

(Holly enters on phone)

HOLLY- Yes, I know that, and I will make that payment as soon as I get the money. There's nothing in the bank right now I can't- okay, yes- I have actual customers this week, and I think most of them are paying actual money, so- hello? Hello? *(Looks at Bridgette)* They hung up. The bank hung up on me.

BRIDGETTE- But you've got actual guests now!

HOLLY- It's a drop in the bucket, Bridgette. I'm afraid the Evergreen Inn really is doomed. I know I said that in an earlier scene, but I want to repeat it in case part of the audience was asleep.

BRIDGETTE- So we're still planning on burning the place down for insurance money?

HOLLY- I don't see any other way. And we can roast marshmallows over the flames, so that's a bonus.

BRETT- *(Enters on phone)* What do you mean there's still no flights? I do not see any snow out there right now. And yes I will continue this conversation in front of other people so they are aware of my situation. Keep trying, Alfred. *(He hangs up)*

HOLLY- Who's Alfred?

BRETT- My but.. L.. buddy. My buddy. I always call him. He is outstanding in a crisis.

HOLLY- Speaking of crisis, I'm having a problem with the furnace. Maybe you can look at it?

BRETT- A furnace. Why would I--?

HOLLY- Because you're a handyman.

BRETT- Oh. Yes. Yess. I am a handyman. Uh.. and my specialty is.. heat, so.. a furnace seems right up my alley, so to speak.

HOLLY- Great! Well if can fix the heat, I can fix us some cookies. Trade?

BRETT- Goods for services. Yes. Of course. Right.

BRIDGETTE- I'll show you where it is.

BRETT- Fantastic. I am excited to get to work on the.. heat.

HOLLY- I'm excited to watch you work.

BRETT- I am excited for your cookies.

HOLLY- They are tasty.

BRETT- I bet they are. *(A moment)* Hopefully not too fattening.

BRIDGETTE- Anyways-

(Bridgette escorts Brett to side of stage, but turns and gives Holly a wink and mouths "Oh my God" to her)

(Narrator 2 rushes on a "furnace")

Here it is. Right here in the lobby, which makes a lot of sense.

Narrator 2- We're not switching scenes now, deal with it.

BRETT- All right then this is the furnace and I am a handyman so I am entirely capable of fixing this. *(He stares at it for a moment. He gingerly touches it.)*

HOLLY- How do you like your cookies?

BRETT- Firm.

HOLLY- That ship has sailed, I'm afraid.

BRETT- Sugary then.

HOLLY- That I can do.

BRIDGETTE- So what do you think is wrong with it?

BRETT- It is.. not working.

BRIDGETTE- Because..

BRETT- Have you considered getting a new furnace?

HOLLY- *(Laughs)* With what money? Brett, I'm.. it's hard to say this, but I'm afraid the Inn is in danger of going out of business. I don't have the money to

fix anything.. and worse than that, I'm alone.. on Christmas. Can you think of anything sadder?

HOLLY- That's what I figured.

BRETT- Homeless puppies. In a box in the rain. Basset hound puppies- they can't get out of the box because they are small.. so they just stare up through the top of it like this—and the rain falls on them.. no one's there to see the box of puppies, so they will probably all die. Maybe one puppy can stack the other puppies up like a staircase and then try to climb over their bodies to safety—the ones on the bottom are willing to sacrifice themselves. "No, you go on at least one of us will live. Tell our story." The last words the puppy ever speaks. The puppy gets to the edge of the bucket and dies, but with a smile on his face, because now there will be no more pain.

(Pause)

(Narrator 2 grabs the jingle bells and shakes them)

HOLLY- All right yes that is sadder.

BRETT- Sorry. I have a very vivid imagination when it comes to sadness. Perhaps that is why I am alone.. on Christmas.

(They have a moment.)

HOLLY- I hate to say this, but I'm out of sprinkles. Maybe you'd like to go downtown and buy some with me?

BRETT- I will go wherever you want to take me.

HOLLY- Who'll watch the Inn?

BRIDGETTE- I'll volunteer! Now you two crazy kids get out of here.

HOLLY- Great! So what's wrong with the furnace anyway?

BRETT- I am afraid it will not let anyone in. It has so many responsibilities, keeping the Inn going, that it is hard for it to trust people. So it pretends to be icy, when in reality it wants to open up. There is so much heat in there, trapped, waiting for the right touch to bring it out. It is very.. very.. passionate.. about heat.