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## **Family Plays**

# MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY

A Mystery-Comedy-Thriller by

**TIM KELLY**



# MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY

“Mystery fans who enjoy their suspense in heavy doses will find the new Tim Kelly mystery to their liking ... All the ingredients of a first-rate mystery. The clues are scattered throughout and virtually everyone is suspected ... A masterful job ... recommended.” (*The Phoenix Gazette*)

“Clever ... intensified suspense ... awesome climax ... see the play.”  
(*Scottsdale Progress*)

“Lively ... Kelly manages to keep us guessing until nearly the last moment.”  
(*Arizona Republic*)

**Murder mystery. By Tim Kelly. Cast: 6m., 6w.** Harry Thompson and his sister, Diane, are sent to an isolated ski lodge in the mountains of New Hampshire on an undercover mission. They don't know that two guests have been weirdly murdered—with more to follow. When they encounter the remarkable Mrs. Bowman, a mountain climber with a dangerous secret, excitement and chills are on the menu. Is the staff comprised of sinister criminals or dedicated police agents? Who is the curious Mr. Merryweather, who only steals valuable art when the sun is shining? What about the mad man with the limp who is intent on weaving an icy web of terror? Is the nurse really a nurse? Can the sheriff, who was once the lodge's caretaker, be trusted? Twist after twist, thrill after thrill, the play will keep the audience guessing until the final moment when Harry and Diane discover they, too, are death-marked victims. Excellent character roles add to a fascinating stage puzzle that terminates in an avalanche of tense excitement and laughter. *Murder Takes a Holiday* is intended for adults and young adults. *Set: a ski lodge reception room. Time: now. Approximate running time: 120 minutes. Code: MN5.*

## Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308  
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170  
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

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Murder Takes a Holiday

# ***Murder Takes a Holiday***

**A Mystery-Comedy-Thriller**

**in two acts**

**By**

**TIM KELLY**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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TIM KELLY

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# MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY

## *Cast of Suspects*

(In Order of Appearance)

LULU, cook at Alpine Chalet, mute  
ADELE PRUITT, Canadian guest  
PAM, teenage maid, aspiring mystery writer  
ED CADBURY, local sheriff  
RAY OAKMAN, employee at the Chalet  
MRS. BOWMAN, mountain climber  
LEON MITCHELL, owner of the ski lodge  
DIANE THOMPSON, on a skiing holiday  
HARRY, her brother  
DOC WILLOUGHBY, the village M. D.  
INTRUDER, murderer in a ski mask  
EMMA ROBERTS, nurse

## *Synopsis of Scenes*

The action of the play takes place in the “Alpine Chalet,” an isolated ski lodge in the mountains of New Hampshire.

The time is the present.

## ACT I

Scene 1: A winter’s night.

Scene 2: Two weeks following, morning

Scene 3: Later.

## ACT II

Scene 1: Still later

Scene 2: Shortly thereafter

Scene 3: Early evening

*MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY*, under the title *MURDER ON ICE*, was first presented by the Stagebrush Theatre, Scottsdale, Arizona, and subsequently by the Footlighters, Ventura, California.

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Harry Thompson and his sister Diane, are sent to an isolated ski lodge in the mountains of New Hampshire on an undercover mission. They don't know that two guests have been murdered—with more to follow. Whence the yet uncounted remarkable Mrs. Bowman, a mountaineer climbing with a dangerous crevasse, and chills are on the menu. Is the staff comprised of sinister criminals or dedicated police agents? Who is the curious "Mr. Merryweather," who only steals valuable art when the sun is shining? What about the mad man with the limp who is intent on weaving an icy web of terror? Is the nurse really a nurse? Can the sheriff, who was once the lodge's caretaker, be trusted? Twist after twist, thrill after thrill, will keep the audience guessing until the final moment when Harry and Diane discover they, too, are death-march victims. Excellent character roles add to a fascinating stage puzzle that terminates in an avalanche of suspense and laughter.

From the press reviews:

"Mystery fans who enjoy the suspense in the avy dose will find the new Tim Kelly mystery to their liking . . . All the ingredients of a first-rate mystery. The clues are scattered throughout and virtually everyone is suspected. . . A masterful job . . . recommended."—*The Phoenix Gazette*

"A murder mystery with all the standard equipment. A few clean-cut red-blooded characters and a few strange ones, a complex tension-building plot and a beautiful setting . . . A richly chilly affair and a fine play."—*Arizona Daily News*

"Escapism that turns out to be big entertainment . . . spectacular finish . . . audience ate it up."—*Ventura This Week*

"Clever . . . intensified suspense . . . awesome climax . . . set the play."—*Scottsdale Progress*

"Lively . . . Kelly manages to keep us guessing until nearly the last moment."—*Arizona Republic*



## PRODUCTION NOTES

### *Properties*

**On stage:** registration desk or table with bell, ledger, paper, pen; flashlights (2) and basket with unopened mail behind desk, stool; painting on wall (Stage Right); bookcase with books and magazines; coatrack; movable drapes or curtains (3 pair); table with chairs (2), sofa; telephone; logical stage dressing as desired: chairs, rugs, lamps, etc.; fireplace if space allows.

### **Brought on:**

ACT I, Scene 1: Tote bag or small backpack, money, mirror (ADELE); gloves, badge, revolver (CADBURY); luggage piece (PAM).

Scene 2: Coat on coatrack for RAY; comicbook, red pencil, apple core (RAY); tray with cups and saucers (PAM); rope, optional scaling pick (MRS. BOWMAN); cane (MITCHELL); luggage (RAY); medical bag, gloves, small envelope (DOC WILLOUGHBY); cup of hot chocolate (LULU); bowl of apples (PAM); short length of thick rope (CADBURY).

Scene 3: Ski pole (DIANE); large notebook, pencil (PAM); wood club (HARRY); pan of water (LULU); medical bag (DOC WILLOUGHBY).

ACT II, Scene 1: Scissors (MRS. BOWMAN); lighted candle (PAM); flashy earrings and bracelet, medical bag (EMMA—this can be the same medical bag that Doc Willoughby used in Act I); revolver (MRS. BOWMAN).

Scene 2: Magazine (DIANE); tray with sandwiches, napkin (PAM); pencil (CADBURY), scissors (INTRUDER); 4 small envelopes with pills (EMMA).

Scene 3: Knitting needles, yarn, gun (MRS. BOWMAN); coffee mug (HARRY, EMMA); gun (MITCHELL); large manila envelope with scissors set behind registration desk.

### *Costuming*

**Lulu** wears a long dark dress, an apron, and maybe a cap. In Act II, Scene 3, she wears ski clothing. **Intruder** wears a ski mask and ski clothes. **Mitchell** wears pajamas, a robe, slippers, and a scarf. In Scene 3 of Act II he wears regular winter clothing, no cane. **Pam** has an optional costume. In keeping with the “Alpine” atmosphere, she might wear a peasant dress. **Ray** might wear a waiter’s jacket. **Ed Cadbury** wears a uniform, if possible; if not, he wears a heavy jacket with a badge and a cap. **Mrs. Bowman** dresses for mountain climbing in Act I. In Act II she wears a hostess gown. **Emma** wears a nurse’s uniform; also, a coat and hat. **Harry** and **Diane Thompson** wear regular winter clothes and accessories.

### *Lights, Sound, Special Effects*

Howling wind (NOTE: never allow sound of howling wind to overpower dialog. Establish the “howling wind” and then fade out, taking it up only when dramatic emphasis is required). Banging at outside door (manual); gunshots; clock striking six o’clock; telephone ringing.

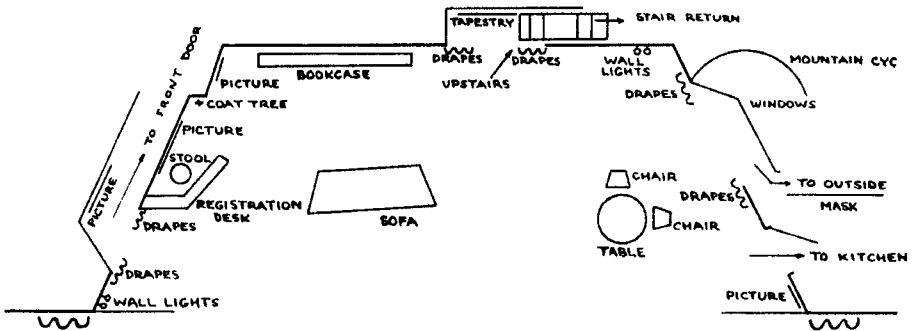
About gunfire: The first shots are supposedly fired by Sheriff Cadbury, Off Left, as he chases after Intruder. During play’s climax, it is an *audience grabber* if Cadbury can fire at Lulu *onstage*, then move after her and fire again, Off Right. However, in the interest of safety, the director can have a member of the stage crew designated as “gunmaster” and he or she will handle the gun that actually fires the blank cartridges. In the final scene Lulu can run out Down Right; Cadbury follows and we hear the gunfire that kills Lulu from offstage. **WARNING:** Blanks can be dangerous. *Never* point a gun directly at somebody. We recommend

that you study the section on guns in Claude Kezer's *Principles of Stage Combat* before firing a gun in a play. Similar precautions must be used for the stabbing scene.

Lighting effects suggested in the text: Glow on distant mountain peaks; flickering lights; dimming. (NOTE: Keep the lighting on the set as shadowy as possible without obscuring audience view. Also, try to keep the playhouse as dark as possible so that the audience attention will be focused on the only source of light—the stage itself.)

About the optional fireplace: If it is made part of the set design, have a fire "glowing" in a couple of scenes and devise some logical blocking to accommodate it; e.g., have characters who come in from outside the lodge step to it to warm their hands, etc.

### The Set



BASIC FLOOR PLAN "MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY"



# MURDER TAKES A HOLIDAY

By TIM KELLY

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*[The set represents the reception room of the Alpine Chalet in New Hampshire. Downstage Right is an entryway that leads to an offstage hallway. At the far end of this hallway, out of view, is the main door to the lodge. A registration desk with telephone, hand bell, ledger, and pen is Stage Right. A stool is behind the desk. On the wall close by is a painting of some winter scene. Up Center is another entryway. This one has a staircase that leads to the upper stories. A few steps are visible. Up Right is a bookcase with books and magazines. A coat-rack stands in the corner. At Stage Left is a terrace alcove with windows that grant a view of distant snow-capped mountain peaks. The terrace alcove can be entered from offstage. There are drapes or curtains that can be pulled shut at each of the entryways and at the terrace alcove. Down Left is the door to the kitchen. A table with two chairs is at Left Center; a sofa at Right Center. Logical "Ski Lodge" stage dressing completes the setting: additional chair(s), rugs, painting(s), lamps, etc. If the playing space is large enough a fireplace would be ideal. A good location would be Stage Left between the terrace alcove and the kitchen door or on the upstage wall between the Up Center entryway and the Up Right bookcase.]*

*AT RISE: The reception room is dimly lit. The drapes at the terrace alcove are drawn open and the distant mountains are shown in an eerie glow. The WIND howls. Sound of BANGING from outside the main door. Silence. Again—more BANGING. Door to the kitchen opens and LULU totters in. She's an elderly woman wearing a long dark dress and white apron. LULU doesn't walk as much as she "scurries," which makes her look like a windup toy. LULU can't speak, but her hearing is acute. She scurries to answer the banging, disappearing into hallway, Right. ADELE PRUITT, a Canadian guest, comes down the Up Center stairs dressed in winter clothing. She carries a tote bag or small backpack; looks about the room, calls to the kitchen]*

ADELE. Thomas? *[Pause]* Thomas, I need a little help. *[No answer. Her attention wanders to the telephone. She crosses, puts the tote bag on the floor. She picks up the receiver and listens for a dial tone. From the look on her face it's plain to see the telephone is not working. Irritated, she slams it down]* Nothing works in this place. It would be a minor miracle if anything did. *[PAM steps from the kitchen. She's a pretty teenage girl, an employee of the lodge]*

PAM. Something I can do for you, Miss Pruitt?

ADELE. [*Points*] This phone is still not working.

PAM. It never does when there's a high wind.

ADELE. [*Stepping behind sofa*] That's most of the time. Would you ask Thomas to get my luggage. I put it in the hallway outside my door. Two pieces.

PAM. Thomas quit.

ADELE. [*Surprised*] He was here this morning.

PAM. That's when he quit. About lunchtime.

ADELE. [*Philosophical*] Can't say I blame him. [*Gestures to the room*] Alpine Chalet isn't exactly booming with business. It's dark and gloomy even when the sun is shining. [*Suddenly, LULU darts from the hallway, Down Right, like a mouse being pursued by a ravenous cat. Halfway across the room she stops, nervously looks over her shoulder*]

PAM. What is it, Lulu?

ADELE. [*Concerned*] You look terrified. [*LULU points Down Right and beats a hasty retreat into the kitchen*] What on earth—? [*ADELE and PAM look Down Right. The local sheriff, ED CADBURY, enters. A badge is pinned to his jacket*]

PAM. Oh, it's you, Sheriff Cadbury.

CADBURY. Who were you expecting?

ADELE. We didn't know whom or what to expect, judging from Lulu's behavior. You frightened her.

CADBURY. [*Takes off his gloves and puts them atop the registration desk*] I always do. I don't think Lulu likes me.

ADELE. I think that badge scares her.

CADBURY. Something does. I have to talk to her, badge or no badge.

ADELE. How are you going to manage that? You know she's mute.

CADBURY. I know.

PAM. I've tried to teach Lulu some sign language, but she refuses to learn.

CADBURY. She can write down her answers.

ADELE. Have you seen Lulu's handwriting?

CADBURY. I have.

ADELE. Then you know what you're in for. Lulu's not much when it comes to spelling, either. She can't string three words together to make any sense.

CADBURY. She can make sense when she wants to.

ADELE. You are determined.

CADBURY. Yup.

PAM. Poor Lulu.

CADBURY. Why was the front door bolted? I could have frozen to death on the welcome mat.

ADELE. Alpine Chalet doesn't have a welcome mat.

PAM. Yes it does, Miss Pruitt. Only it's covered with snow. [*To Cadbury*] Mr. Mitchell always has me bolt the door at night. It's a rule. He gets upset if the door's not bolted.

CADBURY. What's he afraid of?

PAM. You know, uh—prowlers.

CADBURY. Prowlers? Up here? Ha! the only way to get to this lodge is by the ski lift.

ADELE. When it's working. The ski lift is as undependable as the telephone. I'll be glad to see the last of this place.

CADBURY. You're leaving?

ADELE. Tonight.

PAM. Why not wait until morning?

ADELE. I have my reasons. *[To Cadbury]* I don't know how this tomb manages to stay open. I've been the only guest all week.

PAM. *[To Cadbury]* Thomas quit.

CADBURY. Thomas knows he can do better at one of the other lodges. This one's too isolated.

PAM. *[Tentative]* I like the isolation. Gives me time to think about things.

ADELE. At your age you shouldn't have much to think about. I'd better settle what I owe with Mr. Mitchell. Where is he?

PAM. He went down into the village. To see Doc Willoughby.

ADELE. In that case I'll mail him a check. *[To Cadbury]* Silly man doesn't take credit cards. No wonder his business is rotten.

CADBURY. This place used to do okay . . . until that . . . uh, uh . . .

ADELE. I don't know why you people can't say the word. *[Walks to terrace alcove and stares out]* Murder. *[She turns to face Cadbury]* Murder. *[Emphasizing each letter as she spells out the word]* M-U-R-D-E-R.

CADBURY. We heard you the first time.

ADELE. Prowlers? Ha! You know why Mr. Mitchell locks up at night.

CADBURY. I've been worried about you.

ADELE. You won't have to worry about me any more. Not after tonight.

PAM. New Hampshire people don't like to talk about unpleasant things.

ADELE. What you mean, Pam, is that murder is bad for business.

CADBURY. You can't blame people, Miss Pruitt. In this part of the woods everyone's livelihood depends on *one* thing.

ADELE. Tourists.

CADBURY. Yup. Tourists.

PAM. *[To Cadbury]* When will you find out who killed that woman?

CADBURY. You've got a morbid streak in you, Pam.

ADELE. It's natural to wonder about the murder. A young woman comes up the lift and starts down one of the ski trails. Only she never makes it to the bottom.

PAM. *[In lurid recitation]* A killer in a ski mask intercepts . . . they struggle . . . he strangles . . . a few skiers on the lift see him . . . there's nothing they can do but yell out . . . he leaves his victim in the snow . . . he hurries away . . . dragging one foot as if he's been injured. *[Smiles]* How's that for goose bumps? *[ADELE and CADBURY exchange a questioning look. Pam's sense of excitement is gruesome]*

ADELE. The sheriff could be right. About that morbid streak.

PAM. [*Lightly*] I'm interested in unusual things.

CADBURY. You leave "unusual" things like murder to me.

PAM. It's a deal.

ADELE. I'm glad you're here, Sheriff. I don't like taking the lift when it's dark.

CADBURY. The thing to worry about is the wind, not the dark. The lift is always extra dangerous in a high wind.

ADELE. You're going back on the lift, aren't you?

CADBURY. I don't plan to ski back.

ADELE. If the lift is safe enough for you it's safe enough for me. [*Emphatic*] I'm leaving tonight and that's that.

CADBURY. [*Shrugs*] Suit yourself.

PAM. [*Resigned*] I'll get your bags. Only I wish you weren't going. [*PAM exits Up Center*]

CADBURY. Back to Canada, Miss Pruitt?

ADELE. Yes. I can't say I've enjoyed my visit. [*Looks about the room*] Alpine Chalet leaves something to be desired. But I'll look on the bright side.

CADBURY. What's the bright side?

ADELE. One day there was actually some hot water. [*She crosses to sofa*] How long before you'll be leaving?

CADBURY. Depends on Lulu.

ADELE. I'll wait for you in here. [*Sits on sofa*]

CADBURY. Okay by me. [*Calls Down Left*] Lulu? [*Crosses*] Lulu? [*He enters kitchen. The LIGHTS flicker. ADELE reacts. Then, sarcastically:*]

ADELE. Oh, lovely. The perfect end to a less-than-perfect holiday. [*FLICKERING stops. ADELE gets up cautiously and tiptoes to the kitchen door. She puts her ear to it hoping to overhear whatever it is Cadbury is saying. She hears nothing, makes a face. ADELE's eyes drift to the telephone. She decides to give it another go, crosses to desk. WIND howls. The figure of an INTRUDER dressed in a ski outfit limps into view at the terrace alcove. A ski mask makes identification impossible. He stares in at Adele like a spectre from some late night television horror film. ADELE picks up the telephone receiver, listens. Nothing. She slams down the telephone*] Darn. [*Again the LIGHTS flicker. This time, ADELE is visibly upset*] I wish the lights would stop doing that. [*WIND up*] That wind. Goes right through me. Like it's searching for something. [*She steps to the sofa, sits. PAM comes down the stairs with a piece of luggage. Immediately, the INTRUDER on the terrace limps out of sight. PAM crosses in front of the registration desk and puts down the luggage*] Not too heavy?

PAM. I didn't carry both suitcases because of the lights. I was afraid I'd trip in the dark.

ADELE. Can't be too careful.

PAM. Did I hear you talking with someone.

ADELE. I talk to myself when I'm nervous.

PAM. Why are you nervous?

ADELE. The wind. The ski lift. *[PAM picks up the tote bag]*

PAM. I don't remember this.

ADELE. *[Quickly]* Put that down! *[PAM is taken aback by this rude command and apologizes]*

PAM. Sorry. *[She puts down the tote bag]*

ADELE. Forgive me, Pam. I didn't mean to snap at you. I'm a bit out of sorts. I have some personal papers in that bag. I don't like anyone to touch it.

PAM. I understand. I meant what I said before. I am sorry you're leaving.

ADELE. That's sweet. *[Takes out some money]* Here.

PAM. That's not necessary.

ADELE. You've given good service. It's not your fault the place is coming apart. Mr. Mitchell doesn't appreciate you. Go on, take it.

PAM. *[Takes it]* Thank you, Miss Pruitt. It'll be put to good use. Typing paper is expensive. I'll get the other bag.

ADELE. Take my advice, Pam. Alpine Chalet isn't for you. Give beauty school some thought. *[PAM smiles, exits Up Center. WIND up; ADELE experiences a shiver] Brrrrrrr. [Again the LIGHTS flicker and, again, ADELE reacts]* Wind's like a blast of icy sandpaper. I can imagine what my skin looks like after a week in this climate. *[She takes a compact with a mirror from some pocket and studies her complexion. At the same time, INTRUDER reappears at terrace alcove and watches her. Silently, INTRUDER limps into room. ADELE catches a glimpse of him in the mirror. At first she can't believe what she's seeing. Then, aghast, she drops the compact and stands, backs away. One hand is at her throat, but she can't scream. Fear has immobilized her. INTRUDER advances]* Stay away . . . get away . . . leave me alone. *[The LIGHTS flicker, dim down to almost blackness. Only the eerie moonlight from the terrace is left, turning both intruder and Adele into weird shadows. In a burst of strength, ADELE screams out—]* CADBURY! *[She makes a frantic dash for the kitchen door]* CADBURY! *[INTRUDER is too quick for her. He grabs her before she can reach the door and pulls her back to the sofa and flings her down. She starts to rise but INTRUDER is beside her, one knee for balance on the sofa. His gloved hands grab her throat and he begins to strangle. Tighter, tighter. At first ADELE fights back like a demon, but her killer's grip is like granite]* CADBURY . . . CADBURY . . . CAD . . . burrrrr . . . y . . . *[INTRUDER gives a final squeeze and ADELE is dead. A moment passes. INTRUDER rises, surveys his kill, limps back to the terrace alcove, and off. Sound of WIND is deafening, as:]*

Blackout

## Scene 2

*[Two weeks later. Morning. The view at the terrace alcove shows a cloudy day. A lamp or two glow in the room. A coat (Ray's) hangs on the coatrack.]*

RAY OAKMAN, the new houseman, is behind the registration desk, reading a comic book. He's young, indifferent, and not bad looking. However, there's an undercurrent of "dishonesty" that we can sense almost immediately. He appears good-natured but he's sly. As he reads he takes the last bite from an apple and shakes the bell. Immediately the kitchen door flings open and LULU scurries in, crosses to registration desk. Without looking at her, RAY holds out the apple core]

RAY. I'm through with this. *[LULU, holding the apple core by its stem, scurries back into the kitchen and shuts the door. As Lulu makes her cross, PAM comes down the stairs with a tray holding a cup and saucer]*

PAM. Mr. Mitchell isn't any better. *[She sets the tray on the table]* Only took a few swallows of tea. I wanted to get him some hot soup, but he says his appetite is gone.

RAY. *[Interest on the magazine]* Uh-huh.

PAM. *[Steps to the registration desk]* I hope you're not going to desert the lodge.

RAY. The tips in this place don't add up to a nickel. I'm not complaining. Alpine Chalet suits me. I got a lot to think about.

PAM. That's what I tell people. They don't always understand. Maybe you're an intellectual, like me. What are you reading?

RAY. *[Holds up the comic book]* "Adventures of Rat Man."

PAM. *[Horried]* That's a comic book. You're reading a comic book.

RAY. So?

PAM. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. A grown man reading trash.

RAY. It's not trash. You can learn plenty from an avenger like Rat Man. He's on the side of law and order.

PAM. *[Disgusted]* Really, Raymond. *[Shift in mood]* When you think about things—what do you think about?

RAY. Let's see. *[Humors her]* I think about—where am I heading? What's the meaning of life? *[Indicates comic book]* Do I want to join the rat race? *[He grins]*

PAM. You're making fun of me.

RAY. No, I'm not. Why are you so inquisitive?

PAM. I'm not inquisitive.

RAY. You ask a lot of questions.

PAM. I'm nosy. *[RAY puts the magazine on the bookcase as MRS. BOWMAN thumps down the stairs]*

MRS. BOWMAN'S VOICE. You're wasting your time, Mr. Mitchell. If I want to climb, I'll climb.



MITCHELL'S VOICE. Be sensible.

MRS. BOWMAN'S VOICE. I'm always sensible. [*MRS. BOWMAN enters reception room. She's a wildly eccentric woman dressed in heavy clothing. She doesn't talk, she babbles. Over her shoulder is a length of coiled climbing rope, and she carries (optional) a scaling pick*] I came here to climb a mountain and climb a mountain I shall. [*LEON MITCHELL enters behind Mrs. Bowman. He wears pajamas, slippers, robe. Scarf around his neck. Walks with the aid of a cane. MRS. BOWMAN steps to the terrace alcove and surveys the view*] Let me think. Which mountain was I going to climb? [*Points in a right direction*] That one. [*Points in a left direction*] Or was it that one? [*Points directly ahead*] I know. That one. [*Pause*] New Hampshire mountains all look alike in the gloom.

PAM. Doc Willoughby says you should stay in bed.

MITCHELL. [*Sits on sofa*] How can I when Mrs. Bowman's about to kill herself?

MRS. BOWMAN. I have no intention of killing myself.

RAY. It's pea soup out there.

MRS. BOWMAN. I've walked through London in dense fog. I've tramped through a rain forest in Puerto Rico and once, in Hawaii, I jogged around the edge of a lava flow. When I set my mind on a project I complete it.

PAM. Are you sure about the soup, Mr. Mitchell?

MITCHELL. No soup. [*PAM exits into kitchen with tray. VOICES from hallway, Down Right*]

DIANE'S VOICE. I love the view.

HARRY'S VOICE. View? There isn't any.

DIANE'S VOICE. I mean I'll love it when it clears.

MRS. BOWMAN. [*As all look Down Right*] Visitors? [*DIANE THOMPSON, a pretty young woman, enters, sees others, smiles*]

DIANE. Hello.

MRS. BOWMAN. Hello.

MITCHELL. [*Stands*] Welcome to Alpine Chalet. I'm Leon Mitchell. I own the lodge. [*HARRY enters after Diane*]

HARRY. We tried to call ahead. Your telephone wasn't working. [*RAY steps to telephone, picks up the receiver, listens*]

RAY. It still isn't working.

MITCHELL. I want you to go down into the village this afternoon and tell the telephone company. *Again.*

RAY. Whatever you say, Mr. Mitchell.

MRS. BOWMAN. [*Steps into room*] Are you going to be staying? [*Hopeful*] Guests?

DIANE. Yes.

MRS. BOWMAN. [*Delighted*] That is good news. I get lonely for decent conversation.

HARRY. We wrote for reservations. We didn't hear anything.

MITCHELL. When did you write?

HARRY. Two weeks ago.

MITCHELL. *[To Ray, indicating registration desk]* See if there's anything back there.

RAY. Will do. *[RAY dips behind the registration desk and comes up with a basket of unopened mail]* What's the name?

HARRY. Thompson. Harry Thompson. This is my sister Diane. *[RAY rifles through some unopened letters]*

RAY. Most of this stuff looks like junk mail. *[Finds letter]* What do you know? Here it is. *[Reads return address]* "Harry Thompson . . . 503 Canal Street . . . New York, New York." You left off the zip code.

MRS. BOWMAN. I'm Mrs. Bowman. I'm the only other guest here. *[Indicates]* That's Raymond. He's the houseman.

RAY. Hiya. Call me Ray. *[He opens the letter, scans the contents]*

MITCHELL. I've been trying to persuade Mrs. Bowman to stay inside, but she's determined to ignore my advice.

DIANE. It's not a good day for skiing.

MITCHELL. She's not going skiing.

MRS. BOWMAN. Mountain-climbing is my thing.

RAY. *[Checks reservations]* Two rooms. Three days, two nights.

MITCHELL *[To Harry]* I suppose Thomas tossed the letter aside. *[An apology]* He doesn't work for me any more. Is your luggage outside?

DIANE. It's at the lift. With our skis.

MITCHELL. Raymond.

RAY. I'm on my way. *[RAY gets coat from coatrack, puts it on. Moves in front of the registration desk and out, Down Right. MITCHELL coughs. HARRY signs the guest ledger]*

MITCHELL. Please forgive the way I'm dressed. I haven't been feeling well. Pam!

DIANE. I'd like a room with a view. If possible.

MITCHELL. All the rooms at Alpine Chalet have a view.

MRS. BOWMAN. They have a view when someone remembers to clean a window. *[PAM steps from the kitchen]*

PAM. Yes, Mr. Mitchell?

MITCHELL. Two new guests.

PAM. *[Surprised]* You mean it? *[Mitchell gives her a censoring look]* Sorry.

MRS. BOWMAN. Mr. Thompson and his sister.

MITCHELL. The two front rooms? Are they made up?

PAM. They will be. *[She hurries upstage and out]*

MITCHELL. It's not easy to get good help.

HARRY. We're happy you can take us in.

MRS. BOWMAN. This lodge always has vacancies. It's not what you'd call popular. Is it, Mr. Mitchell? *[MITCHELL is fuming]*

MITCHELL. I thought you were going mountain climbing.

MRS. BOWMAN. I am.

MITCHELL. *[Snaps]* Bon voyage.

MRS. BOWMAN. No need to be rude.

MITCHELL. *[To Harry and Diane]* If you'll excuse me. If you need anything ask Pam or Raymond.

DIANE. Thank you.

HARRY. Thanks. *[MITCHELL crosses upstage, gives Mrs. Bowman a dirty look, grumbles, exits. MRS. BOWMAN steps in front of the sofa, speaks huffily]*

MRS. BOWMAN. I don't know why he took offense at my remark. The truth should never be offensive. You agree, don't you? *[Doesn't wait for an answer]* He forget to mention Lulu.

HARRY. Who's Lulu? *[MRS. BOWMAN sits on sofa, pats a place beside her. DIANE sits]*

MRS. BOWMAN. The cook. Can't speak a word.

HARRY. She's a foreigner?

MRS. BOWMAN. No, I mean she can't talk. That's no problem, except that she's a terrible cook—and that *is* a problem. How on earth did you happen to pick this lodge?

DIANE. We heard there was a ski trail that's perfect for hot-dogging.

MRS. BOWMAN. None of the local people will use it. They're afraid. Something "unpleasant" happened there . . . *[Pause]*

HARRY. Don't stop now.

MRS. BOWMAN. I don't want to spoil your holiday.

HARRY. We guarantee it won't spoil our holiday.

MRS. BOWMAN. Promise?

BOTH. Promise?

MRS. BOWMAN. A young woman was brutally murdered on that ski trail.

DIANE. You just spoiled our holiday. *[HARRY and DIANE exchange an unhappy look. MRS. BOWMAN chatters on, non-stop]*

MRS. BOWMAN. This lodge is arthritic. Wait 'til you hear the plumbing.

DIANE. You don't paint a cheery picture.

MRS. BOWMAN. That's another thing. There was a picture I liked on my wall. One day it was there, the next day it was gone.

DIANE. Is that so terrible?

MRS. BOWMAN. Mr. Mitchell denied it was ever there in the first place. I woke one morning and noticed the picture was different. He said it was the light in the room that made the picture *look* different. Later, he was in the cellar putting the canvas, the one from my room, under the lining in a suitcase.

DIANE. You were spying on him?

MRS. BOWMAN. I owed it to myself. He practically accused me of being dotty, didn't he? *[HARRY and DIANE are amused by this talkative mountaineer]* This morning I noticed he was packing that suitcase. I saw him through the window on his little balcony. He looked up and caught me.

DIANE. *[Trying not to laugh]* What did he say?

MRS. BOWMAN. I'd rather not repeat it. I have a low tolerance for rudeness.