

THE SONGS OF CHIGARO!

"Pilot"

Written by

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COLD OPEN

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM – STAGE – NIGHT

Shhhhhh! The show is starting.

A spotlight appears over center stage. Standing in its warm embrace, in front of stained red stage curtains, is PRESLEY ABBOTT (24). A small town girl with big city dreams, she has long aspired to be under stage lights. Well, not quite these stage lights...

The stage is small and charming. Chipped wood floors and a rustic atmosphere, it's the kind of stage where you can hear each awkward squeak of the shoe.

A soft piano comes in. On the keys to the side of the stage, CHRISTOPHER HORWITT (57) is a man that wears many hats, none of which include being a competent theatre director. He leads Presley into her song:

PRESLEY
*The Land of the Midnight Sun,
Or Alaska, as its known,
From the snowy mountain tops,
To the grassy fields we roam,
Alas there's but one summit,
We're 20 thousand feet below,
Let us take you on a journey...*

Christopher takes his hands off the piano, abruptly halting the music as Presley desperately holds her last note. He tugs at a cord, drawing the stage curtains open.

The rest of the CAST is revealed to be standing behind the curtains, along with a pitiful Alaskan themed set. The backdrop is just a printout of the Windows desktop screensaver, while the surrounding trees and bushes are composed of roughly cut cardboard and papier-mâché.

Meanwhile, the cast all have their heads down, legs wide apart, holding their right wrist in their left hand.

Yikes.

WHOLE CAST
Through the songs of Chigaro!

An awkward two-step dance ensues as the music speeds up and the rest of the cast approaches front stage. Christopher, putting on a thick, cheesy smile, turns to the audience:

CHRISTOPHER

Roll call!

MERILYN SEGALL (62) is the first to step forward. No stranger to theatre, Merilyn's raw showmanship is often upstaged by her tireless efforts to appear younger. Her makeup and the spotlight immediately become sworn enemies.

PRESLEY

*It's my... younger sister,
everyone! Nilly Sanderson!*

MERILYN

*A crew to climb Mount Chigaro,
We're young and spry and keen,
My eyes are wide with ambition,
And their dew is ripe with dreams.*

PRESLEY

That's right, kid!

Merilyn struts back behind Presley, while HUDSON MILLS (32) approaches. A shovel in hand, he walks up with a stilted dance. His face and acting style is weirdly intense.

PRESLEY (CONT'D)

*Hey, Hudson Mills, an experienced
climber with working-man-hands! Get
over here, ya grump!*

HUDSON

*Why yes, I can be quite grumpy,
Climb leader is my role,
When I'm not on a giant rock,
I'm underground mining coal.*

Next up is WALTER SMITH (26), a white theatre camp veteran that is clearly milking his *ancestry.com* results...

PRESLEY

Howdy do, Johnny the American Indian?

WALTER

*Past generations guide me,
My heritage keeps me strong,
And in the face of danger,
Best recruit a good shaman.*

Now, ZION HORWITT (17) steps forward. The son of Christopher, it's clear that Zion has no interest in theatre. He sings with a stilted monotone voice, putting no effort into his performance. Worst. Nepotism. Ever.

PRESLEY
And my husband! Frank.

ZION
*I'm a simple lowly husband,
Climbing high never appealed,
I hope my wife makes it home,
Or I'd be really sad for real.*

As Zion sings his verse, Christopher gestures towards him to smile more, hoping to energize Zion's unenthused performance. Finally, Zion turns to his father:

ZION (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
What?

Christopher avoids the confrontation all together and just smiles to the audience.

PRESLEY
And who am I? Well, I'm Myra Sanderson. And I'm about to be the first person to climb Mount Chigaro... even if it's the last thing I ever do.

The entire cast breaks out into a choreographed dance together - "choreographed" being used loosely. They're pretty much just miming out their actions to a rhythmic march.

WHOLE CAST
*Come with us on our trek,
Come with us on our climb,
Come witness all the beauty,
Of Alaska in summertime.*

Christopher reaches for another cord connected to a pulley system. He gives it a tug and the tip of a CARDBOARD CUTOUT MOUNTAIN emerges from the ground. However, the mechanism immediately jams. He continues to pull at it incessantly, making quite a bit of noise, but it's stuck.

The cast gestures to the set, expecting a big reveal just to be met with disappointment. They continue the rest of their song acapella as Christopher fiddles with the pulley.

WHOLE CAST (CONT'D)
*There's no stopping us now,
To the very top we go,
Sit back and hear our tale...*

ZION/MARILYN
Through the songs of Chigaro!

HUDSON/WALTER
Through the songs of Chigaro!

PRESLEY
Through the songs of Chigaro!

BIG FINISH!

They all pump their fists into the air and freeze, each sporting the sort of wide face "theatre smile" that somehow feels A.I. generated. CUT TO CLOSE UPS of each cast member, their eyes beaming in anticipation of applause...

Beat.

Aside from a few claps and a haphazard cough, there's virtually no response from the audience.

CUT TO the audience. The audience is scattered throughout this cabin-like building, spread out across long wooden tables with family-style portions of food. It's ski lodge chic and an embarrassing excuse for a theatre.

Presley stares out at the audience, her fist still firmly held in the air. Though her smile remains intact, she can hardly hide the sadness in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Christopher finally manages to unjam the pulley system. With great effort, he tugs at the cord which causes the cutout to rise up into the air; however, the force of Christopher's pull unhinges the pulley and causes the cutout to fall from the sky and knock Walter directly in the back of his head. He collapses. It's a beautiful disaster.

INSERT a fallen PLAYBILL laying on the ground, a fresh shoeprint on its cover. But beneath the mud, the title of the show is revealed...

THE SONGS OF CHIGARO!

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONEINT. THE CHIGARO PLAYROOM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Presley stands motionlessly backstage, still trying to hold her smile. The backstage is a long hallway, with a couple doors leading to different rooms, including: CHRISTOPHER'S OFFICE, BATHROOM, GREEN ROOM, CLOSET and BACK EXIT.

The rest of the cast and crew are moving around her in perpetual motion. Incredibly busy. They are all out of focus and their voices muffled.

Presley pulls out her phone. She notices that she has a voicemail from her parents. Her finger hovers over the notification, but she decides to go to her contacts and ring her agent instead... No signal.

Presley starts walking down the hallway, passing Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER
Great shows tonight, Presley. First
of many!

Her smile slightly twitches. She continues towards the back exit. She sees Merilyn enter the bathroom. Presley shoots her a smile, but Merilyn does not reciprocate. She slams the door in Presley's face. Strange.

Next, Presley passes Hudson who is seated in the hallway on a decorative log. He doesn't even look up as he is too busy wilting a piece of wood into a smaller piece of wood.

Walter jumps out from the green room, his smile seemingly a lot more authentic than Presley's. Far too much energy.

WALTER
Hey! It's me, Walter! You know,
Johnny the American Indian!

PRESLEY
(eyes him up and down)
You sure are.

WALTER
Don't mind Hudson over there. Like
you said, he can be quite grumpy!

PRESLEY
Hudson? Isn't that his *character*?

WALTER

Oh, Hudson doesn't break character.
He's full method. It's AWESOME.
He's sort of known as the Daniel
Day Lewis of Chigaro.

PRESLEY

Stiff competition, I'm sure.

Christopher pokes his head out from his office.

CHRISTOPHER

Anyone handy enough to try fixing
the stage? I would but I'm bit
swamped at the moment.

Hudson looks at his "working man hands" with great purpose.

HUDSON

(grunts)
I can fix it.

Hudson stands up and walks towards the stage. He passes the bathroom, where Presley notices that Merilyn is watching her through the slimmest crack of the door. Predator stalking its prey. Once she's discovered, Merilyn closes the door quickly.

PRESLEY

Walter, is there somewhere I can
make a phone call?

WALTER

Sure is! There's a payphone right
outside. Here, take my lucky
quarter.

Walter hands her a quarter and puts his arm on her shoulder. He leans in close.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Don't worry, the one you pay me
back with will be even luckier.

Presley can't even fake her smile. She's just extremely uncomfortable. She opens the door to the back exit.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Welcome to the Chigaro family!

EXT. PAYPHONE - NIGHT

Presley exits the showroom and is immediately hit with the Alaskan sunlight... despite it being nighttime.

The scenery is breathtaking, with mountains and forestry surrounding the showroom.

The payphone is placed awkwardly in the center of an open field. Extremely liminal. Presley walks up, inserts the lucky quarter and dials the number for her agent, SPROCK MCGRAW.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE (O.S.)
(heavy metal rock intro)
Sprock McGraw! Talent agent.

SPROCK (O.S.)
(over phone)
Go for Sprock.

PRESLEY
Hey Sprock, it's Pres.

As Sprock talks, Presley notices that she's being watched by Walter from the GREEN ROOM window. He is smiling and waving.

SPROCK (O.S.)
Presley! There she is! The big
star! How'd the first shows go,
huh? I'll tell ya, Pres, I feel it!
This is it! That big break! Now,
you slam back some sardines yet?

Giving Walter a wave and a disingenuous smile, she says through her teeth:

PRESLEY
Sprock, I need you to get me the
hell out of here.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - CHRISTOPHER'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Christopher is at his desk, playing 'Words with Friends' against the computer. His office is scarce, with one side of his desk propped up against the wall just so it can fit.

He looks up and notices that Merilyn has been posing in the doorway for an uncertain amount of time, waiting for a lead in. She's smoking from a retractable cigarette holder.

MERILYN
Well this simply won't do.

Merilyn struts into the room dramatically, pulling up a chair then refusing to sit in it.

CHRISTOPHER
 (still looking at phone)
 What's the problem, Merilyn? I'm
 busy.

MERILYN
 Don't feign ignorance. Presley!
 Joining our production with the
 arrogance of a skilled baboon. And
 make no mistake, Christopher, a
 baboon is still a baboon.

Merilyn ashes her cigarette on Christopher's MBA degree.

CHRISTOPHER
 What? She's dynamite out there.

Merilyn turns quickly and slams her hands against the desk.

MERILYN
 I should be the lead of this show.
ME. Not some Los Angeles puff
 piece. I've been with the Chigaro
 players for over thirty years!
 Where's my respect?

Merilyn gestures to the wall lined with posters of her in
 previous Chigaro productions: "THE CHIGARO GOLD RUSH"; "THE
 GREAT CHIGARO TRAIN HEIST"; "CHIGARO ON ICE ON STAGE".

CHRISTOPHER
 I may be new around here, Merilyn,
 but I can tell... This theatre is
 in desperate need of new blood.

MERILYN
 My blood has never been more ripe!

Christopher's eyes linger at a couple more posters on the
 wall: "THE CHIGARO BERRY PICK"; "DITTIES AT THE KLONDIKE";
 "CARRIE: THE MUSICAL IN CHIGARO". She's been here a while...

CHRISTOPHER
 Listen, I'm sure your blood is
 vastly more robust...

MERILYN
 Poppycock! You think me to be a has-
 been? Washed up? A rotten papaya?
 Spoiled au-jus?

Merilyn waits for Christopher to jump in and assure her she's
 mistaken. Instead, he is typing the word "poppycock" into his
 phone game. Merilyn approaches Christopher menacingly.

MERILYN (CONT'D)

I've lived to see many a theatre director come and go. You're not the first I've quarreled with and you won't be the last. This young and unblemished visage has been the face of the Chigaro showroom for decades. You may think you've struck gold with some LA floozy, but I promise we are not impressed.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - GREEN ROOM - SAME TIME

Walter is admiring Presley from the window, practically drooling.

The green room is a dusty affair made up of couches and expired snacks. No green in sight, apart from some mold.

Zion is sitting on the couch, scratching his crotch and scrolling through his phone. Like father like son.

WALTER

What secret do you think I should tell her first?

Walter collapses into the couch, gushing.

WALTER (CONT'D)

A Hollywood actress in *our* show.
Could you believe it? I feel so alive I could just--

Walter begins to shake uncontrollably, like a child receiving a toy on Christmas. Zion doesn't even look up from his phone, letting this run its course.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Where did your dad find her?

ZION

He saw her on TV.

WALTER

On television!?

Walter revs up to start shaking again, but Zion tosses over his phone with a video playing.

ZION

Wouldn't get too excited.

ON SCREEN: Presley appears in front of a white background. She applies moisturizer all over her face, legs, arms and body. Meanwhile, her voice narrates:

PRESLEY (V.O.)
DeeVa wants to introduce you to
their newest line of moisturizer.
With new minerals and salts for
smoother, softer skin.. And, not
only that, but it's also...

ON SCREEN: Presley finishes applying all the moisturizer on her body, but there's still some more left in her palm.

PRESLEY (V.O.)
...totally edible.

ON SCREEN: She licks the moisturizer directly from her hand.

PRESLEY (V.O.)
For when you're applying
moisturizer and take too much. Just
lick up what's leftover and feel
thirty years younger, inside and
out. Problem solved and ingested.

ON SCREEN: Presley applies the moisturizer to her skin, before applying it to an open-faced BLT sandwich. She takes a squeamish bite.

PRESLEY (V.O.)
Not to mention, it's low in
calories and high in fiber.

ON SCREEN: Presenting the various flavors of moisturizer, including Aloe Vera, Lemon/Lime and Honey Mustard.

PRESLEY (V.O.)
Moisturizer has never been so
efficient, and healthy skin has
never tasted this good. DeeVa's new
edible moisturizer. Yum!

The ad comes to an end, with a toll-free number appearing with "call now" urgency. Walter has an idea...

EXT. PAYPHONE - SAME TIME

Presley is still pacing around outside by the payphone.

PRESLEY
Please tell me there's a way out of
this place, Sprock.
(MORE)

PRESLEY (CONT'D)

I've always wanted to slam a payphone but I'd hate for this to be how I realize that dream.

SPROCK (O.S.)

The contract is pretty ironclad, Presley. You signed on to do six months of "The Songs of Chigaro." I mean, sure, you have your standard morality clause, non-exclusivity clause, the Lisa Andrews clause...

PRESLEY

The Lisa Andrews clause?

SPROCK (O.S.)

Oh, that's just something we put in all our theatre contracts. It basically nullifies the contract upon evidence that the theater is or has been haunted. If only we had thought about that before Lisa...

PRESLEY

What happened to Lisa?

SPROCK (O.S.)

Forget I said that.

PRESLEY

And the non-exclusivity clause?

SPROCK (O.S.)

If you were to be offered another role, it opens your current contract up for renegotiation.

PRESLEY

You mean if I can get a role back in LA, I'd be home free?

SPROCK (O.S.)

Exactly.

PRESLEY

Perfect! I'll do anything. Whatever you've got.

SPROCK (O.S.)

I'll see what I can do. In the meantime, keep your eyes peeled for any ghouls or specters.

PRESLEY

Right. Sure thing.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - STAGE - NEXT NIGHT

Another scene from the play. This particular scene takes place in an old saloon, with a table in the center of the stage and old timey music in the background.

Presley is seated at the head of the table, with Walter and Hudson crouched over her. They are planning their journey, delivering some truly awful dialogue.

PRESLEY

That's the plan. We have enough food to last us four weeks on the mountain. All the equipment has been checked. I've informed my husband of our imminent departure via letter. We should be all set.

HUDSON

The time has come to climb Alaska's highest summit. I'm doing this for my own personal validation.

WALTER

And I for my ancestors.

PRESLEY

We all have specific reasons motivating our climb. Yes.

WALTER

And yours? What are you climbing for, Myra?

Presley ponders her answer as Merilyn enters the scene. She struts onto the stage dramatically, delivering a particularly over the top performance. She has something to prove.

MERILYN

But wait! What of I?

Merilyn neglects her proper mark, and instead stands directly in front of the table, blocking Presley from the audience's view. Presley tries moving her head from side to side, but Merilyn is doing everything in her power to overshadow her.

PRESLEY

Out of the question, Nilly. What kind of older sister would I be if I were to put you in harms way.

HUDSON

Mount Chigaro is a perilous
journey, kid.

MERILYN

I can be of great use due to my
studies in cartography.

Presley stand ups and walks to left stage to be visible.

PRESLEY

It is far too dangerous, Nilly.

Merilyn runs to left stage, once again trying to block Presley. But, for her next line, she turns her head and makes direct eye contact with Presley. This is serious.

MERILYN

I will not be left behind.

Presley drops character for a moment.

PRESLEY

(cautiously)

Alright, Nilly. You may join us...

Merilyn turns to the audience, back in character.

MERILYN

Great, I can navigate!

PRESLEY

Alright, just be sure not to
irritate!

No one laughs. Not one person.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - BATHROOM - LATER

Presley sits sullenly on the toilet lid with her head in her hands. The thought of the play's horrible dialogue lingers.

She checks her phone. The voicemail notification has yet to be opened. Her eyes begin to water, when suddenly...

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

Presley jolts up and opens the bathroom door. It's Merilyn, who immediately clocks Presley's teary eyes.

MERILYN

This is no place for you to cry.

PRESLEY

Oh, I know. Sorry, I-

MERILYN

You must find your own spot.

PRESLEY

What?

MERILYN

Each of us have a designated space
to cry. This one is mine.

Merilyn moves Presley out the doorway and into the hall. She slams the door in Presley's face.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - BACK STAGE - CONTINUED

Presley takes a few steps away from the bathroom, taken aback by the sudden sound of yelling coming from that direction.

WALTER

She tries not to let any tears form
to avoid any makeup from smudging.

INSERT: Merilyn staring at herself in the bathroom mirror, essentially yelling with some throaty cry. Her eyes are not participating. It's very unsettling.

WALTER (CONT'D)

It's quite guttural.

PRESLEY

Right.

WALTER

Hey, so I was wondering...

Walter pulls out a bottle of EDIBLE MOISTURIZER.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Would you mind signing this for me?

Walter clicks a pen. He turns the bottle to reveal Presley's picture on the cover, smiling.

PRESLEY

Wow... I thought they had
discontinued this. Isn't it, like,
super toxic?

WALTER

Only for your skin! It's still
perfectly fine to eat!

Presley signs the bottle: "With love, Presley Abbott."
Walter cannot contain his excitement. She loves him!

PRESLEY

I'm just going to step outside and
make a phone call.

Walter nods, trying his best to hold back his tears. Presley walks to the back exit, but before going, she asks:

PRESLEY (CONT'D)

Walter, you haven't happened upon
anything supernatural while working
here, have you?

Walter shakes his head. No.

PRESLEY (CONT'D)

Just... let me know if you find any
cold spots.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - STAGE - SAME TIME

Zion is laying on a dining table in the audience section, scrolling through his phone. However, the sound of grunting, construction and the odd SMASH slowly gets his attention.

ZION

What are you doing, bro? Thought
you were just fixing the pulley.

CUT TO Hudson, who is standing a top a ladder and working on the FLY SYSTEM. The stage is covered in spare parts of equipment from all corners of the production. It's a mess of loose bits and bobs. The pulley remains untouched.

HUDSON

I'll get to it.

ZION

(returns to phone)
Right.

HUDSON

I remember constructing my first
canoe with nothing more than my
hands and a defeathered crane. And
wood, of course. God, the things
you could do in the 90's.

(MORE)

HUDSON (CONT'D)
That was before the titanic ruined
everything.

(beat)

Say, why don't you come give me a
hand. I'll teach you how to use a
screwdriver.

ZION
I'm chilling, bro.
(double takes)
Also, that's a bradawl. Wait, what
are you using a bradawl for?

Hudson just looks at the tool, confused. He grunts.

ZION (CONT'D)
Do you actually know what you're
doing? Or is it *your character*
that's actually good at this stuff.

HUDSON
When I was a boy, in the harsh
Alaskan climate--

Zion stands up and closes the curtains the stage. He then
returns to his table and lays back down.

ZION
Forget I asked.

EXT. PAYPHONE - SAME TIME

Presley approaches the payphone. Though, she realizes she
hadn't brought a quarter.

PRESLEY
Excuse me! Do you have a quarter?

ISAAC AGAPOV (28), a local who minces salmon but not words,
approaches. Without hesitation, he reaches into his cargo
pants pocket and takes out a handful of a dozen quarters.

PRESLEY (CONT'D)
Thanks--

ISAAC
Isaac.

PRESLEY
Thanks Isaac. I'm Presley.

Presley turns around and begins dialing the number. The phone begins to ring. She turns back around and notices Isaac is still standing there. She lowers the phone to talk with him.

PRESLEY (CONT'D)
Oh, I should be good.

ISAAC
Do you want to go out sometime?

PRESLEY
What?

ISAAC
A date. Would you want to?

PRESLEY
Oh, thanks. Thank you. I'm flattered, it's just that-- I don't really plan on sticking around much longer. Tonight's probably my last show, so... I don't really think it would work out. Sorry.

ISAAC
Okay.

Isaac turns around and walks away. The most nonchalant reaction to rejection ever before seen. Presley brings the phone back to her ear.

SPROCK (O.S.)
...and that's why, with a heavy heart, we've decided that we no longer wish to represent you.

Beat.

PRESLEY
What?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. PAYPHONE - MOMENTS LATER

Presley is flabbergasted. She looks around her immediate area in a daze as Srock's muffled rambling is in the background: the nature, the mountain, the beauty and the stupid showroom.

She snaps out of it. As she talks with Srock, she continues to circle the payphone, absolutely abusing the length of the phone chord. She cuts him off:

PRESLEY
You're dropping me? Seriously?

SPROCK (O.S.)
Listen Pres, I spent all day trying
to knab you a gig. I looked high
and low. And then real low. Not
even the Gap wanted you. The
freaking Gap, Presley!

PRESLEY
What are you trying to say, Srock?
It's hard finding me a role? So
what? It's always like that.

SPROCK (O.S.)
That's what I'm saying, Pres. It *is*
always like that. "The Songs of
Chigaro" was the first thing to
bite in months. And that's a dinner
theatre show at an Alaskan
Wilderness Resort!

PRESLEY
You said that you felt good about
this! That this could be my break!

SPROCK (O.S.)
Darling, you'll be lucky to get a
review written in the local paper.

PRESLEY
There's something here! Please! You
have to believe me!

SPROCK (O.S.)
Geez, you sound just like Lisa.

PRESLEY

Wait! Don't give up yet, okay? I'm getting on the next flight out of here. Screw the contract!

Presley goes to slam the payphone, but the receiver cord is tangled around the machine. The handset won't reach the dock. She drops the phone and lets it dangle.

There goes another dream.

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - BACK STAGE - CONTINUED

Presley storms into the showroom, her face forming some disconcerting attempt at a smile. Everything is fine?

Presley approaches the CLOSET. She opens the door and finds Christopher curled up in a ball, crying.

CHRISTOPHER

Hey! Find your own spot!

She reaches past Christopher and grabs her jacket, closing the door behind her. Presley walks back to the exit, but Walter is now standing in her way.

WALTER

We have another show in an hour, you know? Where are you going? Can I come with?

PRESLEY

I'm going back to Los Angeles.

WALTER

But... you can't!

Presley jolts forward, but Walter awkwardly blocks her.

WALTER (CONT'D)

We need you Presley! You're the only one that can save the show!

PRESLEY

I'm not *that* good, Walter.

WALTER

Did those words on the edible moisturizer mean nothing to you?

PRESLEY

What?

WALTER

The bottle! The one I definitely
didn't lose already. You said you
love me. Were those just words?

PRESLEY

Yes! Absolutely they were!

Presley turns around and walks towards the stage.

WALTER

Presley, wait!

(beat)

Are you mad at me?

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - STAGE - CONTINUED

Hudson is busy tugging at the pulley, raising the mountain cutout from the ground, as Presley enters sternly. The rest of the stage is still a mess. Walter follows.

WALTER

Hudson, stop her!

Hudson uses his wilted wood from earlier to pin the rope to the ground and keep the mountain hoisted. He summersaults and leaps across stage to block Presley. No questions asked.

PRESLEY

Seriously?

WALTER

Why are you doing this? Why do you
want to break up our family? Why
are there so many loose screws on
the floor?

HUDSON

I'm fixing it.

If this chaos wasn't enough, Merilyn struts across the stage with an over-the-top twirl. She's weirdly proud with herself.

MERILYN

Notice anything different about me?

WALTER

Presley is trying to leave!

MERILYN

Brilliant! Ta-ta! What's with all
the stray wiring?

HUDSON
I'm fixing it.

PRESLEY
I don't belong here!

MERILYN
Oh, I see. You think you're so much better than us, don't you. Los Angeles starlit slumming it with the Chigaro players.

PRESLEY
I'm not even from LA! I'm from Baltimore! I moved to LA two years ago and all I have to show for it is a crummy ad and this show! And, you know what, I have to be better than that!

MERILYN
Ta-ta-ta, then! An extra for good riddance.

WALTER
You can't let her leave, Mom--

Walter immediately covers his mouth, realizing his mistake. There's an incredibly awkward beat as Merilyn slowly shifts focus from Presley to Walter. The devil's horns are out.

MERILYN
What did you just call me?

WALTER
(stammering)
Dom? Short for Dominic?

Merilyn raises her arm, her hand opened like using the force.

PRESLEY
What is this? What's happening?

Walter begrudgingly approaches the open hand, eventually walking into her grasp and allowing her to grab him by the throat. He begins to emit the sound of being chocked.

MERILYN
Why would you call me that? Am I your mother?

WALTER
No--

MERILYN
Do I look like a mother?

Beat.

MERILYN (CONT'D)
I DO NOT LOOK LIKE A MOTHER.

Hudson takes a step in, about to confront Merilyn.

MERILYN (CONT'D)
Oh, relax you big lug. I'm not
applying any pressure. He's
choosing to make the noises.

PRESLEY
What? Why?

WALTER
First rule of improv.

PRESLEY
Oh, Christ.

Christopher enters, wiping away any residual tears.

CHRISTOPHER
What's all the commotion? Who
unscrewed all the lightbulbs?

HUDSON
I'm fixing it!

Hudson marches over to his ladder and gets back to work.

CHRISTOPHER
Jesus, Merilyn, let the boy go.

Merilyn releases her grasp. Walter bows.

WALTER
And scene.

MERILYN
Presley wants out. I'm back in.

CHRISTOPHER
I told you, Merilyn. You're blood
isn't right for the part. I want
Presley's blood.

Presley shoots a confused look.

MERILYN

How many times must I tell you?
I've never looked better.

Merilyn poses, as Hudson fixes the spotlight atop of her. Christopher begins observing Merilyn's face with deep concern. There's something wrong...

CHRISTOPHER

Um... Merilyn? What have you done
to your face?

MERILYN

This? Could you believe it's all
natural?
(beat)
Could you?

CHRISTOPHER

Merilyn, you're breaking out...

MERILYN

What?

Merilyn takes out a pocket mirror and looks at her reflection. Her face is covered in a putrid red rash.

WALTER

What did you do?

Merilyn, panicking, empties out her purse. Among its contents is the edible moisturizer. She picks it up and turns the bottle over, revealing Presley's picture and the taunting message: "With Love, Presley."

MERILYN

YOU UNREMARKABLE BITCH!

Merilyn lunges towards Presley. Presley back peddles, accidentally knocking into the hanging mountain cutout. This causes Hudson's makeshift stopper to come loose...

The rope swirls. The lights fall. The fly system comes crashing down. Presley falls through the backdrop. Hudson's ladder is knocked over. Walter is hit by the cutout again. And the stage curtains come tumbling down. A chain reaction of pure chaos.

All that's left is one spotlight, which rests on Merilyn's ghoulish face.

ISAAC (O.S.)

Whoa. Is this theatre haunted?

CUT TO the audience area, where Isaac has seemingly been standing for an unspecified amount of time. Zion is still laying on a dining table. He takes a picture of the pandemonium with his phone. Cheese!

Presley springs up from the hole in the backdrop.

PRESLEY

Can you testify to that?

ISAAC

Okay.

Presley runs off the stage, gives Isaac a kiss on the cheek and exits the building.

CHRISTOPHER

What are you doing here, Isaac?

ISAAC

Heard it was Presley's last show.
Came to watch.

Christopher sighs.

CHRISTOPHER

You might have just missed it.

EXT. LAKESIDE - LATER

Presley is standing on a massive rock by a gorgeous lake, trying to get a signal on her phone. Mount Chigaro is visible in the distance, with clouds covering its peak.

She gets a signal. She begins searching for flights back to LA, but can't stop staring at the voicemail notification from her parents. Finally, she decides to play it:

MOM (O.S.)

Hey, hun. It's mom.

DAD (O.S.)

And dad! Why do you always do that?
Maybe I'll start calling her myself
so I can get a proper introduction.

MOM (O.S.)

Proper introduction? What? Are you
some kind of superstar?

DAD (O.S.)

I could be!

MOM (O.S.)

There's only one superstar in this family and we're leaving her a voicemail right now, so shut it. Sorry about that, hun. Dad's being cantankerous. Anyways, just wanted to check in, see how everything's going. How's LA?

DAD (O.S.)

You find any work yet?

MOM (O.S.)

Harold!

DAD (O.S.)

What? That's a pertinent question!

MOM (O.S.)

Listen, just call us back when you have the chance. Dream big, hun. We love you.

The message ends. Presley hasn't been able to take her eyes off the mountain. How it effortlessly touches the sky.

CHRISTOPHER

You haven't been here long enough to see the peak, have you?

Presley turns and sees that Christopher is approaching.

PRESLEY

The peak?

CHRISTOPHER

Mount Chigaro's peak. It's usually covered by clouds, as you'd imagine. Only on the clearest days can you really see it.

PRESLEY

Don't try to convince me to stay.

CHRISTOPHER

If you want to go, you can go. I won't stop you.

PRESLEY

Great. Bye.

CHRISTOPHER

Okay, I'm bluffing. There's something special about you.

(MORE)

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
We all see it. Why do you think
Merilyn is so threatened? In
theatre, there's no greater
compliment.

PRESLEY
Thought I saw it too. Now, I'm not
so sure.
(beat)
I'm starting to think I really do
belong here, instead of out there.

Presley throws a pebble into the lake.

CHRISTOPHER
So that's a lake. And we're facing
north. Los Angeles is off the coast
of the Pacific and south.

PRESLEY
Thank you for clearing that up.

CHRISTOPHER
Listen, we have a theatre of nearly
a dozen people expecting a night of
laughs, music and fish. You
wouldn't want to let them down,
would you? What do you say?

Presley sighs. She takes one last look of the mountain.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THE CHIGARO SHOWROOM - STAGE - NIGHT

The cardboard cutout mountain stands tall in the back of the set. It's no longer attached to the broken pulley; instead, Merilyn is sitting behind it to help prop it up. Her face is covered in bandages and cream to mitigate her grotesque rash. She sits there, disappointed, drowning her sorrows in a bottle of edible moisturizer. At least it's safe to eat.

The stage is still worse for wear, but the show must go on. The set has a nighttime atmosphere, both purposefully and because the lights have broken.

Zion is on stage, holding a piece of parchment in his hands. He stares off stage, delivering his lines unenthusiastically.

ZION
That's it, eh? You were just going
to leave a note for me, your
husband?

Finally, Presley enters the scene. A true star.

PRESLEY

I need to do this, Frank. I've got to climb Mount Chigaro.

ZION

Have? You don't *have* to do anything. Who knows what could go wrong up there. What if you don't make it-

PRESLEY

(talking about the peak)
I'll make it.

ZION

-back. What if you never make it back, Myra? I don't give a darn about some summit. I care about us. Here. This relationship is *my* summit.

PRESLEY

Oh, you don't understand.

ZION

You're right, I don't understand. I wish there were some way you could explain it more easy...

Cue the piano. Commence the "I Want" song...

PRESLEY

*Simple Myra Sanderson,
Chigaro born and sourdough bread,
Never stepped a foot outside town,
Alaskan from toe to head.*

ZION

Same as I.

PRESLEY

*Dickinson's corner shop,
For a drink there's Gary's saloon,
We have Milton's field of crops, oh
Heard the call of every each loon.*

ZION

What's the point you're trying to make, Myra? It sounds to me like there's something you want...

The music crescendo's...

PRESLEY

*I've seen it all, seen it before,
I seek beyond metaphorical doors,
Mount Chigaro, it's calling me,
Climbing a mountain symbolically.*

ZION

I'll literally kill myself.

PRESLEY

*So my dear, goodbye for now,
My answers lay within the clouds,
For if I stay, I'd ponder of,
What this small town city looks
like... from above.*

Walter and Hudson appear on opposite sides of the stage.
Marilyn contributes her vocals from behind the mountain.

MERILYN, WALTER & HUDSON

*From above, from above,
See the city from above,
From above, from above,
Destiny is up to us.*

PRESLEY

From above!

ZION

*What of love? What of love?
Was my love never enough?
What of love? What of love?
Oh Myra please don't die.*

PRESLEY

*What does this small town city look
like... from above?*

Presley's big song comes to a close and the music fades out.
She has no expectations towards an audience reaction.

But, to her surprise, there's a soft clap coming from the audience. She looks and sees that Isaac is in the front row, giving her an earnest clap. It's not sarcastic, it's not overly gratuitous, it's a simple unabashed clap to show that he enjoyed the musical number.

Presley smiles. This time, it's even a little bit earnest.

PRESLEY (CONT'D)

I'm going to climb this mountain.

Doubtful. But the sentiment is there.

END OF SHOW