Listen to the Snow

A play in one act

by
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STORY OF THE PLAY

This play deals with the heartache and the trauma of being old, being alone in the world and forgotten. Mrs. Delmonico, a former actress, lives in a tenement building in New York. She exists mostly in her imagination and takes her torment out on her neighbor, Mrs. Quinn. They are unable to get along in any way until this Christmas Eve when Mr. Gartch, one of the roomers whom they have never met, happens upon the scene. He becomes their catalyst - motivating them to look at things differently. Because of his being so positive and hopeful, and because he is another human being adrift on their island with them, they become adjusted to their life, deriving pleasure out of simple things - even a simple thing like. . . listening to the snow. About 40 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 m, 2 w)

MRS. QUINN: A wide-eyed woman of about 72, floor manager of seventh floor. Quiet and of a Southern *(Missouri)* background, she keeps to herself and is strong in her opinions.

MRS. DELMONICO: A once handsome woman now in her 70s., She was a professional actress and dresses in costumes and wigs from her old roles. She could be of British origin, still retaining an accent.

MR. GARTCH: A pleasant man, also in his 70s. A lonely Irishman with lots of stories and good will for all.

SCENE

An ancient dilapidated tenement house in the middle of New York, seven stories up, December 24th, late 1990s.

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(AT RISE: A dimly lit hall splits the stage on the seventh floor of an apartment tenement building in New York City on the 24th day of December. A RAGGED MAN appears on the stairs, looks furtively around, then quickly looks through the garbage pails. From DELMONICO's room, we hear the strains of "Warsaw Concerto" being played loudly. The ragged man takes the pail and leaves quickly. As the ragged man first enters the lights come up in one of the rooms off the hall, MRS. QUINN, a wide-eyed woman in her 70s, is painting on canvas, dressed in what appears to be an old army uniform jacket over her house dress, that is splattered and daubed with paint. She is interrupted in her painting by the sudden, loud music and crosses to the hall, goes to Delmonico's door, knocks loudly and is ignored.)

MRS. QUINN: *(After a few seconds.)* I know you're in there, Mrs. Delmonico. Phonographs don't change themselves.

MRS. DELMONICO: *(Unseen, shouting over the music.)* Such a pity, too, Mrs. Wiggs. It's a bother having to do that myself.

QUINN: I'll be calling the police if you don't turn the music down.

DELMONICO: *(Appearing in her room, dressed in cast off bits of costume and waving an empty goblet of wine.)* Tell them to bring their own bottle, dearie.

QUINN: You don't think I will, do you?

DELMONICO: Haven't given it much thought.

QUINN: You'll be in a fine fix if I do. It has to be turned down--now!

DELMONICO: *(Turning it down.)* All right, already! *(Silence.)* That terrible hush you're hearing is King Tut's tomb!

QUINN: Better King Tut's tomb than Radio City Music Hall!

(SFX: We hear the faint city sounds in the streets below.)

DELMONICO: Interspersed, I might add, by the sound of the all-American Bronx.
QUINN: That I can live with. At least, it changes from day to day.
DELMONICO: Not so's anyone can tell, it doesn't!
QUINN: With Christmas tomorrow, you'd think you'd play some Christmasey music.

(QUINN listens at the door a moment, head cocked, then goes into her room, closing door, tries to go back to painting, stops, half-expecting to hear the record again, but hearing, as though amplified, the city sounds and the voices of the tenants in the building. After awhile, DELMONICO rises, gets her garbage pail, goes into the hall, putting it down by her own door, then steps over to Quinn's door and listens before knocking on it hard.)

DELMONICO: I know you're in there, Mrs. Wiggs. I can hear you breathing hard. Eeeeeeeahhhh! Eeeeeeeahhhh! Like a locomotive waiting at a train station.
QUINN: I should be calling someone else for you, not the police at all!
DELMONICO: What a pleasant thought, a white van to ride in! Or would you think a black one with white sidewalls, Mrs. Wiggs?
QUINN: *(Opening the door and peering out.)* My name isn't Wiggs. It's Quinn!
DELMONICO: *(Sniffing.)* Have you noticed the brackishness in the air out here, lately? Such a nasty odor!
QUINN: You're always saying that.
DELMONICO: I'm always smelling that.
QUINN: I'm tired of hearing it.
DELMONICO: Burnt toast and mayonnaise jars!
QUINN: Indeed! You and your imagination!
DELMONICO: And the light's so stingy a person can't see anything clearly. How'll my friends see to come up these stairs?
QUINN: *(Coming out.)* Your friends, now? The only friends coming up those stairs will be bill collectors.

DELMONICO: With good luck, they'll fall down the stairs and hurt themselves and sue old Snowplow.
QUINN: His name's Knoblau!
DELMONICO: Disgraceful old hallway--dank and darksome!
QUINN: *(Going to DELMONICO.)* And what is there to see, I ask you? If that's all you have to do is stand out here and babble about stingy lights

(SFX: Sirens below almost drown out her voice; she waits until they diminish.)

QUINN: *(Cont'd.)* …you might as well go back in, because that's the only light this hall's allowed.
DELMONICO: Which is about the wattage of Snowplow's brains. You can tell him I'm giving my notice the end of this month.
QUINN: Which I've done now, every month for a year. One of these days he'll move you out and where'd you be then, I ask you?
DELMONICO: Out, out, damned spot! Will this hallway never be clean?
QUINN: *(Crossing toward her door.)* You're balmy, Mrs. Delmonico. Balmy!
DELMONICO: Balmy enough to see that peculiar and oppressive thing on the stairway, Mrs. Quinnnnnnnnn...like something out of the Phantom of the Operaaaaaa--just hudddddddling there, waiting to pounce on someone!
QUINN: *(Turning around.)* There you go again!
DELMONICO: Clutching his cape, he is. Gaunt and leering...and waitinnnnnnnng!
QUINN: *(Going into her apartment, calling out.)* If you don't stop that right now, I'm definitely calling the men with the white coats, d'you hear me?
DELMONICO: That'd be a pretty sight, Mrs. Quinine, you going down all those steps past Monsieur Morte...just to get to the phone. And assuming the men with the white coats got by, they'd be driven back by the stench of this rotting old carcass of a building. Whewwww!
QUINN: You're terrible--just terrible!

End of Freeview

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