

ACT I

- SETTING: *The living room of Simon Whitaker's house, a humble home along a rural stretch of US 27 in Kentucky. The room contains the typical living room furniture: an old couch, a rocking chair, coffee table, television/VCR, and a wood-burning stove. There is a bookshelf filled with books including a complete set of Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedias. In one corner of the room is a Christmas tree decorated with wooden ornaments and a string of the old-fashion "bubble" lights, which are not lit. It is a neat room and well "nested". There are three entrances: one leads to a bedroom, one to a kitchen and the last is the front door next to which is a window. It is late afternoon on Christmas Eve. The Present.*
- AT RISE: *The stage is empty. We hear Bing Crosby's "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" winding down on a car radio, followed by the deejay giving this announcement: "For all you folks out traveling tonight you'll be dealing with a lot more than a white Christmas. The forecast calls for freezing rain and sleet until well after midnight, making driving conditions extremely hazardous. The state police have closed Interstate 75 from Knoxville to Cincinnati due to the number of accidents. So be careful out there and stay tuned for further developments." Then the song "Here Comes Santa Claus" begins. After it plays for a moment, we hear the sound of a car horn, a screech of tires and a car slamming into a tree. The music stops. Long, long beat. We hear a man's voice encouraging someone then the front door opens and forty-five year old SIMON WHITAKER backs into the room. He is dressed as Santa Claus. He is leading the driver of the car, forty-year old EVE LAWSON, into the room. She has blood on her forehead.*

SIMON

Here we go...

EVE

I'm all right...

SIMON

Watch your step, ma'am...

EVE

Really, I'm all right.

(She pulls her arm away and smiles.)

Really. Thank you.

SIMON

Yes, ma'am.

EVE

And please – don't call me "ma'am." I'm not that old.

SIMON

Oh. Right. Yes, ma'am. I mean... Sorry.

(Beat. He notices the blood on her forehead.)

Uh... lady? You're bleeding a little bit. On your forehead there...

(EVE feels her head and pulls her hand away.)

EVE

Oh. Wow...

(He leads her to the couch.)

SIMON

Here, now. You have a seat and I'll get something to clean that up for you.

EVE

I guess I hit my head on the steering wheel...

SIMON

Be right back.

3.

(He disappears into the kitchen. EVE puts her hand on her forehead again and winces.)

EVE

Ow...

(SIMON enters with a wet cloth.)

SIMON

Here you go.

(He hands it to her.)

EVE

Thanks.

(She puts the cloth on her head and winces again.)

SIMON

Maybe you should put some ice on it. You want me to get you some ice? I've got a whole tray of it there in the freezer.

EVE

That's okay. This is fine.

SIMON

Are you sure, ma'am? I mean, lady...?

EVE

I'm sure.

(She pulls the cloth away.)

And it's Eve, by the way.

SIMON

Huh?

EVE

My name is Eve. Eve Lawson.

SIMON

Oh.

EVE

Just in case you were trying to think of a third alternative to “ma’am” or “lady.”

(She holds out her hand.)

SIMON

Oh, right, I get it.

(He shakes her hand.)

It's real nice to meet you, Eve.

EVE

And you are... Santa Claus?

SIMON

Huh?

(He looks down at what he's wearing.)

Oh, right... No, ma'am, I'm not Santa Claus. This here is just a costume. The real Santa Claus won't be coming round 'til later.

EVE

Later?

SIMON

Later tonight, I mean – it being Christmas Eve and all. That's when Santa hitches up his sleigh to his eight reindeer – well, nine if you include Rudolph – and brings toys to all the good little girls and boys.

EVE

Right.

SIMON

Of course, he won't come until he knows for good and certain that you're sleeping like in that song “*He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake...*”

EVE

Right, well... Of course. Huh. Tell me, just how hard *did* I hit my head?

SIMON

Pretty hard.

EVE

Well, that explains it then, doesn't it?

SIMON

Explains what, ma'am?

EVE

Why I'm talking to a man dressed in a Santa suit who ran me off the road and into a tree.

SIMON

I didn't run you off the road, ma'am.

EVE

I told you not to call me ...

SIMON

Fact is, *you* nearly killed *me*.

EVE

Don't try to pin this on me, pal. I wasn't the one standing in the middle of the road during an ice storm.

SIMON

I wasn't *standing* there, ma'am...

EVE

If it weren't for the red suit you'd be road kill by now. What were you doing there, anyway?

SIMON

The ice brought down a tree alongside the road. I was trying to drag the branches out of the way so nobody'd hit it. I didn't figure on you coming around the curve that fast with the ice and all.

EVE

I wasn't going *that* fast.

SIMON

You slid off the road, didn't you? This Kentucky ice is no joke, ma'am. You've got no business driving in weather like this. Nobody does. Well, except maybe Santa Claus but he's got the equipment for it. That sleigh of his was built for the snow and ice and ever since Rudolph joined the group not even a pea-soup fog can stop him. Plus he's got the magic on his side.

EVE

Magic?

SIMON

Christmas magic. How else do you think Santa gets that sleigh to fly?

EVE

Uh... the reindeer?

SIMON

C'mon now! Everybody knows that reindeer can't fly all on their own. Why, if they could, you'd be seeing Laplanders riding em' all over the place, wouldn't you?

EVE

I guess that would depend on what a "Laplander" was.

SIMON

The folks that live in Lapland.

EVE

Oh...

(She considers then shakes her head.)

Not helping.

SIMON

Lapland! The northernmost part of Norway, Sweden and Finland that's inhabited by a group of Mongoloid folks called Laplanders.

EVE

Oh.

SIMON

They're sometimes referred to as the "Lapps."

EVE

Oh.

SIMON

Reindeer are indigenous to that region.

EVE

Aha... Well, y'know what? I better be going.

(*She stands up.*)

SIMON

Going?

EVE

Yeah.

(*She hands him the cloth.*)

Thank you so much for your hospitality.

SIMON

Now, wait a minute, ma'am...

EVE

Look, my name is Eve, okay? *Eve*. E – V – E. It's pretty simple. Y'know, Adam and *Eve*? All About *Eve*?

SIMON

Christmas *Eve*...

EVE

Yes.

(*Beat. She indicates the door.*)

Well, I better...

SIMON

Simon.

EVE

What?

(*He pulls off his hat and beard.*)

SIMON

My name is Simon.

EVE

As in "Simple Simon met a pie man going to the fair?"

SIMON

No, ma'am. As in Simon Peter Whitaker.

(*He extends his hand. She shakes it.*)

EVE

Well, it was nice meeting you, Simon Peter Whi...

SIMON

Like "The Rock."

EVE

I beg your pardon?

SIMON

That's what Jesus called Simon Peter. The Rock. It's in the Bible. See, Simon Peter, he was an apostle...

EVE

I know.

SIMON

And he got out of the boat and he tried to walk on the water...

EVE

Yes, I...

SIMON

But he ended up sinking like a stone.

EVE

Maybe that's why Jesus called him "the Rock."

SIMON

No, ma'am. That's not it.

EVE

I know. I was just...

SIMON

He was called The Rock because he was strong and solid and dependable.

EVE

Aha...

SIMON

And he kept trying. Even though he failed time after time he kept trying. My daddy used to say “Good ol’ Simon Peter – at least *he* got out of the boat.”

EVE

It's a point.

SIMON

Y’see, ma’am, Simon Peter kept the faith. No matter what, he kept the faith. That’s why Jesus called him The Rock. And that’s why my daddy named me after him.

EVE

I see. Right. Well – *Simon* – thanks a lot for everything but I better get on the road...

SIMON

Going to see your family?

EVE

What?

SIMON

It being Christmas and all, I figured...

EVE

Oh. Right. Yes.

SIMON

Where are they?

EVE

Who?

SIMON

Your folks. You were heading north so I figured Lexington. Or Cincinnati, maybe.

EVE

That's right.

SIMON

Which? Lexington or...?

EVE

Cincinnati. I'm headed for Cincinnati.

SIMON

Oh. How about your car?

EVE

It's headed for Cincinnati, too.

SIMON

No, I mean, it hit that tree pretty hard. I wonder if it's okay to drive.

EVE

I'm sure it's fine.

SIMON

It's probably bad ice all the way to Cincinnati...

(EVE opens the door.)

EVE

Goodbye, Simon.

SIMON

Bye.

(She exits. He catches the door before she can close it and watches her. Beat.)

Be careful now. That hill's real slippery.

EVE (O.S.)

I'm fine... Aaggh!

(We hear the sound of EVE slipping and falling. SIMON grimaces as he watches her.)

SIMON

You okay?

EVE (O.S.)

Just dandy.

(He watches her regain her footing.)

Stop watching me.