

Scene 1

Enter CON MAN. Rings door bell.

MARIGOLD

Yes?

CON MAN

Good morning, Ma'am. I am with M.M.E...

MARIGOLD

M.M.E.? I don't think—

CON MAN

We are fairly new on the island, but our work here has already given us a strong sense of community involvement. Now the reason I have called on you... But first, let me make a guess that you have lived in this lovely house for quite a long time?

MARIGOLD

Oh, yes—a long time.

CON MAN

I couldn't help notice the lovely flower beds. You must have an excellent gardener.

MARIGOLD

Well, the boy next door does the little bit of lawn I have, but I do all the rest myself.

CON MAN

You do? Really?

MARIGOLD

Yes.

CON MAN

And every time you step out of doors—to know you have created such beauty...

(Pause.)

Now, unfortunately, it falls to me as a representative of M.M.E. to have to impart a little bad news.

MARIGOLD

Not my daughter!

CON MAN

No, my dear lady, nothing like that. But I'm afraid there is a rather serious problem with your chimney.

My what? MARIGOLD

Your chimney! CON MAN

Yes, that's what I thought you said but I—[didn't think there was anything wrong with my chimney.] MARIGOLD

And you hadn't noticed anything unusual, right? CON MAN

Yes. I mean, no. MARIGOLD

Well, if you don't mind my pointing out a few things, Mrs... CON MAN

Marigold. MARIGOLD

Yes, Mrs. Marigold. So please allow me to show you what I mean. CON MAN

It looks the same as it always did. MARIGOLD

Ah, yes, but I'm afraid the structure has been much weakened. CON MAN
(Takes out a telescope.)

This instrument was specially designed for M.M.E.

What is this M.M.E. again? MARIGOLD

Mortar Mice Exterminators Inc. We rid you of your mortar mice. CON MAN

I've never heard of mortar mice. MARIGOLD

Many people haven't. We believe they came from the mainland on a load of used bricks, and they have since become quite a concern. CON MAN
(Looks through telescope.)

I would like you to take a look.
(Hands her the telescope.)

Notice how the mortar appears smooth in some places, but rough in others where they have been chewing. I suspect, in a few weeks' time it will all appear rough and crumbly. And you see that whitish

mark, third row from the top? That's where they've been chewing right into the stonework.

MARIGOLD

I don't know what to think of all this.

CON MAN

I hate of you sitting in your living room one windy evening, and suddenly those bricks drop down into the fireplace.

MARIGOLD

Oh, dear.

CON MAN

And bricks have even been known to fall unexpectedly right through the ceiling.

MARIGOLD

No!

(Beat.)

There was a loose brick a few years ago, I remember... But I thought my husband fixed it.

CON MAN

Your husband?

MARIGOLD

Yes, he died two years ago. I live alone now.

CON MAN

Oh, I'm so very, very sorry.

DAISY ROSE

(Enters.)

Hello, Mrs. Marigold!

MARIGOLD

Hi, Daisy Rose!

DAISY ROSE

Is there somethin' wrong with your roof?

MARIGOLD

No, but my chimney... This man says my chimney is being attacked by mortar mice.

DAISY ROSE

Mice? You have mice? I hate mice! You've got to do something about that, Mrs. Marigold. I don't want no mice wanderin' over here and campin' out in my basement. Have you caught any?

MARIGOLD

No, I haven't—[I didn't even know I had any until this man...]

DAISY ROSE

Did ya see any?

MARIGOLD

No, I haven't actually seen any—[mice around here for years.]

CON MAN

Nor are you likely to, Mrs. Marigold. Mortar mice are strictly nocturnal.

DAISY ROSE

Then how can you tell?

MARIGOLD

He's pointed out where they've been chewing. And also that white mark.

DAISY ROSE

What white mark? Oh, that. I thought that was bird poop.

MARIGOLD

Daisy Rose!

DAISY ROSE

And you're in the business of fixin' chimneys?

CON MAN

Yes, indeed, ma'am. Pest extermination, structural repair and protection.

DAISY ROSE

Maybe we should have old Farley come over and give it a good sweeping. He's got all the equipment. What say, Mrs. Marigold?

MARIGOLD

Well, you may be right, I haven't had anybody look after the chimney since my husband... It just never occurred to me... Perhaps I should have had it cleaned.

CON MAN

A chimney sweep may or may not have spotted the damage. But, not to worry, that's what we are here for. M.M.E. at your service.

DAISY ROSE

You sweep chimneys, too?

CON MAN

Yes, indeed, Ms. Daisy Rose. Structural repair, extermination, protection, and cleaning.

DAISY ROSE
Did ya ask about the cost?

MARIGOLD
No, but I was just going to.
(To CON MAN.)
I'm on a rather limited pension.

CON MAN
Well, then, I shall give you my very best rate.
(Calculates.)
For our full service, a total of only \$399.

MARIGOLD
That much?

CON MAN
We do have a seniors discount... although I can hardly believe that you—[are old enough to qualify for that.]

MARIGOLD
Oh, yes, I am!

CON MAN
Well, then... with the seniors discount—\$359.

DAISY ROSE
Does that include taxes?

CON MAN
Indeed it does, ma'am.

DAISY ROSE
It's important to find out about guarantees for the work.

CON MAN
Absolutely unconditional. If the mice ever return, we will do whatever is necessary without any further charge.

DAISY ROSE
Hm, maybe you should also find out when—[you have to pay for the job.]

CON MAN
Of course it's important that the work should start immediately.

MARIGOLD
Oh, dear, what a worry.
(To DAISY ROSE.)
So you think I should go ahead?

DAISY ROSE

Well, that's got to be your decision, honey.

MARIGOLD

(To CON MAN.)

And it would only be \$359?

CON MAN

Not a penny more.

(Beat.)

I would, of course, need the check before starting the job.

DAISY ROSE

Why does she have to pay in advance? She aint goin' nowhere.

CON MAN

Company policy, ma'am, company policy. I have no control over that.

MARIGOLD

Well... I suppose I must. I'll go and get your cheque.

ELAINE

(Enters.)

Hello, Daisy Rose.

DAISY ROSE

Hiya, Elaine. Watch out for the mice.

(Exits.)

ELAINE

What?

(To CON MAN.)

What's going on?

CON MAN

Ah, yes, well... I'll just nip over to the truck and get my equipment. Parked it down the road a ways.

(Exits.)

Mrs. MARIGOLD is writing a cheque.

ELAINE

Hello, Mother, are you ready? You did remember our appointment at the bank, didn't you?

MARIGOLD

How couldn't I? You phoned three times to remind me.

ELAINE

Who was that guy who took off the minute I came along?