**The Mystery at the Ice Castle Inn**

**Do you know the meaning of the following words or idioms?**

howl

cold fish

snow in

break the ice

draft/ draught

ice queen

on thin ice

to get cold feet

send shivers down the spine

snow under

snow somebody/ snow job

One of these small facts is this: no one here is actually interested in birds.

Our four travelers gather inside by the fireplace. The inn’s housekeeper puts a log into the fire. The group does not notice her as she pours more hot cocoa into their empty mugs. You see, they are the kind of people who never really notice the servants.

No one is talking. The four guests have avoided each other for several days. But now they are forced together by the warmth of the only working fireplace and the promise of hot cocoa.

After all, the inn is quite cold and uncomfortable. Only candles light the rooms. The rugs are so thin that the stone floor underneath shows. Some of the windows are cracked, letting the winter storm blow right through.

The castle looks the same way it did a hundred years ago.

Finally, Sylvia, the actress, **breaks the ice** by talking about the winter storm raging outside. Talking about the weather is a common **ice-breaker** that can bring strangers together. It gives them something to talk about.

“This **cold snap** is lasting a long time! When will we be able to leave?”

Sylvia says this to no one in particular. But the teacher, Madeline, responds. “Yes, when can we leave? I am tired of sitting around in this cold, **drafty** castle.”

“I have an idea,” Vincent, the handsome athlete, says to the young teacher. “Why don’t you join me for a walk in the castle?”

Madeline stares at him with her cold, green eyes and says, “That will happen **when hell freezes over**.”

At that, the actress, Sylvia, laughs out loud. “Well, that is a much better way of saying ‘absolutely not!'”

Vincent realizes that he is now **on thin ice** with both women. He is not really in danger. Rather, he is now on very uncertain terms with them. The room suddenly drops a couple more degrees -- and not from the weather.

Major Jack feels sorry for Vincent after the women **freeze him out**, or make him feel unwelcome. So, the military man offers him a cigarette. Vincent shakes his head no. He says he quit **cold turkey** last year. The major says he admires the athlete’s **accomplishment**. He adds that he has never been able to quit smoking all at once.

“Well, perhaps you don’t have the mental strength that I do,” Vincent says.

Major Jack regrets trying to help such a **cold hearted** man.

He turns his attention to Sylvia. He tells her he likes her voice very much. Most women would melt at his words. But for Sylvia they **cut no ice**. His words have no effect. Her once-friendly voice turns to iceas she says, “What shall I do next, sing for you?”

He **shudders** not from the temperature of the room but from her **icy stare**. He thinks to himself that the attractive actress can certainly be an **ice queen** when she wants to be.

At this point, it is fair to say that the conversations among the group are not going well. Outside, the temperature is dropping. Everything is **frozen solid**. Inside, the entire inn is in a different kind of **deep freeze**. Everyone sits in silence. They stare at the fire as it makes **crackling** noises in the fireplace. Next to it, only a few logs of wood remain.

Suddenly, the very quiet housekeeper breaks the **stone cold** silence. She straightens her back, takes off her apron and pushes her gray hair back into place.

“If I may have your attention,” she says to the group. Her voice cuts through the coldness that hangs in the air.

“The owner of the inn has planned an interesting game for you, our special guests, to play.”

Vincent **throws cold water** on the idea. He laughs and says **coldly,** “I’m not a child. I don’t play games.”

“You may want to change your mind, young man. This game is a kind of treasure hunt,” the housekeeper says.

She is standing in front of the group and no longer seems like “just” a servant. She now has control of the room. When they hear the word “treasure,” they pay close attention to the housekeeper for the first time since their arrival.

She places a large wooden box on the table. It is labeled “Treasure Hunt.”

She explains: “In this box are four envelopes marked with each person’s name. In the envelope are clues. If you follow the clues correctly, you will find your treasure!”

They all agree to play. They are thinking that finding some **cold, hard cash** would be a really nice treasure.

They pick their envelopes and read the clues carefully. Then, each person travels through the empty hallways and rooms of the otherwise deserted castle.

Three hours later, the sun sinks behind the cold mountains. The four treasure-seekers return to the fireplace. The housekeeper is waiting. She motions with her hand for them to sit by the fire. And, one by one, she asks them to **reveal** their treasure.

Madeline is first. “My treasure is a framed **termination** letter? I don’t understand. Am I being fired for something?” The calm in her eyes is gone and for the first time she is nervous**.**

Vincent is not confused or nervous. He is simply angry. “My treasure is a bride’s white wedding veil.” He throws the thin, white piece of fabric into the air.

Major Jack takes out what he found -- a military medal. He reads the writing on the front: “For brave service in battle.” He looks as if he has seen a ghost.

Sylvia’s “treasure” is a pink baby’s rattle. With a haunted look on her face, she shakes it slowly and sadly.

Confusion and tension fill the room. Finally Sylvia, who is standing by the fire as if she were on stage, says what everyone is thinking.

“Okay this is too much! And it isn’t funny! Why are we here? And who is **teasing** us with these **so-called** treasures?”

The housekeeper begins to speak, but suddenly she stops. A terrible sound -- part human, part animal, **howling** from a room above them -- **freezes their blood cold**.

Why do you think the people are at the castle?

What do their treasures mean? What do they symbolize?

How will the story continue?

Part 3. 1:19 Listening

What did they hear when they were looking at their treasure?

Who went to look what had made the noise?

Why and how did the teacher want to block the door?

What did Sylvia discover?

Who tried to calm the group?

Why did the people come to the castle?

What do we find out about the housekeeper?

Who was the sixth person in the room?

How long hadn’t Vincent seen Hope for?

Why was Hope mad?

What did the vail symbolize?

What happened after Vincent confessed?

How did Madeline explain the letter of termination?

How did the bad thing she had done change her life?

What was the connection between Hope and Sylvia?

Why did she do what she did?

How did she feel?

Who was Justice?

What was his connection to Major Jack?

Why did Crystal’s plans go wrong?

Why did Crystal organize the whole trip?

Was Crystal satisfied in the end?

Where did Hope and Crystal go?

What happened to the other people?