

JENNY.

Wow.

This is great.

ELIAS.

Yeah.

MERTIS. Your home away from home.

JENNY. ...So lovely!

MERTIS. Thank you.

*(She smiles at them and they wait for her to show them to their room.)*

MERTIS. Oh! I almost forgot!

*(She exits behind the French doors. ELIAS and JENNY look at each other. They smile.)*

*(ELIAS mouths: "She's a trip.")*

JENNY. What?

*(He mouths "She's a trip" again.)*

JENNY. What?

*(MERTIS re-enters with a plate.)*

MERTIS. Peanut butter fudge.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Oh wow.

That's so nice of you.

*(MERTIS holds out the plate. They are still wearing coats and gloves and ELIAS is holding on to his duffel bag. JENNY takes off her gloves. ELIAS puts down his bag. He takes off his gloves. They both reach out and take a piece. They stand there awkwardly and take a bite while MERTIS watches them.)*

ELIAS. That. Is. Good.

JENNY. Delicious.

*(MERTIS watches them, beaming.)*

ELIAS. *(his mouth full)* I'm Elias, by the way.

MERTIS. You were the one I spoke to on the phone!

ELIAS. Yup. And this is Jenny.

## Start Here

MERTIS. Hello Jenny.

JENNY. Hi.

ELIAS. And should we call /you –

MERTIS. Well I know it says Mertis on the website and Mertis Katherine is my proper name but most people just call me Kitty.

*(ELIAS swallows the last of his fudge. JENNY lowers the rest of her piece of fudge discreetly to her side. ELIAS picks up his bag.)*

MERTIS. I bet you'd like to see your room and get settled in.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Great.

Yeah.

*(MERTIS starts walking, then stops.)*

MERTIS. You'll have to excuse my slippers.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Of course!

You're excused!

MERTIS. I have a blister and it's very late /so I was—

ELIAS. I'm sorry. I know we said 9. But there was crazy / traffic and—

MERTIS. It's fine, you're just not seeing me at my most glamorous.

*(They all walk towards the stairs. MERTIS gestures towards the dining area.)*

MERTIS. Breakfast is from 7 to 9.

We call this "Paris."

*(They gaze at Paris.)*

See. It's /got—

JENNY. Oh yeah!

MERTIS. You can come here for tea or hot cocoa. Any time of the day or night. Like a Paris café.

JENNY. Awesome.

ELIAS. *(re: a picture on the wall)* Who's that?

MERTIS. That's Eugenia.

(MERTIS continues towards a little nook with a mini-fridge and shelf full of snacks in the dining area.)

MERTIS. There's Pepsi and seltzer water.

Please help yourself to whatever you like.

(She opens the mini-fridge door, closes it, then points to the shelf.)

And candy and cookies up there.

JENNY. Dangerous.

MERTIS. Well.

It can be, yes.

It can be very dangerous. But I think of it for guests only.

I'm on a very strict diet.

(stage whisper)

67 pounds in four months.

JENNY.

ELIAS.

That's amazing.

Wow. /Wait—

MERTIS. It's the HCG diet...have you heard of HCG?

(They shake their heads "no.")

MERTIS. You give yourself these special injections and you cut out all refined sugar.

(They don't know what to say to this.)

MERTIS. There's a wonderful doctor who wrote a book about it. I'll show you tomorrow.

(MERTIS finally heads up the stairs. They follow.

JENNY stops on the landing to stare at the doll, then follows MERTIS and ELIAS.)

(On the second set of stairs:)

MERTIS. (pointing up to an object we can't see) Now that is genuine Civil War era!

ELIAS. Cool.

MERTIS. (out of sight now, in the upstairs hallway) ...And... let's see...you're in the Chamberlain room...

ELIAS. (hesitating on the stairs) I thought we were in the Jackson.

MERTIS. Oh—really? Because the Jackson—I think the Chamberlain is much nicer.

ELIAS. I think we asked for the Jackson though.

(Pause.)

MERTIS. Yes well I'm going to be honest with you the Jackson has a leak. A leak in the ceiling.

JENNY. Oh.

MERTIS. You probably asked for the Jackson because it's the least expensive but I'm going to give you the Chamberlain for the price of the Jackson and I hope you'll forgive me for not giving you ample warning.

End Here

JENNY.

ELIAS.

Well thanks for the deal! No, it's okay.

(They head up the stairs and disappear into the upstairs hallway. Footsteps. The sound of a door unlocking. This next section is heard faintly. We shouldn't catch all of it.)

MERTIS. Who's tall enough to reach the dolphin? That string with the dolphin.

(More footsteps.)

MERTIS. Well. All right. This is my favorite room in the house.

JENNY. I really like the ceiling.

MERTIS. That's what they call a memory wheel!

(Pause. Sound of bags being set down on the floor.)

MERTIS. Let's see. We have oil heat and the upstairs gets terribly hot if it stays on at night so I turn it off at 9 p.m. But some guests like to be toasty while they're sleeping so there's a little space heater in the closet if you need it.

(More footsteps.)