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Ver. Jul09

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Ice's Crossing

Characters

CHARLEY PORTER	Male, 40s, earthy, peaceful, kind, fatalistic. A few years younger than his brother Greg.
FATHER'S GHOST (HENRY)	Male, 88. Firm, unchanging, regretful, dead.
TIZZY	Female, Charley's wife, 40s. Uncomfortable, anxious, doubtful, abandoned
RUTH PORTER	Female, 88. Charley's mother, Henry's widow. Kind, delicate, fragile, sad, rueful, dying.
GREG PORTER	Male, mid 50s, Charley's brother. Businesslike, firm, forceful, deadly.
STARR PORTER	Female, late 50s, Greg's wife. Bitchy, snide, outrageous, territorial.
MARY	Female, 40s. Ruth's caregiver. Kind, solicitous, earthy.
SETTING:	Interior of the Porter house in Kansas. Living area with television. Kitchen somewhat like a bakery.

ACT I

I.i	Ruth and Father's Ghost. I'm scared.
I.ii	Greg, Starr and Mary. What we witches must do.
I.iii	Charley and Ghost. I want things as they were.
I.iv	Tizzy and Starr. Popcorn is hate
I.v	Charley and Tizzy. If you loved me, we would go.
I.vi	Charley and Ghost. Bring me your mother.

ACT II

- II.i Kitchen. Breakfast. I miss a man who loves a storm.
- II.ii Greg, Starr, Mary. The witches. This is the plan.
- II.iii Ruth and Father's ghost. I'll take the bus back.
- II.iv Charley & Father's Ghost. Such a disappointment.

INTERMISSION (if desired)

ACT III

- III.i Tizzy and charley. Here's the plan.
- III.ii Charley and Greg. Sign.
- III.iii Charley and Tizzy have cocktails.
- III.iv Tizzy and Father's Ghost. I'm leaving.
- III.v Charley, Starr, Father's Ghost, Tizzy, Mary. Time for pictures.
- III.vi Starr, Greg. Charley has stolen your mother.
- III.vii Charley and Ruth. I can smell the doughnuts.
- III.viii Charley and Tizzy. I rather bite the head off a rat.
- III.ix Charley, Ghost, Ruth, Tizzy. We need the rain.

SYNOPSIS

Short

As his mother RUTH is dying, Charley has returned home to play his brother a game of family politics. Can she stay in Ice's Crossing, or must she go with Charley's brother to Connecticut. His father's ghost pushes Charley to keep her home, integral to his plans to restart the bakery he ran when he was alive. Charley's wife, Tizzy, and Greg's wife, Starr, like Harpies, egg their husbands on.

Production Notes

In this play the characters are embodied in the house. Any changes to the set are created by the characters themselves, specifically FATHER'S GHOST, who transforms the set over the course of the play into a bakery. All remain on stage as one scene melds into the next, the focus changes, and we wander through this family as ghosts weaving together the past and the future.

ACT I
SCENE I

SETTING: Interior of the house.
AT RISE: RUTH in bed. FATHER'S GHOST (Henry) enters.

RUTH

Is it time?

FATHER'S GHOST

Tomorrow. Tomorrow's going to be busy.

RUTH

Henry?

FATHER'S GHOST

I'll make doughnuts. And bread. Coffee cakes. Walnut coffee cakes. Where did we put the walnuts?

RUTH

I'm scared.

FATHER'S GHOST

Mrs. Handshaw wants a birthday cake with a log cabin on it. You can do a chocolate log cabin, Ruthie. Three dozen chocolate éclairs to the Rendezvous. I hope the frosting holds. Summer's no time for chocolate. Summer's no time to be running a bakery.

RUTH

It's gonna be hot today. Wish you'da got that drip cooler. I'd like a drip cooler, Henry. It's gonna be hot.

FATHER'S GHOST

I'm gonna just sit here awhile with you, dear, and stay cool. It'll get busy enough when the sun comes up. They're gonna want you to go, you know.

RUTH

Where'm I going, Henry?

FATHER'S GHOST

You don't have to go, if you don't want. You can stay.

RUTH

I want to stay.

FATHER'S GHOST

That's a girl. I need you in the bakery. I'm starting it up again, you know.

RUTH

That's nice.

(pause)

Where'm I going, Henry?

FATHER'S GHOST

Connecticut. I don't know why. They won't pay you any more attention there, than they do to you right here in Kansas.

RUTH

I don't know why Greg married that Starr. I'm not saying anything against her, but I don't know why he married her.

FATHER'S GHOST

I miss that bakery. I was never alive so much as when I was making doughnuts.

RUTH

People'd walk downtown to get them doughnuts hot. Wished I had me one now.

FATHER'S GHOST

Me, too. Shoulda never give it up.

RUTH

I don't want to go to Connecticut, Henry. Can I stay with you? Do I have to do what she says?

FATHER'S GHOST

Don't listen to Starr. She's a liar.

RUTH

Why they want me back there, anyway? They gonna eat me or something?

FATHER'S GHOST

It's gonna be hot. Maybe a storm later on.

RUTH

Oh, you like that. You like those storms, Henry.

MARY

(MARY enters)

Ruth, dear. Are you okay?

RUTH

Is it today, yet?

MARY

No, Ruthie. You been dreaming.

RUTH

Henry's gone to work.

MARY

Henry's dead, sweetheart. You had a dream.

ACT 1
SCENE 2

SETTING: Interior of the house.
AT RISE: GREG and STARR in the kitchen. Harsh lights,
black and white shadows. MARY enters, sits.

GREG

She can't stay.

STARR

Not here.

GREG

She's gotten worse. She's more than you can handle, Mary.
You've been good, but she needs more than you can give.

STARR

More than she can get in Ice's Crossing.

MARY

She won't go. Not to Connecticut.

GREG

She'll go.

STARR

She'll go. We're telling her it's just a visit. Until she
gets better. When she gets better, we're saying she can come
back.

MARY

Get better?

GREG

She won't get better.

MARY

No. You're selling her house?

GREG

She won't come back.

STARR

The doctors here are terrible.

MARY

I don't know....

STARR

It's a better place. Connecticut. A nicer place.

GREG

For just a visit. We're saying to her that's it's just for a visit.

STARR

I've got her place picked out. It's darling. It's almost as nice as a hotel.

GREG

And the doctors are better in Connecticut.

STARR

Much better.

MARY

She won't want to go.

GREG

She won't want to, but she'll go. She's got to. She can't stay here. She's beyond you.

STARR

For just a visit. We're saying it's just for a visit.

GREG

She can come back when she gets better. That's what we're saying.

STARR

Once she gets there, she'll forget. They all do. And she'll get used to it, like she's always been there.

MARY

She won't be coming back?

GREG

We're selling her house. She'll have no place to come back to.

STARR

Come with us, Mary. She won't feel alone if you come along. You can take a trip to the City. See a Broadway show. You'll see how much nicer Connecticut is, what a nice place I've fixed up for her. Then you come back and tell these people in Ice's Crossing we're not stealing her.

GREG

They say we're kidnapping her.

STARR

It'll be easier for us to take care of her in Connecticut.

GREG

It's hard to get back here.

STARR

Even with his company jet.

GREG

I can't get the jet at a moment's notice if something happens. It takes time to get scheduled.

STARR

Greg's always busy.

MARY

Ice's Crossing won't be the same without her. There's been a Porter in Ice's Crossing for a long, long time.

GREG

I just opened an office in London, and I'm back and forth a lot. It's hard to get here. Ice's Crossing is way the hell away from anything.

STARR

He's tried. So have I. But we have our own family, and there's always so much to do....

GREG

It worries me that I can't get back enough. Starr'll be a few minutes away in Connecticut, you know, if anything happens.

STARR

She's like my own mother.

GREG

She's not your mother. Your mother is insane.

STARR

High strung, that's all. She expects a lot. (to MARY) We set her up in Florida. Greg pays for her to live in a very nice place. A high rise.

GREG

High rise, high rent.

STARR

I've always loved Ruth. I wished my mother was more like her. I've always wanted to take care of her, and now I can.

MARY

She stays in Connecticut?

STARR

They forget. She'll complain. They all do. But six weeks, and they get used to it.

MARY

Ninety years she's lived in Ice's Crossing. This town won't be the same without a Porter in it.

STARR

They live in the past. That's what's real. The now...is just....now, like....television that comes and goes. You don't remember a thing about what you just saw....

GREG

She'll be there and that's what she'll know. That moment, and the past. Long ago. Not how she got there, or where she was last week, but just she's there. That's real. She barely remembers five minutes ago. It gets worse. That's why she's got to go now. If you can't remember what happened sixty seconds ago, your world is chaos.

STARR

By the time they have lunch they will have forgotten what they said at breakfast. They all sit around and tell the same story all day and no one remembers it.

MARY

And...me?

STARR

Settle her in to her new home, have some fun in the City, then come back.

GREG

You've been a wonderful companion, Mary. We'll send you to see a show in the city. How's that? We'll pay your expenses, keep you on salary. Then when you come back, you can close up the house and sell it. That gives you time to find another position. People always need companions, and there are so many old people in Ice's Crossing....

MARY

So, it's over and done.

GREG

Tomorrow the limo comes. We'll take her to meet the plane in Kansas City, then fly to Connecticut. Then that wraps it up.

ACT I
SCENE 3

SETTING: Interior of the house.
AT RISE: CHARLEY fixes a lamp. FATHER'S GHOST hangs
enters.

CHARLEY

Ouch!

FATHER'S GHOST

You're going to hurt yourself.

CHARLEY

You again.

FATHER'S GHOST

That's no way to greet your father.

CHARLEY

You're dead.

FATHER'S GHOST

I don't feel dead. I feel....numb.

CHARLEY

How can you "feel" numb? Numb is *not* feeling.

FATHER'S GHOST

Don't I scare you?

CHARLEY

No.

FATHER'S GHOST

'No'?

CHARLEY

Where'd you buy this lamp? It's never worked.

FATHER'S GHOST

I like it.

CHARLEY

You should've fixed it. You left everything unfinished.

FATHER'S GHOST

It was on my 'to do' list.

CHARLEY

Your 'to do' list. If you were Death, and you were on your
'to do' list, you'd still be alive.

FATHER'S GHOST

You're angry.
(beat)
Avoiding the family?

CHARLEY

I can't avoid you. Otherwise, yes, as much as possible.

FATHER'S GHOST

You can't go on like this.

CHARLEY

I do what I want.

FATHER'S GHOST

You're too much like me. Got a long to-do list?

CHARLEY

I'm not like you. What do you care? You never cared about me.

FATHER'S GHOST

I loved you. I told you that.

CHARLEY

Five minutes before you died. Death-bed confession. You were scared. You call that love?

FATHER'S GHOST

You never liked me.

CHARLEY

No.... I would have to say no.

FATHER'S GHOST

See? We're alike.

CHARLEY

(pause)
I look like you, you know. I have your belly, your hairline. I even act like you sometimes. All those years I waited for you...to say something to me, for you to like me, you were waiting for me, weren't you? We were too damned much the same. So much alike, we missed each other.

FATHER'S GHOST

Yes.

(pause)
I need you now.
(pause)
Will you help?
(pause)
They're taking your mother.
(pause)