

Red Tulips

a play by Stanley Rutherford

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by stanley rutherford
box 50
camp meeker, ca, 95419
707-888-2816
stanley@stanleyrutherford.com

The characters

Multi-racial casting requested

Sydney Tennyson:	Eighty-five years old, brother of Robert Tennyson
Robert Tennyson:	Eighty-two years old, brother of Sydney Tennyson
Miss Eloise Bright:	Late seventies/early eighties, very sweet, quite frail, always hopeful
Mrs. Verna Albertson:	Late eighties, blind, wise and resigned
Mrs. Clementina Meers:	Late seventies, a true believer, an inveterate gossip
Mrs. Maxine Dewey:	Early seventies, flirtatious and fun, a bit of a femme fatale
Mrs. Ramona Dumeyer:	Early seventies, wise and witty, tart of tongue
Mrs. Aurelia Ripley:	Late seventies/early eighties, a sweet little thing, who tends to say the same thing over and over
Mrs. Eleanor Dornbusch:	Early eighties, lonely, confused, something of a witch
Mrs. Augusta DelMonte:	Late eighties/early nineties, a grand old dragon, suffering, suffering, suffering
Winona Tennyson (Mummy):	One-hundred-and-five, Sydney and Robert's mother, a formidable antique in a lace nightie and robe, propped up in a wheel chair, very well groomed and cared for, mute and dubiously conscious
Nurse James:	A kind, caring but busy nurse

The setting

A continuing care facility. Upstage is a multi-leveled warren of 12 cubicles (four cubicles on three levels, or six cubicles on two). Each cubicle is just large enough to frame and contain an old person and his/her own distinct wooden chair. In front of this structure is a stage of two or three levels. The residents move with halting gaits and the help of canes and walkers. The aesthetic is minimalist. The colors and lighting are beautiful.

Act I, scene one

Down stage, the Tennyson Brothers, Sydney and Robert, are sitting on chairs.

After a considerable pause

Sydney: We were privileged.

Robert: **[Nods his head agreeing]**

Sydney: Not just in the monetary sense...

Robert: We were *sheltered*...

Sydney: ...not that we were rich...

Robert: ...*protected* from things...

Sydney: There were the difficult times...

Robert: ...people knew one and another, greeted one another, lied to one another...

Sydney: ...the depression, the war, poppy's heart attack...

Robert: ...you knew people's names, they knew yours...

Sydney: Mummy was never happy after the Caroline Johnstone episode.

Robert: ...names were important then, whose family was who, all that...

Sydney: The Caroline Johnstone episode sent Mummy right over the edge, knocked her right off her feet.

Robert: I love names.

Sydney: She started having the headaches, the crying jags.

Robert: There were such wonderful names.

Sydney: I don't think Mummy had those crying jags before the Caroline Johnstone episode, did she? I don't think she did, I think it was during the Caroline Johnstone episode that she started having the crying jags.

Robert: What crying jags?

Sydney: *Mummy's* crying jags, *Mummy* had crying jags during the Caroline Johnstone episode.

Robert: / had crying jags during the Caroline Johnstone episode.

Sydney: Adultery wasn't taken for granted then the way it is now...

Robert: Caroline Johnstone is such a common name...

Sydney: ...now it's a way of life...

Robert: ...flat, unimaginative, just like Caroline Johnstone.

Sydney: **[Shaking his head]** Mummy just sits there staring out the window of loneliness.

Robert: If poppy had to have a fling you'd have thought he could've picked someone with a more interesting name.

Sydney: It's sad.

Robert: It's tragic.

Sydney: Caroline Johnstone.

Pause

Robert: Poppy was an asshole.

Sydney: God love him.

Robert: Absolute asshole.

Sydney: ...tried so hard to please everybody he couldn't please anybody...

Robert: ...two-bit fraudulent smile, two-bit bullshit..

Sydney: ...absolutely desperate...

Robert: ...two-bit fear translated into two-bit arrogance, always had someone to blame...

Sydney: God love him.

Robert: ...just so he didn't have to blame himself.

Sydney: I don't blame Caroline Johnstone.

Robert: Common name, common face, common voice.

Sydney: If it hadn't been Caroline Johnstone, it would have been somebody else...

Robert: **[Agreeing]** ...there were others....

Sydney: ...the secretary, the real estate agent...

Robert: ...the carhop... they all just wanted the money...

Sydney: And Mummy just sits there, rocking back and forth, staring out the window of loneliness...

Robert: **[Nodding, agreeing]** ...little sweet smile...

Sydney: ...rocking back and forth...

Robert: They offered her a tunafish, and she wouldn't eat...

Sydney: ...not a thing.

Robert: Well, it's over.

Sydney: You can't tell.

Robert: If she's turned down a tunafish, she's getting right close to the end.

Sydney: We've said that before.

Robert: Right close.

Sydney: We've been saying that for years.

Robert: Poor mummy.

Sydney: You wonder what keeps her going.

Robert: Bitterness.

Sydney: I don't know.

Robert: Absolute furious bitterness.

Sydney: You wonder at the strength she has...

Robert: ...that sweet little smile...

Sydney: It won't be long.

Robert: Not if she's turned down the tunafish.

Sydney: Won't be long.

Mrs. Bright, walking with a cane, has entered, and as she crosses by Sydney and Robert, she interrupts...

Miss Bright: Excuse me, have you seen Mrs. Dalloway?

Sydney: Pardon me.

Miss Bright: Have you seen Mrs. Dalloway?

Sydney: **[Turning to Robert]** Have we seen Mrs. Dalloway?

Robert: Who's Mrs. Dalloway?

Miss Bright: She was supposed to meet me.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** She's Miss Neighborly's sister, I think.

Miss Bright: I beg your pardon.

Sydney: She's Miss Neighborly's sister.

Miss Bright: Oh my, no...

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Who's Miss Neighborly?

Miss Bright: They're not sisters.

Sydney: Someone told us they were sisters.

Miss Bright: Mrs. Birnbaum and Mrs. Bailey are sisters.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** I don't think we've met a Mrs. Dalloway...

Sydney: **[To Robert]** Didn't Mummy know a Mrs. Dalloway?

Miss Bright: She usually meets me right after breakfast...

Sydney: **[Introducing himself]** I'm Sydney Tennyson...

Miss Bright: ...and we walk down to the village...

Sydney: ...and this is my brother, Robert Tennyson.

Robert: How do you do.

Miss Bright: How do you do...I'm Eloise Bright.

Sydney: We just moved in last week.

Miss Bright: I've been here fourteen years.

Sydney: We're up on seven.

Robert: Lovely views...

Miss Bright: Fourteen wonderful years.

Sydney: Everyone's so very nice here...

Robert: ...awfully nice.

Miss Bright: It's always so nice to meet new people...**[indicating]** You're Sydney...**[indicating]** and you're Robert... I always like to repeat the names, so I won't forget.

Sydney: And you're Eloise.

Miss Bright: There are so many lovely people here.

Robert: **[Nodding]** Lovely people.

Sydney: Our mother is here, you know.

Miss Bright: I beg your pardon.

Sydney: Mummy is here, our dear mother...

Robert: Winona Tennyson, in the Health Center...

Miss Bright: **[Delighted]** Oh, of course...

Sydney: We'd gotten to the same age that Mummy was when she moved in and we decided to move in too...

Robert: ...keep the family together...

Miss Bright: Always that lovely smile...

Sydney: We feel so fortunate that she's still with us.

Miss Bright: **[Distracted]** If you'll excuse me, I was looking for my friend, Mrs. Dalloway... **[She walks away]**

Blackout

Act I, scene two

Lights up downstage on Mrs. Albertson and Mrs. Meers. Mrs. Albertson is blind and hard of hearing. Upstage Robert and Sydney are seated by Mummy's bedside. Several ladies are up in their cubicles, seated in their chairs, turned away from the audience, motionless.

Mrs. Albertson: I was hearing voices...

Mrs. Meers: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Albertson: ...just outside my room...

Mrs. Meers: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Albertson: ...two voices, two women...

Mrs. Meers: **[Shaking her head]** No consistency.

Mrs. Albertson: ...and I asked, "Who's there?" and no one answered.

Mrs. Meers: You can't tell who's going to walk in .

Mrs. Albertson: They just went on talking..

Mrs. Meers: They call in this temporary help...

Mrs. Albertson: ...one woman was looking for her friend...

Mrs. Meers: ...this is what happens...

Mrs. Albertson: ...and she couldn't find her friend, and she was supposed to meet her friend, and someone had told her that her friend had died, but she didn't see how that could be because if her friend had died she would have *known* that she had died.

Mrs. Meers: My sister had the same sort of thing.

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** My sister had the same sort of thing.

Mrs. Albertson: What sort of thing?

Mrs. Meers: She heard voices.

Mrs. Albertson: Pardon me.

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** She heard voices.

Mrs. Albertson: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Meers: **[Still loudly]** And then she went to a specialist, and he told her that she wasn't hearing anything *at all*, and she said that she was *too* hearing something, and he said that she had a significant hearing impairment in *both* ears and so she couldn't *possibly* be hearing anything, and if she *was* hearing something it was all inside her head.

Mrs. Albertson: Oh, my dear...

Mrs. Meers: Then she went to a neurologist.

Albertson: I don't hear much myself any more...

Mrs. Meers: He prescribed tranquilizers...

Mrs. Albertson: ...some days are better than others...

Mrs. Meers: ...and now she still hears voices, but she doesn't seem to care.

Mrs. Albertson: **[Shaking her head]** This poor woman going on and on about how she couldn't find her friend.

Mrs. Albertson: People are hiding things now.

Mrs. Meers: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Albertson: They always have, of course.

Mrs. Meers: Oh, yes indeed... a lot of people are drinking now.

Mrs. Albertson: Oh, my, yes.

Mrs. Meers: I drink.

Mrs. Albertson: Of course.

Mrs. Meers: ...but, oh, my dear, there are people here who drink *all the time*, I'm serious, *all the time*.

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** *People who drink all the time.*

Mrs. Albertson: **[Nodding]** I think the O'Reilly's...

Mrs. Meers: It's sad...

Mrs. Albertson: ...absolutely hidden...

Mrs. Meers: She was a Meriweather, you know.

Mrs. Albertson: Pardon me.

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** A Meriweather.

Mrs. Albertson: *A what?*

Mrs. Meers: **[Even louder]** Her *family* was a Meriweather.

Mrs. Albertson: Whose family was a Meriweather?

Mrs. Meers: Cecile O'Reilly.

Mrs. Albertson: Really.

Mrs. Meers: Old Mrs. Meriweather drank too.

Mrs. Albertson: Really.

Mrs. Meers: Oh, yes..

Mrs. Albertson: I knew she used ether.

Mrs. Meers: Who did?

Mrs. Albertson: Old Mrs. Meriweather.

Mrs. Meers: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Albertson: All hidden.

Mrs. Meers: Ether!?

Mrs. Albertson: Ether, morphine, anything she could get her hands on.

Mrs. Meers: My, dear Lord.

Mrs. Albertson: All hidden.

Mrs. Meers: The Lord has been so good to me.

Mrs. Albertson: They finally had to strap her arms to her chair.

Mrs. Meers: **[Leaning closer]** The Lord came into my room today and showed me his wounds...

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** The Lord came into my room today and showed me his wounds and asked me to touch them and pray for the redemption of sin and life everlasting.

Mrs. Albertson: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Meers: He's such a nice man...he comes and talks to me every day and sits on my bed and holds my hand and talks about how deeply he cares about my sins. **[Leaning in closer]** He asked me to kiss him.

Mrs. Albertson: He what?

Mrs. Meers: **[Louder]** We were holding hands and he asked me to kiss him, and I told him that I wasn't worthy, and he assured me that I was, and he told me that he only let the worthy kiss him, and so I did. **[Beat]** It was very nice.

Nurse James has entered

Nurse James: They're showing a nature film in the social lounge in about ten minutes.

Mrs. Meers: I beg your pardon.

Nurse James: A nature film in the social lounge in about ten minutes.

Mrs. Meers: A nature film?

Nurse James: About the desert.

Mrs. Albertson: **[Just tuning in]** Is there a problem?

Nurse James: **[Loudly to Mrs. Albertson]** There's going to be a nature film in the social lounge in about ten minutes.

Mrs. Albertson: I don't see why that's a problem.

Nurse James: It's about the desert.

Mrs. Meers: We don't have to go, do we?

Nurse James: You might enjoy it.

Mrs. Meers: I don't like snakes.

Mrs. Albertson: I can't see.

Nurse James: There are going to be cookies and soda pop.

Mrs. Albertson: I still can't see.

Mrs. Meers: I don't like snakes and I don't like big hairy spiders.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To the nurse]** Is it time for my medication?

Nurse James: Not until dinner, Verna.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To the nurse]** Isn't it dinner time?

Nurse James: We just had lunch.

Mrs. Albertson: We did?!

Nurse James: A couple of hours ago.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Meers]** Did we have lunch?

Nurse James: It was salmon loaf.

Mrs. Meers: Is that what that was...

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Nurse]** I would like my medication now.

Mrs. Meers: ...little dried up sort of thing with a sauce.

Nurse James: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** You have to wait until dinner.

Mrs. Albertson: I don't see why I can't have my...

Nurse James: You have to wait until dinner, Verna...

Mrs. Meers: The Lord is with us today, His wisdom is great, His mercy is everlasting..

Mrs. Albertson: I would like my medication now.

Blackout

Act I, scene three

Lights up on Sydney Tennyson, Mrs. Dumeyer, Mrs. Dewey, Robert Tennyson, and Mrs. Ripley seated around a table, eating supper.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Robert, referring to the food]** My, this is good.

Robert: This is very good.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** You remind me of Herb Towner, that's who it is.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Robert]** The breaded veal has always been my favorite.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Doesn't he remind you of Herb Towner?

Mrs. Dewey: **[Looking at Sydney]** He's better looking than Herb Towner....

Sydney: Oh, my dear...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Of course he's better looking than Herb Towner, but doesn't he *look* a little like Herb Towner?

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Robert]** The breaded veal and the turkey loaf are my absolute personal all-time favorites.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** Herb was a lovely fellow.

Sydney: I don't think we ever knew...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** You're better looking.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert and Sydney]** I have to confess that I remember meeting both of you years ago at Natatorium Park.....just after the war...

Robert: Good heavens...

Sydney: **[Delighted]** My God, the Nat!

Mrs. Dewey: ...one night at the carousel.

Robert: I haven't thought about the Nat in years.

Mrs. Dewey: I was a friend of Dottie Fielding's.

Sydney: Good heavens...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Shaking her head]** Dear old Dottie...

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Do I remember Dottie Fielding?

Sydney: Kenny Rexrider's sister.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...completely crazy...

Mrs. Dewey: She was always telling me about those good-looking Tennyson brothers. **[she laughs]**

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Robert]** Honey, *everybody* knew Dottie.

Robert: **[More or less to himself, trying to remember]** Kenny Rexrider...

Sydney: **[To Robert]** Up at the lake, Robbie...the Rexriders, down at the point, he had the crazy sister...

Robert: **[Remembering]** With the hats!

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Laughing]** That's Dottie.

Sydney: Whatever happened to Dottie?

Mrs. Dewey: She passed on...

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...terrible death....

Sydney: We used to see her and Kenny all the time.

Robert: She was marvelous fun.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...heavy drinker, terrible death...

Mrs. Dewey: So many of those people are gone...the Rexriders, the Davidsons...

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...my dear lord...

Mrs. Dewey: ... Sylvia and Kenny Maynard, did you know them?

Sydney: Oh, my yes...

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...that whole crowd...

Mrs. Dewey: ...Bill and Marjorie Kreitman...

Sydney: ...weren't they fun...

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...all gone.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Robert]** Breaded veal has always been my favorite.

Robert: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** This is really very good.

Mrs. Dumeyer: The old people are gone, the old names are gone...

Robert: They all have different names now, don't they...

Mrs. Ripley: I'm the fourth floor representative on the Food Committee.

Sydney: I think the food's very good.

Robert: Very good.

Mrs. Ripley: A representative from each floor meets monthly with the Director of Food Services to discuss food issues.

Mrs. Dumeyer: It's an *institutional* cuisine, of course.

Mrs. Ripley: The breaded veal and the turkey loaf are my personal favorites.

Robert: I thought the sole last night was very nice.

Sydney: Very nice.

Mrs. Dumeyer: The soup was good, I thought.

Mrs. Dewey: Institutional food doesn't have to be bad food.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** Did you ever know Genevieve Towner?

Sydney: **[Checking with Robert]** I don't think we...

Robert: I don't think so.

Mrs. Dewey: She was a lovely person.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** You look a great deal like her husband, Herb.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** What did I tell you.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** You're better looking.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** What did I tell you.

Mrs. Ripley: Mrs. Towner was a very dear dear friend of mine.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney and Robert]** They were residents here for many years...

Mrs. Ripley: ...lovely person inside and out...

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney and Robert, touching/indicating Mrs. Ripley]**
Genevieve Towner and Aurelia **[Mrs. Ripley]** and I were classmates
back at Lewis and Clark High...

Mrs. Ripley: ...and for awhile there there was that ridiculous rumor going around
that my late husband, Mr. Ripley, was having an affair with Mrs.
Towner, and, although I wouldn't have put it past my late husband,
Mr. Ripley, to have had an affair with Mrs. Towner, I know full well
that Genevieve Towner would *never never ever* have had an affair
with my late husband or anyone else's late husband for that matter,
the only person she'd ever have had an affair with would have been
her *own* late husband, and that's just the kind of person she was.
[Beat] Were either of you ever married?

Robert: **[Laughing]** Oh, my no....

Sydney: Never happened...

Robert: **[Shaking his head]** ...too involved...

Sydney: ...business, one thing and another...

Mrs. Dewey: We all think it's so wonderful that you've moved in...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** There are a lot of women here, you know.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** I'd remembered you from all those years ago...

Sydney: **[To Mrs. Ripley, referring to the food]** This *is* awfully good...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** I pretty much gave up on looking for a man, after my
second husband died...

Sydney: **[To the ladies]** Robbie used to make a breaded veal like this, didn't
you, Robbie...

Mrs. Ripley: It's my favorite.

Sydney: **[To the ladies]** Robbie's a marvelous cook.

Robert: It was Mummy's recipe.

Sydney: Mummy was a marvelous cook....it's her birthday next week, you
know.

Mrs. Dewey: Isn't that wonderful.

Robert: She's going to be a hundred and five.

Mrs. Dumeyer: My dear...

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** I beg your pardon.

Sydney: **[Loudly, to Mrs. Ripley]** A hundred and five.

Mrs. Dewey: She always has that lovely little smile...

Mrs. Ripley: Who's a hundred and five?

Sydney: Mummy's a hundred and five.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Loudly to Mrs. Ripley]** Winona Tennyson in the Health Center, Aurelia...you remember Winona?

Sydney: **[As Mrs. Ripley tries to remember]** She's our mother.

Mrs. Dewey: ...always cheerful...

Robert: We're going to have a little party for her...

Mrs. Ripley: **[Shaking her head]** People just keep getting older and older, don't they.

Mrs. Dornbusch has entered has come up to the table.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Leaning in to Mrs. Dumeyer]** I don't think you're at the right table.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dornbusch]** Honey, your table is over there.**[she indicates]**

Mrs. Dornbusch: This is my table.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dornbusch]** Eleanor, dear, your table is over there with Mrs. Dilman.

Mrs. Dornbusch: Isn't this Mrs. Dalloway's table?

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Indicating]** You eat over there with Mrs. Dilman.

Mrs. Dornbusch: I eat with Mrs. Dalloway.

Mrs. Dewey: Eleanor, dear, Mrs. Dalloway's not with us any more.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Confused]** I *think* I eat with Mrs. Dalloway. Don't I eat with Mrs. Dalloway?

Mrs. Dewey: She's not with us any more.

Mrs. Ripley: Whose not with us any more?

Mrs. Dewey: Charlene Dalloway.

Mrs. Ripley: She's not!?

Mrs. Dornbusch: I'm quite sure I eat with Mrs. Dalloway.

Mrs. Dewey: She passed on early last week.

Mrs. Ripley: She did?!

Mrs. Dornbusch: She most certainly did not.

Mrs. Dumeyer: . **[To the Tennysons]** A number of people have reported *seeing* her...

Mrs. Dornbusch: I eat at her table!

Mrs. Ripley: I saw her the day before yesterday.

Mrs. Dewey: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Ripley: Out in the rose garden.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** Aurelia, dear, Charlene Dalloway passed away early last week...

Mrs. Ripley: Quite naked.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To the Tennysons]** Everybody's been very upset.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** Out in the rose garden?

Mrs. Ripley: All pink and plump.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Emphatically]** Charlene Dalloway passed away early last week, and her ashes may be *buried* in the rose garden, but she's certainly not out there cavorting about naked.

Mrs. Ripley: She was the day before yesterday.

Blackout

Act I, scene four

Lights rise on the Tennyson brothers, seated down stage. Sydney is looking through fabric samples, Robert is looking on slowly rubbing his right side over his liver. In the back, some of the ladies are in their cubicles, seated with their backs to the audience or in profile. They are motionless. As the lights rise, Mrs. DelMonte turns toward the audience and leans forward...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Confidentially, to the audience]** They're not telling you everything...there are secrets, carefully kept secrets... Who comes in, who goes out gets recorded...what you eat, what you don't eat, everything, down on paper, every day...

Sydney: **[While focused on the fabric samples, referring to Robert rubbing his right side]** I wish you'd stop doing that.

Robert: **[Still rubbing his side]** There's this pain...

Sydney: Rubbing it isn't going to help.

Robert: **[Still rubbing]** ...dull, nagging, constant pain...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** And some of the residents aren't really residents, if you know what I mean.

Robert: **[Still rubbing]** It's cirrhosis.

Sydney: It is *not* cirrhosis.

Robert: Uncle Teddy died of cirrhosis...

Sydney: **[Annoyed]** Robert.

Mrs. DelMonte: They're watching, every minute, they're watching. making everything their business whether it is their business or not.

Sydney: **[Indicating a fabric sample]** This is sort of nice.

Robert: **[Referring to the sample]** I don't think the chairs would...

Sydney: The chairs would look wonderful in this.

Robert: The walls would turn pink against this.

Sydney: The walls *are* pink.

Robert: They'd become even *more* pink.

Sydney: I don't see quite what's wrong with that....

Robert: ...it's wrong, just wrong. **[Sydney turns to another sample]**

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** And there's an endless "niceness" about everything...everything's "nice," everything's "happy," everything's "fun," and then some old lady comes along and tells you she doesn't like the way you're dressed for dinner.

Robert: It's good we can still drive...

Sydney: **[Pointing to a different sample]** This is nice.

Robert:get away in the afternoons, go out to the club...

Sydney: This would look quite nice.

Robert: ...not that I particularly like the club...

Sydney: Don't you think this would look nice?

Robert: **[Glancing at it]** It's wrong.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** I dress perfectly well, thank you...Hattie Carnegie makes perfectly wonderful clothes, you can't argue with a Hattie Carnegie ensemble, anytime, any place, any occasion, Hattie Carnegie is always appropriate.

Sydney: **[Still looking at the same sample]** I think the chairs would look good in this, I think the rug would look nice with this, I think the walls would look nice with this...

Robert: **[Pointing to the sample]** Mummy wouldn't like it.

Sydney: Mummy's never going to see it.

Robert: I still don't think she'd like it.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** Who's sitting with whom, what they're wearing, which side of town they lived on, who does their hair...

Robert: **[Reconsidering the sample]** Maybe she *would* like it.

Sydney: Robert, dear, I don't think what Mummy would like or wouldn't like has anything to do with anything any more.

Robert: They're *her* chairs, Sydney.

Sydney: We cannot continue to run our lives according to what Mummy would or wouldn't like...**[He turns to another sample]**

Robert: Behind that sweet little smile is the angriest woman in the world...

Sydney: Our entire lives we've been doing what Mummy wanted us to do...

Robert:*her* mother was angry, her *mother's* mother was angry...

Sydney: From now on we're going to do what *we* want to do...

Robert: ...we come from a long, long line of angry, angry, bitter women.
[They look at another sample]

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** I had a beautiful home...

Miss Bright: **[Turning toward the audience, calling out]** Charlene?

Mrs. DelMonte: ...the lawn, the garden, the gnarled old oak...

Miss Bright: **[Calling out]** Has anyone seen Charlene Dalloway?

Mrs. DelMonte: ...the lovely old stairway winding up the side, the breakfast room just off the kitchen, full of light...

Miss Bright: **[To the audience]** I don't understand where she could be.

Robert: Maybe after things settle down a bit we can go on a little outing...

Sydney: **[Looking at a new sample]** This is sort of interesting.

Robert: ...drive up to the lake, along the old road through Bonner's Ferry...

Sydney: **[Indicating the sample]** Do you like that?

Robert: You've been awfully good to me, Sydney, all these years, really awfully good...I hope you realize that I appreciate how good you've been to me...the patience, the kindness...

Sydney: You've been good to me too, Robbie.

Robert: **[Shaking his head]** No, I haven't.

Sydney: Of course you have.

Robert: **[Shaking his head]** I've always been the child...

Sydney: Oh, stop it.

Robert: ...always the one with the problem...

Sydney: We've been under a lot of stress...

Robert: You're not sick of me, are you?

Sydney: You're my brother...I love you.

Robert: I couldn't bear it if you were sick of me...

Sydney: I love you, Robbie.

Robert: **[Rubbing his side]** I haven't been myself lately.

Sydney: There's going to be period of adjustment, that's to be expected...

Robert: ...not quite up to par...

Sydney: We lived in that house our whole lives, *our whole lives* in that same house.

Robert: I think it's going to be very nice here.

Sydney: We couldn't stay, really we just couldn't.

Robert: It will be different.

Sydney: It was too much for both of us, far too much for us to handle any more...

Robert: ...way too much...

Sydney: We won't have to cook, we won't have to clean...

Robert: **[Pointing to a sample]** Mummy wouldn't like that.

Sydney: **[Annoyed]** Mummy's not going to *know* how we recover the chairs.

Robert: What if we have her up to the rooms?

Sydney: **[Firmly]** We moved here to get a fresh start....away from the old house, the old life, the memories, the voices...

Robert: **[Agreeing]** We're meeting new people...

Sydney: It's good that we're meeting new people, very nice people, I think...

Robert: ...we needed new people...

Sydney: We'd gotten into an awful rut...

Robert: ...new faces, new interests...

Sydney: ...the same routine day after day, getting out less and less...

Robert: She's *going* to find out we moved in.

Sydney: She's *not* going to find out we moved in.

Robert: She'd never forgive us for selling the house.

Sydney: She's *not* going to find out that we sold the house.

Robert: What if someone tells her?

Sydney: Robert, dear Robert, she is long, long, long past the point where she's having any sort of comprehension.

Robert: How can you tell?

Sydney: I can tell.

Robert: She was quite "with it" today.

Sydney: That was not "with it".

Robert: She nodded.

Sydney: She did not have a clue, not a clue.

Robert: She knew who we were.

Sydney: **[Sighing]** Let's not argue.

Robert: Did you see that smile?

Sydney: Please, let's not argue.

Robert: She smiled, she knew.

Sydney: She smiles all the time, Robbie...**[shaking his head]** ...far, far, far past the stage of comprehension...

Robert: **[Indicating another sample]** This is sort of nice.

Sydney: This is *not* nice.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Sighing]** ...a beautiful, lovely, beautiful home...

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene?

Mrs. DelMonte: I want to go home...

Miss Bright: **[Looking around]** Has anyone seen Charlene Dalloway?

Sydney: We have to do something about the ring.

Mrs. DelMonte: Why won't they let me go home?

Robert: **[Shaking his head]** I don't know.

Sydney: The doctor said...

Robert: *They* don't know.

Sydney: ...the finger's all puffed up...

Robert: She's worn that ring since her wedding day.

Sydney: ...she'll get gangrene...

Robert: It would kill her if we took it off.

Sydney: It's good we're here now, just down the hall...

Robert: **[Tearing up]** She was so good us...

Sydney:be here for her now that her time is coming...

Robert: **[Starting to cry]** ...loved us no matter what we did...

Sydney: Now, Robbie...

Robert: ...poor Mummy...

Sydney: She won't even know we've taken it off.

Robert: Mummy sees everything, Mummy hears everything, Mummy knows everything...

Sydney: She was angry when she met him, she was angry when she married him, she was angry when he died... I don't see why she'd want to keep a ring on her finger when all it means is anger.

Robert: That's what's keeping her alive.

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene?

Blackout

Act I, scene five

Mrs. Albertson is sitting upstage with Mrs. Ripley.

Lower down Mrs. Meers, Mrs. Dewey, and Mrs. Dumeyer are talking to each other.

The Tennyson brothers are seated around old Mrs. Tennyson down stage. Occasionally one of the brothers inspects her ring finger and plays a bit with the ring.

Mrs. Dornbusch is seated by herself with a box of peppermint creams.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** ...you spend all those years, accumulating all those sheets and table linens and what-not...

Mrs. Meers: **[Leaning in confidentially to Mrs. Dewey/Mrs. Dumeyer]** It was quite the scandal...

Mrs. Albertson: ...pots and pans, end-tables and lamps...

Mrs. Meers: ...caught, right in the buff...

Mrs. Albertson: **[With amusement]** ...and then at some point you start giving it all away...

Mrs. Meers: ...with the butcher..

Mrs. Dumeyer: The butcher?

Mrs. Meers: **[Nodding]** Winona Tennyson and the butcher.

Mrs. Dewey: The butcher!?

Mrs. Meers: He was quite a morsel.

Mrs. Albertson: ...and finally you wonder why you ever thought you needed it all in the first place...**[she laughs]**

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mrs. Albertson, as she's looking through her binoculars]**
There's the most lovely family of quail strutting along over by the potting shed...

Mrs. Meers: Her husband, you know, old Sam Tennyson, had a fling with Caroline Johnstone...

Mrs. Dewey: My dear Lord...

Mrs. Meers: .. and Caroline Johnstone was Winona's *best friend!*

Mrs. Dumeyer: Caroline Johnstone was trash...

Mrs. Albertson: ...all these old ladies sitting around waiting for their children to come by, and they *don't* come by, and they're *never* going to come by...

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mrs. Albertson, as she's looking through the binoculars]**
There's the most lovely family of quail strutting along over by the potting shed...

Mrs. Albertson: ...waiting for food, waiting for the mail, waiting to see who's coming down to breakfast...d

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Holding a box of peppermint creams, offering the audience]**
Would anyone care for a peppermint cream?

Mrs. Meers: **[Leaning in confidentially to Mrs. Dewey/Mrs. Dumeyer]** ...and of course Winona *told* Caroline Johnstone that she was having an affair with the butcher, and of course Caroline Johnstone *told* old Sam Tennyson, and the next time Winona and the butcher were together up at the Tennyson's lake place, old Sam went right up there with his shot gun and caught them right in the buff.

Mrs. Dewey: My dear lord..

Mrs. Dumeyer: The butcher?!

Mrs. Meers: Right in the buff.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** You don't have any Percodan, do you?

Mrs. Meers: ...and then two months after that, Winona and the sons went up to the lake place one afternoon *just by chance*...and *who* should they walk in on but old Sam Tennyson and Caroline Johnstone rolling around together *in flagrante delicto*.

Mrs. Dewey: My dear Lord.

Mrs. Meers: It was devastating for the sons...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Shaking her head]** Caroline Johnstone...

Mrs. Meers: ...it's why they never married, you know...they never got over the shock.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience]** My daughter sent me some peppermint creams, they're really awfully nice...**[she takes one and bites into it]**

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** I've got Ativan and Valium and bottles of sleeping pills, but what I'd really like is some Percodan.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Looking through her binoculars]** There's the most lovely family of quail strutting along over by the potting shed.

Mrs. Albertson: **[Louder to Mrs. Ripley]** You don't have any Percodan, do you?

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Offering]** Would anyone care for a peppermint cream?

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Leaning over to Mrs. Meers, indicating Mrs. Dewey]** Maxine has her eye on young Robert.

Mrs. Dewey: I do not.

Mrs. Dumeyer: You do too.

Mrs. Meers: **[Leaning over to Mrs. Dewey/Dumeyer]** Neither of those men has ever touched a woman, my dear.

Mrs. Dewey: I think they're just shy.

Mrs. Meers: I don't think they're interested in women, if you know what I mean.

Mrs. Dumeyer: They're both gentleman...

Mrs. Dewey: ...*absolute* gentleman...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Still chewing the peppermint cream]** My daughter loves me very much.

Mrs. Dumeyer: They're awfully good looking boys...

Mrs. Dewey: ...*absolute* gentleman.

Mrs. Albertson: **[Leaning over to Mrs. Ripley]** You take a couple of Percodan with a little vodka, my dear, and you've got yourself a nice way to spend the afternoon.

Mrs. Meers: **[Leaning in to Mrs. Dewey/Dumeyer]** Do you know Jesus?

Mrs. Dewey: I beg your pardon.

Mrs. Meers: **[Confidentially to Dewey/Dumeyer]** Jesus was holding my hand last night, and then he took it and placed it in the wound in his side and it was burning hot, and he told me that that was the fire of love, and then he leaned over and gave me a long and passionate kiss.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Who was this?

Mrs. Meers: Jesus.

Mrs. Dumeyer: The gardener?

Mrs. Meers: Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Oh, my dear.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Offering the binoculars to Mrs. Albertson]** Would you like to look at the quail?

Mrs. Albertson: Pardon me.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Louder]** Would you like to look at the quail?

Mrs. Albertson: I can't see, my dear.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Loudly]** There's a lovely family of quail strutting along over by the potting shed...

Mrs. Albertson: Is that a fact.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Offering the binoculars again]** Would you like to look at them?

Mrs. Albertson: **[Takes the binoculars from Mrs. Ripley, puts them up to her eyes and looks out in a direction that's not where Mrs. Ripley was looking, then...]** Isn't that lovely.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[As she takes another peppermint cream]** My daughter loves me very much.

Mummy in bed, the nurse, sitting on chairs somewhat away from the bed, Sydney and Robert

Nurse: **[To mummy]** I think you're feeling a whole lot better now, aren't you, I can tell...**[then to the brothers]** I think she's feeling a whole lot better...

Sydney: **[Loudly to Mummy]** You're feeling a whole lot better now, Mummy.

Nurse: **[To Sydney/Robert]** She got rid of some of that water build-up.

Robert: **[Loudly to mummy]** You got rid of some of that water build-up.

Nurse: **[To Sydney]** She had a very nice b.m. this morning **[then to Mummy, loudly]** ...didn't you have a nice b.m. this morning...

Pause as they all study her.

Robert: I think she's asleep.

Sydney: **[To Mummy, loudly]** Everything's going to be all right, Mummy.

Robert: **[To Mummy, loudly]** Try to remember the good times, Mummy.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Are you comfortable?

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Can you remember the good times?

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Can you smile? Can you give us a pretty little smile?

They all stare at her

Robert: **[Concerned, to Sydney]** There's something wrong.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Can you smile, Mummy?

Robert: I think she's asleep.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It would mean so much to us, if you'd just give us a nice little smile.

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Do you want some apple juice, Mummy?

They all stare at her.

Nurse: **[Studying her finger]** The swelling's gone down quite a bit, I think...

Robert: I don't know.

Nurse: It's a bit better today...

Sydney: It's not good.

Robert: **[Shaking his head]** I don't think...

Nurse: **[Playing with mummy's ring]** It's quite a bit looser than it was yesterday....

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Can you smile, mummy?

Nurse: **[To Mummy]** I just want to loosen your ring, Mrs. Tennyson.

Robert: **[To the nurse]** Be careful.

Sydney: **[Softly to the nurse]** It's been on her hand since the day she married poppy.

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Please forgive us, Mummy.

Sydney: Robert....

Robert: Please forgive us.

Nurse: **[To Mummy]** You'll be a lot more comfortable, Mrs. Tennyson.

Robert: Poor poppy.

Sydney: Robert...

Nurse: I think it's coming...

Robert: **[To Mummy]** He loved you, Mummy, he loved you so very much.

Nurse: **[To Mummy]** We're almost there, Mrs. Tennyson.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Just relax, Mummy...

Robert: Poppy understands, Mummy, he understands, he loves you more than ever.

Sydney: We'll get you some ice cream in a minute, Mummy.

Robert: Forgive us, please, Mummy.

Nurse: I think, we've got it...**[she pulls off the ring]**

There's a pause as they all stare at Mummy, whose only response is a sweet little smile.

Robert: She's smiling.

Sydney: She's smiling!

Nurse: **[To Mummy]** That wasn't so bad now, was it...

Sydney: Would you like some ice cream, Mummy?

Suddenly mummy lets out a blood-curdling scream.

Blackout

Act I, scene six

It's nighttime, everyone is in their cubicle. The ladies are in their nightgowns. They each speak to the audience.

Mrs. Albertson: At night you can hear people breathe...through the walls...up and down the halls...

Mrs. Meers: It starts in my foot...

Mrs. Albertson: ...coughing, sighing, lying awake unable to sleep...

Mrs. Meers: ...the ball of my foot...

Mrs. Albertson: ...because after a certain point in your life there aren't any boundaries any more...

Mrs. Meers: ...a sharp burning feeling in the ball of my foot...

Mrs. Albertson: ...you can hear everything...

Mrs. Meers: ...like a cramp...

Mrs. Albertson: ...everybody...

Mrs. Meers: ...the bite of a cramp...

Mrs. Albertson: ...everywhere...

Mrs. Meers: ...and then it starts to spread...

Mrs. Albertson: ...you can feel what they're feeling, the beating of their heart, the blood in their veins, the sharp stabbing pain in the side...

Robert: ...a spot right here... **[rubbing his liver]** ...

Miss Bright: I'm so fortunate...

Robert: ...a constant ache, an endless fatigue...

Sydney: **[Sighing]** ...dizzy spells out of nowhere...

Miss Bright:my whole life, so very fortunate...

Sydney: ...standing there, just fine, and then I turn my head, and all of sudden this dizziness...

Mrs. Albertson: ...everyone lying in the dark of their room having a conversation with the end of their life.

Mrs. DelMonte: I threw out all my old pictures...

Miss Bright: I've had so many wonderful friends.

Mrs. DelMonte: ...and for years I kept them and dusted them and arranged them, and showed them to any one who was willing to look that this was my husband, and this was my daughter, and this was my son, and now my husband is dead, and my daughter doesn't speak to me, and my son is someone I don't want to talk to even if I knew how to find him...

Miss Bright: ...lovely memories, lovely old friends...

Mrs. Dewey: I was awakened by a knock...

Miss Bright: ...the faces, the names, the stories...

Mrs. Dewey: ...the middle of the night and there was a knock on the door...

Miss Bright: ...the sound of their voice, the laugh...

Mrs. Dewey: ...and I called "Who's there?"

Miss Bright: ...so many of them have passed on.

Mrs. Dewey: ...but no one answered.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Who has been leafing through a magazine]** Whatever happened to *style*? **[She turns the page]**

Mrs. DelMonte: DelMonte was a *name* in the old days...

Miss Bright: **[As though she sees someone]** Is that you, Charlene?

Mrs. DelMonte: People had *names*....

Mrs. Dumeyer: All these *breasts*...**[she turns a few more pages]**

Mrs. DelMonte: ...the DelMontes, the Tennysons, the Rothrocks...

Mrs. Dornbusch: I've lined up all my purses...

Mrs. DelMonte: People *knew* who you were...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Whatever happened to *legs*?

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...by color, by season, all thirty-two of them, all lined up...

Mrs. DelMonte: ...and now no one knows, no one cares...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Whatever happened to *necks*? **[She continues looking through the magazine]**

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene, is that you?

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling]** Is someone there?

Mrs. Dornbusch:formal, informal, spring, winter, fall...

Miss Bright: I was hoping Charlene would come by...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...*my* purses, my *mother's* purses....

Miss Bright: She died, they told me she died...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...great grandma Isabelle's purses...

Miss Bright: ...but I thought she'd want to come by to see me again, my friends who've past on always come by to see me again...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Still looking through the magazine, sighing]** I'm not going to give up...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...the history of purses all lined up...

Sydney: We were different as children.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[As she turns a page]** I'm still alive, thank you...

Sydney: I was the quiet one, he was even quieter.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...even if I don't have anything to wear. **[She turns a page]**

Sydney: He didn't talk until he was four.

Robert: I didn't have anything to say.

Sydney: ...he didn't walk until he was four.

Robert: I didn't have any where to go.

Mrs. Dornbusch: I've been a very good girl...I've lined up all my purses...**[she helps herself to a peppermint cream]**

Mrs. Albertson: And you feel yourself becoming less visible, less present, less real...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling]** Who's there?

Mrs. Albertson:and as you walk down the hallway, no one sees you, no one knows you, no one cares about you...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling]** Is anyone there?

Mrs. Albertson: ...and you begin to wonder whether you even exist.

Mrs. DelMonte: Does anyone know who I am?

Sydney: Robbie was Mummy's favorite...he was the one Mummy loved and she told me that she loved him more than she loved me, and I told her that I loved him more than I loved her, and she told me that I was ungrateful and selfish and that's why she didn't love me as much as she loved Robbie...

Mrs. Albertson: **[Calling]** I would like my medication now.

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene, it's me, Eloise...are you there?

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling]** Who's there?

Mrs. Albertson: **[Calling]** May I have my medication, please.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling]** Robert, is that you?

Miss Bright: **[As though to Charlene]** Can you hear me, Charlene? Darling, don't be afraid, it's me, it's Eloise, I understand...

Sydney: And that's when I decided that I didn't really care what Mummy thought at all.

Robert: Mummy was a bitch.

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene?

Sydney: I loved Robbie and Robbie loved me, and there was nothing Mummy could do about it...

Robert: ...a selfish, demanding, drunken old bitch....

Sydney: She tried to keep us apart...

Robert: ...thought we were too close...

Sydney: ...decided to send me away to boarding school...

Robert: ...it would be "good" for us...

Sydney: ...we could make "other friends"...

Mrs. Albertson: **[Calling]** I would like my medication now.

Robert: So we decided to kill her...

Mrs. Albertson: **[Calling]** May I please have my medication?

Sydney: ...an elaborate plan...

Robert: ...poison...

Sydney: ...slow and painful...

Robert: ...a small dose stirred in her coffee...

Sydney: ...intended for rats...

Robert: ...the most exciting day of my life....

Sydney: ...we couldn't sleep, awake all night...

Robert: ...and we went down to the kitchen in the morning, and while I talked to the cook, Sydney slipped a bit of the stuff into the coffee pot that was on the tray...

Sydney: ...it was exquisite...

Robert: ...and we took it up to Mummy's room and sat on the edge her bed, and Sydney poured her a cup and creamed it and sugared it and mummy reached out and took the cup and slowly put it to her lips and took just a bit of a sip, and then paused, and said, "good morning"...

Sydney: ...it was exquisite...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Calling out]** Is that you, Robert? Is that you?

Mrs. DelMonte: I try not to complain...

Mrs. Meers: **[Echoing]** I try not to complain..

Miss Bright: I've been so very fortunate.

Mrs. DelMonte: I try to put on a smile each morning...

Mrs. Meers: ...and stand up straight and go about my business...

Mrs. DelMonte: ...and say "hello" and "how are you?"....

Mrs. Meers: ...and I always say "I'm fine, thank you".. it's sort of a pact you have with the others....

Mrs. DelMonte: ...an unspoken agreement that if we all say "we're fine," we'll all *be* fine...

Mrs. Meers: ...and everything's fine...

Mrs. DelMonte: ...you're fine...

Mrs. Meers: ...and I'm fine...

Mrs. DelMonte: ...and I'll tell you right now, I'm absolutely sick of it.

Mrs. Albertson: At some point you just become numb...

Sydney: She almost died.

Mrs. Albertson: ...you feel so much, you fear so much, you hope for so much...

Sydney: She started choking....

Robert: ...it was awful...

Sydney: ...coughing, couldn't catch her breathe...

Robert: ...it was awful...

Sydney: ...trying to scream, but she couldn't...

Robert: ...it was awful...

Mrs. Albertson: ...numb to yourself, numb to your past...

Sydney: ...gasping, crying...

Robert: ...begging us to help...

Sydney: ...holding out her hand...

Robert: ...terror-filled eyes...

Mrs. Albertson: ...numb to your whole life.

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** Charlene?

Sydney: **[Beat]** But she survived.

Robert: It was awful...

Sydney: ...they rushed her to the hospital and she survived...

Robert: ...it was awful...

Mrs. Albertson: ...and as your life fades away, you become part of everything else...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Stepping toward the audience, confidentially]** There are bodies in the hallway...

Robert: ...and now she's old and numb.

Mrs. Albertson: ...you feel everything...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...dead bodies lining the hallway...

Robert: Mummy is old and numb.

Mrs. Albertson: ...you hear everything...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...rotting old dead bodies...

Sydney: Mummy is old and numb.

Mrs. Albertson: ...you see everything...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...and they're burying them right here in the floor **[indicating]**...

Mrs. Albertson: ...you know everything...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...burying the bodies at night when everyone's asleep...

Robert: And now *we're* old and numb.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Pointing with her cane to a spot on the floor]** This is the point where fear meets desire. Right here, this spot... **[indicating]** Fear crosses along a line this way, and desire crosses along a line right here, *right here*...beware...fear and desire, desire and fear...

Mrs. Albertson: ...you get tired of looking, tired of seeing, tired of hearing "I need, I want, I desire, I can't have..."

Miss Bright: **[Calling]** I love you, Charlene...

Mrs. Albertson: ...and then the day finally comes when all of the voices start to sound the same.

Blackout

End of Act One

Act Two, scene one

Morning. Lights rise very slowly. The ladies are in their pajamas and nighties, stretching and yawning. Nurse James is making the morning rounds delivering orange juice and medication. There's a lot of movement. Mrs. Dornbusch is wandering around. Nurse James is helping Mrs. Meers get comfortable...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Wandering around, talking to herself]** It's such a beautiful day....

Mrs. Meers: **[To Nurse James]** I'm so awfully tired...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...beautiful light, beautiful breeze, beautiful scent of the pines...

Mrs. Meers: ...I couldn't sleep, and then there was all this noise going on down the hall...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...red tulips, red tulips, red tulips....

Mrs. Meers: .. somebody screaming...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...all along the path, red tulips...

Nurse James: **[To Mrs. Meers]** Would you like some orange juice, Mrs. Meers?

Mrs. Meers: I'd like bacon and eggs, thank you.

Nurse James: It's oatmeal this morning, honey...bacon and eggs on Friday...**[then to Mrs. Dornbusch, who is passing by]** Would you like some orange juice, Eleanor?

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[As she passes by Nurse James]** ...forget-me-nots, grass widows, all these lovely wild flowers and the most beautiful red tulips....

Mrs. Meers: **[Muttering]** ...voices all night long...

Nurse James: **[To Mrs. Dornbusch]** Eleanor, here's your pill....

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Brushing her aside]** I'm staring in a new movie...

Mrs. Meers: I want eggs over easy, hash browns on the side...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...a new film with Gregory Peck...

Nurse James: **[To Mrs. Dornbusch]** It's your blood pressure medication, Eleanor, you need to take it... **[Nurse James follows Mrs. Dornbusch, holding out the pill]**

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...it's a romance...

Mrs. Meers: ...Mrs. DelMonte screaming about something, Mr. Chedzey screaming about something...

Lights up on Mrs. Dewey and Mrs. Dumeyer, in their bathrobes

Mrs. Dumeyer: Apparently she saw her in the hallway, just outside her door...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Shaking her head]** I don't understand....

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...and she started screaming, and then old Mr. Chedzey started crying for help...

Mrs. Dewey: ...the whole thing's completely out of hand...

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...and then Miss Bright saw her and started running after her...

Mrs. Dewey: The same thing happened after Sudsy Russell died...

Lights up on Miss Bright, talking to Mrs. Albertson

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** We've gone walking every day for years...

Mrs. Dewey: ...everybody seeing her, everybody talking about it...

Miss Bright: ...every morning after breakfast we take the trail down to the village...

Mrs. Dewey: ...hysterical old ladies with nothing better to do...

Miss Bright: ...and I waited and I waited, and then they came and told me that she was dead.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating her oatmeal]** My, this is good.

Miss Bright: But then someone said they saw her the next day in the rose garden, and someone saw her leaving the dining room, and then last night I heard her outside my door and I went out to see and she was walking down the hallway sobbing her eyes out, and I called her, "Charlene," and she just kept walking, and I called her and ran after her, and she turned and looked at me, and it was her, it was definitely definitely definitely her, and I said, "Charlene?" ...and she looked right through me as though we'd never met...**[she starts crying]**

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating her oatmeal]** This is very very good.

Lights up on Mrs. DelMonte and Nurse James

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Agitated]** My heart was pounding, I could barely breathe...

Nurse James: Everything's all right now.

Mrs. DelMonte: ...standing in the doorway, Charlene Dalloway back from the dead...

Nurse James: **[Handing her a pill]** Dr. Mitchell wants you take this.

Mrs. DelMonte: ... standing right there, *right in the doorway, Charlene Dalloway!*

Nurse James: **[Pouring her a glass of orange juice]** It's morning, Mrs. DelMonte, it's a beautiful day, the sun is shining...

Mrs. DelMonte: I want to speak to someone in authority.

Nurse James: Drink your orange juice.

Mrs. DelMonte: I have a heart condition, are you aware of that?

Nurse James: We're having oatmeal this morning, oatmeal and peaches...you love oatmeal...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Joyce Peasley used to see Sudsy Russell all the time after she died...

Mrs. DelMonte: I have a very very serious heart condition and a liver condition....

Mrs. Dumeyer: poor old Joyce...

Mrs. DelMonte:and I'm having a great deal of pain right here in my hip...

Mrs. Dumeyer:she said Sudsy Russell came into her room all the time to complain about how lonely she was...

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** Do you have any friends?

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon?

Miss Bright: **[Loudly]** Do you have any friends?

Mrs. Albertson: I think they're all dead, my dear...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** ...couldn't believe she was dead, and how awful it was, and how she couldn't talk to anyone, because she couldn't hear any one because everyone was trapped inside their own personal hell talking to themselves about whatever there was to talk about inside their own personal hell...absolutely awful...

Miss Bright: Even though Charlene's dead, she's still a very good friend of mine.

Mrs. Albertson: Of course she is.

Miss Bright: I don't think just because you're dead...

Mrs. Albertson: Some of the nicest people I know are dead...they're so sensible.

Miss Bright: Charlene knew my mother, she knew my father, she knew my older sister, Adele, she knew the house I grew up in, she knew about the polio and the brace I wore for years...

Mrs. Albertson: Do you think they'll bring us our medication soon?

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating her oatmeal]** My, this is good.

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** How can anyone know me unless they know these things, these people, my life, who I was, who I am...

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Miss Bright]** I was hoping they'd bring us our medication.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating her oatmeal]** This is very very good.

Miss Bright: There's no one left who knows who I am.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Dumeyer]** I thought it might have been Robert at my door last night...

Miss Bright: No one.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Pardon me.

Mrs. Dewey: ...Robert Tennyson at my door last night...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Darling, a woman of your age has to be very careful.

Mrs. Dewey: He's lonely, Ramona.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Men can be a terrible disappointment...

Mrs. Dewey: I can see it in his eyes.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...a terrible disappointment...

Mrs. Dewey: It's companionship, I'm talking about companionship.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Darling, I don't think he's interested in...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Snapping back]** May I hold on to the fantasy, please...may I please just hold on to the fantasy?

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating her oatmeal]** Oatmeal is my very favorite...

Mrs. Dewey: Everything else is being taken away...

Mrs. Ripley: ...oatmeal and blueberry muffins...

Mrs. Dewey: ...slowly, surely, every part of my life is being taken away...let me hold on to the fantasy, may I do that, please?

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** I'm not an important person, and so many of Charlene's friends were important people, and even though I wasn't an important person, Charlene treated me like I was an important person...that's what a good friend is, someone who makes you *feel* like an important person.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Maybe it was Charlene Dalloway I saw last night.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Annoyed]** She's dead, Ramona, Charlene Dalloway is dead.

Mrs. Dumeyer: It looked quite a bit like...

Mrs. Dewey: She's dead, Ramona, Charlene Dalloway is dead...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Joyce Peasley used to....

Mrs. Dewey: She's dead, Ramona, Joyce Peasley is dead, so is Sudsy Russell, so is Dottie Fielding, so is Charlene Dalloway...it's a condition, Ramona, an irreversible condition...dead, d-e-a-d, dead.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[As she's wandering around]** Has anyone seen my Chanel No. 5?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Calling loudly]** I want to speak to someone in authority.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Starting to cry]** Where is my Chanel No. 5?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Calling loudly]** I demand to speak to someone in authority.

Mrs. Meers: **[Calling out]** This is a day that the Lord hath made...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Muttering]** This is no way to run an institution.

Mrs. Meers: **[Calling out]** ...let us be glad and rejoice in it!

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Sobbing]** My daughter gave me Chanel No.5...

Mrs. Meers: **[Calling out]** His goodness is great, his mercy is everlasting!

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Sobbing]** Who has my Chanel No. 5?

Mrs. Meers: **[Calling out]** Praise him and speak good of his name!

Mrs. Ripley: **[Quietly calling]** May I have some more oatmeal, please?

Mrs. Dewey: **[After a beat, to Mrs. Dumeyer]** I'm quite sure it was Robert last night...

Mrs. Dumeyer: Did you see the red tulips?.

Mrs. Dewey: I could just *feel* it was him...

Mrs. Dumeyer: There are the most beautiful red tulips blooming along the path that goes to the village... all these wildflowers, and the most beautiful red tulips...

Mrs. Dewey: ...he has such sad, beautiful eyes...

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** I would like to be your friend.

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Miss Bright: I would very much like it if you would be my friend.

Mrs. Albertson: That would be very nice, my dear.

Miss Bright: I always like to make new friends...I've had so many lovely friends, but the best thing of all is to make a new friend.

Mrs. Albertson: I think you'd be a very nice friend.

Miss Bright: We could tell each other our stories.

Mrs. Albertson: I would like that.

Miss Bright: I bet you have very interesting stories.

Mrs. Albertson: I bet you have very interesting stories too.

Miss Bright: I could read to you, we could listen to music...if you have any letters you'd like me to write...

Mrs. Albertson: I think we could be very good friends.

Miss Bright: I think we could too.

Mrs. Ripley: Oatmeal is the very best way to start the day, and if you have a nice bowl of warm oatmeal with a little brown sugar sprinkled across the top and a nice warm cup of cocoa, you have everything you need to be happy.

Blackout

Act II, scene two

Late afternoon. Sydney and Robert are sitting down stage. Sydney is making/checking a list.

Sydney: **[Checking his list]** Maxine and Ramona, Mrs. Ripley, and there's that nice Miss Bright...

Robert: Mrs. DelMonte.

Sydney: **[Checking]** Mrs. DelMonte.

Robert: Let's try to keep it small...

Sydney: **[Checking]** The Teitelbaums, Mrs. Albertson, she seems awfully nice...

Robert: We don't want it to get too big.

Sydney: It's nice to include the new people we've met...**[adding to the list]** Mrs. Meers...

Robert: I don't think Mummy knows half of these people.

Sydney: **[Adding to the list]** Mrs. Dornbusch.

Robert: I don't think I know half of these people.

Sydney: It's a very nice community here, I think.

Robert: The living and the dead.

Sydney: Now, Robbie...

Robert: It looked just like Uncle Isgar, I'm telling you...

Sydney: It wasn't Uncle Isgar...

Robert: ...just like Uncle Isgar...

Sydney: Uncle Isgar is dead, Robbie.

Robert: ...sitting there nice-as-you-please in the social lounge...

Sydney: It was Colonel Netherton.

Robert: ...the tweed jacket, the slump...some dead lady roaming the hallways at night...

Sydney: Maxine says this happens, someone dies and people think they see them.

Robert: **[Beat, then rubbing his liver]** I'm scared.

Sydney: Robbie, dear Robbie, everything's going to be all right...

Robert: **[Rubbing his liver]** The tests aren't going to be good.

Sydney: You're just having your usual anxieties.

Robert: They're not going to be good.

Sydney: You say this every time, and every time the tests are fine... Why don't we go for a little ride tomorrow...we could take that nice ride out by the river, have dinner at that fish place you like...

Robert: **[Suddenly teary-eyed]** I wanted to please you...

Sydney: Let's go for a little drive tomorrow, have dinner at the fish place...

Robert: ...I wanted to please mummy, I couldn't please mummy, I wanted to please you...

Sydney: You've pleased me very much.

Robert: I didn't want to be a disappointment.

Sydney: You've been the most important thing in my life, the very most important thing...There are good times ahead, Robbie,

Robert: **[Nodding]** There are good times ahead.

Sydney: We'll take some trips, we're enjoying our new friends.

Robert: We have each other.

Sydney: I think the party will be very nice, very nice....we'll have fruit punch *and* wine coolers...Mummy would want us to serve wine coolers, and the ladies who don't want alcohol...

Robert: **[Rubbing his liver]** I don't have much longer...

Sydney: Maybe if you'd quit rubbing....

Robert: **[Rubbing his liver]** You don't understand...

Sydney: You're a very sensitive person, Robbie.

Robert: I'm not a social person.

Sydney: You've always been very sensitive.

Robert: I've never been a social person.

Sydney: It will be a very nice party...

Robert: I know you want me to be a social person...

Sydney: ...there are very nice people here...

Robert: ...lunch with the Teitelbaums, drinks with Maxine Dewey and Ramona Dumeyer, bridge with somebody whose name I've forgotten...

Sydney: You always seem to enjoy yourself...

Robert:I don't even play bridge...

Sydney: ...always the center of attention...

Robert: ...dead people wandering the hallways...

Sydney: We'll go for a little ride tomorrow, have lunch at that nice fish place...

Robert: **[Referring to Uncle Isgar]** ...the tweed jacket, the slump, the sad old toupee...

Sydney: Robbie...

Robert: You're not dead, are you?

Sydney: ...now listen to me...

Robert: My whole life has been a mistake.

Sydney: You've had a very good life.

Robert: The sister who died when she was five months old, the miscarriage, the miscarriage, you, the sister who died in three days, the miscarriage, the miscarriage, then me...

Sydney: Robert dear, please...

Robert: No wonder Mummy was so irritable.

Sydney: Robbie, please...

Robert: Mummy didn't want me, that's the point...

Sydney: ...all of this has nothing to do with anything any more...

Robert:and then she started curling my hair and dressing me up in little frilly dresses, and then she didn't like it when I grew up to be such a siss.

Sydney: Why don't we have dinner in our rooms, we won't go down...would that make you feel better?

Robert: We're having drinks with Maxine and Ramona.

Sydney: I'll call them and tell them you're not feeling well.

Robert: I'm not.

Sydney: We'll have soup.

Robert: You can tell them I'm dying.

Sydney: I think we have some split pea.

Robert: She didn't want me and then she tried to create what she wanted and then she didn't like what she created and then she hated me and then she hated herself for hating me and then she pretended to love me out of sheer guilt.

Sydney: It doesn't make any difference any more, Robbie.

Robert: She's lying there loving me and hating me right this very minute.

Sydney: She's lying there hating herself.

Robert: She hates you too.

Sydney: She despises me.

Robert: You hate me too.

Sydney: **[Suddenly angered]** It was not *my* idea to move in here, Robert, dear, it was not my idea at all, it was *you* who wanted to move in here, not I, I was perfectly content, the garden, the deck, the morning walk to the store, and we'd come up here twice a week to see mummy...I was happy, everything was fine, except you, nothing was ever fine for you, was it, everything was always a problem, nothing was right, everything was wrong, and no matter what I did, no matter what I tried.

Robert: You hate me.

Sydney: You wanted security, you got security, this is what security feels like.

Robert: This is not security.

Sydney: I have needs too, Robert dear, I would appreciate it if you would not forget that.

Robert: You didn't tell me that this was some sort of "halfway" house of the living and the dead.

Sydney: It was / who worked my entire life to support you Robert, dear, it was / who went to the shop every day with poppy and helped poppy and had to deal with poppy and finally took over from poppy, and you and mummy were completely helpless in the face of any sort of dealings with the normal flow of business in the everyday normal world, and all I wanted was for you to be happy...that's what I was doing it for, so you could be happy and so that we could be happy together when we got older and be able to spend more time with each other and enjoy each other and love each other...that's what I wanted.

Robert: I *told* you you couldn't trust Marty Briarton.

Sydney: **[Angrily]** I needed help, I couldn't keep the business going by myself... you're just like mummy you know that? Just like mummy, the same stupid, contrary, demanding, whining, stupid, spoiled, selfish, totally ungrateful child. Both of you. Stupid.

Robert: **[Long beat]** I want to be cremated.

Sydney: Stop this.

Robert: I want you to burn me, sprinkle me, and then forget me.

Sydney: It was not my fault that the business went broke, it was not Marty Briarton's fault either, Robert, dear...*men quit wearing hats*...they used to wear hats, poppy made a fortune selling hats, but then *men quit wearing hats*.

Robert: I'm tired now.

Sydney: It's not as if we're destitute, Robert, dear, over the years poppy and I made a great deal of money, we still have plenty of money.

Robert: We could have had more money.

Sydney: What possible difference would it make, what possible difference...what would you do with more money now, waste it? ...just like you and mummy wasted it for years with all your little luxuries...completely spoiled, completely ungrateful... **[Long beat, then...]** We'll have fruit juice and wine coolers and you and I can give

a toast, a little speech about mummy and poppy and how happy we were.

Robert: I think we're in for a good stretch of it now, don't you?

Sydney: We could be if you'd try a little.

Robert: I think we're in for a good stretch of it.

Sydney: I think the party will be very nice.

Robert: **[Long beat]** You don't think mummy's dead, do you?

Sydney: Robbie...

Robert: **[With a sigh]** It's so hard to tell sometimes.

Blackout

Act Two, scene three

Cocktails with Mrs. Dewey, Mrs. Dumeyer, Mrs. Ripley, and Sydney and Robert Tennyson. They're all on to their third drink...the ladies, in particular, are quite tipsy, quite loose.

Mrs. Dewey: ...Rome was so lovely, we loved Rome, narrow little streets, that wonderful language..

Mrs. Dumeyer: I always wanted to travel.

Mrs. Dewey: ...and then we went up to Florence...

Robert: **[Longingly]** Oh, my...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** I couldn't get either of my husbands to leave the state.

Sydney: We've always talked about going to Florence...

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** ...the sunsets, my dear, the sunsets over the Arno, that gorgeous Renaissance countryside....

Mrs. Dumeyer: I didn't have any luck with husbands.

Mrs. Dewey: You had a lovely husband.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Which one?

Mrs. Dewey: Reggie Dumeyer was a perfectly lovely man...Darling, have a prosciutto.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...a lying, cheating, womanizing lush...**[then taking a prosciutto]**
...thank you.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** Would you like a prosciutto?

Robert: Oh, my no, thank you.

Sydney: Robert wasn't feeling very well earlier.

Robert: I'm fine, really.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** Would you like some tea? I'd be happy to make you some tea?

Robert: I'm fine, really.

Sydney: He's fine.

Mrs. Dewey: If there's anything you'd like...

Mrs. Dumeyer: All I got was humiliation...seventeen years of humiliation with the first one, twenty-seven years of humiliation with the second one...forty-four years of "yes, dear," "no, dear," "what do you want, dear," and then one day I sat at the kitchen table, tears pouring down my face, realizing that I'd never really loved either of them at all.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating one of the canapés]** My this is good...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Passing the canapés to Mrs. Ripley]** Darling, have another....

Mrs. Dumeyer: I hate men.

Everyone laughs

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Dumeyer]** You need another vodka.

Everyone laughs

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** Not *all* men, of course, but most of them.

Sydney: We're not all bad.

Robert: Most of us are.

Everyone laughs

Sydney: We don't mean to be bad.

Mrs. Dumeyer: You spend the first part of your life looking for one, spend the rest of your life trying to live with one, and then spend the end of your life regretting the fact that you got the *wrong* one in the first place...

Mrs. Dewey: I like men.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...and then you end up spending your last days alone with a bunch of old ladies. **[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Ripley: **[Referring to the canapé]** Is this some kind of ham?

Mrs. Dewey: It's prosciutto, darling...Would you like some more?

Mrs. Ripley: **[Taking another]** These are very good.

Sydney: These *are* good.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** I think we're so fortunate that such lovely men as you and your brother moved into the manor...

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Listen to you...

Mrs. Dewey: I mean it.

Mrs. Dumeyer: How do you know they're lovely?

Mrs. Dewey: They're gentlemen...can't you tell?

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Referring to Robert]** That one might be...but this one...**[referring to Sydney]**

Sydney: Oh my dear.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Referring to Sydney]** He's a tease.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I think I've been found out.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...running around looking like Humphrey Bogart...**[to Mrs. Dewey]** that's who he looks like...Humphrey Bogart.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** You're better looking.

Mrs. Ripley: Is this some sort of ham?

Mrs. Dumeyer: Honey, it's prosciutto...it's Italian...have some more...I think you'll like it.

Mrs. Ripley: This is very good.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** You're just a heart breaker, I know the type.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I haven't broken any hearts, have I?

Robert: Marian Botsford.

Sydney: Stop it.

Robert: **[To Mrs. Dumeyer]** She chased him for years.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** *You're* the heart breaker.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** I'll bet you are.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** Miss Cynthia Lewis?

Robert: Sydney.

Sydney: Little heart-shaped mouth.

Robert: Sydney, please.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** I certainly wouldn't mind it if you wanted to break *my* heart.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** Darling, why don't you just throw yourself at him.

Mrs. Dewey: What do you think I'm doing? **[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Robert, referring to Mrs. Dewey]** Honey, don't worry, she's harmless.

Mrs. Dewey: I am not!

Everyone laughs

Robert: **[Flattered and flirtatious]** You're awfully sweet.

Mrs. Dumeyer: She is not.

Mrs. Dewey: I am too.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I think these girls might be trouble, Robbie.

Mrs. Dewey: I beg your pardon!

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I think they might be the kind of girls Mummy always warned us about. **[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Dewey: We're nice girls!

Mrs. Dumeyer: I am...**[to Mrs. Dewey]** I'm not so sure about you. **[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Robert]** Darling, why don't you have some more vodka?

Mrs. Dumeyer: See what I mean?

Robert: No, really I shouldn't.

Sydney: Robert wasn't feeling very well earlier.

Mrs. Dewey: Oh, come on....we're having such a nice time.

Robert: Maybe a little.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** Now, Robert...

Mrs. Dumeyer: I'll have another. **[Everyone laughs. Mrs. Dewey pours Robert and Mrs. Dumeyer a drink]**

Sydney: Take it easy now, Robbie....

Robert: **[Annoyed, to Sydney]** I'm fine, thank you, Sydney...**then to Mrs. Dewey]** Older brother always has to be in charge..

Sydney: **[Starting to rise]** Maybe we should be going...

Mrs. Dewey: Nonsense.

Sydney: I'm not feeling very well.

Mrs. Dewey: You sit back down, I'll get you some tea.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I don't think you should over-do...

Robert: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** My whole life under his thumb...

Sydney: Robert.

Robert: **[To Mrs. Dewey, referring to Sydney]** No fun at all.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** He's going to be just fine...

Sydney: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** He has a problem with alcohol, and when he drinks too much...

Robert: Sit down, Sydney.

Mrs. Dewey: Now, boys.

Robert: **[To Mrs. Dewey]** *He* has a problem with alcohol.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Honey, we *all* have a problem with alcohol.

Mrs. Dewey: *I* don't have a problem with alcohol. **[She and Mrs. Dumeyer burst out laughing]**

Sydney: **[Leaning over to Robert]** Robbie....

Robert: **[Snapping back, to Sydney]** I am having a very nice time, thank you, Sydney, a very nice time, and since we're in the company of such lovely and charming ladies, I would think that *you* would have the courtesy to at least *try* to have a good time too.

Sydney: I'm having a very nice time, thank you.

Mrs. Dumeyer: I'm having a marvelous time...let's go to Rome.

Everyone laughs

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** Did you ever know Genevieve Towner?

Sydney: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** I don't think we ever...

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** Darling, why don't you have another prosciutto...

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** She was a very very...

Mrs. Dewey: Aurelia, darling, we've already discussed Mrs. Towner....

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Sydney]** They were very close...

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Ripley, offering the canapé tray]** Darling, have another prosciutto.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Taking a canapé]** Is this some sort of ham?

Mrs. Dewey: It's Italian, darling...

Sydney: **[Standing, holding his chest]** I'm really *not* feeling very well...

Robert: You're fine.

Mrs. Dewey: Can I get you some tea?

Sydney: **[Holding his chest]** I don't know quite what it is...

Robert: Put your arms up, Sydney. **[He puts his arms over his head, demonstrating]**

Sydney: **[As he raises his arms]** I don't really quite...

Robert: Put your arms up! Breathe, Sydney... just breathe!

Mrs. Dewey: Should I call the nurse?

Robert: He's fine... he just forgets to breathe sometimes....**[then to Sydney]** Breathe, Sydney...

Mrs. Dewey: I'm going to call the nurse...

Sydney: I'll be all right.

Robert: He's fine.

Mrs. Ripley: Genevieve Towner was telling me...

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Ripley]** Darling...

Mrs. Ripley: ...she's having the best time now that she's dead...

Mrs. Dewey: Aurelia, please...

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Are you okay?

Sydney: Maybe we should go...

Mrs. Ripley: Genevieve Towner was telling me....

Mrs. Dewey: Shut up, Aurelia, please just shut up.

Sydney: **[To Robert]** I think we should go

Mrs. Ripley: She was telling me...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Erupting]** Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up!

Mrs. Ripley: ...that the worst thing about being dead is that you're still the same person you've always been and there's nothing you can do about it.

Mrs. Dumeyer: May I have another vodka?

Blackout

Act II, scene four

Robert and Sydney are getting dressed for Mummy's birthday party. Sydney is tying his tie. Robert is looking through one of mummy's old photo albums. There are several other old albums piled next to it.

Sydney: **[As he ties his tie]** ...the flowers look lovely, the table looks lovely, Mrs. Orbach is going to play the piano...

Robert: **[As he looks at the photo album]** Everything's going to be fine.

Sydney: Maxine said she'd help serve the shortcake...

Robert: ... all this fussing about, everything's going to be fine...

Sydney: I hope there are enough strawberries.

Robert: Sydney.

Sydney: I just want things to be nice.

Robert: **[Beat, then indicating the photo albums]** I thought we could put these out...I think people would enjoy seeing them...

Sydney: I talked to the cook, I talked to Maria...

Robert: I don't want you to overdo.

Sydney: I'm fine.

Robert: You have those little spells...

Sydney: ...a little dizziness now and then...

Robert: This is the point.

Sydney: ...a little shortness of breath...

Robert: This is the point.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Crying out]** Help me, please help me.

Robert: We're not young any more, Sydney.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Crying out]** ...some one, please help me.

Robert: *I've got my liver, you've got your heart, we've got *conditions*, that's what it's about now, *conditions*. [He refocuses on the album, Sydney looks on]*

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Crying out]** An old woman is dying...can anyone help an old woman?

Robert: **[Looking at the photos, indicating]** Mummy and grandma Loddie in Great Falls... **[chuckling]** Look at the dresses... **[indicating]**... poor old Isgar back in the shadows.

Sydney: **[Indicating]** Little Sydney and Robert...

Robert: Oh, my...

Sydney: ...blond curly hair down to your shoulders, that lovely smile...

Robert: It's a fearful smile.

Sydney: You've always had a lovely smile.

Robert: It's a fearful smile. **[they continue looking at the photos]**

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Indicating to Nurse James, who has entered her room]** Tell my sister to leave, I don't want her here.

Nurse James: There's no one here, Mrs. DelMonte.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Indicating]** She's sitting right over there.

Nurse James: **[Starting to massage her back]** Honey, why don't you just relax, let me give you a back rub.

Mrs. DelMonte: I don't want her to see me.

Nurse James: Just relax. **[she continues to massage Mrs. DelMonte, who's clearly enjoying it]**

Robert: **[Suddenly blurting out, troubled]** It didn't mean anything when I ran off with Cynthia Lewis, Sydney, it didn't mean anything...

Sydney: Of course it didn't.

Robert: It didn't mean anything at all.

Sydney: **[Understandingly]** It was the war, I was away...let's not talk about it now...

Robert: ...living at home, Poppy was sick, Mummy was crazy...

Sydney: Please let's not talk about it.

Robert: I thought that if I ran away with Cynthia Lewis I could learn to love Cynthia Lewis...

Sydney: Robbie, please.

Robert: And then we got the telegram saying you'd been wounded...

Sydney: **[As he starts fiddling with/adjusting Robert's tie]** Maybe after things calm down, we can take a little trip...

Robert: I should have been the one to go...

Sydney:go somewhere on the train....

Robert: You should have stayed to help Poppy, / should have been the one to go...

Sydney: We always had fun traveling on the train...

Robert: They brought you home, and a you just lay there for weeks, silent, vacant eyes...

Sydney: We used to take those lovely trips to Chicago...We could do that again, just get on the train, one of those nice sleeping cars...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To Nurse James, who's still massaging her back]** My sister has come to get me, I don't want to go...

Sydney: We could stay at the Palmer House, just like the old days...

Mrs. DelMonte: She died fifteen years ago and she told me that one day she'd come back to get me...**[then shouting]** Go away, Vilma! I'm not ready to go!

Sydney: There was that lovely bar...remember the Palmer House?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To Nurse James]** Tell her to go away....I'm not ready to go, I want to suffer some more. **[She settles back in to enjoying the back rub]**

Sydney: Remember that lovely bar, the orchestra, the singer...

Robert: The martinis...**[they laugh, then...]** Those were nice times, weren't they.

Sydney: After things calm down, we could...

Robert: I don't know... all that distance...

Sydney: Oh, why not...

Robert: I have that bladder thing.

Sydney: We all have the bladder thing.

Robert: I just worry that....

Sydney: You can have the bladder thing just as well at the Palmer House as you can here.

Nurse James: **[As she rubs her back]** You're going to a nice party in a little while.

Mrs. DelMonte: I don't like parties.

Nurse James: For your friend, Winona...she's a hundred and five.

Mrs. DelMonte: Poor Winona.

Nurse James: Her sons are giving her a party.

Mrs. DelMonte: I don't want to see Winona.

Nurse James: She's your old friend...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Nodding off, as she enjoys the back rub]** ... sits there nodding, smiling...

Sydney: Have you thought about what you're going to say?

Robert: You never talked about what happened.

Sydney: I thought it would be nice if we both said something, Mummy would like that.

Robert: I wanted to hear about what happened, you never talked about what happened.

Sydney: Robbie, I didn't want to talk about the war, I still don't want to talk about the war, there's nothing to talk about... I lived...many didn't...you live through something like that you don't want to talk about it, you don't want to remember it...

Robert: There's this part of you that...

Sydney: It changes you.

Robert: ...that I don't know anything about.

Sydney: Maybe there are things that I don't *want* you to know about, Robbie.

Robert: Nothing was ever the same after that.

Sydney: **[Long beat]** Have you thought about what you're going to say?

Robert: I'm not going to say anything.

Sydney: Mummy would like it if you said something.

Robert: I'm going to show people the pictures.

Sydney: She's a hundred and five, when someone's a hundred and five you say something about them.

Robert: You're the talker.

Sydney: Maybe tell some of the old stories, the trip west from Cincinnati, the homestead in Montana...

Robert: **[Tearfully referring to the photo album]** All of these people are gone, Sydney, they're all gone.

Sydney: They were wonderful people, weren't they...

Robert: We're the only ones who remember them now.

Sydney: ...Phoebe, Daisy, beautiful old Aunt Kate...

Robert: **[Referring to the albums]** There's not even anyone to leave these to.

Sydney: Let's not worry about it now.

Robert: We're the end of the line, aren't we.

Sydney: Let's try to have a nice time today, Robbie, enjoy mummy's party.

Robert: You look tired.

Sydney: I am tired.

Robert: You've been doing too much...

Sydney: I don't think I've ever been this tired.

Robert: ...do this, do that, all worked up...

Sydney: After the party, we'll take a nice trip...

Robert: **[Reassuring him]** The party's going to be very nice.

Sydney: ...Chicago, on the train, the Palmer House, that would be lovely...

Robert: ...let's try to enjoy ourselves...

Sydney: ...we had wonderful times back then, didn't we.

Robert: We'll do it again.

Sydney: After things calm down...

Robert: Chicago, the train, the Palmer House...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience]** At first I thought it was someone else's hand...

Miss Bright: **[To the audience]** We were going to be married...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...and then I realized it was *my* hand, but it was floating right over there **[indicates]**...

Miss Bright: ...Norman and I were going to be married...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...my pale fragile beautiful old hand floating right over there...

Miss Bright: ...but Norman was killed in the war...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...and my ear was over there **[indicates]** ...and my mouth was over there **[indicates]** ...

Miss Bright: ...shot down in the Pacific, just days before the end of the war...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...and my left leg was lying over there on top of the bureau...

Miss Bright: ...and the military men came to the door, and rang the bell, and I knew why they'd come, I knew, I knew...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...every part of me floating away...

Miss Bright: ...all I have now is his picture, and the memory of his voice, his smile, his laugh...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...every thing, every body, every memory, every wish...

Miss Bright: ...shot down over the Pacific...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...every desire...

Miss Bright:never to be found again.

Robert: **[Beat]** Will you hold my hand?
Sydney takes Robert's hand

Robert: It's very nice holding your hand.

Sydney: It's very nice holding your hand too.

[Long beat]

Robert: I always loved holding your hand...

Sydney: I always loved holding your hand...

Robert: ...when we were boys...

Sydney: ...from the beginning...

Robert: ...walked to school holding hands...

Sydney: ...held hands in the evening...

Robert: And then we stopped.

Sydney: We grew up.

Robert: Why did we stop?

Sydney: We grew up.

Robert: I didn't love Cynthia Lewis, I never loved Cynthia Lewis...

Sydney: It doesn't make any difference now, Robbie.

Robert: I loved you. **[Long beat]** Will you hold my hand when I die?

Blackout

Act II, scene five

Mummy's birthday party. Mummy sits in her wheel chair, far down stage, back to the audience. She's all propped up, made up, dressed up to the nines. On a table there's strawberry shortcake, wine coolers, a punch bowl, cups, frilly pink decorations, pink balloons.. An upright piano sits upstage. Robert, Sydney, Nurse James, Mrs. Meers, Mrs. Dewey, Mrs. Dumeyer, and Mrs. Ripley are clustered around Mummy. Mrs. Dornbusch is wandering around the table. All of the ladies are dressed up for a party, purses, hats, flowers...

Mrs. Meers: **[Loudly, to Mummy]** You're looking marvelous, Winona...

Sydney: **[Loudly, to Mummy]** It's Clementina, Mummy....

Mrs. Meers: ...absolutely marvelous.

Robert: **[Loudly to Mummy]** Do you know what day it is today, Mummy?

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** You remember Clementina...

Mrs. Meers: **[To Mummy]** The Lord bless you, my dear...

Robert: **[Loudly to Mummy]** It's your birthday, Mummy.

Mrs. Meers: The Lord told me to give you His special blessing on this special day.

Sydney: **[To Mummy, indicating]** And this is Maxine Dewey...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Stepping forward, to Mummy]** How do you do, Mrs. Tennyson, it's so nice to see you again.

Sydney: **[To Mummy, indicating]** ...and Ramona Dumeyer.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mummy]** Congratulations, Mrs. Tennyson.

Mrs. Dewey: You're the prettiest lady at the party.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** The prettiest lady at the party, Mummy.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mummy]** You're an inspiration to all of us.

Mrs. Dumeyer: I think you're getting more beautiful every year.

Robert: **[Loudly to Mummy]** You're a hundred and five today, Mummy.

Mrs. Meers: **[To Mummy]** You're always beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, Winona.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Sydney]** She probably doesn't remember me.

Sydney: Of course, she remembers you...**[then to Mummy]** You remember Aurelia.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mummy]** We used to know each from the Church Guild.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Aurelia Ripley from the Church Guild.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mummy]** We made stocking stuffers every Christmas...you and I and Charlene Dalloway.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Do you remember making stocking stuffers?

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mummy]** Charlene says to be sure to say hello.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** You used to make stocking stuffers...

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mummy]** She's dead now, you know, but she hasn't let it slow her down one little bit.

Mrs. Meers: The Lord is with us today, and so is the Blessed Virgin Mother.

Robert: **[With a pitcher of wine coolers]** Wine cooler? Anyone for another wine cooler? **[Miss Bright and Mrs. Albertson are entering]**

Mrs. Meers: The Lord's name be praised. **[She holds out her glass for a refill]**

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Sydney]** This is such a lovely occasion.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Having taken a sip of her wine cooler]** My, this is good.

Mrs. Dewey/
Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Having taken a sip of their wine coolers]** My, this is good.

Mrs. Meers: **[Raising her glass]** The Blessed Virgin Mother's name be praised.

Robert: **[To Miss Bright/Mrs. Albertson]** Wine cooler, Miss Bright, Mrs. Albertson?

Miss Bright: Oh, no thank you.

Robert: Mrs. Albertson?

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon?

Robert: **[Loudly]** Would you care for a wine cooler?

Miss Bright: **[Loudly to Mrs. Albertson]** A wine cooler, dear.

Mrs. Albertson: A wine what?

Robert: **[Loudly]** Cooler, Mrs. Albertson...a wine cooler.

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Robert]** Do you have anything a little stronger? **[Everyone laughs]**

Robert: Why don't you start with this, and I'll see what I can come up with...**[more laughter]** .It's so nice to see you.

Miss Bright: It's so nice of you to have us.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Miss Bright]** How do you do.

Miss Bright **[To Mrs. Dewey]** How do you do.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Miss Bright]** How do you do.

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Dumeyer]** How do you do.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Miss Bright]** It's so nice to see you.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mrs. Bright]** How do you do.

Miss Bright: How do you do.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Miss Bright]** That color looks so nice on you.

Miss Bright: Oh, thank you, my dear.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Loudly to Mrs. Albertson]** How are you, Verna... it's Maxine Dewey...

Mrs. Albertson: How do you,

Mrs. Dewey: ...and Ramona Dumeyer and Aurelia Ripley...

Mrs. Albertson: How do you,

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** You're looking absolutely marvelous, Verna.

Mrs. Dewey: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** It's so nice to see you again.

Mrs. Ripley: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** That color looks so nice on you.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It's Eloise Bright, Mummy.

Miss Bright: **[To Mummy]** Happy birthday, dear.

Sydney: And Verna Albertson...you remember Verna...

Mrs. Albertson: **[To Miss Bright]** Is there some sort of problem?

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** It's Winona Tennyson, dear...it's her birthday today,

Sydney: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** She's a hundred and five.

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Miss Bright: **[Loudly]** She's hundred and five years old.

Mrs. Albertson: I'm so sorry to hear that. **[Everyone laughs]**

All ladies: **[All turning toward Mummy]** This is such a wonderful occasion.

Sydney: **[Loudly, to Mummy]** A hundred and five today, Mummy.

Mrs. Meers: **[To Sydney, referring to Mummy]** I think she's a little tired.

Sydney: **[Adjusting Mummy's pillows]** Do you want to sit up a little higher?

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Who has emerged from the back of the crowd, to Sydney, referring to Mummy]** She looks awfully familiar...

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Is that better, Mummy?

Mrs. Meers: **[To Mummy]** Don't tire yourself out now, Winona.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Loudly to Mummy]** You look awfully familiar.

Robert: **[Offering a wine cooler]** A wine cooler, Mrs. Dornbusch?

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Taking wine cooler from Robert]** Thank you.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It's Eleanor Dornbusch, Mummy...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Scrutinizing Mummy]** I think we used to see each other out at the race track. **[Everyone smiles/laughs, amused]**

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** You used to be neighbors on the fifth floor.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Quite sure now]** I used to see her out at the race track.

Sydney: **[To Mummy, playfully]** Did you play the horses, Mummy?
[Everyone smiles/laughs]

Robert: **[To Mummy, shaking his finger playfully]** You didn't tell us you played the horses.

Sydney: Did you win, Mummy?

Robert: I bet you did.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Loudly, to Mummy]** I used to see you out there all the time with Mr. Pardini, the butcher. **[Smiles/laughs, perhaps there's a gasp, Mrs. Meers eyes Dewey/Dumeyer]**

Robert: **[To Mrs. Dornbusch, shaking his finger playfully]** You shouldn't tell stories about people, Eleanor...**[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Dornbusch: He was quite a morsel.

Robert: No more wine coolers for Mrs. Dornbusch. **[Everyone laughs]**

Mrs. Albertson: Is there some sort of problem?

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To Mrs. Albertson, very loudly]** She had affair with Mr. Pardini, the butcher.

Mrs. Albertson: Good for her. **[A roar of laughter, applause]**

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Good for you, Mummy.

Miss Bright: **[To Mummy]** You've always smiled from your heart, Winona,...

Mrs. Meers: The Lord is a forgiving Lord...

Miss Bright: ...that's why you're so beautiful because your heart is beautiful...

Sydney: You have a beautiful heart, Mummy.

Miss Bright: And although I haven't known you very long, dear, your lovely smile has made me your friend, and you're a very lovely friend.

Everyone murmurs agreement. Mrs. DelMonte has entered.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Crossing toward Mummy]** Winona, Winona, Winona...I would like to wish my friend a Happy Birthday...

Robert: **[Greeting her]** Mrs. DelMonte!

All ladies: **[To each other]** It's Mrs. DelMonte

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It's Mrs. DelMonte, Mummy.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Moving painfully toward Mummy]** I am dying and I want to wish my friend a Happy Birthday.

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It's Augusta, Mummy...your dear old friend, Augusta...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Opening her arms to Mummy]** Winona, Winona, Winona, Winona, my dear...my dear, dear Winona...**[she reaches out and touches Mummy]** I am dying, my dear, I have pain here...here...and here...

Robert: **[To Mrs. DelMonte]** Would you like a wine cooler, Mrs. DelMonte?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Still indicating]** ...here...here...and here....

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** It's your old friend, Augusta, Mummy.

Mrs. DelMonte: Remember the good times, Winona, remember the good times, my dear.

Robert: **[To Mummy]** Remember the good times, Mummy.

Mrs. DelMonte: ...summers up at the lake, you and Sam and the boys...

Sydney: Those were wonderful times.

Mrs. DelMonte: ...we used to laugh, my dear, we used to laugh, we used to cry, we used to fight, we used to drink too much and try to row that old blue dinghy across the lake... **[she laughs]**

All ladies: Remember the good times...

Mrs. DelMonte: You always had that wonderful smile....

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** Can you smile, mummy?

Mrs. DelMonte: ...the good times, the bad times...

Sydney: **[To Mummy]** ...one little smile?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Concerned, to Mummy]** You're looking awfully tired, Winona...

Sydney: Come on, Mummy, one beautiful little smile...

All ladies: Remember the good times...

Robert: Please, Mummy, just one little smile....

Beat, then Mummy manages a teeny little smile, and everyone applauds and cheers.

Sydney: **[Raising his glass, toasting]** She was beautiful on the day she was born, and has grown more beautiful each day that she lives....

Robert: **[To Mummy]** You've been wonderful to us, Mummy...

Sydney:born just outside of Cincinnati, she came West in an old Star touring car with four sisters, a brother, their great grandpa Earl...

Robert: ...loving, caring, watching us grow...

Sydney: ...grew up on a ranch in Montana, hard winters, long cold starry nights...

Robert: ...always there whenever we needed you...

Sydney: ...the first time she saw poppy, it was love at first sight...

Robert: ...always kind, always gentle...

Sydney: ... the kiss on the porch, crazy old Aunt Lillian spying on them from the roof...

Robert: ...loving us when we didn't deserve it, helping us, helping others...

Sydney: ... a loving wife, a loving mother, a loving friend...

Robert: ...the Heart Association, the Cancer Society, the Ladies' Symphony Guild...

Sydney: We love you, Mummy.

Robert: We love you, Mummy...you're the most beautiful and the best Mummy anyone could ever have..

Sydney: And we want to wish you a very very happy happy birthday, Mummy...and many, many, many birthdays more.

Everyone claps and cheers, and Nurse James, starts to play "Happy Birthday" on the piano, and everyone joins in.

Everyone: **[Singing]** Happy birthday to you....Happy birthday to you...Happy birthday, dear mummy/ dear Winona... Happy birthday to you!

Everyone applauds and cheers.

Robert: **[Calling out]** Strawberry shortcake!

More cheers and applause, as Nurse James starts playing a waltz on the piano. Robert and Sydney start serving shortcake. The ladies are buzzing about engaged in little-old-lady small talk. Sydney takes pieces of strawberry shortcake back to Mummy and Mrs. DeMonte, and starts feeding shortcake to Mummy. Then getting into the spirit of things, Mrs. Dumeyer and Mrs. Ripley start dancing, and then Mrs. Meers and Mrs.

Dornbusch start dancing, and then Mrs. Dewey asks Robert to dance, and they start dancing. Everybody's enjoying themselves, as Sydney stands and crosses toward the food table to get something, but, suddenly struck by a spell of dizziness, he puts his hand to his head, grabs a chair to steady himself, collapses onto the chair, and sinks to the ground. The ladies around him gasp, rush to help him, there's a growing response ("Oh, my dear...Are you all right...What's wrong?") Nurse James rushes over...

Robert: Sydney, what's wrong?

Nurse James: **[Pushing toward him]** Just stay calm...

Robert: What's wrong, Sydney...can you talk?

Nurse James: **[To the ladies]** Please give us some space...

Mrs. Albertson: Is there some sort of problem?

Robert: Can you hear me, Sydney? Can you hear me?

Nurse James: **[Loosening Sydney's collar]** Everything's going to be all right...
[Feeling his neck pulse] Try to relax....

Robert: Breathe, Sydney, just breathe...

Blackout

Act II, scene six

Sydney is lying in a hospital bed, Robert is sitting by his side. Nurse James is taking Sydney's blood pressure. A vase of red tulips sits on a table next to the bed.

Dimly lit in the background, the ladies are all getting ready for bed.

Long pause, as Nurse James finishes taking Sydney's blood pressure...

Nurse James: **[To Robert]** His blood pressure's fine.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Do you need anything, Sydney?

Nurse James: **[To Robert]** Dr. Patrick's going to be back later, he wants to check on him again.

Robert: **[To Nurse James]** I don't think he hears us.

Nurse James: Let him rest.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Do you hear me, Sydney?

Nurse James: Let him rest.

Robert: **[To Nurse James]** This is what happened to Mummy...

Nurse James: Dr. Patrick says he's responding well.

Robert: ...one little stroke, then another...

Nurse James: His blood pressure's good, his pulse is good...let him rest. **[She leaves]**

Robert: **[After a long beat, to Sydney]** I'm just going to sit here for a while, Sydney...you can just rest, whatever you want...**[beat]** ...everything's going to be all right...

Mrs. Dornbusch, alone in her cubicle

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience]** So many of my fans have been writing me...

Mrs. Albertson and Miss Bright, in Mrs. Albertson's cubicle.

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson]** Would you like to go for a walk after lunch tomorrow?

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Miss Bright: Would you like to go for a walk tomorrow?

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...saying how much they loved my films...

Miss Bright: There's a lovely trail that goes down to the village.

Mrs. Albertson: I don't walk much any more, my dear.

Miss Bright: There's a railing that goes all the way down, you can hold on to my arm....

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience]** I'm going to send you a picture that you can keep, autographed if you'd like, suitable for framing, and this is at no charge to you.

Miss Bright: **[To Mrs. Albertson, worried]** Do your friends come back to visit you after they've died?

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon?

Miss Bright: **[Louder]** Do your friends come back to visit you after they've died?

Mrs. Albertson: Oh, my yes...someone shows up almost every night.

Miss Bright: I thought my friend Charlene...

Mrs. Albertson: She'll come by...

Miss Bright: I thought by now she'd...

Mrs. Albertson: Sometimes they hesitate...

Miss Bright: We've always shared everything...

Mrs. Albertson: ...they don't quite know how to approach...

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience]** ...and if you call today I'm going to include a copy of my just-released memoirs, "Stories of the War Years," with pictures of me and Mrs. Roosevelt and Lana Turner selling war bonds.

Miss Bright: So many people are afraid.

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Miss Bright: So many people are afraid.

Mrs. Albertson: I'm not afraid.

Miss Bright: I'm not either.

Mrs. Albertson: I'm not afraid of anything.

Miss Bright: I don't think there's anything to be afraid of.

Mrs. Albertson: I don't either...not any more.

Miss Bright: **[Beat, then taking Mrs. Albertson's hand]** I like being your friend.

Mrs. Albertson: I like being your friend too. **[As the dialogue proceeds, Miss Bright leaves Mrs. Albertson's cubicle and returns to her own.**

Mrs. Ripley, alone in her cubicle, eating chocolate tapioca.

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating tapioca, to the audience]** My, this is good...

Robert: **[To Sydney, who is restless]** I'm right here, Sydney...

Mrs. Dewey and Mrs. Dumeyer, in Mrs. Dewey's cubicle.

Mrs. Dewey: **[Shaking her head]** ...so vulnerable...

Mrs. Dumeyer: He's 85, Maxine...

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating tapioca, to the audience]**this is very, very, good...

Mrs. Dewey: ...just when you least expect...

Mrs. Dumeyer: He's 85, Maxine, things happen.

Mrs. Dewey: Robert must be so upset.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** You're going to be all right, Sydney...

Mrs. Dewey: They've been together their whole lives.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** ...this is just something we're going to have to deal with...

Mrs. Ripley: **[Eating tapioca]** Chocolate tapioca is my very favorite.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Standing, yawning]** Honey, I'm going back to my room and take off my girdle...

Mrs. Dewey: Don't go.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...floss my teeth, brush my teeth....

Mrs. Dewey: Stay and talk.

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...thank God that I still *have* my teeth...

Mrs. Dewey: Do you ever miss your husband?

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...and then I'm going to climb into bed with a hot water bottle and read about Liz Taylor's hip surgery.

Mrs. Dewey: I miss mine.

Mrs. Dumeyer: I miss both of mine.

Mrs. Dewey: I miss him terribly.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Personalities aside.

Mrs. Dewey: There's not a single day I don't think about him.

Mrs. Dumeyer: Let's go out to lunch tomorrow.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Calling out]** I would like some attention now.

Mrs. Dumeyer: We'll have a drink at the club...

Robert: **[To Sydney]** Did you see the red tulips, Sydney?

Mrs. Dumeyer: ...have a couple martinis and go look for shoes, they're having a sale at Nordstrom.

Robert: Miss Bright brought you some lovely red tulips...everyone's been very concerned...

Mrs. Dewey: **[Idea!]** Let's get our nails done.

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[What the hell]** Toes too.

Mrs. Dewey: How about a facial? **[They laugh]**

Mrs. Dumeyer: **[Still laughing]** How long have we known each other?

Mrs. Dewey: **[Laughing]** Oh, honey, too long, way, way too long...**[They both laugh heartily, and as the dialogue proceeds, they hug and Mrs. Dumeyer leaves the cubicle and returns to her own]**

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Calling out]** I wish someone would pay attention to me now...
Nurse James in Mrs. Albertson's cubicle.

Nurse James: **[Loudly, trying to wake her]** How are you tonight, Verna?

Mrs. Albertson: **[Waking, startled]** What...what...

Nurse James: How are you doing tonight?

Mrs. Albertson: Is there some sort of problem?

Nurse James: It's time for your pill.

Mrs. Albertson: It's what?

Nurse James: It's time for your pill. **[She hands Mrs. Albertson the pill and a glass of water.]**

Mrs. Albertson: **[Taking it, but not putting it in her mouth]** Thank you.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Almost giving up]** Will someone please help an old lady?

Nurse James: I want to see you take it.

Mrs. Albertson: **[Pretending to take it, swallow it]** Thank you.

Nurse James: Do you have any stories tonight?

Mrs. Albertson: I beg your pardon.

Nurse James: You always tell me a story...

Mrs. Albertson: I don't have any stories.

Nurse James:about Baltimore...

Mrs. Albertson: I've told them all.

Nurse James: ...about your sister, Loretta...

Mrs. Albertson: *You* tell me one.

Nurse James: **[Laughing]** They're not as good as your stories...do you want some help getting undressed?

Mrs. Albertson: I'll be fine.

Nurse James: I'll come back later and tuck you in.

Mrs. Albertson: Don't wake me if I'm asleep, please...I'll be fine. **[Nurse James exits, and as the dialogue proceeds, Mrs. Albertson takes out a small cloth bag, and puts the pill she had pretended to take into it]**

Mrs. DelMonte: **[As though talking to her sister]** Go away, Vilma.

Robert: **[To Sydney]** I don't think mummy's going to be with us much longer, Sydney.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Talking to her sister]** I don't want to see you now.

Robert: I don't think she can take much more.

Mrs. Meers: **[To the audience]** The Lord is with us this evening.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Talking to her sister]** I'm not dead yet, Vilma...come back later.

Mrs. Meers: **[To the audience]** I can feel His presence, moving through the hallways...

Robert: I don't want her to suffer

Mrs. Meers: **[To the audience]** ...embracing us with His love...

Robert: Sometimes you wish she'd just go peacefully in the night.

Mrs. Meers: **[To the audience]** ...leading us away to a world of no pain.

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Talking to her sister]** I don't like you, Vilma...I have never particularly liked you ...and I'm certainly not going to spend the rest of eternity in your presence.

Mrs. Albertson has taken all the pills out of the small bag—pills she has secretly saved for months—and starts to take them.

Mrs. Albertson: It's time...

Mrs. DelMonte: I don't want to die.

Robert: I'd like to start over, Sydney.

Mrs. Albertson: ...a lovely day, a lovely evening...

Robert: I'd like another chance.

Mrs. DelMonte: I'd like another chance.

Mrs. Albertson: ...it's time...

Robert: I've not been myself lately...

Mrs. DelMonte: May I have another chance?

Mrs. Albertson: ...time to open the door and take the next step....

Robert: Maybe this whole little setback has been good for us, given us a little wake-up call.

Mrs. Albertson: I've been very happy...

Mrs. DelMonte: You're looking pretty good, Vilma.

Robert: We've got to take things a little easier...

Mrs. Albertson: I've been blessed...

Robert: ...accept the limitations....

Mrs. Albertson: ...loved and cared for...

Mrs. DelMonte: Are you happier now? You look happier...

Robert: We're very different people, you and I, do you realize that?

Mrs. Albertson: ...it's a lovely night....

Robert: ...very different...

Mrs. DelMonte: I've missed you, Vilma, I hate to say it, but it's kind of nice to see you again...

Mrs. Albertson: ...a lovely peaceful night...**[She continues taking the pills]**

Nurse James has entered Miss Bright's cubicle.

Miss Bright: **[To Nurse]** I had the most wonderful day today...

Nurse: Do you want some chocolate tapioca, Eloise?

Miss Bright: Oh, my, no.

Robert: You're not angry with me, are you, Sydney?

Miss Bright: I had the most wonderful day today.

Nurse: How about some peppermint tea?

Miss Bright: No thank you.

Robert: I didn't mean to make you angry, I couldn't bear it if you were angry, please don't be angry with me.

Miss Bright: I made a new friend today...her name is Verna...

Nurse: **[Delighted]** Oh, she's so lovely.

Mrs. Albertson: Everything will be easy now...

Nurse: She always tells me stories.

Mrs. Albertson: ...nothing to worry about, nothing to fear...

Nurse: Anything else you need?

Mrs. Albertson: ...nothing but peace.

Miss Bright: May I have a little kiss.

Nurse: Of course. **[She leans over and kisses her]**

Miss Bright: Thank you.

Nurse: Thank *you*.

Miss Bright: You're such a lovely person.

Nurse: *You're* the loveliest. **[She kisses her again, then exits]**

Robert: I think we're in for a good stretch of it, Sydney, I'm sure of it.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[To the audience, indicating with her cane on the floor]**
Happiness is here, right here, follow this line...

Robert: We'll take things a little slower, try to enjoy things more.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Indicating]** ...and here is disappointment and here is sorrow, be careful where you step...

Robert: I think it's awfully good we moved in here, Sydney, awfully good.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[As she steps carefully making her way across the stage]** ... life is a pathway you make for yourself....

Mrs. Albertson: I'm so tired...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...a solitary journey you take with a lot of other people...

Mrs. Albertson: ...so very tired...

Mrs. Dornbusch: ...waiting for the friend who will lead you away.

Miss Bright: **[As though talking to Charlene Dalloway]** I've made a new friend, Charlene...a lovely new friend.

Robert: We were privileged, Sydney, really very privileged.

Miss Bright: **[As though to Charlene Dalloway]** Not that I'm not still your friend, Charlene, you're my very best friend.

Robert: We've always had each other, we always will...

Mrs. DelMonte: **[To the audience]** Please don't forget me.

Miss Bright: **[As though to Charlene Dalloway]** Did you see the red tulips, Charlene...the ones that we planted along the trail...they're blooming now...remember the tulips we planted last fall?

Mrs. DelMonte: **[Near tears]** Please don't forget me.

Mrs. Dornbusch: **[Echoing]** Please don't forget me.

Mrs. Ripley: A nice bowl of chocolate tapioca pudding and a tall glass of milk before bed and all of your dreams will be sweet ones.

Mrs. Meers **[Loudly]** Now I lay me down to sleep.

All other ladies: Now I lay me down to sleep.

Mrs. Meers: I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

All other ladies: I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

Mrs. Meers: If I should die before I wake.

All other ladies: If I should die before I wake.

Mrs. Meers: I pray the Lord my soul to take.

All other ladies: I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Mrs. Meers: Amen.

All other ladies: Amen.

Robert: I need you, Sydney, do you know what I mean? I need you, my dear, old friend.

Miss Bright: **[As though to Charlene Dalloway]** Don't be afraid, Charlene...

Mrs. Ripley: Please don't forget me.

Miss Bright: **[As though to Charlene Dalloway]** If you need anything, I'm always here to help you.

Robert:

When you're feeling more up to it I think we should plan a little outing, would you like that?...up to the lake, like in the old days... I'll roast a chicken, and we'll have roast chicken sandwiches and mummy's potato salad, and we'll take the old road, remember the old road, up through Sandpoint and Bonner's Ferry, up to the old lake place, and we'll take the trail to the spring, do you remember the old Indian spring?...my goodness, Sydney, my, that was so long ago, so long ago...and we can sit in the sun for a bit, just you and I alone together, just like in the old days...**[beat]** You're not going to die, are you Sydney? Please don't die...please don't die just yet, Sydney, please, not yet, not now, it would be such a shame...**[beat]** ...we're just beginning to get to know each other, Sydney, just beginning...

Slow fade to blackout

End of play