

## ACT I

INT. MANSION MAIN LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Bagpipes play a funeral song. Thunder and rain are heard - it is a stormy summer's day.

LIGHTS COME UP  
TO REVEAL:

The lobby of a large country mansion with marbled pillars. There are two large maroon-colored carpeted staircases leading up to the bedrooms upstairs. The entire lobby is stuffed with funeral wreaths and flowers. A massive portrait of VIVICA DESMOND hangs in the center of the room. She is strikingly beautiful though there is steel in those eyes. Below her portrait is a large writing desk. At times, lightning causes light to flash into the lobby through large windows on the fourth wall. Every now and then a SERVANT or two rush through carrying more flowers, presents, etc in preparation.

ALBERT stands CENTER STAGE staring up at the portrait with his back to the audience. He's in his late 40s in an old rumpled suit. His energy levels change constantly from melancholy to manic depending on his moods. In one hand he holds a glass of champagne from which he sips and in the other is a cigarette. He looks at her, tsks and shakes his head.

ALBERT

Tragic. Just tragic. Where did all the time go  
darling?

(sighs and looks at his watch)

How can people be late for a funeral reception?

*Your* reception? Is that even possible? Well of  
course it is - look at this place, it's like a morgue.

Pun intended. Oh my god, I'm getting morbid.

Albert continues to smoke, drink and look at Vivica. He hears a voice approaching.

HARGRAVES (O.S.)

Yes, of course. It's exactly the usual arrangement  
just faster.

HARGRAVES walks through the room, from stage left to right, speaking on his phone. Warm, charming and loyal, he's of Indian origin and wears a jacket and a kilt with a sporran.

HARGRAVES (CONT'D)

Out of the question, these travel arrangement have to be made today. *Open tickets*. That's what I need. I know it's a little confusing but-

He notices Albert.

HARGRAVES (CONT'D)

Let me uh...let me call you back.

He hangs up.

HARGRAVES (CONT'D)

Excuse me? Sir? There's no smoking in here.

Albert ignores him.

HARGRAVES (CONT'D)

Sir?

ALBERT

You know, I was thinking, you could run around naked in a place like this.

HARGRAVES

Excuse me?

ALBERT

I mean it is one hell of a castle isn't it? A bit drafty though. Get some candelabras in here and it would be a perfect setting for a murder mystery don't you think? Scottish mansion, rolling hills, storm outside.

Thunder and lightning.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

See? Perfect.

Hargraves looks at him a moment.

HARGRAVES

Ok. I suppose that's good to know. It doesn't change the fact you're not allowed to smoke in here.

Hargraves takes a small bell out of his jacket pocket and rings it. A SERVANT appears holding a silver tray with an ashtray. Albert is suitably impressed.

ALBERT

Of course! How could I have forgotten? The essential ingredient in any murder mystery. The butler.

He puts out his cigarette. The servant leaves.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I'm Albert by the way, though my friends call me Al. What about you Jeeves? What do they call you?

HARGRAVES

My name is Hargraves sir. I'm the chief of staff here.

ALBERT

And that's like the head butler?

HARGRAVES

Not quite. Now, if you'll excuse me, I still have many things to attend to.

ALBERT

By all means, by all means, don't let me keep you.

Albert unconsciously lights another cigarette as he speaks forcing Hargraves to stop his departure.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

You know, I don't think I've ever seen a brown man in a kilt before.

Hargraves rings his bell and the servant reappears with the silver tray and ashtray. The servant clears their throat.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Force of habit.

He puts out the cigarette. The servant leaves.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I don't understand how smoking is banned in this house. If memory serves, Vivica herself indulged every now and then.

HARGRAVES

The purpose is much more practical than political. Tobacco smoke residue tends to linger on the furniture, carpets and curtains, not to mention the obvious health reasons.

ALBERT

Oh I understand. They used to tell me the same thing when I ran for office you know? Politics is all about optics. Can't smoke on screen, during a debate, on the toilet....

(sighs)

You're making me melancholy. Aren't butlers meant to, you know, meld into the background and not bother gentlemen about smoking and such rubbish?

HARGRAVES

Perhaps it would be so if we were in the early 1900s and this was Downton Abbey. However, such is not the case. As for a gentleman, I do not see one in front of me. A true gentleman is respectful, considerate and, most importantly, honest.

Albert makes a claw with his hand.

ALBERT

Meeeeeoowwww! I like you! But tell me one thing Jeeves, just to put my eeeendless curiosity at ease, is it true that you fellows don't wear underwear below...all that?

He indicates the kilt.

HARGRAVES

There's only one way to find out. And my name...is Hargraves...sir.

Pause.

ALBERT

Oh we're gonna get along just fine.

Hargraves' mobile phone starts to buzz.

## HARGRAVES

Excuse me.

Hargraves exits stage right. Albert watches him go then surreptitiously lights another cigarette and starts to hum and begins to examine the many bouquets and wreaths. He quickly looks around to ensure he's alone and promptly starts to pull out the envelopes from some of the flower arrangements and opening them. He starts to read from some of them.

## ALBERT

"I shall never forget you." Boring.

"Heaven has a new angel". Cliche.

"You broke my heart and yet I shall miss you dearly." That's just sad.

"If only you had only given me a chance. Our lives could have been so different." Desperate.

(to Vivica's portrait)

Seriously Vivica, how many men can fall in love with one woman!?

(surveys the room)

I mean Jesus!

The sound of a woman LAUGHING echoes in the distance. Alber looks around in shock and then stares up at the portrait. The sound of an approaching car is heard, headlights flash across the room and loud car horns. Albert jumps and drops the notes.

## ALBERT (CONT'D)

Shit!

Doorbell is heard. Albert kicks the dropped notes into the jungle of bouquets.

## HARGRAVES (O.S.)

Welcome, welcome, please come in, come in out of this squall.

Footsteps approach.

## ALBERT

Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!

He adopts a pose and smokes and waits

JACKIE, and SETH enter from stage right. JACKIE is in her late 30s, fashionably dressed and very pretty. She appears dry.

SETH is drenched. He is in his early 40s, good looking and dressed in what was a sharp suit now splattered with mud.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

There you are! What took you so bloody long? I thought you were right behind me!

JACKIE

Don't look at me, it wasn't my fault.

She kisses Albert on the cheeks.

SETH

It wasn't anyone's fault. Flat tire. What're you gonna do? Look at suit! Do you have any idea how much it cost? Give me a moment. Let me sort myself out.

He starts to leave. A servant enters with a tray of champagne glasses and Seth takes one.

SETH (CONT'D)

(to servant)

Umm, the restrooms are...?

The servant indicates off stage right.

SETH (CONT'D)

Ah! Thank you.

Jackie takes a glass.

JACKIE

Thank you.

The servant leaves towards stage left. Before doing so, he takes an ashtray out of his pocket, places it on the tray and stands in front of Albert. Albert sighs and puts out his cigarette.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Are we the only ones? Where's everyone else?

ALBERT

No idea. I thought it was just going to be me for a moment. Well, it's better than the madness of the funeral I suppose.

(MORE)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

At least here I can hear myself think! Where were you all sitting? I couldn't see you in the church.

JACKIE

Oh we were up front.

ALBERT

What!? Why the hell was I in the back row then??  
And to be ushered out after the service like that. We barely got a chance to say hello for god's sake.  
What was all the rush I wonder?

JACKIE

Any word from Anne?

ALBERT

She was running around trying to make her connection last I heard.

JACKIE

I can't believe she missed the service.

ALBERT

Can't you? It's been more than a decade since we all saw each other and she still can't keep an appointment.

JACKIE

Almost fifteen years Al.  
(sighs)  
I'm actually glad it's just us here. Everything's been so hectic! How have you been? How's Cathy?

ALBERT

(Grunts)  
Oh she's deliriously happy. She left me a few years back. Married a dentist or something.

JACKIE

Oh...I'm sorry to hear that. And the kids?

ALBERT

I'm sure they're fine.

JACKIE

Didn't you run for office or something at one point?  
What happened with that?

ALBERT

You heard about that? Well, It was a...uh look,  
what's with all the boring Uncle Al's life story  
questions? Tell me about you Jackie! You were the  
queen's protégée! Trained to conquer the world!  
How many companies are you running? How many  
cars and mansions do you own now? How many  
lives have you crushed on your way up the ladder?  
That's the stuff I want to know! Tell me everything!  
I want to hear every single gory, juicy detail!

JACKIE

(laughs)

Oh, I got married a year or so after we all went our  
separate ways. We in church! I gave up the whole  
corporate thing. Sales just...didn't do it for me  
anymore. I'm a mother and a gardener now!  
Working with your hands in the sun...it's so healing.  
I get to make the world a little greener. I'm happy.

Albert stares at her a moment.

ALBERT

Oh. You're serious? Right. Hey, good for you, good  
for you. The plant stuff, yeah, sounds great.

Seth comes back in. Same suit but spotless now.

JACKIE

I think I better freshen up as well before everyone  
else arrives.

She exits.

SETH

Ah much, much better!  
(sips his champagne)  
Sooo Al. How's it going Al?

Albert looks at Seth's suit.



ALBERT

It's going Seth, it's going.

SETH

Kinda weird to be back together...for this huh?

ALBERT

I, for one, am surprised you came. Is that a new suit?

SETH

Why wouldn't I come?

ALBERT

Well...considering how it all ended. I figured you would still be holding a grudge.

SETH

How it ended? What does that mean.

ALBERT

Oh you know exactly what it means.

SETH

Oh ,oh that! Come on, that was a lifetime ago! I wasn't going to - it's pointless to hold on to - anyway, it's all in the past. I mean, I figure that's why you came isn't it?

ALBERT

Mmm, maybe I just didn't have anything better to do. But honestly, I need a straight answer from you. Is that a new suit? How did you do that?

He walks around Seth.

SETH

Oh, yeah, this is fresh.

ALBERT

But...it's the same suit?

Jackie comes back.

SETH

I have my servant pack three of everything.  
Specifically for this reason. This way I have less to  
think about!

ALBERT

Clearly.  
(beat)  
So you two got a chance to catch up I guess? On the  
drive over?

Seth and Jackie look at each other.

JACKIE

Uh...

SETH

Yeah, kinda.

JACKIE

Well, we had the flat tire.

SETH

I did all the work. She refused to get out of the car.

JACKIE

It was raining. I can't control the weather can I?  
And there was no way I was going to get all wet and  
dirty.

The doorbell rings.

ALBERT

I forgot about that.

JACKIE

About what?

ALBERT

The...uh, the OCD...the cleanliness thing.

JACKIE

It's not OCD. It's just being hygienic.