usual hour, please.

LIN: And wh-what is the usual hour?

CIRCE: Midnight, of course.

LIN: Uh…of course. Have a pleasant…sleep? (CIRCE exits, and LIN looks about to collapse as she wipes the sweat from her brow.)

JIM: She’s an interesting character, isn’t she?

LIN: If she was any more interesting, I think I would’ve fainted.

JIM: Just be brave. It’s only for one night. (There is suddenly a low, mournful moan, followed by a terrifying female shriek. JIM and LIN look bug-eyed at one another, and LIN drops down behind the desk.)

LUCY: (Entering quickly right.) Oh, dear me, the Colonel and Lady Smedley are fighting again! You’ll have to excuse them, but sometimes ghosts slip back into their old ways. (Looking around puzzledly.) What happened to the young lady?

JIM: (Pointing to the desk.) I think she had a sudden attack of the bends.

LUCY: (Going to the desk.) Dear, are you back there?

LIN: (In a shaky, squeaky voice.) Ye-es?

LUCY: Why don’t you stand up?

LIN: I will, as soon as I find my shoes.

LUCY: But why did you take your shoes off?

LIN: I didn’t. I jumped out of them. (LIN struggles shakily to her feet.) I’m surprised my knees still work.
LUCY: Really, dear, there’s no need to be afraid. A little noise never hurt anybody.
LIN: That’s what Nobel said when he invented dynamite. I don’t think I can work here, Lucy.
LUCY: Oh, but, my dear child, you haven’t given it a fair trial. You’ll feel differently in the morning.
LIN: I probably will. By then, I’ll have died of fright and fit right in. (Crossing center.) I’m sorry, Lucy, but my nerves won’t take much more of this.
LUCY: (Comforting her.) Oh, my poor dear. Perhaps a bit of wolfbane soup. (There is an eerie, ghostly laugh - perhaps amplified.) Now, Willoughby, quit fooling around! He’s practicing that laugh for the part of the ghost of Hamlet’s father.
JIM: Talk about type-casting.
WILLOUGHBY’S VOICE: (Eerily.) I heard that!
LIN: (Holding her stomach.) I don’t feel well.
LUCY: Would three-hundred dollars a week make you feel better?
LIN: I’m feeling better. (WILLOUGHBY’s eerie laugh sounds again.) I’m feeling worse. (MYRTLE enters right.)
MYRTLE: The bedrooms are all ready, Miss Lucy.
LUCY: Why, thank you, Myrtle. You didn’t throw out the cobwebs, did you?
MYRTLE: No, ma’am. I folded ‘em up and put ‘em in the drawers, like you asked me to. (LIN turns and starts for the door, but JIM catches her.)
LUCY: That’s fine, Myrtle. Is Miss LaRue feeling any better?
MYRTLE: Yes, ma’am. She’s watching some of her old movies on the broken TV...the one without any picture tube. (LIN starts again for the front door, and JIM catches her.)
LUCY: Thank you, Myrtle. (MYRTLE exits.) Well, children, you might as well go up to your rooms now. I’ll show you the way. (She starts right, and the lights flicker off and on.)
JIM: What was that?
LUCY: Oh, at times it's very difficult to keep the lights on without electricity. *(JIM and LIN look at each other and gulp.)* Come along now. *(They follow her hesitantly out, as the lights continue to flicker and WILLOUGHBY's ghostly laugh sounds again.)*

CURTAIN.

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