

NO PARKING

A Musical in One Act for Seven Characters, Piano, Cello and Clarinet

Book and Lyrics: Elizabeth Bassine

Music: Roger Ames

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Cast of Characters:

Alice – elegant, but in a world she no longer knows – and doesn't want to

Matron -- this the focus of her life, saddened by her inability to make life any easier for her charges

Sara – finding joy in the unique/loving bond, allowing the challenge of Alzheimer's to fade as it removes all earlier challenges between mother and daughter

Clara – cheeky redhead, cheshire cat-like, appearing/disappearing, stuck in her abused teen years

Walter – big, comfortable, walrus of a man, offering hugs and remnants of wisdom

Manny – a neurotic mad hatter ex-entertainer who adds merriment despite himself

Jerry – more the reflective looking glass than anything he once was

Dodger – dog/white rabbit helping Alice find her way 'home'

Music as character: Musicians seated to side stage, lit when dramaturgy requires. The music is an organic dimensionsuggesting, anticipating, and expressing the characters' state-of-mind, sometimes confused, sometimes expansive, sometimes intimate... always revealing personal truths and the shared truth of musical memory.

Set design: An equally impressionistic concept can suffice to depict the nursing home environment.... serving to describe the bare quality of lives depleted of any richness, save the vibrant nature of what remains of the residents themselves.

Furnishings to include:

Telephone table

Reception desk/nurses' station

Sofa

Folding chairs (for music room/dining room)

Dining tables – 2

Outdoor bench

Door frame

4 or 5 lockers or framed closet doors

NO PARKING reveals through musical-memory the near-end of a journey of nostalgia

and sorrow, experienced by a still lively group of seniors afflicted by Alzheimer's.

Alice, the newcomer, takes on a leadership role. With loving whimsy, she guides her

cohorts through days of chaos and change, as they find themselves chasing their 'white rabbits' of life to its inevitable conclusion. At a time when many abandon friends and loved ones in this unexpected metamorphosis, NO PARKING seeks to describe how very much their unique and precious selves brave the tumult, and long for a graceful exit

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SCENE I

Present day. An apartment somewhere in Florida. Interior indicated by only a chair, telephone table w/telephone, and an open doorway.

(Quite distressed, dressed randomly and in slippers, a confused Alice – about 75 yrs -- is screaming into the wrong end of the telephone, hardly breathing between words....)

Alice:

Get me Sara! Operator, get me Sara...in....oh, where the hell does she live.....
 Sara is that-you-okay-get-me out of here!! They're crazy and they're telling me I'm crazy, but I'm not. They didn't even get a new appraisal! They don't have a bathroom and ...

I AM speaking up. I'm SCREAMING! What? What? How does this phone work? It's not working. I can't hear you. Speak up! Speak up!

(Alice puts phone down on chairand calls out to her cousin)

Estelle! Somebody! Where are you? Where is the bathroom?

(Alice looks for phone, not stopped by her inability to locate it, continues to speak to Sara...)

Sara, I can't stay here. There's no kitchen and I need coffee.....

Sara, where are you and why don't you answer me?
 Someone started such a tiny, little fire. It was nothing really, but they made such a fuss!

Where do you live, dear? How long will it take you to get here?
Do you have a map, Sara? Will you be here in a few minutes?
Look at the map, Sara, and tell me how many miles ...now divide the minutes and I'll know.

No, darling. I'm not going to live with you – no, no, no....Why, you're not anywhere near the Opera! How could I possibly? No, I need my opera friends, dear. Maybe when I'm old, Sara, and we have more in common.

(aside)

I love my children...but enough's enough!!

(finds telephone, but speaks loudly to Estelle assuming she's elsewhere in the apartment)

I'm leaving. Where did you put myoh, what-do-you-call-it? Ah, my invitation. Who's getting me? You've been terrible. You can't cook, but I won't say that or *(gleefully)* I'll hurt your feelings. Why did you bring me here anyway? Who can live in a place with so many doors and no rooms?!

I'm very upset. And where are my papers? I've had those papers for 60 years and now they're gone. Someone's stolen them! You? Was it you?!

(stops the rant for a moment, musing...)

And you're my cousin, aren't you.....You were such a nice little girl.

(pause)

You're god-awful now!!

(to herself)

How do I get out of here?! This street only goes one way.....

I'll never come here again!Where is that door???

(another brief pause...Alice finds the door and exits singing happily....)

1. OH BURY ME NOT.....ON THE LONE PRAIRIE
WHERE THE COYOTES HOWL
AND THE WIND BLOWS FREE.....

SCENE II

Four months later. On a bench outside a red brick, single-storey building (indicated by suggestive painting on scrim), in front of a sign that reads NO PARKING...

1. Prelude (underscoring)

Alice – *Still elegant and somewhat more composed, several pair of eyeglasses hanging around her neck, sketchbook and pencil in hand, large purse always near, sits on the bench. Appears unclear as to how to put pencil to paper, and finally slips pencil through her chignon.*

(Sara, 40-45 yrs old, Alice's daughter, approaches)

Sara: *(enters giving Alice a kiss and hug)*
Hi Mom! How are you? Rough night, I hear.....

Alice: *(looking up in surprise)*
You had a rough night, dear?

(loudly, as though Sara can't hear her)
Do you feel better now?

Sara:
I'm fine, Mom. Are you sketching?

(Alice's sweet theme underscores)

Alice:
Well, yes, darling. I'm preparing for the drawing and fainting class.....but this pencil doesn't work, Sara. Nothing works.....And I can't find my glasses.

Sara: *(gently touching the eyeglasses...)*
Never mind. Why don't I get us some lunch....
Would you like a grilled Swiss, Mom? It's your favorite.

Alice:
Yes, dear, as long as there's some cheese on it. Cheese is actually my favorite. And ask for a table by the window, darling.

Sara: *(abruptly distracted)*
Oh no..... Dodger got out of the car!

(a flash of white, as Dodger (the dog) runs past the bench)

Alice: *(greatly distressed)*
Sara! Catch my rabbit! Oh god, oh god, my rabbit! Now I'm going to be late.
Sara, help me! Help me! Is it too late already?

(thoughtfully...slowly...)

I believe it is too late.

(Alice's theme grows darker, more urgent in mood)

Sara:

Don't worry, Mom. I'll get him. You won't be late. Do you have an appointment?
(we see someone pick-up Dodger in his arms at side of stage.)

Alice:

Yes, a very important appointment, Sara. I'm so afraid I'll be late, although it IS too late, you know. Don't let me be late.
Promise me. *(imploringly)*

Sara:

I promise, Mom. I promise.

2. IS THE MOON COMING OVER THE MOUNTAIN: Alice

IS THE MOON COMING OVER THE MOUNTAIN?
I'VE GOT TO BE THERE TO SEE.
IS THE SHIP COMING IN TO THE HARBOR?
IS IT WAITING THERE FOR ME?

HAS SPRING ARISEN FROM UNDER THE SNOW?
I THINK SOMEHOW I'LL NEVER KNOW.
I HAVE A FEELING I MUST GO,
BUT WHO CAN TELL ME WHERE?
WHO CAN TELL ME WHERE.....

IS MY HUSBAND WAITING AT DUSK FOR ME
THE WAY I USED TO WAIT?
IS HE HOLDING LILACS AND CANDY FOR ME
LIKE HE DID ON OUR VERY FIRST DATE?

WILL THE CHILDREN BE LITTLE OR LARGE, DO YOU THINK,
WHEN I FINALLY FIND MY WAY?
WILL MOTHER AND FATHER BE YOUNG OR OLD?
WILL I SEE THEM ALL SOMEDAY?

I THINK SOMEHOW I'LL NEVER KNOW.
I HAVE A FEELING I MUST GO
WHO CAN TELL ME WHEN? WHO CAN TELL ME WHERE?

HAVE I STAYED TOO LONG AT THE FAIR, MY DEAR,
HAVE I STAYED TOO LONG AT THE FAIR...?
(drifts off in thought....then)

What fair, dear? Fair? Hair?! Is there another hair on my chin?
And what the HELL am I doing here??

SCENE III

Later that day. Building interior. Reception desk (which later doubles as nurses' station) and beyond into music room with folding chairs in rows (which serves also as general activity area and dining area) and a large fire extinguisher w/lever on the wall.

(Sara arrives and speaks into an intercom at reception desk...)

Sara:

Hello hello! I'm here to see Alice. May I have today's security code, please?

Voice off-stage:

Here you go – 12, 18, 27!

(Sara enters code, buzzer sounds)

All: *(from interior. residents' voices, gleefully and very loudly repeat the code that is meant to keep them securely inside the building)*

12! 18! 27!

Sara: *(walks beyond desk and finds Alice nearby):*

Ah! Here you are!

How was your appointment, Mom?

Alice:

Inadequate.

Matron: *(50ish, exhausted -- overhears...and provides a dose of reality...)*

She didn't have an appointment.

Alice: *(insistent)*

I most certainly did. I saw the doctor. Right there. Right where you're standing.... So, Missy-know-it-all, this was on YOUR watch and you should have seen us!

(showing anxiety)

Sara, she should have seen us!

Matron:

You'd like to see the doctor, I know. And you will. Soon.

Today he has other patients to attend to.

Alice:

He can attend 3 or 4 or 7

But, don't tell me I didn't see him. I know I did.....Unless it was someone else. There are a frightful lot of someone else's lurking around here.

But I don't know what he said. And soon it will be useless as I'm running out of time.

Seeing him yesterday was the point. I don't know who I'll be tomorrow.....

Matron: (*emphatically to Sara*)

She did not see the doctor today.

(*to Alice, with attitude*)

I know I shouldn't contradict, but you were here with your newspapers, Alice, reading up on the state of the nation.

Alice: (*equally emphatic*)

Mmm. A critical state! Jails full of seniors....

Walter:

A'll be darned.

Manny: (*completing song/joke*)

To get ya in a taxi, honey!

Alice: (*continues...*)

My cab was late,

But I did make it to my appointment and was not here because this is NO place to be.

You of all people should know that. If one lives here, one knows it doesn't count.

Matron:

That may be. But more to the point, we'll see the doctor very soon.

Alice: (*suddenly taking a different approach*)

What doctor? Are you ill? I'm sorry to hear that!

(*stage whisper to Sara, like a little girl*): Not really!

Sara:

All right, Mom, I get it. I think it's time for today's musicale, right, Matron? Singing's good medicine for everybody.

Alice:

And nobody. Will anybody be there? Where's Body anyway?

Sara:

Whose body?

Alice:

Clara's of course. She always likes to disappear into another place because nobody's there. And then she gets to fill it up and be somebody.

Sara:

If you say so, Mom.

Alice:

Thank you, Donna. *(as Sara rolls her eyes, shakes her head...)*

Where were we going?

Will the Queen be there? *(pointing to the matron)*

Manny: *(Manny – tall, nervous, dramatic, old entertainer —hears Alice and pushes past, biting his fingernails, muttering and looking at his watch)*

The Queen? Will I be singing for the Queen? Oh no!!! Pressure! Pressure!

Sara:

Well, let's get started and we'll find out if she's going to join us.

Alice:

She'll probably be there because she doesn't like anything going on without her.

(she asks the matron) Do you? I'm speaking to you, Dearie! Oh, I see. The silent type today, eh? With whom will you find a better repartee?

(no response)

See. There. She doesn't even care!

(Alice smacks the side of Matron's head, managing all the while to look regal)

Matron: *(attempting to remain composed, puts her head in her hands)*

Why would I be here if I didn't care, Alice? I care about you all!

Alice:

She doesn't care about me....*(musing.....)*

She does rather like Jerry, 'though. Hmmm....

(abrupt change back to panic)

And she hides the telephone. I need the telephone.

(to Sara)

Excuse me for a moment, Love.....

(speaking into a non-existent phone...)

Long distance. I want long distance, please!

(frustrated)

Yes, I paid the phone bill...

(to Sara..)

Sara, didn't we?

The Queen is hiding the telephone, turning off the air conditioning, polishing my nails a ferocious fuchsia, brushing my hair in unpredictable ways, taking MY showers....
And she is entirely TOO large.

Matron:

Alice, really! I'm just beside myself!

Alice:

That's what I said! Too big for your britches! Beside yourself is right.

(turning to Sara)

Matron:

Sara, I don't know how much more of this I can tolerate. There must be a line drawn somewhere!

(Alice draws a line on her pad.)

Matron:

What are you doing now?

Alice:

I've drawn the line. And you may not step across it. Ever.

Matron:

I'll try not to. I've NO wish to, you know.

Alice:

I've no wish to know you either.

(Sara looks helplessly at Matron and gives a little grin and shrug)

(Alice, Matron, Manny, and Sara move toward the folding chairs. Residents – Clara, Walter, Jerry -- already seated, sit in silence, expressionless and with heads down)

(Matron and Manny take places at the front of the room. Alice takes her seat next to Jerry)

Matron:

Hello everyone. Thank you for taking your seats. Do not stand unless one of the staff assists you. It's time to connect across time now – memories in song!

Clara: *(red-headed, cheeky, frazzled, alternately difficult/asleep, eternally a young girl)*
I'm outa here. *(she gets up, but lingers at the doorway)*

Alice: *(seated next to Jerry, a pliable, pleasant-looking resident who is only about half present)*
I'd like to dance with Jerry.

Matron:
Jerry may not feel like dancing today.

Alice: *(annoyed at Matron for speaking on Jerry's behalf)*
Well, why don't we ask JERRY.
Right, Jerry?

(Jerry remains motionless, expressionless. Alice pats his hand)

(music up). Everyone begins to sing the songs they automatically – as if on dopamine -- recall from their early past...music making that connection over time and place)

3. MUSIC PROGRAM: Ensemble Sing-along
NOTHING COULD BE FINER THAN TO BE IN CAROLINA
IN THE MORNING
NO ONE COULD BE SWEETER THAN MY SWEETIE WHEN I MEET HER
IN THE MORNING,.

STROLLING WITH MY GIRLY WHERE THE DEW IS PEARLY EARLY
IN THE MORNING.
BUTTERFLIES ALL FLUTTER UP AND KISS EACH LITTLE BUTTERCUP
AT DAWNING.

(music moves directly into next song ...)

GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY
REMEMBER ME TO HERALD SQUARE.....
TELL ALL THE GANG AT 42ND STREET
THAT I WILL SOON BE THERE

WHISPER OF HOW I'M YEARNING
TO MINGLE WITH THE OLD TIME THRONG
GIVE MY REGARDS TO OLD BROADWAY
AND SAY THAT I'LL BE THERE ERE LONG

(Alice stands and begins a song of her own choosing ...the room is hushed...no music)

Alice:
I'M ALWAYS CHASING RAINBOWS
WATCHING CLOUDS DRIFTING BY
MY DREAMS ARE ALL LIKE ALL MY SCHEMES
ENDING IN THE SKY!

(Manny who has been singing badly out of time with the music, suddenly appears embarrassed and takes a seat)

Alice: *(turning to Jerry)*

Jerry, have you seen my rabbit?

Jerry:

(very slowly shakes his head NO)

Alice: *(thoughtfully..)*

That's too bad. I thought you might have.....

(she then continues, happy in her memory)

Jerry, do you remember when we first met?

We had tea, didn't we.....

(Jerry shrugs his shoulders like 'I don't know..')

I was mad as a hatter then, wasn't I.....

Jerry, are we mad now?

We're mad, Jerry.

Matron:

(in agreement)

We're all mad.

Alice, leave Jerry alone. Don't bother him.

(to Sara...whispering/gesturing)

Did they really know one another? I don't think so....

(Sara shrugs and looks very doubtful)

Alice:

(beginning to escalate into a panic...placing herself between Jerry and Matron)

Jerry would NEVER be a bother! You, on the other hand, have always been!

Leave him! He is fine as long as he's with me. He was *smiling*. Heaven forbid the man should smile! Don't take him away! Don't take him away!

(Alice and Matron both tugging at Jerry)

Matron:

He must be kept safe, Alice.

Alice:
Safe...but he must be JERRY!!!

(As a result of the tug of war, Jerry pulls his arm away and inadvertently smacks Matron in her face and startles her)

Manny: *(ignoring Matron)*
Poor Jerry. Poor Jerry. Go ahead, Alice. Bother me, instead. I deserve it. I deserve it!
I've got no rhythm to speak of.....cannot for the life of me sing in time. I'm badly out
of time.....behind time.....ahead of time....I just don't know.....

(Alice looks at Manny without much pity, then turns back to Jerry)

Alice: *(looking directly into Jerry's eyes)*
Look at me, Jerry. Look at me.....

4. SONG FOR JERRY: Jerry and Alice *(neither really sure they shared a past, but happy to buy into the idea at present)*

Alice:
DO I KNOW YOU?
I THINK I USED TO KNOW YOU,
BUT I'M NOT REALLY SURE
WHO AM I? WHO ARE YOU?
DID WE DO THIS ONCE BEFORE?

Jerry:
DO I LIKE YOU?
I THINK I USED TO LIKE YOU,
BUT DO I LIKE YOU NOW?

Alice:
DO YOU LIKE ME?

Jerry:
DO I LIKE YOU?
LET'S DISCOVER IF YOU LOVED ME.....

Alice:
AND NOW YOU SAY:

Alice and Jerry: AND HOW!

WE CAN'T BE SURE FOREVER.

AND FOREVER ISN'T MORE.
WE CAN'T BE SURE FOREVER,

Alice:
SO LET'S BUY IT IN THE STORE.
IF WE MUST RETURN IT,
WE DON'T HAVE TO SAY ITS NAME,
BUT I HOPE WE WANT TO KEEP IT,
RETURNING FRIENDS IS SUCH A SHAME.

DO I LIKE YOU? (*Jerry echoes*)
I THINK I USED TO LIKE YOU,
BUT DO I LIKE YOU NOW? (*Jerry echoes*)

DO YOU LIKE ME? DO I LIKE YOU?
AND NOW YOU SAY: (*both sing*) AND HOW!

(*Jerry BEAMS at Alice*)

Alice stands, addressing the assembled residents...

Alice:
All right, now...Everyone, attention, please!
Next there will be a tea party.
Everyone up up up, up up!
(*All scramble with difficulty to get up from their seats. Matron scurries, attempting to keep them from falling*)

Sara:
Maybe not, Mom.....

Manny:
Yes, yes! Thank god you remembered! It's 4 o'clock, children! Time for tea. Frequent sips. Much anxiety. No complacency for me! No indeed. Indeed not.
(*and with something important...*) The tea tray has flown!.....I've known it all along.

(*Walter, a sincere and large walrus of a man with a mustache, tries to give Manny a bear hug*)

Thank you, but I don't deserve it. I'm a monster.

Walter:
Bad singing does not a monster make, dear boy.

Manny:
But it wastes time. Kills it dead, does it not? And we don't have any.

Walter:

But we DO, old boy. It's 4pm – and we have found time for tea! Earl Grey or Harrowgate? Devonshire. Oh, Pet – not to fret!

(Alice stands, taking Jerry's hands, urging him to dance)

Matron:

Alice! Be careful! You'll both fall. For a lady, you're far too aggressive.....men don't like it.

Walter:

We like it.

Alice: *(correcting Matron)*

Assertive, dear. And it's worked for me!

Let's quit this place and go to Roseland, Jerry.

Walter:

Quit this place

Take the wife

Get off early

What a life.

(with sudden urgency...)

She wants to go NOW!

(Alice continues to attempt to pull Jerry up onto his feet)

Matron:

Help here! Help here! You're incorrigible. Someone take Alice to her room. Now, please!

She will hurt herself or hurt someone else, and I'll have my hands full.....

(now in a sad whisper) and I'll never forgive myself.

Alice: *(with growing agitation...)*

My room?! I don't have a room. I DO NOT live here! Call a cab!

Where's that telephone?! Call the police!! Police!! Where's a cop when you need one?!

(looking frantically around....)

Call the fire department!

(Fiercely, Alice hits the fire alarm on the wall. All residents are startled – crying, screaming at the noise of the siren)

Residents:

Fire! Fire!

Help! Get me out of here!

Police!
 What happened?
 What did I do?
 What did you do?
 Where's Matron? Where's Matron?

Manny: *(as always, with drama...another pronouncement)*
 So this is how it ends!

(Matron and Sara quickly pull Alice back and walk her to a seat.....Alice begins to become lucid again)

Matron:
 That is NOT allowed!
 There are rules you must obey, Alice --
 Or we all will pay!

(pointing the way for Alice...)
 To your room!

Alice: *(settling down and suddenly pouty, to Sara...)*
 I want to go to my room at home, Sara, but I can't get there.
 I don't have cab fare.
 I'm supposed to go to my room wherever we are now, but I don't want to, Sara.

Sara:
 It will be okay, Mom. Why don't you want to go to your room? It's just down the hall.

Alice:
 There's a man in my bed.
 And I think he's dead.

Sara:
 He's probably just sleeping.

Alice: *(confidently)*
 He told me he was dead.

Manny: *(overhearing)*
 Oh no! Did my singing kill him? So sorry....so sorry.....
 What a wreck am I! And with no hat to hide my shame.

Sara:
 Someone will take a look in your room, Mom. We can sit here for a few minutes while they make sure it's safe.

Alice: (looking about critically)
(a la Bette Davis) What a dump! Windows won't open. The carpet is greige. One can't buy the NY Times in the lobby. I NEVER get my mail. I'm leaving.....*(stands up, but has no idea where to go...long pause and change of mood, some new awareness of her situation dawns)*.....leaving.....any day now. Any day.

(They sit down again together, Alice's head on Sara's shoulder, Sara's head resting against her mother's)

Baby, will you sing me what you used to sing to me when I was YOUR baby?

5. LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG: Alice and Sara

Sara:
 ONCE IN THE DEAR DEAD DAYS BEYOND RECALL,
 WHEN ON THE WORLD THE MISTS BEGAN TO FALL,
 OUT OF THE DREAMS THAT ROSE IN HAPPY THROG
 LOW TO OUR HEARTS LOVE SANG AN OLD SWEET SONG;
 AND IN THE DUSK WHERE FELL THE FIRELIGHT GLEAM,
 SOFTLY IT WOVE ITSELF INTO OUR DREAM.

Alice and Sara:
 JUST A SONG A TWILIGHT, WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE LOW,
 AND THE FLICK'RING SHADOWS SOFTLY COME AND GO,
 THO' THE HEART BE WEARY, SAD THE DAY AND LONG,
 STILL TO US AT TWILIGHT COMES LOVE'S OLD SONG,
 COMES LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG.

Sara:
 EVEN TODAY WE HEAR LOVE'S SONG OF YORE,
 DEEP IN OUR HEARTS IT DWELLS FOREVERMORE.

Alice:
 FOOTSTEPS MAY FALTER, WEARY GROW THE WAY,

Sara:
 STILL WE CAN HEAR IT AT THE CLOSE OF DAY.

(Both)
 SO TILL THE END, WHEN LIFE'S DIM SHADOWS FALL,
 LOVE WILL BE FOUND THE SWEETEST SONG OF ALL.

(Ensemble joins...)
 JUST A SONG A TWILIGHT, WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE LOW,
 AND THE FLICK'RING SHADOWS SOFTLY COME AND GO,
 THO' THE HEART BE WEARY, SAD THE DAY AND LONG,
 STILL TO US AT TWILIGHT COMES LOVE'S OLD SONG,
 COMES LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG.

(Clara quietly joins them, sits down w/her head on Sara's other shoulder, and promptly

falls asleep to their singing)

SCENE IV

Dining Room of residence. Folding chairs around 2 tables. All are seated, with napkins tucked under their chins. Lunch is underway....

Matron: *(trying to Clara as though she were a baby)*

Here, Clara, have some nice soup.

Now, Clara.....

(as Clara attempts to put her leg on the table)

Manny :

Clara, Clara, smart and able,

Take your elbows off the table.....

Clara:

Canteloupe!

Walter:

Quite right. A church wedding, my girl!

Clara:

Goddamn it!

(and they ALL attempt to put elbows and feet on tables)

Manny:

Double damn it!

Matron:

Quiet now. This behavior is unbecoming and not at all funny.

Alice:

Becoming what, if not funny?

It, my dear, is nonsense.

There's nothing more telling than nonsense.

Clara:

I'm outa here. I've fuckin' had it....Abyssinia..

Manny: *(continuing to complete/sing the joke)*

In all the old familiar places.....

Matron: *(grabs onto Clara's shirttails, pulling her back)*
Have some nice milk, Clara.... You *must eat!*

Walter:
I've been told protein is clogging our brains, Matron. She'll skip that bite, dear.

Manny:
Gumming us up – dumbing us down! Oh my oh my.....

Clara: *(suddenly turns to Matron, confrontational)*
I LOVE YOU, A BUSHEL AND A PECK
BUSHEL AND A PECK AND A HUG AROUND YOUR NECK!
(throwing her arms around Matron's neck in a choke-grip until Matron cannot breathe)

Manny:
My money's on Clara!

(Matron breaks free of Clara's grip and gives her a withering look....)

Clara:
Um... I'd best be going.

Matron:
And where do you think you're going?

Alice:
She doesn't think...or she'd know she can't go anywhere she'd want to be.
I, on the other hand, will leave when my driver arrives.

Matron: *(recovering)*
Yes, she's stuck with us, isn't she, Alice...

(aside to herself)
and so am I, dear, so am I.....

(back to the group)
It's all right, Clara. Sit down and have some nice pudding.

Alice: *(interrupting....)*
Nice, schmice. Everything can't be nice!
Nice potato, nice tomato, nice soup, nice ...
Three blind mice! Were they nice, too?
Be precise, please! Most things are NOT nice.
(thinks about it for a moment, confirming her thought...)

Precise, I say! I need precision!
I MUST have precision! (*becoming agitated*)

Matron:
Yes, you're right. (*giving up for the moment*)
Nothing is nice.

6. PRECISELY NOT NICELY: Alice, Matron, Ensemble (*reciting against angry/conflicted impressionistic music*)

Matron:
LIFE IS NOT NICE.
NOT MOST OF THE TIME.

Alice: (*urgently*)
MOST OF THE TIME
DOESN'T COUNT.
I NEED AN ALWAYS OR A NEVER.
PRECISION IS PARAMOUNT!

Matron:
All right!
LIFE IS NOT NICE. NOT EVER.

Alice:
THAT'S IT! YOU'VE GOT IT NOW!
NEVER IS BETTER THAN SOMETIMES, AS...
IT'S CLEAR ON WHAT I CAN COUNT.
OR NOT.
IT'S CLEAR ON WHAT I CAN COUNT.

I CAN LIVE WITHOUT NICE [QUITE NICELY]
BECAUSE NICE IS LIKELY UNTRUE
BUT WITH ANY AMOUNT OF PRECISION [PRECISELY]
THERE'S NO CHANCE
TO MISCONSTRUE.

I'm quite sure about this.

Ensemble:
PRECISION IS AS PRECISION DOES.
IT TELLS ME WHO I AM AND WAS.

Matron:
Do any of us want to know, I wonder?

Manny:
 You can count on me to be nice, dear girl,
 but likely not precise.probably not ever.

Walter: *(thoughtfully and with great clarity)*
 Precisely the issue
 It's abundantly clear
 That exactly what matters
 Sound sincere to the ear.

(Walter blows kisses and bows deeply)
 Ah, now I've worked up something of an appetite!

Alice: *(loudly and with attention now turned to Jerry)*
 Jerry is having trouble with his apple juice, here! He's choking!! He needs a straw.
 Straw here! Straw here! *(she begins to stand.)*

Matron:
 Alice, sit down. I'll get a straw. I'll get a straw for Jerry.....

Alice:
 We ALL need straws. And I'll take care of Jerry, thank you. Children always have straws. And we need chocolate milk.

Matron:
 Alice, enough! We don't have chocolate milk. We have apple juice. Why must you make luncheon so difficult?! Jerry doesn't like you to act this way, you know. *(with a hint of satisfaction at using Jerry to her advantage)*

Alice:
 HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT JERRY LIKES AND WHOM HE LIKES?
 Why don't you get your own children and leave Jerry to me!

Matron: *(wounded)*
 He is in my care, Alice.

Alice:
 Then be nice! You think everything is nice, but you're unkind....That is precisely impossible! Now where is our chocolate milk?

Walter:
 Port, please, I'd like my Port. Thank you, sir and madam.

Manny:
 Yes, drinks served in the lobby at intermission, gentlemen!

Alice:
Children always have chocolate milk before their naps.

Matron:
You're not a child, Alice, 'though you often act like one. You both instigate and irritate!!

(reaching over to shake Clara)
Clara, wake up, for heaven's sake!

Alice:
Clara, if you keep your eyes closed, they'll never adjust!

Clara:
Adjust to what?

Alice: *(with great solemnity and foreboding)*

To the light that's coming.....

Clara: *(unimpressed)*
Wake me when it gets here.

(Alice nevertheless gives Clara a pair of her glasses)

Matron:
(frazzled, but aware of Alice's kind gesture)
Alright. A concession, Alice: We'll have chocolate milk.

Clara: *(petulant and childlike...)*
I drank my milk and Daddy bought me a new Chevy... and....he...he...
But I didn't tell Mama...I never told...*(she begins to shake, but visibly tries to pull herself together and then gets up as if to leave)*

Outa here for good.

(Matron pulls Clara back down in her seat)
Don't think about that, Clara. You'll be fine.
Don't think.....
Don't think...
And your life will be like mine *(ironically)*

Alice:
Alright then!
Everyone up! Then to Clara's Chevy and off to see the USA!

Residents:

(sing) See the USA in your Chevrolet....
But chocolate first!!!!

Walter:

Where is the car, Clara?

Manny: *(sings)*

America is asking us to call!

(suddenly downcast)

But not me....they're not asking me.....oh, I'm a failure...a monster..... a monster....

(suddenly confessional)

There was a monster in my closet, Walt.

Alice:

Ah! It may be the same one that was in my bed.....

Walter will save you, child.

Walter *(to Manny – slowly, purposefully)*:

The monster, dear one, was your troubling voice – the voice you only *thought* was yours.

(pauses to consider) In fact, I remember well your voice...the very best in silent films,
Dear! The monster is gone away now ... *(again, thoughtfully)* as all things here must go.

(Manny is transfixed, eyes wide like a child, and listens intently.)

Do you believe me, my boy?

Manny *(somewhat confused, hesitant, attempting to buy into this)*:

Well....yes.

(then more assured...)

Yes, Walt. I will try to.

Alice:

(Looking everywhere EXCEPT at Matron...)

Where is that old Queen anyway?

Manny *(feeling considerably better)*:

Right here, Darling!

Alice:

No, no. The *other* one.

Queen, Queen, where are you?
 We have a great thirst for chocolate. Need it now, dear!
 I'll trade my head for chocolate!
 Oh, just take my head I can't stand it anymore.

Manny:
 I can't stand it anymore!
 No bonhomie --
 I can't stand me!.....

DRUGSTORE GLASSES: Manny
(Residents get confused and take each others seats, while Manny shows growing abandon with this song)

YESTERDAY I FOUND A BIT OF RELIEF
 RELIEF IN WHAT I SAW
 THE MIRROR LOOKED BACK HAPPILY
 AS ONLY TEENCIE WEENCIE JOWELS

(posing as if showing off a Roman profile)
 DID I SEE THERE BY MY JAW

TODAY RELIEF HAS GONE AWAY
 THE MONSTER HAS RETURNED
 SUCH CHANGES SHOCK MOST FRIGHTFULLY
 HOW DOES ONE SEE WHAT CANNOT BE
 AND NOT AT ALL WHAT ONE DISCERNED?

IT MUST BE THE DRUGSTORE GLASSES!
 THEY'RE JUST NO GOOD! NO GOOD!
 IF MEDICAID WOULD MEDI-CARE
 I'D HAVE A WIG WITH LONG RED HAIR
 AND WHITE VENEERS AND LAVISHMENT (!)
 I'D FIND WHERE ALL MY LOVERS WENT.

IT MUST BE THE DRUGSTORE GLASSES
 THEY'RE CHANGING WHAT I KNOW
 JUST SHOW ME TO THE HIGHWAY, DEAR,
 I MAY NOT MAKE IT WAY BACK HERE...
 A RABBIT HOLE WILL DO JUST FINE
 STOP! *(pause)*
 WHOSE GLASSES ARE THESE? THEY AREN'T MINE!

Alice:
 You see, children. We have glasses for everyone.
 Now take a gander at each other.

You may look like your sister or uncle or brother
 Family is glue. And that's precisely true.
 Like it or not, there's simply nothing we can do.

Manny:
 Are you Isidore?

Walter:
 No, my dear. Herman here.

Matron:
 Everyone! Sit down in your own seats!

(residents again attempt to climb onto chairs, take each others seats, sit down on the floor. They begin to giggle)

Take care! Take care!
(sadly...)
 Oh, but they ARE children.....If only I could be.....even for one moment.....

Alice: *(also attempting to climb onto a tablea commanding voice raised....)*
 Attention! Attention, please! Has anyone seen my rabbit?
 Has anyone seen my rabbit?

Clara *(with a broad grin, and giggling)*:
 Your rabbit? I ate it! I ate it!

Alice:
 You didn't.

Clara:
 I did.

Alice:
 Don't be silly. Do NOT be so silly.
 I'm going to tell the doctor about you.

Clara:
 I didn't eat it, Alice. I love rabbits. I would like to be your best friend. And I won't eat your rabbit.
 Would you like my hat?

Manny:
(intervening)
 I'd like your hat, please, Clara, with many thanks for your most timely kindness to this sorry mess of a man.

(from this point forward, Manny wears the hat)

Matron:

Enough enough! Lunch is officially over.

Alice: *(addressing Matron, pointing to Clara)*

Keep my rabbit away from her.

And keep it away from Grand, as well.

Matron:

Am I to understand you want me to speak to your Grandfather, Alice?

Alice:

In the affirmative. He's a furrier. Keep him away.

Clara:

Aardvark!

Manny: *(quickly completing the joke)*

A million miles for one of your smiles -

Matron:

UGHHHHHHH Go take your naps!!

(Residents shuffle around, very evidently not knowing where to go...Alice sings spontaneously)

7. NAP TIME: Alice

NAPPING IS A LOVELY THING...

A LOVELY TIME FOR DREAMING

LYING IN BED, DOING NOTHING AT ALL,

JUST LOOKING UP AT THE CEILING

THOSE OPEN, CLEAN SPACES

ABOVE MY HEAD

WHERE THERE'S NOTHING TO KEEP ME FROM SEEING

WHERE I LIVED AND WHO I WAS

WHEN LIFE WAS FULL

AND I HAD A LIFE WORTH LIVING.

I HAD A LIFE WORTH LIVING.

EMPTY SPACES INVITE ME TO SEE

MY LIFE WHEN LIFE WAS FULL OF ME.

THE WHITE OF THE CEILING,

THE CLEAN EMPTY SPACES

MY MIND BEGINS TO SEE THEM

FILLING UP SLOWLY WITH PEOPLE AND PLACES

NOTHING INTRUDES, NOTHING ERASES
 THE LOVELY OLD NAMES
 OF THOSE LOVELY YOUNG FACES
 NOTHING CAN REACH TO INTRUDE OR ERASE
 WHAT USED TO BE YOUNG IN THOSE BIG, EMPTY SPACES.

(Clara takes Alice's hand...)

Clara:
 Outa here?

Alice:
 Come, Clara, and sit down beside me.
 Why don't we have a story?
 I never thought stories were real, but now I know they are, so we should make them when we can, shouldn't we, Dear.....
 Let's have the story of us since this morning...not as far back as yesterday, you see, because we were different people then, weren't we.

Where shall we go from here?

Clara:
 That depends on where you want to be.

Alice:
 Quite right, Clara.
 I'd like to be with the heart of my heart.

Clara:
 And where is that?

Alice:
 Anywhere I'm truly at, of course, Clara.
 We'll begin and stop when we get there:

When my heart was sitting in my lap,
 He purred and purred and seemed quite hap.
 His fur was white and winter-grown,
 His nose a lovely pinkish- tone.

(remembers dreamily)

Where was I? Oh, yes.

I'd like you to have met him

As he was so dear to me.
 But when I tried to pet him
 He left and I couldn't see.....

Where had he gone, I wonder.....

Well, I think, after all, the meaning is clear.
 We're meant to try to find him, dear.....

And tell me now why you are here,
 If you're not looking for your heart?
 There's no point in being here unless
 You're missing everything – or part.

A story must have a moral, I think.
 So what would serve a good purpose?
 We haven't much longer than a wink.
 Let's discuss the end with the Tortoise.

He'll finish the day eventually,
 But may have a different point of view
 And then we'll see if he makes sense
 Or if you and also I do.

I'd very much like to find my heart.....
(with resignation)
 Well, next time....

Clara: *(with a certain, serious premonition)*
 It IS next time. I know it is...I know it is.

(they hold hands)

Alice: *(to Walter and Manny)*
 Come on boys...Something to soothe 'til the bar opens.....

Walter and Manny: Duet Toora-Loora-Loora and Russian Lullabye to Alice and Clara.

Walter/Manny together:
 TOORA LOORA LOORA TOORA LOORA LI
 TOORA LOORA LOORA
 HUSH NOW DON'T YOU CRY

Walter:
 OVER IN KILLARNEY MANY YEARS AGO

MY MOTHER SANG THIS SONG TO ME
IN TONES SO SWEET AND LOW

Manny:
JUST A LITTLE SIMPLE TUNE
IN HER GOOD OLD IRISH WAY
AND I'D GIVE THE WORLD IF SHE
COULD SING THAT SONG TODAY

Walter/Manny together:
TOORA LOORA LORRA TOORA LOORA LI
TOORA LOORA LOORA
IT'S AN IRISH LULLABYE

Manny: (*imposing this memory on toora loora*)
EVERY NIGHT YOU'LL HEAR HER CROON A RUSSIAN LULLABYE
JUST A LITTLE PLAINTIFF TUNE AND BABY STARTS TO CRY

Walter:
HUSHABYE MY BABY SOMEDAY THERE MAY BE
A LAND THAT'S FREE FOR YOU AND ME
AND A RUSSIAN LULLABYE.

SCENE V

Residence's general activity area. Nurses' station/desk to side stage, chairs moved back.
Sofa to side stage.

(*hushed whispers. Sara enters.*)

Sara:
What's happened? It's awfully quiet here.
Is anything wrong? More wrong than usual?

Matron:
Yes, it is (*carefully choosing her word*) subdued today.

Walter:
Are we to be subdued?!

Matron:
You are not.

Walter:
No, but possibility itself is. I can sense that.
And, if I do say so, probability is.

Yes, with certainty.

Matron: *(to Sara)*

One of our residents – Did you know Charles? – Charles drank a quart of cleaning fluid last night....and...well....he's passed on.

Sara:

I'm so sorry! How awful! Had he known what he was doing? Did he want to die, do you suppose? Had he said anything after dinner?

Matron:

Only that he was looking for his better half.

I told him she was always with him. Maybe he thought that was a lie. I hadn't meant it as a lie, Sara. I think he'd forgotten how to find her here, inside. *(she says, touching her heart)*

(stops to collect herself....then)

Well, impossible to say, isn't it. Impossible to know what these people are thinking

Manny: *(overhearing...then interjecting)*

Well then, this is

What we think.

He drank some ink.

Jerry: *(who has been listening quietly as always, opens his mouth – and apparently his soul – and wails the kaddish the Jewish prayer for mourning. It comes out of nowhere, focusing all attention to him. When he's finished. He sits calmly down.)*

(clearly impressed):

Oh my!

Sara:

Goodness! Somebody's feeling something!

Matron:

Is he Jewish?!

(silence. not knowing what else to say on the subject.....)

Well, Charles may have had enough.

Manny:

Enough! I can't stand it. My singing killed the boy!

Bind me! Gag me! Walter, help me confine my very limited talents! The monster is returneth!

Walter:

Yes, of course, yes. I'll take over the singing for the day.
Quite true, Charles had had enough, I'd say.

Matron: *(somewhat defensively, and trying to ignore these other conversations):*

Well, he was asleep in his room and rounds had been made and I think he simply wandered into the kitchen and mistook the liquid for soda or milk. He wasn't all that unhappy.

Sara:

Not any fault of yours, Matron, but he may have wanted to leave.

Matron:

To be free? To be free of me? To be free of himself? To find her....?

(challenging)

Is that what happened with YOUR mom, then? Did she INTEND to wander onto the highway?

Had she intended to end it all, Sara?

Sara: *(somewhat defensively, as well..)*

She did not mean to end anything! She'd lost all sense of direction, that's all, and just kept walking.....She was looking for a place that used to be there. *(pause)* It was extremely upsetting.....We couldn't find her for the longest time.

Matron:

Ah, and so you brought her here for her own good and safety, then, Sara....Even if she needed to be free to find what used to be?

Sara:

Well, yes,.....I did. I have to keep her safe, don't I?

(getting upset)

We have to keep her safe!

(at Matron)

YOU HAVE TO KEEP HER SAFE!
YOU MUST SAVE HER FROM HERSELF!
DANGER IS LURKING HERE AND THERE
SHE IS SO TERRIBLY UNAWARE...

HER UNSUSPECTING FOOTSTEPS MAY LEAD HER TO THE EDGE
OF HARM AND FATE AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Matron:

NO! OH NO! I'VE MADE A PLEDGE!

Sara:

THEN, MATRON, KEEP HER SAFE!

Matron:

WE'LL REMOVE THE PENCILS, FOOD UTENCILS -
KNITTING NEEDLES, TOO.
THEY'RE WEAPONS IN HER HANDS NOW –

Sara:

ALL THINGS SHE USED TO DO.

LOCK THE DOORS AND WINDOWS,
CURTAINS DRAWN BY DAY
ALL TURN ENEMIES TO LIFE ITSELF –

Matron:

A LIFE WE'VE PROMISED TO PRESERVE
FOR WHAT REASON, WHO CAN SAY?
THIS IS BUT A HALFWAY HOUSE
TO WHERE WE'LL GO SOMEDAY.

Sara:

SAVE HER FROM A WORLD THAT ISN'T KIND TO AGE
SAVE HER FROM CERTAIN TORMENT,
CONFUSION AND RAGE!
SHE MUST BE KEPT SAFE AT HOME HERE
SAFE AND SOUND INSIDE HER CAGE.

Sara and Matron:

HER CAGE, HER CAGE!
WHAT IS RIGHT HERE? WHAT IS WRONG?
WILL HER HEART BE SAFE HERE?
WILL WE KEEP HER FROM HER SONG?

HER SONG, HER SONG
WILL HER LIFE BE SAD AND LONG?
WILL HER VOICE BE HEARD HERE?
WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG?

Matron:

WE DON'T WANT HER TO BE ANGRY
ANGRY AS YOU AND ME –

Sara and Matron:

CAUGHT BETWEEN LOVE AND REASON –

Sara:
WOULD SHE THINK THAT THIS IS TREASON?

Matron:
IT IS CRUEL, THIS WINTER SEASON.

Sara:
IT IS CRUEL, THIS WINTER SEASON...
KEEP HER CAGED.....OR LET HER FREE!
TAKE CARE OF HER! TAKE CARE!

Matron:
YES, SARA.....

(quietly...)
FOR WHAT PURPOSE, I WONDER.....BUT TO GIVE ME A JOB AND
NO OTHER?

Sara:
NO! TAKE CARE! SHE IS STILL MY MOTHER!

Matron:
Charles was tired last night. No one thought he was that far gone....or that desperate.

(Sara shakes her head no with some obvious exasperation...as she reacts to Matron's renewed defensive statement...although with acceptance of the inevitable)

Anyway, many here won't notice.

Manny:
Notice? Are you giving me notice?

(the others begin to assemble...Manny loses no opportunity to relate..)

I knew it! My career is at its end! My swan song! Here rests Charles...Charles and I...no peace will we find! Two of a kind!

Sara:
They will noticeand they will understand.....

Clara:
Where is Charles?
He was wearing my bathrobe.
And slippers.
But I didn't mind.

Walter:
Neither did he.

Clara:
Charles was sad.

Manny:
Who wouldn't be?

Clara:
He waited.....

Alice:
Too long.
He wanted to go home.

Matron: *(raising her voice to explain)*
Charles has passed away. He's with God now.

Clara:
Wake me up when he comes back.

Alice:
He's not coming back. He's given up his place.
He's dead. Old people die.....
and it's a good thing because they've had their turn here.
And there's a shortage of space.

Walter: *(nodding yes...considering this.)*
It's a very good thing we're young.

(Manny has commandeered the medicine cart and changes the subject)

Manny :
We're here for our meds, Matron.

Walter:
Line-up, people. Line-up for Matron.
One at a time, please..or two.

Manny:
Something for the throat, dear!

Alice: *(urgently, alarmed...)*
Stop stop that! Stop that! Are you sure we need all those pills? Are you sure?

(characteristically questioning)
 Does everyone need pills?
 I don't need mine.
 But Jerry needs nine.

Matron:
 Yes, let's take our meds.
 We're swiss cheese in our heads, aren't we.....
 Hole one minute, cheese the next.....
 Some pills are white and some are reds..
 Come now folks, take your meds

(Residents take pills, some put them in pockets, some trade with each other (I want red, etc.)
(Manny gargles.)

Walter: *(another pronouncement..)*
 My neurons, I've been told, you know, are lost within the cell.

Manny:
 Woe am I. Woe are we.
 Lost in the cell
 And they've thrown away the key!

Matron: *(exasperated)*
 So much for science, Sara.

Sara:
 Excellent meds, All! Very good for the grey matter!

Alice:
 Don't be too sure, ladies. Meds are under suspicion and under-documented.

Matron:
 Alice, you don't know everything. Let me do my job!

Alice:
 I know what I know, dear. You may be Queen, but there's not much under that crown!
 I'm the brains around here.
 Let's see Matron take her meds, people. More! More!

(and a pointed non-sequitur to Matron..)
 And leave Jerry out of it!!

Walter:
 What, pray, what is in a brain? *(philosophically)*

8. BRAIN DRAIN SONG: Ensemble

Walter:

WHAT OH WHAT IS IN A BRAIN?
 EVERYTHING'S GONE DOWN THE DRAIN.
 WHO I WAS AND WHERE I WENT
 ALL THE SMALL AND BIG EVENTS
 WHAT OH WHAT IS IN MY BRAIN?

Manny:

MEDICINE GOES DOWN THE DRAIN
 WHEN I REFUSE TO SWALLOW
 MEDICINE GOES DOWN THE DRAIN
 AND I JUST CHOOSE TO WALLOW

Clara:

MY BRAIN IS DRAINED. I'M JUST A FAKE.
 SOMETIMES I WISH THAT I WERE DEAD
 BUT OH WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE
 I'VE ALREADY LOST MY HEAD
 I'VE ALREADY LOST MY HEAD

Manny:

MEDICINE GOES DOWN THE DRAIN
 IT MAKES ME UBER- MELLOW
 MEDICINE GOES DOWN THE DRAIN
 WHERE IS THAT LUCID FELLOW?

Clara:

MY BRAIN IS GREEN, MY PEE IS RED
 SOMETIMES I WISH THAT I WERE DEAD
 BUT OH WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE
 MY LIFE IS GREY, WE'VE BEEN MISLED
 LET'S TAKE THAT STUFF, THEN BACK TO BED!

All:

Wallow wallow wallow follow me! Follow me!

(they queue up in SEXY (as possible) conga line as music continues. Manny in the lead, a flower in his teeth)

Alice: *(as a pronouncement)*

I've got to get to work. I have my job to do!

(she walks purposefully behind the nursing station desk. Matron and Walter stop by the

*desk. Walter takes a flower from a vase, taking a bite of the flower.
Matron is quick to extract the flower from his mouth)*

Matron:

Spit out that flower, Walter -- out! No flowers. They may be toxic!

Clara:

Give me one! I must have it !!

Sara: (*urgently*)

Do Not eat the flowers, people!

Clara: (*defiantly*)

Flower power!

Matron:

All of you.....oh. Merde.

Clara:

Shit! Shit!

Manny:

Oh, shoot! Shoot shoot shoot!!!

Walter:

I'm shot!

You've shot me!

Manny:

Sorry, old man. It was an accident , I'm sure.

Walter:

Quite alright, Pet. Accidents will happen , you know.

Matron : (*getting exhausted*)

Will someone tell me what Alice is doing behind this desk?!

Alice, come come, join the others now for physical therapy!

Alice:

Don't get fussy, Dearie. This is my job.... I prefer it to anything physical.

And this place wouldn't run smoothly, if it weren't for me.

As you well know!

Now off you go! You could use some exercise.

Matron:
Therapy is helpful. I'm doing this for you, Alice!

Alice:
I object!

Matron:
To what??

Alice:
Objectionable favors!
Life extension is a curse...a course to be avoided.
My rabbit was running the right course, of course. He knows where the end goes.

Vera, where is he?

(Sara looks with complete helplessness at Alice)

Matron: *(frustrated)*
No more! Alice, this minute! OUT! You're at MY desk! Sara, please help me with Alice, please! Now!

9. DO AS YOU'RE TOLD: Matron

DON'T WALK, DON'T TALK, DON'T HURT YOURSELVES
NOW PUT THAT BACK UP ON THOSE SHELVES
EAT AND SLEEP AND TAKE YOUR MEDS
AND DON'T ATTEMPT TO FIND YOUR HEADS

DON'T ATTEMPT TO FIND YOUR LIVES
THEY'VE GONE FOR GOOD, MY DEARS
YOU'VE LOST THE GOOD, YOU'VE LOST THE BAD
THERE ARE NO GOLDEN YEARS, MY DEARS

NO GOLDEN YEARSNOT HERE.

DON'T ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE
WHAT'S IN YOUR INTEREST -- BOTTOM LINE:
ATTEND TO ME AND TO MY RULES
STOP MISBEHAVING, DON'T BE FOOLS.

DON'T ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE
WHAT'S IN YOUR INTEREST – BOTTOM LINE:

(thoughtfully)

IF YOU DON'T LET US DO OUR CHORES
OUR LIVES ARE JUST AS LOST AS YOURS.

(Alice imitates Matron..)

DON'T ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE
WHAT'S IN YOUR INTEREST – BOTTOM LINE:

(Ensemble ends song.)

IF YOU DON'T LET US DO OUR CHORES
OUR LIVES ARE JUST AS LOST AS YOURS.

Alice:

Lost.....soon to be extinct.
Extinction, dear.
We wish for it here.

Matron:

And with all we do for you.....! Although when my turn comes, it will be the first
vacation I'll have had in decades. *(pause, upset)*
I WON'T HAVE IT! I WON'T HAVE IT! *(in tears)*

(new thought, to Sara)

Clara said I look like a donkey.

Clara:

I said you look like an ass.
She needs a tail!
(looking down...with a whisper)...Daddy has a tail.

Matron:

Enough!

(composes herself..)

Alright. How about horses? Do you like horses?

Walter:

Arabian, Cayuse, Mustang, Appaloosa, Morgan, my Dears...

Matron: *(dreamily, remembering...)*

Oh, I loved to ride as a girl.....
Such freedom!

Alice:

The horses weren't free.

Matron:
True true....although some lucky few are....others give us the gift of freedom.

Alice:
They don't give it. We take it.
Humans were a major mistake.
Rabbits are superior.

Clara:
Were we ever free?

Alice:
I don't think so, but we will be.

Matron:
Not soon enough....not soon enough...

Walter:
We're free to love, Matron.

Matron and Clara: (*in unison, world-wearily*)
Love is never free, Walter.

Alice:
But I've paid for everything - many times over! - and YOU (*to Matron*) took my wallet.

Matron: (*sighing*)
Oh, Alice.

Manny:
We've paid up the wazoobut for what?

Walter:
We paid for our mistakes, boys and girls.
And I do believe we saved the rest for a rainy day!

Song: RAINY DAY WALTZ

Walter: (*lumbering lightly*)
1, 2, 3
1, 2, 3
LIFE WENT QUITE
NACHRALLY.
1,2,3
1,2,THEY
TAUGHT US IN

FINITY.
BOUGHT US A
CHOCOLAAT.
SAID TO SAVE
UP A LOT.
SAVE UP A LOT!
THEY SAID: SAVE UP A LOT!

All:
THEN!!
MISLED, WITHOUT WARNING
THERE CAME THAT DARK MORNING
WE FOUND WE'D SAVED UP EVERY DIME
BUT WE COULDN'T BUY ANY MORE TIME!

Jerry:
Now what?

Clara:
TIME TO SKIDADDLE!

Alice:
Okay, we'll
Taxicab it -

Manny:
(WE'RE UP THAT) CREEK WITH NO PADDLE.

Alice:
And we're late! Oh, where's my rabbit?!

Clara:
Dagnabit! Dagnabit!

Walter:
1,2,3,
1,2,3
1, WALT
ZING WILL
MAKE YOU FREE
COME! COME A-
WAY WITH ME!
1,2,3
1,2,3
1

Manny:
 UNTIMELY
 TIMELESSNESS!
 CAN IT BE?
 CAN IT BE?
 TIME HAS CAUGHT
 UP WITH ME?
 WOE IS ME!
 UNTIMELY TIME!

All:
 THEN!!
 MISLED, WITHOUT WARNING
 HERE IS THAT DARK MORNING
 WE FIND WE'D SAVED UP EVERY DIME
 BUT WE CAN'T BUY ANY MORE TIME.

Jerry:
 Does that mean I paid, too?
 Or do I still owe you?
 And, if so, what do I owe?

Clara:
 Nothing – if we just pack up and go!!

Walter:
 WHAT SHALL WE
 DO WITH AN
 HOUR? A DAY?

Alice:
 WE SIP LEMONADE ON THE
 FRONT PORCH, MY FRIEND,
 AND WATCH THE TIME
 SLIPPING AWAY.

YES...
 UNDER THE PURPLE WISTERIA
 PONDERING LIFE'S MYSTERIA

Clara: (*out of nowhere, but pondering.*)
 What is the difference between a donkey and a horse anyway?

Walter:
 I'd rather be a horse,

Manny:
Of course.

Walter:
Horses legs are longer.

Manny:
Donkey's ears are taller.
Much like a rabbit's.

Alice: (hand to heart)
Someone said rabbit!

Jerry: (*becoming the hero Alice has made him*)
I'll buy you a rabbit, Alice.

Alice:
You love me, don't you, Jerry. Will you take the train all the way down from the Bronx?
I'd like to go to the movies....and then dancing.....

Matron:
Not now, please! No more now.

(*visibly weary*)
Oh....I'm exhausted running just to stay in place.

Alice:
Well, then run that-a-way.....far, far away.
Jerry will be taking ME dancing.

Matron: (*to Sara*)
How did we get here? How many wrong turns did we take?

Sara:
Maybe they weren't wrong turns.....

Walter:
If they weren't right and they weren't left,
they were wrong!

Sara:
Isn't it noble to assist the weak?

Matron:
Not this week.

Sara:

Any week? We're supposed to love all men, Matron...all men are our brothers...

Clara:

Don't love all men, you two. Bad idea. Very.
Mother! Help!

(looking around at the others...in a loud and urgent whisper)

She should have told! She should have said No!

Matron:

Next week will be better. Please don't distress yourselves.

Walter:

No distress here. Let's put *this* to rest, Dears.
Now come here to me and we'll discuss it.
Just sit right here and we'll talk for a while.
Let's all talk this through.
Now what is true, my Darlings.....
What is true for you?

(thoughtfully, confidently as always)

Of course, I knew that, too, I knew.

11. WHAT DID WE KNOW ANYWAY?? Walter and Jerry Duet

Walter:

WHAT DID WE KNOW
AND WHEN DID WE KNOW IT?
DID WE HAVE A HOUSE A YARD
AND DID WE EVER MOW IT?

DID WE KNOW WHAT WE WERE AFTER
AND DID WE EVER FIND IT?
DID WE HAVE A BORING JOB,
AND DID WE EVER MIND IT?

Jerry:

DID I HAVE A LOVING WIFE?
A DOG, A CAT, A BIRD?
DID WE DISAGREE A LOT
AND WAS I EVER HEARD?

DID WE RAISE A FAMILY
AND TRY TO SET THE RULES?

DID THE CHILDREN LISTEN WELL
OR THINK THAT WE WERE FOOLS!

Walter:

DID WE THINK WE HAD FOREVER
TO USE WHAT WE HAD LEARNED?
WE NOW DEDUCE IT'S OF NO USE
TO SAVE WHAT WE HAD EARNED!

LIFE IS SHORT
AND CERTAINLY UNCERTAIN
SING YOUR OWN SONG
BEFORE THE FINAL CURTAIN.

Manny:

(very dramatically)

Carnegie Hall – au revoir!

Walter, Jerry:

LET'S TRY TO GIVE IT ONE MORE CHANCE
(shaking hands)
BEFORE WE DECOMPOSE, LET'S DANCE!

(a little twirl)

Matron:

No, no...Heaven forbid! Let's stop that before it starts!.....no decomposing
or deconstructing, gentlemen!

Alice: *(speaking up loudly from behind the desk)*

Will someone bring me the doctor's journal, please!
I have to check today's entries.

Matron:

Do not go anywhere near those records!!

Alice:

I must check them and I will.
The doctor made too many mistakes in yesterday's entry.
He wrote several preposterous comments!
Something like a warranty of built-in obsolescence
and a diagnosis of extended adolescence.....

Voice of an aide:

Matron, Alice has the doctor's journal under her bed!

Alice:
It's not under my bed.....It's all in my head..
You have nothing in yours except bran flakes
or you'd have corrected all flagrant mistakes.

Matron (*calling to aide*):
Find another place for that book!!

Everyone! Television time.
Don't stand there! Just GO!

Clara:
Wait.
(*pause...and again..*)
Wait.

Walter:
I'll wait, dear one.

Matron:
Don't wait too long or it will be too late.

Jerry: (*with a horrified scream*)
NO!

Alice:
Too late?

Manny:
Too late?

Clara:
Too late for what?

Matron:
If you wait too long, nothing will matter. (*again, world-weary*)
Believe me, I know.

Alice:
That's not true! That's not true! And that's not a rule!

Sara:
Matron, watch yourself!

Matron:
Sadly, it is true. I see it happening before my eyes, Sara, don't you?

They're unraveling and so am I.

Walter:
Existentially.
Providentially.

Clara:
It will matter, it will it will.

Manny:
Yes, it will matter, dear. What will matter?

Jerry: *(in a meaningful whisper)*
Everything!

12. IF WE WAIT TOO LONG NOTHING WILL MATTER: Ensemble

IF WE WAIT TOO LONG,
NOTHING WILL MATTER
ALL THE ICE CREAM IN THE WORLD
WILL MELT
AND WE WILL FLOAT AWAY
ALL THE WINTERS WILL BE LONG
AND COLD
THERE WON'T BE ANY MAY

ALL THE NIGHTS IN THE SKIES WON'T END
THERE WON'T BE ANY DAY.
ALL THE HOMING BIRDS WILL STRAY
AND WE WILL OVERSTAY, MY SWEET,
WE WILL OVERSTAY.

ALL THE BOOKS IN THE WORLD
WILL BE READ
WHILE THE OLD FOLKS STAY IN BED
ALL REASON WILL HAVE LOST
ITS THREAD
ALL THE WORDS WILL BE SAID.
AND WE WILL LOSE OUR HEADS.

IF WE WAIT TOO LONG.....IF WE DELAY,
AND STAY TOO LONG AT PLAY,
OUR DAYS, OUR SPRINGS, OUR LOVES, MY SWEET
ALL WILL FLY AWAY, ALL WILL FLY AWAY
AND NOTHING WILL MATTER.....ANYWAY.....
NOTHING AT ALL WILL MATTER.

Manny:
Oh, how time flies! Catch it! Too late. Damn!

(Jerry begins to weep and Alice comforts him)

Sara:
We just won't let that happen! Don't cry, don't cry. Please!!

Walter:
Everything matters! We must discuss what matters.
(slowly,) It is time to talk of this and many things.

Alice:
I thought so, Walter. For instance, my shoes. Let's speak about them for a moment. I couldn't find my shoes this morning, so I assume they've walked off looking for our story.

Manny:
Yes, my dear. Shoes are always a part of the story.

Walter:
We couldn't find our story, Alice, until you came here.....
(Clara nods in agreement.)

Manny:
Yes, Alice. You are a story-finder.

Clara:
Don't be so nice to Alice. She's MY friend.

Matron: *(exasperated)*
Go take a walk, Clara.....please. A nice long one. I need it.

Residents glare at her.

Matron:
Then into the television room! Now.

Alice:
One moment! We're working on a puzzle – as if you didn't know!

Matron:
No, you're not, Alice. ...You are the puzzle. You're all just talking nonsense.

Alice:

Yes! Nonsense is the point, don't you remember?! Nonsense is the puzzle.

So we must solve it.....

Where were we.....

I think we were looking for my shoes.

Please, Clara, help me find my shoes.

I'll put in a good word for you tonight
and you won't have to take your pills.

Matron:

Alright. That's enough, Alice. For some of us, pills are a life-saver.

Alice:

Yes, I'll have a Life Saver, thanks.

Pills are a puzzle:

They make everyone around here tired, but we absolutely must not go to sleep.

We haven't figured things out yet.

Manny:

No, nothing's figured out at all.

Jerry:

Where's my puzzle?

Clara:

Ask Mother for the puzzle.

Jerry: *(heart-wrenching, as man slips into boy)*

Mother's not here. I want to go home.....

Alice:

My crossword puzzles. Where are they, please?

Matron:

They're in your shopping bag, Alice.

Alice: *(in a panic)*

Where is my shopping bag?!

Those puzzles are very important.

They have words that always cross.

And lives cross when words are hidden.

With Time. Without Space.

In Sequence.

Words have information

and information is important.

We need information here!!!

All:
Information! Information!

Alice:
Don't hide my crosswords! They have answers!
Matron's stolen my crosswords! I need them. I need the words!

(Alice becomes very agitated. Jerry attempts to comfort her.)

Sara: *(beseechingly)*:
Matron, please help...

Matron *(to an aide off-stage, then uncharacteristically/kindly patting Alice)*:
Yes, yes. Please get Alice her shopping bag, someone. She needs it right now!

Alice:
A teasel or a weasel be,
but don't attempt to comfort me!!

Alice: *(handed her shopping bag)*
Whew! That was close.....I thought it had been stolen. I must have my puzzles.
(musing)I used to know the answers.

Walter:
(uncharacteristically somber)
Answers don't matter now.

Alice:
That depends on the questions, Walter.
Now, here's an answer: What shall we have for dinner?

Manny:
I think I shall sing for my supper!

Walter:
That's not an answer, my boy.

Alice:
No, but the answer is essential, is it not?

(Jerry nods yes.)

For instance,
We always eat at 6.

My husband likes his food salty.

(Clara holds Alice's hand.)

Clara:
I don't know if I have a husband, Alice.

Alice:
Of course you have, dear.

Sara:
Yes, of course you have, dear.

Walter:
I'm going to marry Alice.

Clara:
Why?

Walter:
Because she's been waiting for something to happen.

(He walks toward her, and she makes slight, dance-like, movements with arms like the beginning of wings.....)

Walter (now light on his toes, takes Alice in his arms and they dance in a pink glow that takes the years away)

13. AFTER THE BALL

AFTER THE BALL IS OVER, AFTER THE BREAK OF MORN,
AFTER THE DANCERS' LEAVING, AFTER THE STARS ARE GONE,
MANY A HEART IS ACHING, IF YOU COULD READ THEM ALL—
MANY THE HOPES THAT HAVE VANISHED AFTER THE BALL

(We see Matron waltzing alone – as if with a ghostly partner – to the side of the stage)

SCENE VI.

Again, inside the general living area, which now includes a row of closet doors and a window to the other side stage. *(Sara enters..)*

Sara *(to Matron)*
Just me again today, Matron. My kids haven't been comfortable about coming here.

Matron:
Honestly, Sara, I'm uncomfortable about coming here. And kids...well, as it turns out, I've got them *(pointing to some of the residents)*....not quite the children I'd imagined. Not what I'd planned, of course. I waited too long, so this is the hand I've been dealt.

Sara:

Never is what we'd imagined, is it....And our children always turn into themselves anyway.....But I understand.....one way or another, always caring for somebody, aren't we.....I guess it doesn't matter who cares for whom....or who's who.....as long as we do what we're able, yes?

Matron:

Yes, we're doing our jobs.

Sara:

Well, we're trying.

Matron:

Still. I waited too long.

(to herself.....)

I'd give all wealth that years have piled,
The slow result of Life's decay,
To be once more a little child
For on bright summers day. (1)

(again, to herself)

extinct, I think.....are we all becoming.....

(Alice sees Sara approaching...)

Alice:

Hi Sweetheart! I know you. You look like me.
Are you family?
Family's very important, you see.....
However, I never cared for my cousins much.

(kiss on the cheek)

If you're leaving, stay in touch!

I was just saying that Daddy likes salty food.
Do I know you?

Sara:

Yes, Mom, it's Sara, your daughter.

Alice:

Hi Mom – Sara, here.

14. I'M BECOMING YOU: Alice and Sara Duet

Sara:
I'M BECOMING YOU, YOU KNOW,

ALICE:
I THINK IT'S QUITE BECOMING.

Sara:
WE'RE STAND-IN'S FOR EACH OTHER NOW...
ISN'T IT MIND-NUMBING?

Alice:
How old are you, dear?

Sara:
I'm fifty-two.

Alice:
How do you like that! I am, too!

Sara:
I THINK THERE'S BEEN A SEISMIC SHIFT!
ISN'T IT JUST STUNNING?!
WE'RE MERGING WHILE WE SING OUR SONG!
HOW SURPRISING! AND HOW CUNNING!

Alice and Sara:
LIFE'S CIRCLED IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
AROUND AND BACK LIKE A BIRD IN THE SKY
LET'S NOT ASK WHY
LET'S NOT ASK WHY
ALL I KNOW IS I LOVE YOU
I LOVE YOU
AND I DO, TOO
I LOVE YOU
AND I DO, TOO
I DO, TOO

(looking on....)
Matron *((to herself))*
Oh Lord.... It IS happening sooner than I'd expected.

(to Sara)
But, Sara, such beautiful, unconditional love!

Sara: *(to Matron)*

Just returning it, Matron. I didn't know much when she gave it to me, but I believe it has served me very well. I pray it does something for her now.

(to Alice)

Would you like to see the photo of Daddy that's in your room, Mom?

Alice:

Oh, that's not Daddy. I don't know who that is. *(matter-of-factly)*

Did you see my shoes?

Walter:

Alice and I are going to be married, Sara.

All:

A wedding! What shall we wear?

All : *(as they continue to rummage through the row of closets/lockers)*

(Clara) Hey! I found my dress!

(Manny) Take off my dress!

(Walter) That's Alice's Blue Gown!

(Manny) Hide your self-loathing – Dress it in clothing!

Clara: *(turns her back to Manny)*

Zip me up, daddy-o. I must have CLOSURE!

Manny:

Happy to oblige...yes, of course...

Clara:

You always are, daddy-o.....No no no! *(suddenly screechingly upset, pushes him away)*

(Manny begins to change clothes, unzipping his pants...)

Clara:

(seeing this)

No no!! Daddy, no!!! *(and hides in a locker)*

Alice:

Transform me into someone young

As clothes speak louder than the tongue

Clara: *(emerging from the locker)*

Here skirts are found and never lost -

Walter: *(wisely)*
 Though pants are nearly twice the cost!

(Alice separates from the chaos and walks to the window.....)

Alice: *(dreamily....)*
 I LOST YOU IN THE CLOSET
 AND SOMEONE FOUND YOU THERE
 THEY DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE MINE
 AND DIDN'T SEEM TO CARE

(across the stage...mood is suddenly also changing...)

Matron:
 THE OLD CAROUSEL IS BREAKING DOWN

Manny:
 IS THIS THE VERY LAST PARTY IN TOWN?

Manny and Matron:
 IS THIS THE VERY LAST PARTY.....??

Alice *(still standing across the stage, looking out the window...)*

I'M ALWAYS CHASING RAINBOWS, WATCHING CLOUDS DRIFTING BY...
 MY DREAMS ARE JUST LIKE ALL MY SCHEMES, ENDING IN THE SKY!
 SOME FELLOWS LOOK AND FIND THE SUNSHINE.....

(suddenly Alice very purposefully tries to open the window.....and when unable to do that, bangs against it with her arm until she has made a crack which cuts her..... Matron hears and runs to her, pulling her back and away from the window. Alice is dazed, hands, arms bloody. Matron calls out.....)

Matron:
 Help here! Help here! Now!

Alice:
(still dazed and quiet)
 I need to leave. I must go home....my real home.

Matron: *(applying pressure to Alice's wound.....)*
 You ARE home, Alice.
 A rule is a rule and this is your home.
 You may not crash through windows.
 And we will not speak about extinction anymore!

Alice: *(suddenly very angry)*
 If I live here, in this crazy place,
 You must leave so I can think.
 I hate, detest, and loathe you!
 And you need a bath. You stink!!

(Alice grabs a shard of glass and swings it wildly overhead. She screams, then laughs, then cries)

SCENE VI I

In the general activity area without closets.

(Alice has joined the others...her arm in a bandage. The others have their arms sympathetically bandaged, some with ribbons around them)

Matron: *(trying to be cheerful)*
 Well, now that you're all dressed to the nine's, do we know what today is?

Alice:
 I'm not a 9.....I'm a size 8.
 And my shoes are only 7:30.

YOU're the one who's too big too big!

Matron: *(ignoring this)*
 It's Alice's birthday.

Alice:
 What day is it?

Matron:
 It's your birthday, Alice.

Walter:
 Is it party time? I could use a pick-me-up.....

Alice:
 But what DAY is it? Precision! Precision!

Matron:
 Well, it is March 4th!

Alice:
 Yes, right day, dear....

Thanks for sparing me the year!
 Anyway, I knew that. I'm the eldest. My birthday's first.
(pause)

But it could well be the last! Anyone for cryonics --
 Freezing our parts?

Walter:
 A strange option, dear hearts

Manny:
 But better than colonics!

And imagine me – an ice sculpture!
 What an entrance! Quite a show!
 A veritable Holiday on Ice!
 'Though I'd likely have a meltdown
 And disappear under my chapeau!

Alice:
 We're off topic, all.
 Everyone listen! Down the hall!
 March forth! March forth!
 Left. Right. Left. Right.

Matron:
 No, that's your left foot.

Manny:
 Which is my foot?

Walter:
 I left yours there, son...

Manny:
 Quite right.
 Hang a Ralph.
 Hang a Lewey.

(all begin to stumble around)

Matron:
 Oh no. You're all over the place again. Help here! People, people! Pretend you're civilized! Come back for a tea party.

Alice:
 We did pretend we were civilized...and now we're homogenized. No deal.

Walter:
March forth! Follow Alice! Alice is our leader!

Matron:
God forbid! She is NOT. If anyone here is, I am. Now stop this nonsense.
Do as I say!

Residents:
O.K.!!

Matron: (*surprised*)
Hmmm, that was easy....., but it's cold comfort.
You all should walk in my shoes for a day.

Alice:
Alright, but I'd rather have my own shoes.

All:
We'd rather have our own shoes!

Matron:
God oh god oh god. Who wears the pants in this family anyway?

Clara: (*cries out..*)
No! ! No !!

Walter:
You're safe here, Clara.
(*Walter comforts her*)

Manny: (*to Alice*)
She's still crying, poor girl.

Walter:
Screams are only dreams, children.

Alice:
Then we have to listen 'til they speak.

Clara:
I'm worried. Very.

Walter:
Why, lamb?

Clara:
Because...when I close my eyes I SEE *NOTHING!*

Walter:
But we're not meant to see anything with our eyes closed.

Clara:
I used to see everything. It wasn't good, but it was mine.
Now I just HEAR it all the time!

Please! Listen to me.
I'm a near fatality.

I'M BAD

I'M BAAAD!
SO VERY BAD!
I HAD A DAD
WHO SAID I OUGHTA.
AND I WAS HIS ONLY DAUGHTA.
SO I DID.
I DIDN'T OUGHTA.

SO VERY SAD.

I'M BAAAD!
I SHOULDN'T OUGHTA.
BUT A DAMN GOOD DAUGHTA.

GET ME BEYOND THIS.
NO KISSES PLEASE.
FRAGMENTS OF FONDNESS
BUT DARK MEMORIES.

No one here can remember!
Why can't I forget?

IT GOES 'ROUND IN MY BRAIN
TOO OBSCENE TO BE SEEN.
DID HE MEAN TO BE MEAN?
NOW MY MIND ISN'T CLEAN.

CLEAN IT!!!!
'CAUSE I'M BAD!!!!

DON'T SAY I'M NOT.

I KNOW WHAT I AM.
A TINY TEMPTRESS.
LITTLE WHORE.
HOW COULD A FATHER
ASK FOR MORE?

WHO WAS TO BLAME?
A CHINA DOLL, I'M TOLD.
HIS SKIN WAS HOT.
MINE IS COLD.
NOW I'M BROKEN AND I'M OLD.

AND BAAADDD!!

WHERE WERE YOU, MOM?
FRIGHTENED, TOO?
LEFT ME, MOM,
LIKE YOU NEVER KNEW.
BUSY BUSY EVERYDAY.
WAS IT HARD TO LOOK AWAY?

SO QUIET, MOM.
NOTHING TO SAY?
LOST YOUR WORDS
WHEN HE CAME YOUR WAY?
DRESSED ME UP, DRESSED ME DOWN.
I WAS THE CUTEST GIRL IN TOWN.

DID YOU TRY TO SAVE ME?
MAYBE LOSE ME IN A CROWD?
LEAVE ME ON A DOORSTEP?
A STOOP? AN ELEVATOR?
I GUESS YOUR WEREN'T STRONG ENOUGH
AND THOUGHT YOU'D DO THAT LATER.

DO IT NOW!!
LOSE ME NOW
BECAUSE I'M BAD!

A DAMN GOOD DAUGHTA!

Walter: *(patting Clara's hand in comfort)*
A good girl, Clara. A very good girl.

(Clara hides behind something.)

Manny: (*contemplating the situation...after a long, visibly dramatic pause...*)

So! Let's see a show!
Clara will drive us there.

Clara:
I'm too young to drive.

Alice:
Well, hand over those keys! I'm eldest here!
We can't grow old, if we haven't been young!
And we're too old to die young, so let's skidaddle!

Sara:
Oh No no no no.....Mom, I brought you colored pencils – and they work.

Alice: (*interrupting, wary*)
I'm not signing anything!!

Sara:
...and a surprise that's in your room waiting for you.

Alice:
I sure as hell could use a surprise, Ruth. (*Sara rolls her eyes.*)
Need a jump start, darling. No key in *this* ignition recently.

CAN'T FIND MY LOST POTENTIAL.
I'M INCONSEQUENTIAL.
NOT EVEN AN ABBREVIATION –
JUST A STRANGE MUTATION –
OF MY SELF WHEN I WAS HERE.

(*HOLDS SARA'S HAND TO LEND COMFORT*)
DON'T FEAR FOR YOUR SANITY
DON'T CALL IN THE MARINES!
ON THE OTHER HAND, CHECK YOUR POCKETS.
I HEAR IT COULD BE IN YOUR JEANS.

(*sighs deeply*)

IT WOULD BE TORRENTIAL
IF I COULD CRY.
I KNOW I'M MAKING NOISES,
BUT MY EYES ARE DRY.

Sara:

Oh, Mother. Think about a *good* surprise.

Alice:

I'm sure I know what it is. It's that Blue Book, isn't it.

Sara:

Which blue book, Mom?

Alice:

The one we used to read that explained what's wrong with me!

Someone stole it.

I need another one, Sara, and things will be all right.

(Matron looks sternly at Sara.)

Sara:

Yes, Mom, we'll read it later – together – just us.

Alice: *(gleefully)*

And then we can tell everyone else what's wrong with them, too.

Walter :

It's about time someone told me.

Manny:

What IS wrong with you?

Walter:

Do you know me?

Manny:

Who are you? Are you sick, too?.

Jerry: *(getting to the heart of the matter)*

And then we can go home, Alice!

Matron:

You'll go home later. This is your home until then.

You're ill, not feeling well, that's all .

You'll go home later, when you're better.

Alice:

Later is meaningless. It is no longer in our vocabulary.

Matron:

No need to read a book about illness, Alice.

Alice (*quietly*):

But there is. We have to find out about it because we're losing everything here.

Walter:

Yes, everything is lost here, isn't it, Sara...

Manny:

But we'll find it for you, Alice.

Walter:

What is it we're looking for again?

Alice:

We're looking for what's going to happen.

(*pause*)

Is something going to happen?

Clara: (*slowly, with concern...*)

I think I'm looking for my daughter.

Matron:

She visited with you yesterday, Clara.

And you'll see her tomorrow.

Clara:

But I don't know tomorrow.

Jerry:

Someone, please.....I need to find tomorrow, too.

I don't know tomorrow.

Alice:

You know me, Jerry, don't you? We'll find you and then we'll find today.

Matron:

Oh, jeez. We'll all be right here tomorrow. Same place. Same people.

Alice:

No, please, no.

All: (*groaning*)

No! No! Not the same place!

Not the same people!

Clara:
 There's a new person in my bed.
 I don't want him there!
 I want to go outside and leave here!
 Get him out of my bed!

Sara:
 There's no one in your bed, Clara. You're okay.

Matron:
 We'll go outside together -- later.

All:
 Outside now! To the elevator!
 What floor are we on?

Manny: *(deep knee-bending...)*
 Up, then down.
 Up, then down.
 Okey dokey
 Everyone!
 Off the elevator!

All: *(chanting the security code #s....)*
 36! 16! 47!

Matron: *(calling out an order to someone off-stage)*
 Change that damn code again!

Manny:
 Yes, yes! Or they'll break in again to rob me of my voice -- and my hat!!!!

Walter
 Where's the car, Clara??

Clara:
 I need my car. I want to go! I need to split for nowheresville,.

Alice:
 Hold my hand, Jerry. We're going out. Would you like to go to the ocean?

(Jerry nods emphatically YES.)

Alice:
 Tomorrow we'll go to the boardwalkand to see Mother.

Jerry:
Then.....I DO know tomorrow?

17. LET'S FIND TOMORROW: Jerry
*(during his little song, Alice wipes Jerry's nose, brushes back his hair from his face.
Jerry takes one of Alice's hands in both of his and holds it to his cheek)*

I'M AFRAID I'VE LOST TODAY.
CAN'T FIND IT ANYWHERE.
I'M AFRAID I'VE LOST TODAY.
IS IT HIDING IN THIN AIR?

I'M NOT AWARE OF WHERE IT'S GONE
IT'S MORE THAN I CAN BEAR,
WHERE IT'S GONE ESCAPES ME
AND I HAVEN'T GOT A SPARE.

WHAT HAVE I DONE? I'VE LOST TODAY!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO LOSE IT.
WHAT HAVE I DONE? I NEED IT BACK.
I'M SURE THAT I WOULD CHOOSE IT.

WAS IT SWEETER THAN I KNEW IT WAS?
BETTER THAN THIS SORROW.
I KNOW! INSTEAD, I'LL LOSE MYSELF...
.AND THEN I'LL FIND TOMORROW.

Alice:
Don't get lost, Jerry.

Jerry:
(suddenly remembering something...)
Was there a yesterday? They said I'd go home. I was supposed to go home yesterday!

Alice:
If you go home, may I go with you, Jerry?

Jerry:
I don't know. I'll have to ask.

Alice:
Let's not ask anything now. Let's just have cake.

Sara:
We can play that game you like, Mom.

Alice:
I don't remember.

Sara:
Do You Remember?

Alice:
I don't remember.
The muscles in my brain feel weak, dear.
I must sit down and try to think.

Sara:
The Do You Remember Game! The one that has the funny words that grandma told you!

Sara:
18. THE DO YOU REMEMBER GAME.....

DO YOU REMEMBER.....
LASAGNA,
(Alice shakes her head no and giggles.)

DO YOU REMEMBER
CANDY APPLES?
OTHER DISHES!
HUGE KNISHES!
ROASTED CHESTNUTS!
MORE KNISHES! *(just repeating to make it sound funny)*

CHARLOTTE RUSSES!
CHOCOLATE MOOSES

Matron:
NOT TO MENTION
NELSON EDDY

Residents:
I WON'T

Matron:
WON'T WHAT?

All:
MENTION NELSON EDDY.

All:
 TROLLEY CARS
 NOXZEMA JARS
 BABE RUTH
 A TELEPHONE BOOTH
 SODA POP
 LINDY HOP
 WILL ROGERS
 BROOKLYN DODGERS
 A JUMPING BEAN
 PROM KING
 PROM QUEEN

Alice (*dreamily*)
 I WAS BEAUTIFUL!

Walter:
 YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

Matron:
 Anything else?

Jerry:
 BEEEEEEEE BOP!

All:
 NO. THAT'S ALL.
 (*but not stopping*)

Sara:
 Do You Remember.....

All:
 FDR
 FILM NOIR
 ALL THAT JAZZ
 RAZZAMATAZZ
 WE'RE COOKIN' WITH GAZ

Manny: (*getting carried away...*)
 HE'S A SWEETPOTOOTIE
 SWITCHEROOTIE
 KILLER-DILLER
 HOTSY TOTSY

Matron:
YOU'RE CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN'

Jerry:
BEEEE BOP

All:
DIMAGGIO
MONROE! MONROE!

CARY GRANT
WHO SAYS I CAN'T

FIBBER MAGEE
LIVE TV
A PIN FOR MY HAT
THE AUTOMAT
ALGER HISS
MY FIRST FRENCH KISS!

Alice:
A LONG TIME AGO

Matron:
I KNOW. I KNOW.

All:
BUT MAYBE TODAY?
WHO CAN SAY? WHO CAN SAY?

Alice:
I WAS BEAUTIFUL.....

Walter:
YOU ARE STILL BEAUTIFUL.

(trying even harder.....)
THE LIVING END.

Alice:
That's an oxymoron, Walt, but true. And the problem in a nutshell. *(Knocks on her head.)*

18 B. THE WAITING SONG: Walter

YOU ARE MORE BEAUTIFUL

THAN YOU EVER MUST HAVE BEEN.
 THE LINES THAT HAD COLLECTED RIGHT HERE (*touches her face*)
 WILL NEVER COME BACK AGAIN...NEVER, MY DEAR.

THE DARKENED SKIES HAVE DISAPPEARED
 THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO FEAR, MY DEAR
 THE CLOUDS ARE GONE, THE WAY IS CLEAR.
 YOUR WAITING IS OVER, I'M SURE IT'S TRUE.
 BUT I WILL KEEP WAITING, IF YOU'D LIKE ME TO.

Matron and Sara:
 We'll wait also.

Manny:
 I'll wait, although it makes me quite anxious.

Residents (*all but Alice and Walter*):
 WE'LL WAIT. WE'LL WAIT WITH YOU.
 WHO HAS SOMETHING BETTER TO DO?
 WE'LL WAIT, WE'LL WAIT.
 TAKE YOUR TIME

Manny:
 BUT DON'T BE LATE

Walter:
 Take your time

Alice:
 But don't take mine!

Clara:
 Take mine! Take mine!
 It's in custody
 And I'll never get it back.
 Look for the weeping willow tree
 Its tears are turning black

I am outa here!!
 Just wait and see.....

SCENE IX

Dining room. Couch to one side. All present, except for Clara.

Alice's birthday party
(All sit at a table, Manny. Clara is not present.)

Manny:

19. HAPPY BIRTHDAY SONG

HAPPY BIRTHDAY IS A RULE
 YES, MY DARLING, YOU'RE A JEWEL
 HAPPY DAY TO EVERYONE, TOO.
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR ALICE.
 NOW, A BRIEF INTERVIEW:
(as if holding a mic to her, but allowing time for Alice to speak)

AND IT'S ALICE, EVERYONE! WELCOME, WELCOME...
 HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?
 YOU MUST BE THRILLED THAT YOU'RE SO REVERED...
 WE'RE ALL DELIGHTED YOU'VE PERSEVERED...
 HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

Thank you thank you. Now to the dining hall!

Walter:

We're in the dining hall, old man.

Manny:

Quite right. Let's eat, drink, and take a nap.

Matron:

Stay awake now...
 It will take all of us to blow out the candles.

Alice:

(drifting quietly.....)

Out candle.....

20. I MADE A STAR (Alice and Matron)

Matron: *(dreamily as she carries in the birthday cake)*

There's still something about parties...

WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WAS...*(interrupted..)*

Alice:

WHEN I WAS YOUNG I MADE A STAR

I HELD IT, THEN I FLUNG IT FAR
 IT CIRCLED ALL AROUND THE EARTH
 AND SHINED SO VERY HARD IT BURST
 A MILLION PIECES ALL FELL DOWN
 AROUND ME AT MY FEET.
 I'VE PICKED THEM UP AND FITTED THEM
 TOGETHER THROUGH THE YEARS.
 THE PUZZLE'S ALMOST FINISHED NOW.
 I'VE GLUED IT WITH MY TEARS.
 SOON AGAIN I'LL HAVE THAT STAR.

Matron:
 SOON AGAIN I'LL HAVE THAT STAR...

(all stand and then take each others' seats a la musical chairs, though quietly as in silent choreographed steps)

Alice:
 WHEN I AM OLD, I'LL TAKE THAT STAR
 AND PUT IT IN MY PURSE.
 I'LL KEEP IT WITH ME DAY AND NIGHT
 AND FEEL LIFE SPINNING IN REVERSE
 I'LL USE THE BRIGHT STARLIGHT TO SEE
 SO I'LL BE READY FOR THE FLIGHT
 WHEN THE STAR TAKES OFF WITH ME..... !!

(party continues and, for the first time, Manny – glowing -- sings Happy Birthday in perfect time and pitch....he has achieved his moment!)

Manny:
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR ALICE
 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.....

(Matron tries to sit down to join them all at the table)

Residents:
 No room!! No room!
 Too big! Too big!

Matron:
 Don't mention MANNERS around here.

Residents:
 We won't.

Alice:

I had a terrible dream this morning, dear ones.....

I was a little girl and another child gave me a rabbit's foot.

It was a terrible dream as I never appeared to have looked for the rest of the rabbit.

Will you all find the rest of my rabbit for me?

Walter:

Yes, we will, Alice. He may have been waiting, you know.....all these years....

Best to go looking, as so little just comes to us. But always wise to speak wishes....just in case someone does hear.

Manny:

Quite right.

Alice:

I've never thought of just asking, you know.....

Ask....hmmmmmm.....just ask.... (*considering the possibilities..*)

Did we do that, Sara dear? Just ask, I mean? I don't think we ever asked mother? Did you ask me?

Sara:

There never seemed enough time to just ask, Mom. I don't know why....

Maybe it's not too late to start asking now.....

To ask for what we need...

Manny:

Entertainment, folks! Ready?

Okay, now, hit it!

21. WHO KNEW? Manny and Walter

EVERYONE COLD ONCE WAS HOT

EVERYONE HAD A CLUE

EVERYONE BIG GETS SMALLER

EVERYONE'S HAIR NEEDS GLUE

EVERYONE OLD ONCE WAS YOUNG

ONCE WE WERE DAMN FINE

EVERYONE HERE LOOKS GOOD TO ME

DOES THAT I.V. DRIP TAKE WINE?

Walter:

THERE'S SUCH A NEED TO RE-CONNECT

WITH FRIENDS WHO'VE GONE ASTRAY

HOW LUCKY THAT WE HAPPENED UPON
EACH OTHER IN THIS WAY!

Manny:
WE EACH DESERVE A COMPLIMENT
EACH AND EVERY ONE
WE'RE ALL AS OLD AS SEDIMENT
BUT NONE CAN BE OUTDONE!

All:
EVERYONE HERE'S AMENABLE
TO THE SAMENESS OF EACH DAY
LIFE MAY BE UNTENABLE
BUT REPLAY IT, DEARS, REPLAY!

Walter:
The argument's most defensible.

Matron:
Only vaguely comprehensible.

Manny:
Immensely densely right.

Walter:
And relevant, I say.

Alice:
Yes, in each and every way.

Sara:
Sing your song.....
We'll hum along.

Alice:
Who knew we'd be dancing to a tune...

Walter:
That was ending so soon.....

Manny:
Dance! Fly!!

Alice:
Yes, fly, darlings! Where is my star?!

Walter:

I'm not sure I want to disappear
Often I quite like it here.....

Alice:

THEN TAKE YOUR TIME, BUT DON'T TAKE MINE
THOSE NEWER KIDS NEED ROOM TO GROW
AND HAVEN'T ANOTHER PLACE TO GO
WE'LL HAVE TO GIVE THEM OUR PLACE HERE
SO GO ABOUT IT WITH GOOD CHEER

I CAN FEEL IT IN MY KNEES AND NECK
THEIR YOUNGER BONES ARE GROWING
THIS SPACE WAS A RENTAL, AFTER ALL
OUR LEASE IS UP! GET GOING!

WE'VE BEEN IN A HOLDING PATTERN, DEAR,
ALL WAITING 'ROUND TO DISAPPEAR.
GROWING YOUNGER YEAR AFTER YEAR AFTER YEAR.....

Where the hell is my rabbit?!!!!!!!
I need that rabbit!!!!!!

MY HANDS ARE SHAKING ENDLESSLY
ALTHOUGH I DO TAKE CARE
I'VE LIPSTICK ON MY FOREHEAD
AND BUTTER IN MY HAIR
I LEAVE BEFORE THE REST OF YOU
AS I'M THE ELDEST HERE
MY TICKET, FARE AND SUITCASE
ARE READY, WAITING, NEAR
JUST WAVE GOODBYE, BLOW KISSES
DON'T TRY TO INTERFERE!

Jerry:

(out of the blue..)

But SHE can't say goodbye.

Manny:

Who, dear?

Jerry:

Clara. Where's Clara?

All:

Where IS Clara?

Manny:
I believe the girl has disappeared!

Walter:
She's a walker, yes.

Manny:
Always looking for her way
Out of the place she's in --

Sara:
Out of her own skin.

Manny:
She does always disappear.

Walter:
But she re-appears. She feels safe with us.

Matron:
I'll see, I'll see.....I'll take care of this.
Everyone go about your business...

Manny:
My business is your business,

Walter:
and very much vice versa

Manny:
Your business is my business.
Now which of those is worser?

Walter:
(seeing Matron return)
Oh my, oh dear, worser, worser, I fear.

Matron:
Clara's gone.

All:
Where?? Where is Clara?

Matron:
I don't know....ummm *(fighting back tears and not wanting to share the truth)*, I don't

know....

Alice:
Who?? Who?

All:
Clara!

Walter:
Oh dear dear! She's gone full-circle.

Manny:
She's grown-down to nothing!
She's outa here this time!

Matron:
(after a deep breath)
I'm so sorry. Clara is gone.

(Alice let's out the scream of a wounded animal)

Alice:
NO!!!!
No no no she can't! She can't disappear! I'm the one. I have to disappear first.

(to Matron)
You told me to watch out for #1 and I did.....but I should have been watching for Clara!

No no no no. She's not supposed to disappear. She wasn't ready.
She was so young! Let me *(crying)*,,,,,, let me go.....let me.

Where is my rabbit? Where is my rabbit? I've stayed too long. I should have asked.
I could have just asked!! It's been time to ask and to move ahead...and instead I dawdled.

I should have spent more time doing ..not thinking...not talking.
If I'd asked and listened, my answer would have had me walking.
That's right. My rabbit would have had me walking to where we used to be.
It wasn't Clara's time to go.
It should have been me...me...me

(She's completely distraught and exhausted)

Walter:
Here is car fare, dearest.

Alice:

Will someone help me, please.....I don't feel right. Circuit breakers broke! Power's out!!

(Matron, Sara and Walter help Alice. She is helped to the couch and collapses. Walter leaves quietly)

Sara:

She's been strong, you know....always strong.
She never wanted more than she had....so it never occurred to her to ask for anything.
Mom always just kept going.....Maybe that's why she needs her rabbit. She doesn't know how to ask if it's time to goor how to get there.

(upset, teary and needing a break..)

I'll be just out here, Matron. Call if you need me, please. You know what to do.

Matron holds Alice's hand and sings.

22. THE RUSE

ALICE, MY JESTER, MY PRINCESS, MY MUSE –
ALL OF MY MALICE WAS ONLY A RUSE.
I HARASS AND BULLY, PRETEND NOT TO CARE.
DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE, DEAR. WE'VE BEEN QUITE A PAIR.

(grandly) YOU ARE MY RAISON D'ETRE!

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?
AND WHAT FUN WOULD IT BE?
WHAT'S THE POINT IN GROWING OLDER,
IF YOU WON'T BE HERE WITH ME?

ALICE, MY JESTER, MY PRINCESS, MY MUSE –
I KNOW YOU'RE TIRED AND WILL LEAVE WHEN YOU CHOOSE....
YOU'VE TAUGHT US ALL HOW TO LAUGH AND LIVE.
I BESTOW ON YOU MY TITLE – QUEEN – SEEING THAT IT'S MINE TO GIVE.

(light fades as matron sits with Alice)

SCENE X:

Outside on the bench, in front of the NO PARKING sign which has been altered. Alice slouched, unable to sit upright. Walter stands by.

Sara:

(carrying a large tote, Sara quietly puts it at Alice's feet and sits down next to her)

Mom, do you feel better? How are you doing today? I was very worried.

Alice:

Oh, it was just a minor plumbing problem. Old pipes, dear. I don't mind. I'm rusty. Musty. Leaky pipes, that's all.

Sara:

You'll rest today, won't you.....

Walter: *(trying to insert some levity...pointing to a parking sign in driveway near bench as we saw it at the opening of Scene II)*

Look at that, Alice! Someone wrote No Barking without Permit!

Alice:

(a gasp of great surprise)

A brilliant man, dear heart! Smart, smart man. No wonder my rabbit's not here!!

Walter:

Very kind of you, Alice, thank you, but rabbits don't bark. Besides, the sign really says parking, not barking, you know.

Alice:

I know that, darling man.....but how can you expect a rabbit to understand? Thank you, thank you, thank you! I finally know why he's been away. He's parked somewhere else! He was parking up the wrong tree!

Walter:

She's not quite here, in my estimate, Sara dear.

Sara:

Maybe she's heading off to somewhere better.... I hope.

(Sara gives Walter a little hug. Walter leaves quietly)

Alice: *(speaking slowly now)*

Where did you say I'm going, darling?

I found quite a few things right here, you know. Or quite a few things right...right here, dear.

I found my shoes in the closet....., Who'd have thought?!

And I found you, didn't I....And here we are. What more could I ask?

Shall I ask, Sara?

Do you have a question for me?

But I'm very tired. I'd like to go to sleep now. I'll see you later.

What is your name again?

Oh, I forgot for a moment. I know you. You're Alice.

Sara:

Yes, Mom, I guess maybe I am. Do you know who you are?

Alice:

I'm an old lady, dear.

Sara:

Never!

Do you feel like having lunch, Mom? We can eat in your room.

Alice:

No, thank you. I'll just rest now.

I've got an appointment later – although I can't quite remember with whom -- but I can't be late.

You won't let me be late, will you.....

I've stayed too long, Alice.

(pause)

I'll make your dinner later, dear

I won't make it too salty.....

Sara (leans down, reaches into the tote and pulls out Dodger, placing him in Alice's lap, saying with great care to have Alice's attention)

Look, Mom, here's Dodger.

Alice: (joyfully, exquisitely startled as she proclaims...)

My rabbit!!! My rabbit!!!!

He'll know the way, Sara. And I won't get lost.

It's time, my darling.

This is the best day of my life!

(Alice, Sara sit leaning against one another with Dodger in Alice's lap)

All:

(Picks up end of

23. LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG

and music swells)

EVEN TODAY WE HEAR LOVE'S SONG OF YORE,
DEEP IN OUR HEARTS IT DWELLS FOREVERMORE.
FOOTSTEPS MAY FALTER, WEARY GROW THE WAY,
STILL WE CAN HEAR IT AT THE CLOSE OF DAY.

SO TILL THE END, WHEN LIFE'S DIM SHADOWS FALL,
LOVE WILL BE FOUND THE SWEETEST SONG OF ALL.

THOUGH THE HEART BE WEARY,
SAD THE DAY AND LONG
STILL TO US AT TWILIGHT,
COMES LOVE'S SWEET SONG
LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG.

The End