

Lobby Card

by

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Cast of Characters

Mare Vogl/Mary Rodell.....actress  
Penelope Oxenberg.....psychiatrist  
Tristan Weld.....associate assistant hotel manager / doctor  
James LeFavre.....hotel manager / doctor  
Lance Kincaid.....janitor / orderly

Place

Hotel lobby and residences / rehab center conference rooms

Time

The present

Synopsis

MARE VOGL, an actress, is being committed to a sobriety program after years of substance abuse. It's gotten to the point where her illusions are so vivid she can't quite differentiate between reality and fantasy. She plays out her last moment of intoxication in what she's convinced is a swank Riviera hotel.

SCENE: THE ORNATE IF STUFFY HOTEL LOBBY ONE SOME SEEMINGLY WELL-MONEYED COAST SOMEWHERE. MASSIVE POTTED PLANTS. SOOTHING, CHAMPAGNE-COLORED DECOR. FAR ABOVE, A CHANDELIER, LIKE A FALLING ANGEL, ILLUMINES THE EVER-PRESENT MARBLE. A RIDICULOUSLY GRAND STAIRCASE FADES INTO THE PROSCENUM AT THE BASE OF WHICH A LARGE COMPASS RELIEF IS STRIKINGLY CLEAR. LIGHT IS SHIFTING AS THE PLAY PROGRESSES--FROM NIGHT TO DAY. OFF, THERE'S A HINT OF OCEAN WAVES THROUGHOUT.

AT RISE: IT'S LATE AND THE LIGHTS ARE LOW. THE CLEANER GOES AROUND WITH A DUST PAN AND BROOM THROUGHOUT.

(LANCE KINCAID, the NIGHT JANITOR, cleans around the sofa end tables, pockets his rag, then picks up his cleaning kit. HE crosses to the paintings and dusts. HE stops and does a sort of thumbnail sketch and shakes his head.)

LANCE

(leans on the piano)

Yessir, they come and go, like minutes on the clock. And don't they repeat like notes on a keyboard. They're all like old songs, aren't they? You know--the ones that get stuck in your head. That's what they're like. I was out front earlier and I saw this fella with another fella on his arm. And they were young, and I don't care, you know, but the town was theirs tonight. And they were laughing it up the way young men do, don't you know. And as they pass they look in here and they smile. I'm sure they can afford a place like this--especially at their age. But soon enough the nights get darker, don't you think? And being that young soon leaves you for something else. And it ain't the day.

(sits at the piano, begins to play)

It ain't the day. I came here and checked in like that--a young man, with the world waiting. But don't feel sorry for me: it's not like my dad wasn't an uptown surgeon and my mother an adjunct professor of economics. Places like this don't care. I came for the weekend, and stayed.

(stops playing)

And stayed.

(O.S. VOICES rise, and LANCE turns to watch the TRISTAN enter with an extremely inebriated MARE VOGL draped over his shoulder. THEY cross to the sofa.)

TRISTAN

(seeing Lance)

Good evening, Lance. Have you seen Mr. Lefavre?

LANCE

Not since dinner. You need help, doc?

TRISTAN

(leading)

Ok, miss... Just over here... Nice comfy sofa.

(calling)

Mr. Lefavre! If you could, please. I need some help here.

JAMES (O.S.)

Coming! A moment, please!

TRISTAN

Mr. Kincaid, perhaps a pillow?

(LANCE crosses and props up some pillows. MARE mumbles something aside, staggering and stumbling, trying to maintain. TRISTAN sets her down, propping up pillows but she falls over.)

LANCE

She doesn't look good.

TRISTAN

Long night.

LANCE

Long day!

(JAMES enters with a flourish, crosses to the sofas.)

JAMES

My goodness, what on earth happened here?

TRISTAN

Don't know, sir. I believe she's a bit inebriated.

JAMES

Clearly.

(to MARE)

Miss, can you hear me?

(MARE grunts.)

JAMES (CONT'D)

That's a yes, wouldn't you say, Tristan?

TRISTAN

I would, Mr. Lefavre. Or a solid maybe.

JAMES

Do you recognize her? Is she a guest?

(off his shrug, then to MARE)

Miss? Are you staying with us? Are you a guest here?

(MARE is coming around. She sits up, eyes both men. She attempts to sit up, falls back.)

TRISTAN

Must've been one helluva party.

JAMES

Yes.

(to MARE)

Miss, do you need us to call a cab for you? Are you staying here?

MARE

(slur)

I was thinking of getting a room. Is there one?

JAMES

Do you have a name? What is your name, miss?

(SHE stares at them with dagger-eyes, first to JAMES then to TRISTAN.)

MARE

(incredulously)

Don't know you know me?

(TRISTAN and JAMES exchange glances.)

JAMES

I can't say that I do.

(to TRISTAN)

Do you recognize this you lady, Tristan?

TRISTAN

I'm afraid I don't, sir.

JAMES

Should we know you, miss?

MARE

I'm Mare Vogl, goddamnit!

(off their blank stares)

The actor!

JAMES

Yes, of course. Welcome to the Regency, Mrs. Vogl.

MARE

Miss.

(side-glance to TRISTAN)

You had it right the first time.

JAMES

Of course.

(to TRISTAN)

Tristan, I wonder if you could get Ms. Vogl a glass of water?

TRISTAN

(exiting)

Absolutely.

MARE

Make that a bourbon, kid! Neat!

(TRISTAN eyes JAMES.)

JAMES

Just water, Tristan.

TRISTAN

Yes, sir.

(HE exists. JAMES sits on the opposite end of the sofa. HE crosses his legs, examines MARE.)

MARE

What? Never been in the presence of someone famous before?

JAMES

No, we get a lot of celebrities here.

MARE

Yeah, well, I'm an actress not a celebrity.

(noticing LANCE)

What's he staring at?

JAMES

I don't think he's staring at anything. I could ask him to clean elsewhere.

(to LANCE)

Mr. Kincaid, I wonder if you can take your kit to the game room for now?

LANCE

Yes, of course, Mr. LeFavre.

(LANCE begins to exit, side-stepping TRISTAN entering, with a tall glass of water.)

MARE

Oh, it's fine. He can stay. Let him stare. They all stare eventually. I honestly don't mind. He has work to do.

(JAMES nods at the LANCE, who continues working on the other side of the room.)

(TRISTAN hands MARE the glass of water.)

TRISTAN

This will help.

(SHE drinks then emphatically spits it out.)

MARE

What the hell is this?



TRISTAN

Water. You asked for water, no?

MARE

No one ever just wants water, kid! Do I look like I need a glass of water or a glass of gin?

JAMES

Mrs. Vogl--

MARE

Ms! It's Ms. There is no mister, there never was a mister, there never will be a mister!

JAMES

Very well, Ms. Vogl. Do you have somewhere to stay tonight?

MARE

Do I not have a reservation here?

JAMES

No, I don't believe so. I could comp a room for you. You could check out in the morning.

(MARE fishes through her clutch, pulls out a credit card.)

MARE

If there is a room, just put it on this.

JAMES

No, I insist.

MARE

Just do it!

(JAMES takes the credit card and crosses to the desk. TRISTAN sits on the opposite end of the sofa. MARE shoots him a glance and he smiles, and she rolls her eyes and looks away.)

TRISTAN

I remember your movie now.

(SHE grunts.)

TRISTAN (CONT'D)

The one that came out last year--what was it?

MARE

There were two.

TRISTAN

The one with the hearse.

MARE

They all had hearses. What they hell do you think the movie business is all about, young man? Hearses!

(off his aside)

What are you, some kind of actor?

TRISTAN

Not really. Never really thought about it before.

MARE

How long have you been doing whatever it is you do here?

(beat)

What do you do here besides sober up artistes on lush couches?

TRISTAN

I take care of the hotel--when the manager isn't on the floor. It's my job to know everything about everyone at any given time.

MARE

Is that even possible? How can you know who's coming and going around here? So many faces.

TRISTAN

I manage.

(TRISTAN sees JAMES crossing with a printout and ledger.)

JAMES

Everything is in order. If I can just get you to sign here we can get you to your room. One night was it?

MARE

(signing)

Maybe more, if that's alright.

JAMES

I'm sure we can make accommodations.

(to TRISTAN)

Tristan, I wonder if you can assist in turning down Ms. Vogl's room? Number 201.

TRISTAN

Right away, sir.

(TRISTAN exits. JAMES lingers.)

JAMES

It won't be a moment, Ms. Vogl.

MARE

That's what all men say right before they leave. "It won't be a moment, Mary."

(off LEFAVRE'S stare)

Mary. That's my actual name. Mary Rodell. And yet men seemed to seek out women name Mary, as if it were something cheap, just the name of the Lord's mother. Back where I come from, what about where you come from?

(beat, off his shrug)

Cottonwood Falls. That's in Kansas. A hayseed place in Chase County. I don't suppose any one living here knows anything about counties, much less Kansas.

JAMES

I've heard of it. Kansas, that is.

MARE

From the Wizard of Oz.

JAMES

Yes, of course.

MARE

But they are people there, young man, in this Cottonwood Falls. In Kansas. Places in cities. In towns.

(looking around, gesturing)

This? What is this, after all? All hotels are the same place. They are for passing through mindless middleclass people.

TRISTAN

I'm gonna have to stop you there, miss Vogl. This is more than that. When you come to this hotel you're stepping into glamor--

MARE

I step in to glamor everyday, young man.

TRISTAN

Yeah, but, Ms. Vogl, the kind of glamor I'm referring to--

MARE

Isn't available for the rest of the world.

(TRISTAN gets up, neatens his jacket and tie.)

TRISTAN

I'm going to check on your room.

(MARE waves him off as he exists. The LANCE lingers near the massive potted tree. HE shoots a few glances at MARE, then admires his handiwork.)

LANCE

(hands on hips)

Yeah, this one.

(MARE glances around, lands on the LANCE.)

MARE

Pardon me?

LANCE

This tree. And the other one.

MARE

What about it?

LANCE

It came from when Bonaparte retreated to Egypt. Well, not this one specifically but it's the same route.

MARE

That so?

LANCE

It is.

MARE

And what are you? The hotel historian or something? The working class night reader filling his mind of useless facts?

LANCE

I suppose I am. How is that any different than being an actor?

MARE

I've known men--real men--who've played at being better janitors, bub. Men who've actually played Bonaparte.

LANCE

I guess that's true. I don't get out to the pictures too much these days, so I wouldn't really know. I mean, no one does, what with the plague and everything.

MARE

Plague's over. Do you see me wearing a mask over here?

(off his glance)

There is no plague. There never was a plague.

(beat)

What do they pay you?

LANCE

Oh, I do okay. Enough to get by.

MARE

That tells me exactly nothing.

LANCE

I do okay, Ms. Vogl.

MARE

So you were listening?

(off his shrug)

To the conversation earlier. You know who I am.

LANCE

I do. You're a lot shorter in real life. But I've seen you at the premieres at night. I go every year. Been going for, damn, I guess thirty years now.

MARE  
Is that so?

LANCE  
It is.

MARE  
Were you imagining yourself up there? Or walking that red carpet maybe just once?  
(distantly)  
Just once. You don't need more than that.  
(pointedly)  
But you want more than that. You need more than that.

LANCE  
Can I get you anything, Ms. Vogl?

(SHE dismisses. LANCE waters a tree. HE doesn't look up as TRISTAN approaches.)

TRISTAN  
Mr. Kincaid, got a min?

(THEY pull aside.)

TRISTAN (CONT'D)  
Let's not engage Ms. Vogl at this time.

LANCE  
Of course.

TRISTAN  
She's under some duress, I suppose.

LANCE  
That's an understatement!

TRISTAN  
It is. So maybe move the cleaning to the elevators?

LANCE  
Done that already. Flipped a coin. It was the first thing on my list.

TRISTAN

Ok, then how about the grand portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Poldark?

LANCE

Dusted that yesterday evening. I do that once a week--on Wednesdays.

(HE pulls out a small notebook from his breast pocket, flips through, checks something off with a chewed-on pencil.)

LANCE (CONT'D)

(showing TRISTAN)

See? Right there.

(reading)

Wednesday. Dust the portraits.

(HE flicks the notebook back into his pocket.)

LANCE (CONT'D)

Today's Thursday, right?

TRISTAN

It is.

LANCE

There you go.

TRISTAN

Ok, then how about the second floor gallery?

LANCE

How about the second floor gallery?

TRISTAN

Is that on the list?

LANCE

Are you questioning my work ethic, Tristan?

TRISTAN

No! No, not at all. It's just that, well, we're in the presence of a star--

LANCE

Who's not shining particularly bright tonight, you have to admit.

TRISTAN

Be that as it may, she's a guest--

LANCE

Who doesn't seem to have anywhere to go.

TRISTAN

But now she does. Now she does, Mr. Kincaid.

(THEY glance at MARE, who's nodding off on the sofa. TRISTAN leads the LANCE toward the elevators.)

TRISTAN (CONT'D)

So let's respect that.

LANCE

Are you going to be able to get her upstairs?

TRISTAN

I think we can manage.

LANCE

I think there are wheelchairs in the basement.

(off his stare)

I'm just saying! She's kind checked out, Tris, and you're gonna need to clear her out of here before the paparazzi shows up, right?

TRISTAN

That's a good call. Can you go grab one? There's good fellow.

LANCE

(hands TRISTAN his broom)

Watch my stuff.

(LANCE exits. TRISTAN collects the JANITOR's kit, wheels it aside. He rejoins the passed-out MARE.)

TRISTAN

Ms. Vogl?

(Beat. SHE stirs and SNORES, kicks off her shoes, curls up.)



TRISTAN (CONT'D)

No, you're right! You should definitely sleep it off!

(hard whisper)

I'll see if I can locate a blanket or something.

(TRISTAN crosses counter where JAMES  
scrutinizes MARE'S credit card.)

JAMES

(aside)

This darn thing..

(seeing TRISTAN)

Tristan, I wonder if you can help me here?

TRISTAN

(crossing)

Sir?

JAMES

Her card. It's being rejected. And I don't know if it's me, the computer, or Ms. Vogl's card. Can you take a look?

(TRISTAN comes around and BOTH stare at  
the screen. TRISTAN taps the keyboard,  
shrugs.)

TRISTAN

No, I don't believe it's our computer, Mr. Lefavre.

(Beat. They slow-glance MARE, then each  
other.)

JAMES

Then her card's being rejected?

TRISTAN

Seems that way.

JAMES

Where did you find Ms. Vogl?

TRISTAN

Out front. She was sitting on the bellman. Well, I mean, kind of all over the bellman.

JAMES

Yes, I understand. So she may've been kicked out of another hotel on the boulevard.

TRISTAN

Or several. And restaurants, too.

JAMES

Yes.

TRISTAN

I've sent Mr. Kincaid to fetch a wheelchair from the basement. I don't think she can walk.

JAMES

But she can't stay here. Her card's being rejected. Can you go see if she has another?

TRISTAN

She's very passed out, sir.

JAMES

Yes, I can see that. And there's nothing we can do about that now. But, she doesn't appear to have any way to pay for the room, unless she produces another credit card. So, can you please ask her if she has another.

(TRISTAN reluctantly crosses to the sofas.)

TRISTAN

Ms. Vogl?

(MARE stirs, then abruptly sits up.)

MARE

What? Where am I?

(glances around, coming to)

What is this place?

(seeing TRISTAN)

Who are you?

TRISTAN

My name is Tristan Weld, I'm the associate assistant manager of the hotel, Ms. Vogl.

MARE

Hotel?

TRISTAN

Yes. You came in a short while ago and, indirectly, acquired about a room.

(off MARE'S blank stare)

For the night.

(off her squint, still lights-out)

And the consensus was that you would be leaving in the morning, which is a few hours from now, however your credit card--the one you gave us?--has been rejected, and so Mr. Lefavre, the hotel manager, and I were wondering if had another that we could run.

(MARE pulls herself up, leans on the arm.)

MARE

Of course. These things happen all the time, don't they?

TRISTAN

Occasionally. And the sooner we get this straightened out, the sooner we can get you to your room.

(MARE produces a stack of credit cards, hands them to TRISTAN.)

MARE

These all have money on them. I may've given you a dud. We can't always have winners, can we?

(TRISTAN takes the cards.)

TRISTAN

No, I suppose we can't. Thank you.

(TRISTAN joins JAMES at the desk. LANCE now enters with the wheelchair and crosses to MARE.)

LANCE

Here we go, Ms. Vogl. A nice ride to the second floor.

MARE

What the hell is this for?

LANCE

Your convenience. You wouldn't want to fall or anything. Let's call it a courtesy.

MARE

You can call it anything you want, flatfoot. I'm not getting on that thing.

(TRISTANT and JAMES join.)

JAMES

Everything appears to be in order, Ms. Vogl. I have you down for tonight. If you decide to stay with us longer, please let either Mr. Weld or myself know.

MARE

There's enough money on these things for me to stay here a year!

JAMES

Even so, let us know by tomorrow's checkout, if you can.

MARE

Enough money!

(TRISTAN makes to help MARE to a wheelchair.)

MARE (CONT'D)

I can do it myself! I'm not that old. I'm someone, goddamnit! Haven't you been listening?

TRISTAN

Indeed.

MARE

Someone!

(SHE slips into the wheelchair then glances around.)

MARE (CONT'D)

Where are my things?

TRISTAN

You had nothing when you came here earlier, I'm afraid. Could you have left it somewhere? In a cab or at a restaurant? Did you come from another hotel, perhaps?

MARE

(distantly)

There've been a lot of them over the years. They all seem the same. Like entrances to heaven.

(looking around)

I mean, look at this place. The marble. The glass. The paintings. The opulence. No one really lives like this anymore, do they? I should have been painted in my day. I should have been admired by someone who actually loved me, not just faces watching a screen, people I would never really meet, much less know. Isn't that what a life is supposed to be, after all?

(off their stares)

Ah, what the hell do you guys know? You live in lobbies, surround yourselves with decorum and strangers, passing the seasons like the potted plants.

(gestures to exiting LANCE)

Like that one over there. Tending to plants and paintings. Strangers and flowers.

(beat, then distantly)

I know this isn't really a hotel. And I know that you're just being nice so you can forget about me until I'm a goddamn vegetable. They sent me here. They said it would make me better. They said a lot of things.

(beat)

I would like to go to my room now.

(TRISTAN, JAMES and LANCE enter, head-to-toe in scrubs.)

JAMES

(leaning in, sternly)

Everything is in order, Ms. Rodell.

MARE

(correcting)

That's Mrs. Rodell, if you please.

JAMES

You're cleared and checked in. Your first session will be tomorrow morning.

MARE

Tell me, doctor.

JAMES

Yes?

(Fear now washes over MARE: eyes widen, face goes ashen, shoulders droop,)

MARE

Does anyone ever leave this place?

JAMES

Many do.

MARE

But some don't.

JAMES

That's true. We shall have to see.

(MARE fades. LANCE takes up the wheelchair, turns MARE gently around.)

MARE

That is my fear. To not leave. Fans are expecting me on the red carpet. In Cannes.

(LANCE wheels her off as she continues.)

MARE (CONT'D)

Later, as the sun is going down over the water, they light up the red carpet for the premiere. Oh, you would love that. Just to be there, in that moment. The cameras. The flashbulbs. The glamor. People shouting your name, people trying to be close, to be within a few feet of you. To be you. And as you enter the theater and walk toward the large doors, your heart pounding, you see the lobby cards: it's your face. It's you! You were part of something, and they can't take that away from you.

(beat)

They can't take that away, can they?

(LANCE and MARE exit. TRISTAN goes to the counter, thumbs through some paperwork. HE glances up at JAMES.)

TRISTAN

What is it, James?

JAMES

Do you suppose there will ever be a night when this doesn't happen?

TRISTAN

Time of day makes no difference. People are broken, regardless of the clock, James.

JAMES

That's not my point. My point is, when at last the so-called Mare Vogls of the world are no longer living in an illusion of their own making, will it finally be quiet in places like this?

TRISTAN

We'd be out of work. Can't have that, can we?

JAMES

But at what expense?

TRISTAN

(slipping folders into a satchel)

Does it matter?

(exiting)

See you in the morning, doctor.

JAMES

Good night.

(TRISTAN exits. JAMES sits on the sofa, crosses his legs, heaves a heavy sigh. HE adjusts himself, feeling something under him, then pulls out a credit card from the cushions.)

JAMES (CONT'D)

(aside, regarding the credit card)

Mare Vogl.

(HE frowns then crosses to the counter and slips the card into a belongings bag.)

CURTAIN.

SCENE: THE INTERVIEW

AT RISE: IT'S TOO BRIGHT.

(MARE enters, full of new-sober swagger, leading LEFAVRE, crosses to the window, looks out.)

MARE

That's a helluva view. Must've cost you a fortune.

LEFAVRE

Yes, well, these kinds of places do come with a price tag.

MARE

Yeah, I bet it does.

LEFAVRE

Please sit, Ms. Vogl.

MARE

I prefer to stand. I sat all goddamn morning. I laid down all goddamn night.

LEFAVRE

As you wish.

MARE

I do wish, thank you, sonny.

LEFAVRE

You may call me Dr. LeFavre.

MARE

(dismissing)

LeFavre. What's that, French or something? Creole? I'll bet it's Creole, but then how the hell would you've made it to this place being Creole.

LEFAVRE

Do you mind, Ms. Vogl. I don't think we need to go there, do we?

(MARE stares him down as she pulls out a cigarette and lights up.)

MARE

Mind if I smoke?

LEFAVRE

Well, now that you've lighted it, no, but thank you for asking.

MARE

Got an ashtray?



LEFAVRE

You can use this coffee cup on the desk here.

MARE

(crossing to the desk)

I'll sit then.

(SHE sits, leans back, legs uncrossed.)

MARE (CONT'D)

So what are we doing here today? Is there some kind of social schedule? Come on, you're the hotel manager, talk to me. Croquet? Drinks on the veranda? Beach volleyball? What?

LEFAVRE

Well, Ms. Oxenberg has you on her schedule today.

MARE

Who is she? Some kind of steward?

LEFAVRE

Right... A steward. Yes, could say that.

MARE

I played a steward in a series years ago--before all this streaming crap? Do you remember?

LEFAVRE

I think so.

MARE

Of course you do. Everyone remembers. I was the one they all wanted to bone!