And They Flew

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And They Flew

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Juli Ré Van Brunt

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2009

May 17, 2013
Setting and Character Descriptions

Time: December First of Present day

Place: Interior of a historic home surrounded by a new, middle-class development

Characters: 

Emma Louise Parker  "Emma," 49, homemaker  
Mother of twins Thomas and Jessica  
Married at 20, mother at 21, widow at 29  
Fraternal twin of Edie

Jessica Lynn Parker  "Jessica," and "Jess"  
Emma's 28 year old daughter  
Twin sister of Thomas, single  
Human Resources Manager

Thomas Elliot Parker  "Thomas," and "Tommy"  
Emma's 28 year old son  
Twin brother of Jessica, married to Steve  
Contractor

Zachary Poolesville  "Zachary," and "Zac," 120  
Retired Marine, has been dead for 50 yrs  (Committed suicide in the kitchen the day his wife suddenly died.)

Edie Loraine Taylor  "Edie," 49, Emma's fraternal twin  
"Aunt E" to Thomas and Jessica  
Fabulous

Doctor  Nameless, faceless, many. Voice-overs only

Dr. Gabriel Pause  Neighbor, widower, psychologist  
Wants badly to be Emma's love interest

Dr. Smith Cooley  Psychiatrist, colleague of Dr. Pause

Notes:  All doctors can be played by the same actor.  
Each set of twins should share distinct physical quirks.
ACT ONE
Scene 1

AT RISE: EMMA lies supine on an examining table, top of her head to the audience, feet in gynecological stirrups. Upstage in the darkened background is the interior of her house. On the interior kitchen wall hangs a poster featuring the following poem by Christopher Logue: "Come to the edge. We might fall. Come to the edge. It's too high. COME TO THE EDGE! And they came. And he pushed them. And they flew." There is a table with four chairs in the kitchen, and a large and intricate wooden mantle in the living room. ZACHARY, wearing a Marine dress uniform, circa WWII, is in the kitchen reading a recipe which lies open on the table. Next to him is a beautiful and ornate cake, surrounded by stacks of gladware and multiple reference books on mental illness. Via camera and projection, we see a close up of EMMA'S face only, we cannot see the DOCTOR.

DOCTOR
(Voice over - loud and drawn out, à la the Wizard of Oz.)

You're in menopause.

EMMA
What?

DOCTOR
How are the kids?

EMMA
They're fine...what?

DOCTOR
Tommy still living with that gay boy?

EMMA
They're married.
DOCTOR
Well, I'm giving you some prescriptions.

(Little pieces of paper fly onto her belly.)

EMMA
What?

DOCTOR
You're all done here.

EMMA
What?

DOCTOR
Get dressed.

(A phone rings. Lights up on the kitchen table. EMMA rises, picks up the prescriptions, and crosses to the kitchen door. She opens it, sees ZACHARY, whose back is to her, and freezes. The phone continues to ring.)

EMMA
(To ZACHARY.)
Hello?

ZACHARY
(To the cake.)
Hello.

EMMA
(Dropping her things, skirting around ZACHARY, and picking up the phone.)
Hey, just a sec.

EMMA (cont.)
(To ZACHARY who does not respond.)
Can I help you with something? Hello-o? Do I know you? Are you with Thomas? (Shouting toward the rest of the house.) Thomas? (To phone.) Call you back.

(She hangs up the phone and crosses to ZACHARY.)

EMMA (cont.)
Hello? Hello? Are you deaf?
(Not paying any attention to her, ZACHARY lowers his head to the cake and breathes deeply.)

EMMA (cont.)

Oh, no you don't!

(EMMA picks up a knife and charges him.)

EMMA (cont.)

Step away from that cake!

(ZACHARY catches her gaze, trips backwards, and throws up his hands in surrender.)

EMMA (cont.)

(Pointing the knife at his chest.)

That's for my sister! Now, who are you and what are you doing in my kitchen? (ZACHARY does not respond.) No? (Keeping her eyes and knife trained on ZACHARY, she heads for the phone.) Well, that's it then, I'm calling the police!

ZACHARY

Edie, the cake's for Edie! She just called, but...but you didn't add all the sugar.

EMMA

Of course I did, it's perfect! And what do you know about Edie? If you're here for the party you're more than a month early - and neither of us knows you!

ZACHARY

Not quite.

EMMA

Not quite what? What are you talking about? Who....

ZACHARY

The cake, it isn't perfect. The recipe calls for....

EMMA

Stop talking about the cake, you can't have any! Now, who....

ZACHARY

Ok, ok, but you didn't...

EMMA

I said no cake! (Beat, and then slowly.) Now, who are you, what are you doing here, and why were you ignoring me while the phone was ringing off the bloody hook?
I didn't know you were talking to me.

Right. Well, who else would I be talking to? You're the only one here!

You...can see me?

Are you dull?

No, it's just that....

And how did you get in here anyway?

I live here...I, I mean I used to live here.

(Pointing the knife at his face.)

Well, you don't anymore!

Yes, well...no. I mean, I do...ah, did live...I...I'm sorry, I....

Got that right!

I'm not used to conversation. And you've got a knife.

Trained right on that heavy little heartbeat.

Right, about that....

And the only other people to ever live in this house died. So who are you, and what are you....

Zachary, my name is Zachary, and it's very nice to finally meet you, I, I mean meet you for real.
EMMA
Did you break in? Did Edie put you up to this? Because whatever she told you, I am not in the market for a toy soldier.

ZACHARY
No, no. I....

EMMA
One of my children?

ZACHARY
No. And Thomas isn't here.

EMMA
Well, why are you here coveting my cake?

ZACHARY
I'm not coveting anything! I mean, I guess that isn't strictly true, but (EMMA warns him.) I...I...I guess I'm the ghost of your kitchen. But I don't want your cake. I mean, I do, I do want it. It looks lovely, but I really can't eat it, and even if I could you left out half the sugar.

EMMA
Oh, I get it, you're a patient of Dr. Pauses, right?

ZACHARY
It still smells good though. I get more of the zest with this one.

EMMA
(Picking up the phone and dialing.)
What did you do, just wander over here after your session?

ZACHARY
I didn't have a session.

EMMA
Came early and went to the wrong house?

ZACHARY
No, really, I....

EMMA
Tried my door and let yourself in? Damn lock. (To phone.) Hi, Gabriel, it's...damn. (Pausing to listen to the rest of his extremely lengthy outgoing message.) Hi, Gabe, it's Em, listen, I think I have one of yours over here, could you come and pick him up before I have to stab him to death? Thank you, bye bye.
(She hangs up the phone and checks the time.)

ZACHARY
Listen, I'm telling you the truth...I...I can't believe you can see me.

EMMA
Well, you're not invisible!

ZACHARY
Usually I am.

EMMA
Right, well the magic's gone. You're flesh and blood now, so....

ZACHARY
Your cake has half the sugar missing!

EMMA
It certainly does not!

ZACHARY
Does too! (Beat.) When you transferred your notes you copied the recipe wrong. There should be brown as well as white. You only added the white this time.

EMMA
Ok, Captain Invisible, I've had enough. (Searching for DR. PAUSE'S cell number, finally finding it, realizing it's next to impossible to see, and shaking her head in disgust.) How about if you go wait outside before....

ZACHARY
Captain Poolesville, and you forgot to copy it onto the index card, it's no big deal. I mean with all the recipes you've been testing....

EMMA
I can't believe he doesn't have you locked up. (Dialing phone again.) Wandering around, letting yourself into other peoples houses. You're lucky I didn't stab you.

ZACHARY
Actually, you couldn't.

EMMA
(On phone, listening to another recording.)
Damn, well, he must be in session. (To phone.) Hi, Gabe, me again, just thought I'd try your cell. Listen, I hate to bother you, but, Mr...uh, Zachary...uh....
Poolesville.

EMMA
Poolesville, right. Seems to have found his way into my kitchen and is refusing to leave.

ZACHARY
No, I'm not, I'd love to leave! But I bet you can't make me.

EMMA
Would you come over please? Thanks, and I think I've got Edie's cake settled for this year if you'd like a taste.

(She hangs up the phone.)

ZACHARY
Bet he doesn't like a taste.

EMMA
What's with the uniform? Still active duty?

ZACHARY
No.

EMMA
PTSD?

ZACHARY
Excuse me?

EMMA
Uh-huh. How early are you?

ZACHARY
For what?

EMMA
Your appointment.

ZACHARY
I don't really have one.

EMMA
You just showed up?
ZACHARY

Apparently.

EMMA

Expecting to be seen?

ZACHARY

No, definitely not, this part's a complete surprise. Shocking really. I...I haven't spoken to someone in so long. Oh, it feels good.

EMMA

Right. Well, listen, since the good doctor doesn't live here, and you don't have an appointment anyway, you've got two choices. Leave now and go next door to wait at his house, or I'm calling the police.

ZACHARY

I vote neither.

EMMA

I'm sure that's true.

ZACHARY

No, I mean...I can't leave, you can't make me, and the police are a bad idea.

EMMA

Look, I've had it. I'm old, I'm tired, and....

ZACHARY

Forty-nine is not old, trust me.

EMMA

Just because my door wasn't locked doesn't mean you have the right to enter. I don't want to cause the doc any trouble, but if you don't leave the police will take you to St. E's.

ZACHARY

Actually, I don't think they can see me. But then again, you can, so...who knows? Go on ahead and call them, it'll at least be interesting!

EMMA

Don't try to stop me.

ZACHARY

I won't.

EMMA

You won't?
ZACHARY
No, but I think you'll regret it - they're going to think you're crazy.

EMMA
(Reaching for the phone.)
Well, one of us is.

ZACHARY
(Second guessing having encouraged her to call.)
An English muffin and cantaloupe!

EMMA
What's that?

ZACHARY
Your breakfast. (He walks back to the cake.) You had an English muffin, the last one actually, and a quarter of a cantaloupe. This cake has only half its sugar, but the vanilla/zest balance is right on, and you've finally got the frosting right. You're plagued by hot flashes, haven't been sleeping much, wonder if you're losung your wits like your mother most unfortunately did - I was very sorry about all that by the way, but I really think you handled an impossible situation beautifully, and you just came from the gynecologist.

EMMA
Don't you talk about my gynecologist! How...how did you...you, you've been watching me? Stalking me?

ZACHARY
I've been stuck in this kitchen since before your children were born.

EMMA
(Fiercely.)
What do you know about my children? You stay away from them, you hear me? You stay away from my children!

(JESSICA enters the living room and heads for the kitchen.)

JESSICA
Mom?

EMMA
Thomas?

JESSICA
(Entering the kitchen.)
No, Mom, it's me. It's my late day, remember? I'm heading to work, but I need to borrow your spring form for...are you ok?
(EMMA looks at ZACHARY.)

ZACHARY

Told you.

JESSICA

Mom? Mom, what's wrong? (Beat.) Mom? What's with the knife?

EMMA

What do you mean, what's wrong? Do you know who he is?

JESSICA

Who who is?

ZACHARY

( Hooting like an owl.)

Who, who! Who, who!

EMMA

The man.

JESSICA

What man? What are you talking about?

ZACHARY

This is excellent!

JESSICA

(Taking the knife.)

Mom! What man? Was someone here? Are you ok?

ZACHARY

I'm dead and you're a psychic!

EMMA

He...he's...invisible.

JESSICA

What? What are you talking about?

EMMA

But I see him.

JESSICA

Mom!
EMMA
Oh, yes, Dear, the sugar's all there, it's fine.

JESSICA
Sugar? What are you talking about? You are not fine. What man? Is he still here? Did he hurt you? Did you call the police?

EMMA
No, no, he...he's gone with the spring form.

ZACHARY
I wish.

EMMA
Me too.

JESSICA

(JESSICA coaxes EMMA to one of the chairs.)

ZACHARY
You know, I have to say I'm relieved. I was starting to think you were losing it too, but this is brilliant!

(JESSICA and EMMA sit.)

JESSICA
Can you tell me what he looked like?

(EMMA stares at ZACHARY, but does not speak. Several beats go by.)

ZACHARY
I mean, all that weird twin stuff with your sister. You've probably always been a little psychic.

JESSICA
Mom, please! I need you to talk to me.

ZACHARY
Hey, maybe Edie's psychic too, let's call her back and ask!

EMMA
I must be dreaming. I took a nap....
JESSICA
You took a nap in your coat?

EMMA
I must have.

JESSICA
What did he look like?

ZACHARY
Tall, dark, handsome. Dashing really.

JESSICA
Was he taller than Daddy?

EMMA
They're about the same.

JESSICA
Ok, ok, good. Did he have dark hair, light hair....

EMMA
Completely gray.

ZACHARY
Well, at least I've still got a full head thank you very much! At my age one can't be picky!

EMMA
(Standing abruptly.)
I'm sorry, Dear, but my eyes aren't behaving properly.

(EMMA, followed by JESSICA, exits to the living room.)

EMMA (cont.)
I think I just need to go lie down a bit, alright? Just get a little rest.

JESSICA
I'll stay with you.

EMMA
My eyes...my eyes are just behaving badly.

(EMMA and JESSICA exit. Sound of a thunder clap.)

ZACHARY
We'll meet again! (Sound of a thunder clap, and under breath.) I hope.

Black Out.
ACT ONE
Scene 2

An hour later. The doorbell sounds several times before lights come up. JESSICA enters, crosses to the door, and opens it. DR. GABRIEL PAUSE enters wearing a soaking wet raincoat.

JESSICA
(On the brink.)
Oh, Dr. P, I'm glad you're here!

DR. PAUSE
Hi, Jessica, it's...it's nice to see you too - are you ok?

JESSICA
No, something's wrong with Mom and she refuses to go to the hospital. Will you talk to her?

DR. PAUSE
(Alarmed.)
Where is she?

EMMA
(Entering.)
She's right here, and she's fine. Perfectly normal.

DR. PAUSE
(Relieved.)
You've never been that, Emma.

EMMA
Good afternoon, Gabriel. What brings you over on this fine day?

JESSICA
Not fine any more.

DR. PAUSE
Your messages concerned me, so I thought I had better brave the elements.

EMMA
Messages?

DR. PAUSE
You don't remember calling me?
EMMA
Calling you? Oh, yes, yes, that's right. I...I had a dream about you.

DR. PAUSE
You did? You had a dream about me? Well, that's...that's lovely. I'm flatt....

EMMA
Yes, I dreamt I was in the kitchen, and there was a man - one of your patients, or so I thought, and...and he was refusing to leave until I gave him Edie's cake.

DR. PAUSE
Really? A patient? He...he wanted your...your cake?

EMMA
No, Edie's cake.

DR. PAUSE
Oh, I doubt he wanted Edie's....

EMMA
And, well, it was so real that I just had to share it with you.

DR. PAUSE
And you're sure you're feeling ok?

EMMA
Of course I am. You don't have patients wandering around coveting people's cakes!

DR. PAUSE
No, at least I hope I don't!

JESSICA
(Gesturing toward the kitchen.) Why don't we sit down and have some tea?

EMMA
No! No, I don't want to go in there...I, I mean I've been baking all morning, the kitchen's a mess. We don't want to be in there. Why don't we just zip down to the bakery?

JESSICA
You hate the bakery.

EMMA
No, I don't, I just prefer my own cooking. But it's good to get out sometimes. Fresh air, sunshine.
It's raining.

Well, all the better for a steaming cup o' Joe. Warm us right up!

Which we'll need since we'll be soaking.

I'm already soaking.

That's the spirit! It's settled then. We can't live our lives based on the weather!

(THEY exit to thunder as a phone rings. THOMAS enters downstage left at a drafting table, and picks up the phone.)

Hey, what's with that text? I was on-site with a client and you scared me half to death! Then I couldn't get a signal in that damn storm, and when I finally could you didn't pick up! What the....

(JESSICA, on a telephone headset, enters downstage right at a cubicle desk. She speaks in a loud whisper.)

Well, you weren't calling me back!

I'm at work!

Which I'm sure you were on time to, while I was over two hours late - on my late day!

Well, she wasn't abducted by aliens, and she didn't have a heart....

It was completely weird.

Well, she's not going to be any less weird later. Can we just...(Beat. He correctly senses JESSICA saying "no, this can't wait," and resigns himself.) Ok, what happened?
JESSICA
It was totally bizarre. I got there and she was holding a knife and all freaked out about some man being in the kitchen, but then she said she had been dreaming - except that she still had her coat on, and...I don't know, she wouldn't talk to me. She said her eyes were bothering her, went in her room, and then just laid there, staring at Dad's picture and refusing to go to the hospital. Dr. P showed up, she told him she was fine, and we went for coffee in that insane downpour.

THOMAS
At the offending bakery?

JESSICA
You got it.

THOMAS
Ok, that's weird.

JESSICA
Thank you.

THOMAS
And why did Dr. P....

JESSICA
Because before I got there she left him some weird messages that he was in her dreams, and you know Dr. P, he's all moon eyes. Probably loved every minute.

THOMAS
(Nodding.)
I'm sure she's fine. Edie will call, and I'll see you there tonight.

(THOMAS and JESSICA hang up and exit, as EMMA enters, crosses to the examining table, and sits. A few beats pass, and then an eye chart projects on screen.)

EMMA
(Resigned and squinting.)
Cataracts or bifocals?

DOCTOR
(Voice over, chuckling.)
Actually, both.

(THOMAS and JESSICA hang up and exit, as EMMA enters, crosses to the examining table, and sits. A few beats pass, and then an eye chart projects on screen.)

EMMA
But you haven't even examined me.
(We hear the sound of paper shuffling.)

DOCTOR
It says here that you're fifty, happy birthday.

EMMA
I'm forty-nine, don't rush me!

DOCTOR
Where are your glasses?

EMMA
I don't wear glasses.

DOCTOR
Well, you do now.

(Glasses fall from the ceiling. The kitchen phone rings. EMMA picks up the glasses, puts them on, and finds navigating in bifocals to be tricky as she crosses to the living room. She starts to, but does not enter the kitchen, and then begins to re-arrange the living room so that everything angles away from the kitchen. Eventually she speaks as though she has answered the phone, but it continues to ring.)

EMMA
I can't talk now. (Shoving furniture.) I'm fine, really. (Shoving furniture.) I'm just...I...I just need a few minutes. (Shoving furniture.) I promise.

(The ringing stops.)

EMMA
Thank you.

(EMMA shoves one last thing, and then stops re-arranging, leaving the room in complete disarray. She readies herself, and enters the kitchen.)

ZACHARY
Hi.

EMMA
I'm not speaking to you.
ZACHARY
Oh. Well, at least you can still hear me! Look, I know this is a bit shocking, I mean it is for me too, but I'm not a scary kind of ghost, at least I don't think I am. I'm not going to hurt you, I promise. I'm just stuck here. Useless and taking up space. Sort of.

(Several beats go by. The phone rings.)

EMMA
Not yet.

(The phone stops.)

ZACHARY
It's so weird how you two do that.

What kind of ghost are you?

ZACHARY
Oh, I...ah...I don't really know actually. But I'm nothing to worry about, I'm just...well, I'm here, and...and you have no idea how amazing it is to have someone to talk to! I've been so lonely, it's been ages....

EMMA
Listen, I can't really do whatever this is right now. I...I have a lot going on. I've got recipes to test, Christmas and a big New Years Eve birthday party to plan, sanity to keep.

ZACHARY
I know, I know, I won't bug you. It's just that I thought maybe we could, you know, be friends.

EMMA
No. Not if I don't hear you.

(EMMA turns music on, exits the kitchen, and continues re-arranging the furniture to be even more bizarrely angled.)

(The phone rings.)

EMMA (cont.)
Can't you tell I'm busy?

(She continues with the furniture. The phone rings again.)

EMMA (cont.)
And I would really rather not talk right now, I'm fine.
(The phone rings.)

EMMA (cont.)

Fine!

(EMMA enters the kitchen and answers the phone trying to sound casual. As she speaks, she prepares dinner, while not to looking at ZACHARY - who makes this increasingly difficult.)

EMMA

Hey. (Beat.) Well, he said I'm in menopause. Finished, dried up, and done, so you'll be next. Oh, I don't know (looking at the prescriptions), there's cream so I don't leak, pills so I don't sweat it, and lubrication in the increasingly unlikely event that your prayers for me are answered. (Laughs.) Yes, but as a bonus, no more children. (Laughs.) Oh, they're fine, they're fine, but I'm telling you, our mother lives on in my daughter. (Nodding.) More and more each...exactly. It's like she's channeling her. (ZACHARY advances on EMMA, who quickly retreats and shakes her head no.) Oh no, no. I mean she's completely embodied now. (ZACHARY silently pleads with EMMA, who raises a finger at him, while again shaking her head no.) Last weekend she asked for liver and onions! (Nodding.) And onions! (Nodding.) I know, I know, I'm telling you, she's possessed.

ZACHARY

Channeling, embodied, possessed? That the best you have?

(EMMA sneers at ZACHARY while backing away from him, forces a laugh into the phone, and exits the kitchen.)

ZACHARY

(Exceptionally loudly.)

Nice. Where's my haunted?

EMMA

(Exasperated, but still on the phone.)

Well, I'm making salad for this afternoon, and if she eats the avocado (loudly toward the kitchen), I am going to schedule an exorcism!

ZACHARY

( Exceptionally loudly.)

Ha! Now there's a good one. Go ahead, make my day!

(Increasingly stressed, EMMA gets as far away from the kitchen as her phone will allow.)
EMMA
Actually, I might just do it myself, much as Mother...I mean we loved her the first time, we don't need an encore. (Beat.) Oh, Tommy I don't worry about, that Steve's a better wife than you and I combined. But her. I just don't know about her. How she has the time to fuss at me endlessly...it has to be Mother. No other mortal man could....

ZACHARY
(Shouting.)
Mortal! Great, you're really rolling now. I'm bloody sick of this too you know - and I've been seeing you for a whole lot longer than you've been seeing me!

(Sound of cars arriving, EMMA startles.)

EMMA
They're here, I've got to go. Thanks. (Laughs.) Right. I'll send you my tampons.

ZACHARY
(Still shouting.)
You can't keep me a secret from her, I know you. Ask her if she's psychic!

(EMMA tears into the kitchen and slams the phone down.)

EMMA
Watch me!

(EMMA storms back out of the kitchen and into the living room, stops abruptly and turns back toward the kitchen.)

EMMA
(Shouting.)
And stop talking to me, you don't exist!

ZACHARY
(Shouting back as EMMA quickly shoves the remaining furniture around in a failed attempt to make things look more orderly.)
Fine. But we're going to have to talk eventually (shouting again), since I live here. (Under breath trying out phrases.) Or am dead here? Stuck here? Not living here? (Shouting again). Since I'm the living dead!

(Just as EMMA finishes with the furniture, JESSICA and THOMAS enter. JESSICA eyes the room suspiciously and hands EMMA a basket overflowing with avocados, which EMMA eyes suspiciously.)

EMMA and JESSICA
(Simultaneously, both stunned and suspicious.)

What's this?
JESSICA
Avocados from the market. Perfectly ripe. What are you doing?

EMMA
Avocados.

JESSICA
Mom, what's with the furniture?

EMMA
I...oh, I don't know...I lost the remote. What's with the avocados?

JESSICA
They're for dinner, you said we were having Mexican. Do you need help with....

EMMA
I've never seen so many avocados.

JESSICA
Well, we don't have to eat them all this minute. Why did you move everything?

EMMA
Good thing, because this is a lot of avocados.

(THOMAS picks up the remote and hands it to her.)

EMMA (cont.)
Oh! Thank you, Dear.

JESSICA
I thought you liked avocados?

EMMA
I do, I do. But do you?

JESSICA
What's wrong, Mom, you still seem a bit...odd.

EMMA
Do I?

JESSICA
Yes. And of course I like avocados. I've always liked avocados, that's why I brought them. We all like avocados.
EMMA

*(Attacking.)*

Never! You have never liked avocados. Not once in my nearly thirty years as your mother have I witnessed you eating so much as a single avocado.

JESSICA

*(Incredulously.)*

I'm telling you I like avocados!

EMMA

Since when? Since when do you like avocados? Call them "roundish green things" last I remember.

JESSICA

And that they are. Delicious roundish green things that I love. And if they're upsetting you, I'll put them in the car.

EMMA

Avocados do not upset me. You upset me.

JESSICA

By bringing avocados.

EMMA

*(Closing in on JESSICA.)*

Precisely! But I know what to do about it, make no mistake, I do.

*(EMMA repeatedly thrusts two fingers at JESSICA as though attempting to cast out a demon, then crosses to the kitchen to set the table. ZACHARY moves so as to be continuously in her way, but she avoids him.)*

JESSICA

I don't imagine she means we're making guacamole?

THOMAS

What?

JESSICA

What?!

THOMAS

Well, I don't know.

JESSICA

She's losing it.
THOMAS
She's just nervous about her birthday. Let's go eat.

JESSICA
Right, avocados.

(They cross to EMMA in the kitchen, who has finished setting the table and is now staring at ZACHARY'S back as he gazes out the window. THOMAS sits, which startles EMMA back into motion, and she begins to bring dishes of food to the table. JESSICA surveys the room, attempting to determine what EMMA had been looking at, pausing at the stacks of prescriptions, gladware, and finally, the window. Neither JESSICA nor THOMAS can see ZACHARY.)

JESSICA
Something out there?

EMMA
(Dishing food to THOMAS.)
No. (Sweetly to THOMAS.) Where's Steven?

THOMAS
He has a wedding tonight.

EMMA
(Already fixing a large gladware container.)
Well, we'll fix him a plate then shall we.

THOMAS
Mom, you don't....

EMMA
(Starting a second container.)
Nonsense, Dear, it's no bother.

THOMAS
(Eating.)
Thanks, Mom.

JESSICA
(Joining THOMAS at the table, but not eating.)
What did the doctor say?

EMMA
Not to have any more children.
JESSICA
And what's wrong with you?

(EMMA hands more dishes to THOMAS who continues to eat. ZACHARY moves to stand beside EMMA, which agitates her.)

EMMA
Why does there have to be something wrong with me? I'm fine.

ZACHARY
Liar.

JESSICA
No, you aren't. This morning you were complaining about your vision and your hearing, and your....

EMMA
Children.

JESSICA
Headaches, and hot flashes, and your inability to sleep through the night.

EMMA
I sleep just fine, thank you.

ZACHARY
Liar.

EMMA
(Desperately trying to ignore ZACHARY and handing yet another dish to THOMAS - the dishes now surround him.)

Here, Dear.

JESSICA
Right. Well, what did the doctor say?

ZACHARY
Nothing half as interesting as the truth.

JESSICA
(Reaching over to pick up the prescriptions.)

What are all these for?

EMMA
Old age.
ZACHARY
Liar! Liar! Liar! Your pants will catch....

EMMA
I am not lying! They're for old age (handing filled gladware to THOMAS), and that should be plenty enough for....

THOMAS
I didn't say you were lying.

JESSICA
Who said anything about lying? Why would you be lying? What are you....

EMMA
(To THOMAS.)
Of course you didn't, Dear.

JESSICA
Mom! Seriously, what's wrong?

ZACHARY
Your mother has entered menopause and developed super-natural powers!

EMMA
I told you, I have old age. Now, how are my grandchildren?

(ZACHARY throws his hands up in defeat, and returns to the window.)

JESSICA
Non-existent.

EMMA
Well! We'll have way too much food then, way too much, but there was a container sale....

JESSICA
I see that. Good bargain.

EMMA
Excellent.

JESSICA
Will you please just talk with Dr. P again tomorrow?

EMMA
Am I to be the sole topic of conversation again this evening, because I'd really rather....
JESSICA

Just say you'll speak with him, that's all.

EMMA

We had coffee this morning. You were there.

JESSICA

Yes, and we talked about you getting a referral.

EMMA

I don't need a referral, and I have spoken with Gabriel nearly every day for thirty-five years. I think he's had quite enough of....

(THOMAS fails to stifle a snicker, but continues to eat, while grinning and shaking his head very purposefully no. EMMA takes note of this but does not make eye contact with him.)

JESSICA

(Interrupting EMMA.)

Professionally. Will you speak with him professionally?

EMMA

(Interrupting JESSICA and whacking THOMAS on the head, whose grin becomes a smirk.)

I'm not a professional.

JESSICA

Do you have to be so entirely difficult?

EMMA

Do you have to be so entirely pestering? (Beat.) If I should feel the need for a psychiatrist I'll let you know after. (To THOMAS.) And what are you going on about anyway?

JESSICA

After?

THOMAS

Nothing. You know Dr. P likes you.

JESSICA

After?

EMMA

Yes, after! And if you would like a child I suggest you get on with having one. By the time I was....
JESSICA
I know! I know, we know already. You win, I give. (To THOMAS.) Lucky you're gay.

EMMA
Yes, well I don't see why that changes anything nowadays.

JESSICA
Amazing.

EMMA
I mean, the possibilities are nearly endless. It's remarkable really.

JESSICA
Mom! Will you please just tell us what happened at the doctors this morning?

EMMA
(To JESSICA.)
That was the briefest victory of all mankind.

JESSICA
(To EMMA.)
You are the most dramatic mother of all man....

EMMA
He said that I'm in menopause, gave me an army of prescriptions, and sent me on my way. Happy?

JESSICA
(Annoyed but relieved.)
Ecstatic.

ZACHARY
You've got to tell them about me, Emma. They're going to....

EMMA
(Rising quickly despite the fact that neither she nor JESSICA have eaten.)
Well, shall we go sit where it's more comfortable then?

THOMAS
(Rising.)
I'm stuffed. Excellent as always, Mom.

EMMA
Thank you, Dear.
(THOMAS starts to clear his plate, but EMMA stops him.)

EMMA (cont.)
Not to worry, let's leave this to the gremlins.

ZACHARY
Nice.

(EMMA and THOMAS exit to the living room.)

JESSICA
I'll just make myself a plate then.

EMMA
(Over her shoulder.)
Whatever you like, Dear.

(EMMA and THOMAS sit in the living room. JESSICA starts to serve herself some food, but is simultaneously reading the prescriptions. She spills food on herself, stands quickly, drops the spoon, and knocks into the table.)

EMMA (cont.)
(Calling out to the kitchen, alarmed.)
You ok? What was that?

JESSICA
(Brushing herself off and yelling back.)
Nothing. I'm fine, I'll be right there.

(Not convinced and nervous, EMMA rises, and crosses back to the kitchen. JESSICA gives up on eating, and begins to cross to the living room. They run into each other.)

JESSICA (cont.)
It's ok, Mom, I got it.

(JESSICA tries to show EMMA that she had just spilled food on herself, but EMMA has already blown past her without looking.)

EMMA
(Over her shoulder.)
I'll just put the water on for coffee then....
(EMMA enters the kitchen and heads straight for ZACHARY, who turns to her. They fight, flustering EMMA, who is assembling the coffee tray on auto-pilot. JESSICA and THOMAS speak in hushed voices.)

JESSICA

Do you see?

THOMAS

Not really.

JESSICA

Come on, Thomas, she's flipping.

THOMAS

(Rubbing his belly.)

She seems fine to me.

JESSICA

Then you can inherit the lifetime supply of Tupperware.

THOMAS

She'll use them.

JESSICA

Our great-grandchildren won't use them.

THOMAS

(Laughing.)

She'll be thrilled you're pregnant!

JESSICA

Don't you start. She doesn't need your help.

THOMAS

Who's your daddy? (JESSICA is not amused.) What? She's fine.

JESSICA

As Grandma Ester!

THOMAS

Grandma Ester was like...seventy before she became bi-polar.

JESSICA

And Mom's always been early.
THOMAS
Well, she doesn't seem like she's mentally ill to me. Menopause can be a time of difficult transitions, maybe you could....

JESSICA
Oh, how gay are you?

(Jessica whips out her cell phone and walks away from THOMAS in disgust. Lights switch to ZACHARY and EMMA whispering.)

ZACHARY
But I didn't do anything! I wasn't anywhere near her and I didn't say a word - and even if I had she wouldn't have heard me! You're completely overreacting!

EMMA
Get out!

ZACHARY
Oh, I see, it's all "blame it on the ghost" now. Anything that happens from here on out, it's going to be my fault, is that right? Well, how about this - I wish I could have touched her! I wish I could touch any....

EMMA
You stay away from my daughter!

ZACHARY
I don't have a choice!

EMMA
You're right about that, because, I'll...because I'll...I'll kill you!

(Beat.)

ZACHARY
Not quite the punch you were looking for?

EMMA
Just leave us alone!

(EMMA grabs the tray of coffee & dessert, and exits the kitchen.)

THOMAS
Excellent.
ZACHARY
(Yelling after EMMA.)
Love to, but you're the one who tore in here accusing me of....

(EMMA turns back to the kitchen, slamming the tray into the door, and entering.)

EMMA

Enough!

JESSICA
Mom? Do you need a hand?

(EMMA exits back to the living room with the tray.)

ZACHARY
(Still yelling.)
I suppose I sucked the sugar right out of Edie's cake? (Beat.) And that African violet, I willed it to die!

EMMA
(To THOMAS and JESSICA, while setting the tray down.)
You have to leave!

THOMAS
What are you talking about?

JESSICA
Enough what?

EMMA
(Gesturing for them to get up.)
Sugar. There's not enough sugar in Edie's cake, I have to re-do it.

JESSICA
Mom, your birthday is a month away, isn't that the point of making a test cake? So that you don't have to worry....

EMMA
And the time. I didn't realize how late it was and you both have work tomorrow, so off you go now.

THOMAS
It's Friday, it's the weekend.
JESSICA
Mom, seriously, what's wrong? You're not going to start a cake right now, it's too late.

THOMAS
And we just finished eating.

JESSICA
Some of us did.

EMMA
(Initially to THOMAS.)
I know, Dear, I know. And I'm very sorry, but we'll just have to save the coffee for another time.
I've got to sleep, and bake, and so do you. You've got great big buildings to create, and (to JESSICA) you've got...personnel to...do something with. And anyway, off you go. I'll just put this in the fridge, and the next time you come....

JESSICA
You're going to save the coffee?

EMMA
(To THOMAS, while shooing them towards the door.)
I'll make it up to you. Give my love to Steven. Oh, Steven!

(EMMA rushes into the kitchen.)

JESSICA
(To THOMAS.)
Please tell me that you see it now.

(EMMA grabs the meals she packed for THOMAS to take, returns, and hands them to him.)

THOMAS
Thanks, Mom.

EMMA
(Pushing them out the door.)
Oh, it's nothing. Now off you go. Bye, bye, my twins, I love you equal.

(JESSICA and THOMAS exit. EMMA closes the door behind them, grabs the tray of coffee, and storms back to the kitchen where ZACHARY is inhaling their meal.)

ZACHARY
Whoops! Caught again. (Beat.) What? There are worse habits.
EMMA

(Deadpan.)
Nothing good out the window?

ZACHARY

Probably, but I've had about all the fear facing I can take today.

(EMMA stares at him quizzically. He goes back to sniffing the plate.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
Time for some good old fashion comfort food. (Beat.) And you know, I don’t think you’re crazy at all.

EMMA

(Taking the plate out from under him and cleaning.)
Well, that's a real comfort. Now would you please get out of my way. I refuse to have another conversation with you.

ZACHARY

Don't look now.

EMMA

Yes, well, that's all I'm saying.

ZACHARY

(Playfully.)
I doubt it.

EMMA

And what is that supposed to....

ZACHARY

(Pleased with himself, he maneuvers so as to be more completely in her way.)
Only that as we live in the same house....

EMMA

We do not live in the same anything!

ZACHARY

Semantics or denial?

EMMA

No, you are not....
ZACHARY
Sadly, I am. And I've been here longer than you, so why don't we....

EMMA
*We* nothing! *No we, no you.* You are not real, and I will keep telling you that until you disappear.

ZACHARY
Yes, but you are a liar, and I don't listen.

EMMA
You don't exist.

ZACHARY
Then you're crazy.

EMMA
Not on your life!

ZACHARY *(Intentionally provoking her.)*
Just like your mother.

EMMA
Don't you dare speak about my mother!

ZACHARY
All right then, you explain me.

EMMA
You, are a figment of my imagination. I'm not sick, I'm not having hallucinations, and I am not in the throws of Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or dementia. I just need to get a life, that's all. Get out more, do things, be with people. Real people.

*(EMMA stops cleaning, grabs a newspaper off the counter, and begins flipping through it.)*

ZACHARY
Get a hobby.

EMMA
Exactly!

ZACHARY
Maybe take a class.
EMMA
Right.

ZACHARY
Uh-huh. (Beat.) You know, I think I've offered you a very fine, perfectly plausible explanation.

EMMA
Maybe basket making.

ZACHARY
Confirmed by your gynecologist, of changes in your....

EMMA
Or pottery.

ZACHARY
Or Psycho-neuro-immunology?

(Beat, as EMMA looks to him.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
(Grinning.)
Sorry, I thought you liked going to doctors.

EMMA
Please don't talk about my gynecologist.

ZACHARY
Right.

EMMA
(Fanning herself in the refrigerator.)
I mean, fifty is the new forty, which is the new thirty, which is practically in diapers.

ZACHARY
You'd rather wear a diaper than talk with me? I'm hurt.

EMMA
I'd rather you be gone!

ZACHARY
Right. Well, I'm afraid I can't help you there, it seems I'm cursed to spend all eternity in my humble little kitchen.

EMMA
My kitchen.
ZACHARY
Mine first, and thanks to watching you all these years, I’ve become a most excellent cook!

EMMA
Stop talking!

(ZACHARY begins to dance around the kitchen. EMMA resumes her work, side-stepping him with some difficulty.)

ZACHARY
Fine. Shall we dance then? How about some music? You’ve finally sold me on that Les....

EMMA
No, I most certainly will not, and we will not be doing anything.

ZACHARY
And how I miss dancing. In my day....

EMMA
(Finding it impossible to avoid him.)
Please!

ZACHARY
(Dancing, joyously.)
People danced, and oh it was wonderful!

EMMA
Stop, stop...stop it already, truce!

ZACHARY
(Stopping.)
Truce?

EMMA
Yes. I...I want to make a deal with you.

ZACHARY
(Exaggeratingly bowing.)
As my lady wishes.

EMMA
Yes, well....

(EMMA considers him for a moment.)
EMMA (cont.)
You stay out of my life, and I'll stay out of yours.

(EMMA brushes past him and continues to clean. ZACHARY resumes his dance.)

ZACHARY
Ah, no can do. Try again.

EMMA
Ok, ok, fine! Just don't pester me.

ZACHARY
(Still dancing.)
Define, "pester."

EMMA
You!

ZACHARY
(Still dancing.)
A shot to the heart, and thoroughly impossible, as I'm afraid I am very much stuck with me. (Noticing the poem.) But perhaps I could be Shakespeare for a while. (He stops dancing, and strikes a stereotypical and magnificently exaggerated oratory pose just beneath it.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
(Reading.)
"Come to the edge. It's too high."

EMMA
That's not Shakespeare, it's Christopher Logue. It says so right....

ZACHARY
(Still reading.)
"Come to the edge. We might fall."

EMMA
I know the poem already, it's hanging on my wall.

ZACHARY
(Still reading.)
"COMING THE EDGE!"
EMMA
Ok, enough!

ZACHARY
(Directly to her, softly.)
"And they came. And he pushed them. And they flew."

(A beat passes, and EMMA shakes her head no.)

EMMA
I can't.

ZACHARY
Come on, Emma, give me a chance....

(He resumes dancing.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
I'm not dying here. (Beat.) Get it?

EMMA
(Under her breath.)
Amusing.

(EMMA stops cleaning and turns to face him directly. He notices and stops dancing. They stare at one another for several beats.)

EMMA
Just...just give me some time, ok? If this is...I mean, if you're really...if...if I can really talk to...if I can...I mean...it's just, just all so...so....

(They stare at each other. Several beats go by.)

EMMA
I just need some time.

ZACHARY
(Soothingly and with a bow.)
You've got it.

(EMMA exits. ZACHARY begins to dance again.)

ZACHARY
Good night, Emma.

Black Out.
Scene 3

Lights up on DR. PAUSE, JESSICA, THOMAS, and EMMA, sitting around the kitchen table, which is covered with food. The gladware and prescriptions have disappeared, and ZACHARY is staring at the poem.

DR. PAUSE
Excellent as always, Emma, thank you.

EMMA
Not to worry, it's my pleasure.

DR. PAUSE
You're still the best cook in the county.

ZACHARY
You know, poetry might be my favorite art form, it's like magic on a page.

EMMA
Good lord! That was ages ago, I can't believe you even remember.

DR. PAUSE
There isn't a man alive who could forget your spaghetti pot pie.

ZACHARY
I must have read this thing a thousand times, and it's incredible how it changes.

THOMAS
I'm with Dr. P, Mom, you should enter state again.

EMMA
(Dismissively.)
Nonsense, I haven't cooked since you two were in diapers!

JESSICA
(Gesturing to the table.)
Hello.

EMMA
Oh, this wasn't anything.

DR. PAUSE
Well, your nothing is stupendous, especially since you've been feeling out of sorts lately.
(ZACHARY breaks away from the poem to join them, standing behind JESSICA, and staring hopefully at EMMA.)

EMMA
Let’s just cut to the chase, Gabriel. I’m not crazy.

ZACHARY
No, just stubborn and negating.

DR. PAUSE
No one has said you are.

EMMA
(Glaring at her children.)
Actually, several people have suggested it (THOMAS silently denies this), but I don’t pay them any mind.

DR. PAUSE
All right then, why do you think Jessica asked me to dinner?

EMMA
To confirm her suspicions, that I'm following in Mother's footsteps and losing what's left of my wits!

DR. PAUSE
 Seems to me you've still got a good bit.

ZACHARY
I like him.

EMMA
Well, that’s something then. (Offering DR. PAUSE a dish.) Another round?

DR. PAUSE
Stuffed to the gills, thank you.

EMMA
Then what’ll it be, Doc?

ZACHARY
How about the truth?

EMMA
We’ve known each other long enough, fire away.
DR. PAUSE

Do you know what day it is?

EMMA

My daughter’s last.

(ZACHARY laughs.)

DR. PAUSE

And do you know where you are?

EMMA

The Spanish Inquisition. Here in my very own kitchen. Imagine!

(ZACHARY)

Good one!

JESSICA

Mother, could you just....

EMMA

What would you have me say exactly! (To DR. PAUSE, but gesturing at JESSICA.) Why not ask her, we'll save a step.

JESSICA

I'm only trying to....

DR. PAUSE

I don't think that will be necessary, Emma, and I think you know that Jessica and Thomas love you very much. (He grasps EMMA’S hand, THOMAS nudges JESSICA playfully to notice this, annoying her because she already has.) We all do.

ZACHARY

(Loudly in agreement, but also possessively.)

Here, here!

EMMA

(Startled by ZACHARY.)

Gabriel, I....

DR. PAUSE

(Snapping to and quickly releasing her hand.)

Everyone here cares for you a great deal, we're all just concerned about your health and....
EMMA

(Intended for ZACHARY alone, but also received by JESSICA.)
My health would be better with less stress!

DR. PAUSE
Agreed. How about if we just enjoy ourselves and call a truce. No questioning, just a nice, neighborly meal.

EMMA

(To both ZACHARY and JESSICA.)
I'm not sure some of us are capable....

JESSICA and ZACHARY
Agreed.

EMMA
Well then, Gabriel, perhaps you'll join us more often, you seem to bring me good luck!
(Gesturing to the living room.) How about coffee?

DR. PAUSE

(Standing and running his hands over his stomach.)
I think I can manage room enough.

EMMA
Excellent. I'll just put the pot on and be right out.

(DR. PAUSE, THOMAS, and JESSICA exit to the living room. EMMA puts coffee on.)

ZACHARY

(Excitedly.)
This is the perfect time, Emma. They want to know, they're asking, it's a golden opportunity!

EMMA

(To herself.)
I'm not crazy.

ZACHARY

(Flatly.)
No, just persistently in denial.

(EMMA turns music on, and we hear Les Paul and Mary Ford's "Josephine," as EMMA exits to the living room.)
ZACHARY (cont.)
(Calling after her.)
Fine, but it's a sparkling good chance.

DR. PAUSE

That Les Paul?

JESSICA

Mom's possessed.

EMMA
(Joining THOMAS on the sofa.)
I am not!

ZACHARY
(Shouting from the kitchen.)
Engraved invitation!

JESSICA
Ok, ok, I just meant that you're a little obsessed with him, that's all.

EMMA

With who?

JESSICA
Les Paul, who did you think I....

EMMA

Well, I'm a fan.

DR. PAUSE

You know, I once saw him play at a little club....

EMMA
(Standing and heading back to the kitchen.)
I'll get it.

DR. PAUSE
(Confused.)
Get what?

(The phone rings.)

JESSICA and THOMAS
(Simultaneously.)

Edie.
(EMMA enters the kitchen, turns the music off, and picks up the phone. ZACHARY appears to be pleading with her.)

I'm surrounded by magic twins.

DR. PAUSE

More like circus freaks.

JESSICA

(Shaking head no.)

You two inherited a gift.

DR. PAUSE

THOMAS and JESSICA

(Simultaneously.)

Not exactly. (They look at each other.) [D]inx!

(THOMAS and JESSICA laugh, EMMA hangs up the phone, gathers the coffee, and exits with the tray. ZACHARY begins pacing while tugging at a loose thread on his uniform.)

Mom's the psychic of the family.

JESSICA

EMMA

(Returning with the coffee and seating herself as far from Dr. Pause as possible - who takes note of her choice.)

Got that right.

ZACHARY

(Yelling exasperatedly.)

Oh, come on! The door couldn't be wider!

DR. PAUSE

(Shifting to create obvious space for EMMA beside him.)

[D]inx?

JESSICA

Remember when we were young and Tommy had a little trouble with the "j" sound? He used to....

THOMAS

(To EMMA.)

How's Aunt Edie?
EMMA

(Pouring coffee.)
Older by a minute, but I'm....

THOMAS and JESSICA

(Simultaneously.)
Wiser by a mile.

EMMA

(Returning to the chair furthest from Dr. Pause, who again takes note of her choice.)
And she's coming in early for our birthday, so she'll be here for Christmas!

JESSICA

(Relieved - but not surprised.)
Excellent!

(ZACHARY returns to the window, still twisting the thread.)

THOMAS

Wasn't it supposed to be her turn to host this year?

EMMA

(Nodding.)
I think she needs a break from Mr. Snaggleypuss.

JESSICA

Who wouldn't, that cat's possessed! Why doesn't she just get rid of him.

THOMAS

If she would call him something normal he'd be better. That name's bad karma.

DR. PAUSE

(Accepting defeat and chuckling.)
Oh, Mr. Snaggleypuss isn't so bad, I've heard worse.

JESSICA

Really? You've heard worse than "Sir Snaggleypuss, Duke of Christmas?"

DR. PAUSE

Well, maybe not.

JESSICA

Mom refuses to call him, Sir.
EMMA

He doesn't deserve it!

(They laugh.)

DR. PAUSE

(Stretching up and standing.)

I'm sure it'll be great to have your sister back for a while, but it's getting late, and I should head out.

EMMA

Nonsense, we've barely finished eating.

DR. PAUSE

And quite well we did, thank you, but it's about that time. All those calories seem to have settled in my eyelids.

EMMA

No coffee then?

DR. PAUSE

No, I think I've had it for tonight. How about a rain check?

EMMA

Of course, you know you're always welcome.

DR. PAUSE

Delicious as always, Emma, thank you.

EMMA

My pleasure.

DR. PAUSE

Well, good night then.

(It's briefly awkward, before EMMA embraces, then releases him.)

EMMA

Good night, Gabriel, thanks for coming.

DR. PAUSE

It was my pleasure, Emma, good night.
EMMA heads for the kitchen with the coffee tray. THOMAS shakes Dr. PAUSE'S hand and then follows EMMA into the kitchen, where they begin to clean up. ZACHARY remains at the window, meditatively twisting his thread. JESSICA walks DR. PAUSE to the door.

DR. PAUSE (cont.)
Your mother seems fine to me, Jess, but I’m not with her all the time, and...well, perhaps I’m not the best to judge.

(DR. PAUSE hands JESSICA a business card.)

DR. PAUSE (cont.)
I spoke with a friend, Dr. Dove Cooley, who specializes in adult onset and geriatric psychiatry. They’ve only met casually a few times, and neither of us thinks there would be any conflict. He's got a brother-in-law who's a neurologist, Smith, I think, Smith Cooley. They'd be a good team if it turns out there's any need. Dove offered to see her before his rounds tomorrow morning if you want to....

JESSICA
If she’ll go.

(Thomas returns from the kitchen to join them.)

DR. PAUSE
She’ll go. She won’t admit it, but part of her wants to know if she’s dealing with a mental illness, too. And I’ll keep my eye on her, see if I can’t help out in the yard a bit more. His cell is there, just let him know.

JESSICA
Thanks, Dr. P.

DR. PAUSE
Don’t sweat it, she’s a tough one.

JESSICA
Share that with her, will you?

(DR. PAUSE and JESSICA embrace.)

DR. PAUSE
Good night, Jess.

JESSICA
Good night, thanks again.
(DR. PAUSE nods to THOMAS, and exits. JESSICA picks up the remaining cups and is heading for the kitchen when EMMA exits back to them.)

EMMA
(Taking the cups from JESSICA.)
Thank you, Dear, but I can manage it.

THOMAS
Mom, why don't you date?

EMMA
Because your father....

THOMAS
Died when we were eight, we remember.

EMMA
(Sweetly, with her hand on THOMAS'S face.)
Because he was the man for me.

(EMMA lets go of THOMAS, and gathers the remaining dishes.)

THOMAS
There's no shortage of men out there, trust me. If you don't like....

(JESSICA gets THOMAS to back off it.)

EMMA
I know full well there are men out there. They're everywhere, believe you me, I see them all the time. And to be honest, I'd mostly rather not. (Beat.) Now go on and get out of here (to THOMAS), you still need to drop your sister off. (Bringing them to the door.) I've got this mess, you two just get home safely.

JESSICA
Wait, Mom, I need you to do me a favor first.

THOMAS
Do us a favor.

EMMA
My sweethearts, I miss your father too, each and every day. And it's not that I don't miss having a man around the house, sometimes I do. But your father was the house. He was home.

JESSICA
No, no, Mom. That's not it.
THOMAS

We....

JESSICA

(Holding out the business card.)

We need you to see this psychiatrist tomorrow morning. He's a friend of Dr. P's, and....

EMMA

Oh, I see. It's a repetitive favor.

JESSICA

No, Mom, this is different. You know Dr. P, talking with him casually over dinner isn't the same thing as seeing someone professionally.

EMMA

Then why on earth did I just cook....

JESSICA

Just...please? He's going to fit you in tomorrow morning, and I promise that if you....

THOMAS

For us, Mom, ok? Do it for all of us.

EMMA

(Hugging and kissing them goodnight.)

Ok, ok.

JESSICA

Thank you.

EMMA

Good night.

Black Out.
ACT ONE
Scene 4

The next morning. EMMA, wearing an apron, is in the kitchen crying. A large pile of onions and potatoes sit un-cut on the table. JESSICA enters the living room.

JESSICA
(Shouting toward the kitchen.)
Mom, you ready? I told Dr. Dove we'd try to be a bit early.

EMMA
(To herself, overwhelmed and exhausted.)
No respite for the wicked! (Attempting to sound dry-eyed while shouting back to JESSICA.) Just a minute.

ZACHARY
This isn't a curse, you aren't wicked.

EMMA
(To herself, borrowing loosely from Shakespeare's King Lear.)
Ah, but which way does madness lie...I must know so I can shun it.

JESSICA
(Glancing through mail on a table by the door, and shouting back.)
Who are you talking to? Is Dr. P....

EMMA
(Gathering herself and shouting to JESSICA.)
No, no one, just...singing a dirge.

JESSICA
Singing? Singing what?

(EMMA crosses slowly toward the living room while still wearing the apron. She pauses at the door.)

ZACHARY
I believe in you.

EMMA
(While exiting the kitchen.)
Yes, but I don't.

(JESSICA looks up from the mail.)
What were you singing?

Nothing.

Were you crying?

It's the onions.

You're cooking already?

No.  *Seeing that JESSICA is staring at her apron.* I mean yes.  Yes, uh...dinner.  Getting ready for dinner tonight.

*(JESSICA glances towards the kitchen.  It's clear that she suspects there are no chopped onions.)*

For tonight?

*EMMA sees JESSICA'S glance, gets nervous that her lie will be exposed, and becomes a bit frantic.*

Yes, well obviously I thought that you and your brother might like to...oh, look at the time!  I'm glad you felt the need to come remind me, but I....

I'm taking you.  And where are your glasses?

*EMMA sees her purse and looking for something inside it.*

Off in the proverbial file.

You lost them?

*Finding her purse and looking for something inside it.*

No, I purposely misplaced them.  It's fine, I couldn't see through them anyway.
JESSICA
But you just got them, if the prescription isn't right, we can....

EMMA
(Dismissively, while putting her coat on.)
No, the hot flashes fog them up. It was like walking around with a rain forest on my face.

JESSICA
You could just dry them when it happens.

EMMA
I'd need wipers. Better that they're broken.

JESSICA
I thought they were lost.

EMMA
Right. Well, until they offer a de-fogging model, I'll take blurry.

JESSICA
You're still wearing your apron.

EMMA
(I'd need wipers. Better that they're broken.)

EMMA (cont.)
I felt like I was wandering around looking for monkeys.

JESSICA
Here, let me help....

EMMA
And macaws.

(They manage to free EMMA from her entanglement.)

EMMA (cont.)
I've got it. You go on now, I can get myself there perfectly well, not to worry.

JESSICA
Do you promise you'll....

EMMA
Do whatever it takes to get the two of you off my old and aching back?
EMMA and JESSICA  
(Simultaneously.)

Yes!

(There is a brief and silent stand off.)

JESSICA

You're sure you know where it is.

EMMA

I'm sure. Now go on, or I'll be late.

(JESSICA exits. EMMA closes the door, and crosses to the examining table, where an ink blot is projected on screen. She raises one end of the table so that it resembles a chaise lounge, and lays down. Time passes, and she grows increasingly anxious and fidgety. Eventually, the lights snap out, and a bright spotlight hits her face.)

EMMA (cont.)

(Using her arms to shield herself from the light.)

Whoa! Hey, what....

DOCTOR

Tell me about your mother.

EMMA

What?

DOCTOR

Your mother.

EMMA

What?

(Spotlight out on EMMA, and lights up on JESSICA, downstage right at a desk, and, THOMAS, downstage left at a drafting table. They are on their respective phones.)

JESSICA

I'm telling you, it was very supremely weird. She practically threw me out again, got all tangled up in an apron she forgot she was wearing, wouldn't let me go with her, and wants us back for dinner tonight.

THOMAS

Again?
JESSICA
Again. And I'm stopping by St. E's on the way, so we can go over their brochure after.

THOMAS
Don't you think a psych hospital is jumping the gun a bit?

JESSICA
They have an out patient program too, and did I mention the glasses that may, or may not, be lost, broken, or both? (Beat.) Or the singing, but not singing? Or the monkeys?

THOMAS
Singing monkeys?

JESSICA
And macaws. And I think she lied about cutting onions.

She what?

THOMAS

JESSICA
She looked like she'd been crying, but told me it was because she'd been chopping onions.

So?

THOMAS

JESSICA
So, I didn't smell any.

THOMAS

JESSICA
Well, maybe they're in the Tupperware.

Very funny. (Beat.) Look, Mom and Edie were completely off guard when Grandma got sick, and it was a disaster. We need to be prepared, and I want to read up on the options so we can talk with her about them before she's so far gone that she doesn't understand.

THOMAS
All I'm saying is that she seems ok-ish right now, so let's just hear what the psychiatrist has to say....

JESSICA
Like she'll tell us.

THOMAS
And see how she is. Maybe she'll be better. Besides, Edie will be here soon, and...
JESSICA
Amen for that! But three weeks is a long time, and between now and then we need to get organized. If she doesn't make a miraculous and full transition back to normal mom tonight, we need to confront her.

THOMAS
Again? Dr. P just....

JESSICA
Yes, again. And chatting with a neighbor who wants to sleep with her didn't stop the flying monkeys.

THOMAS
Singing monkeys.

JESSICA
Whatever, there were monkeys! We have a family history. We need a thorough evaluation, and St. E's can do it better and faster than running around to a million different specialists.

THOMAS
Ok, ok, fine.

JESSICA
We have to be ready, Tommy, just in case.

THOMAS
Right. You're right. I'll see you later.

(Spotlights out, as THOMAS and JESSICA hang up and exit. Lights come up on the kitchen, where EMMA is cooking.)

EMMA
(Relieved and happy.)
I can't believe I got myself all worked up over such foolishness! Therapists are the easiest people on earth to lie to!

ZACHARY
I don't think that's the point.

EMMA
Oh, right, I should have told him I'm seeing a ghoul in the kitchen and gotten myself locked up. Nothing doing.

ZACHARY
Hey! Watch who you're calling "ghoul."
(EMMA begins carrying plates to the living room.)

ZACHARY
(Calling after her.)
What are you doing?

EMMA
(Over her shoulder.)
Having dinner in the living room where you can't pester us!

ZACHARY
(Yelling.)
I'm starting to take this personally.

EMMA
(To herself, looking around at the room.)
I don't spend enough time in this room anyway, it's really quite lovely.

(EMMA returns to the kitchen to gather more items. ZACHARY watches her go back and forth a couple times.)

ZACHARY
You're not going to tell them then?

EMMA
Certainly not!

ZACHARY
Don't you think you're just postponing the inevitable?

EMMA
I hope not.

ZACHARY
Emma, I really think you should....

EMMA
Hush! I'm not interested in what you think this evening. I'm happy!

(EMMA turns music on, and we hear Les Paul and Mary Ford's "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," which EMMA sings and dances to while working. ZACHARY watches her for a while, and decides not to obstruct her mood.)
ZACHARY  
(Loudly, over the music.)
Can I at least have a book?

EMMA

What?

ZACHARY
A book. I'd love a book. (EMMA turns the music off and stares at him.) It can be anything, just something other than my poem to read. It's been ages.

EMMA
That I can do. Let's see....

(EMMA exits to the living room, grabs two books off a shelf and brings them back to the kitchen.)

ZACHARY

EMMA
Beggars can't be choosers.

ZACHARY
Maybe something else.

(EMMA exits back to the living room, grabs another couple books, and brings them to the kitchen.)

EMMA
How about these?

(EMMA holds up a cookbook, and Agatha Christie's "Mrs. Marple...")

ZACHARY
I'll take Mrs. Marple, and hope that Mrs. McGillicuddy saw something good.

(THOMAS and JESSICA enter the living room, and take their coats off.)

JESSICA
(Shouting toward the kitchen.)

Mom?

(EMMA opens the book for ZACHARY and sets it on the table.)
ZACHARY

Thank you.

EMMA

(Shouting back.)

Be right out.

JESSICA

(Shouting.)

Are we eating in the living room?

EMMA

(Shouting.)

Yes, what do you think?

JESSICA

(Under her breath, sadly.)

I think you're losing your mind.

EMMA

What?

JESSICA

(Shouting.)

Nothing, it looks great.

EMMA

(Shouting.)

Singing? Oh yes, I was.

(JESSICA looks to THOMAS.)

THOMAS

(Shouting.)

Can I help with anything?

(EMMA enters with an over the top enormous roast.)

EMMA

Oh, I think I've got it now, thank you, Dear. If you could just make sure I get it on the table.

THOMAS

(Helping her.)

Wow.
JESSICA
I'll say. How did it go with the psychiatrist?

EMMA  
(Sharpening the carving knife.)
Dr. Dove? Oh, all fine. Just need to watch my stress levels.

JESSICA
Nothing else? He didn't...I mean, you did talk to him, right?

EMMA
Of course I did!

(EMMA begins savagely carving the meat.)

JESSICA
Well, what did he....

EMMA
He asked me about Mother, and I told him she was dead. That was about it, really. Told me to say hi to Gabriel.

(EMMA flips a chunk of meat on THOMAS'S plate.)

EMMA (cont.)
Dig in!

THOMAS  
(Hesitantly.)
Thank you.

(EMMA flips a smaller chunk of meat on JESSICA'S plate.)

JESSICA
Thanks.

EMMA
Go ahead and dish up, I've got a minute on the oven.

(EMMA exits back to the kitchen and checks the oven. JESSICA looks to THOMAS.)

THOMAS
Edie.
JESSICA

Not soon enough.

ZACHARY

You know, on the whole, I think avoidance isn't your best option.

EMMA

Book not doing it for you then.

(EMMA turns the page for him, and crosses back to the living room, carrying salt and pepper.)

ZACHARY

(Calling after her.)

Ever consider that they might be happy to hear about me? I mean at least you're not off your rocker.

(EMMA turns back to the kitchen without putting the shakers down.)

EMMA

Please don't do this now.

ZACHARY

Do what?

EMMA

Just read your book, ok? Please. (Singing "Please Mr. Postman," by the Marvelettes to cover up her speech.) Mr. Postman, look and see... (Crossing to the living room and continuing to sing.) Is there a letter, a letter for me...

ZACHARY

(Calling after her.)

Nice.

(EMMA puts the shakers down and surveys the table.)

THOMAS

Well, you sound happy.

EMMA

I am, thank you.

JESSICA

Why don't you sit down and eat with us.
EMMA
You go ahead. I'm just watching the cobbler.

THOMAS
You made cobbler?

EMMA
I did indeed! Peach.

THOMAS
My favorite.

EMMA
With blueberries.

THOMAS
Excellent!

ZACHARY
(Calling out loudly.)
Page please. I mean, since you're watching the cobbler.

EMMA
(Entering the kitchen, and speaking under her breath.)
Oh shush, they'll hear you!

(EMMA flips the page for ZACHARY and heads to the oven.)

ZACHARY
(Singing loudly.)
No, they won't, they absolutely won't. (Stopping singing.) Oh, but you can. You finally, amazingly, can! You can hear me, see me, talk with me, it's....

EMMA
Shhh! (Under her breath.) Enough! (Singing.) Shhhhestnuts roasting by an open fire....

ZACHARY
(Laughing.)
Good one. But, you really do need to tell them about me, and...I think I'm determined to help.

EMMA
(Messing with the cobbler.)
Don't you tell me what I need! I'm the queen of the hard-headed harpies! What I need is for this cobbler to....

(ZACHARY tries to get EMMA to look at him.)
EMMA (cont.)

Behave!

ZACHARY

(Seriously.)

No. You are a miracle.

EMMA

A miracle! Ha! (Singing from "It's a miracle" by Culture Club) It's a miracle, it's a mir-a-cle, it's a miracle...

ZACHARY

No, really. Before you...

EMMA

I don't believe for two seconds that you...(Singing from "You are the sunshine of my life," by Stevie Wonder.) ...are the sunshine of my life.

ZACHARY

(Laughing.)

Thank you. I'm rather fond of you as well.

EMMA

Oh, hush!

(EMMA crosses to the living room, carrying the cobbler.)

EMMA (cont.)

(Singing the mockingbird lullaby.)

...Little babies, don't say a word, Momma's going to buy you a...(Speaking normally and setting the cobbler down.) There we are. Now I'll just get the coffee rolling, and we'll be all set.

JESSICA

Mom, are you blushing?

EMMA

Don't be silly. Of course I'm not.

JESSICA

Your cheeks are red.

EMMA

(Over her shoulder heading back to the kitchen.)

The oven's hot!
JESSICA
(Sadly, but resigned.)
You need help.

EMMA
Not at all, I'll be right there.

(As EMMA enters the kitchen, JESSICA and THOMAS speak in loud whispers.)

JESSICA
Do you see? She’s not living in reality, Tommy. She’s living in fa la la land.

She seems happy.

THOMAS
Happy?! She's singing greatest hits of the sixties, seventies, and eighties!

(Trying to listen, JESSICA begins sneaking back and forth between THOMAS and the kitchen door in an comical, exaggerated manner.)

THOMAS
So you want to lock her up for having a good memory?

JESSICA
With Christmas carols! And I don't want to lock her up!

So?

THOMAS
So she's on random shuffle!

So?

JESSICA
And she won't sit down with us. (Beat.) Why don't you just admit that you're afraid?

THOMAS
Fine. I am. I don't want to send my mother to the loony bin!

JESSICA
That's not what I mean and you know it!
THOMAS
Know what? What are you talking about?

JESSICA
You're afraid that it's genetic and that we'll go crazy too.

THOMAS
(Watching her continue to perform an awkward sneaky hop between himself and the kitchen door.)
Why would I ever think you're crazy?

JESSICA
Stop joking, this is serious!

THOMAS
Inherited pathologies aren't guaranteed to manifest, and....

JESSICA
Well, aren't you just Dr. Phil!

THOMAS
(Unfazed.)
And genetic tendencies are not fate.

JESSICA
(At the kitchen door.)
Well, her fate is going to be (singing), signed, sealed, and delivered if she doesn't snap to.

(There is a loud crash in the kitchen. ZACHARY has caused EMMA to drop something. JESSICA jumps, and looks to THOMAS.)

EMMA
(Shouting.)
All fine, no worries!

ZACHARY
(Shouting.)
Fine? I'm better than fine, I'm fantastic.

THOMAS
(Shouting.)
Save the pieces!

JESSICA
(Hopping away from the kitchen, glaring at THOMAS, and shouting.)
Do you need any help?
EMMA

(Shouting.)
No, thank you, Dear. (Quietly to ZACHARY.) Would you please not shout!

ZACHARY

(Shouting.)
I thought we were all shouting!

EMMA

Well, I can hear you well enough!

ZACHARY

That's the miracle, Emma! That's it! I haven't had a conversation in fifty years. Fifty years until you.

(He resumes dancing about the kitchen.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
You are a miracle! You're a lifesaver!

EMMA

Ha! Seems I'm a bit late.

ZACHARY

(Smiling.)
Well, maybe not in the precise definit....

EMMA

(Singing "It's too late," by Carole King.)
Well, it's too late, baby, now it's too late....

ZACHARY

(Joing her singing.)
But we really could try to make it...you're still alive, and....

JESSICA

(Loudly, not bothering to lower her voice.)
Too late indeed. That's it!

(JESSICA takes out the St. E's hospital brochure and attempts to hand it to THOMAS. He refuses it, and they speak in very loud whispers.)

THOMAS

Not right now, no!
JESSICA
Come on, Tommy, you're hearing her as well as I am. She won't talk to us about the psychiatrist, and clearly she's losing it! We've got to step in while she's still functional and get her a full evaluation. The sooner we figure out what drugs she needs, the better it's gonna be. For all of us.

(Several moments pass, and they continue to hear odd noises from the kitchen. ZACHARY is attempting to dance with EMMA, who is still cleaning up the spill, and now has a case of the giggles. After EMMA drops something else and bursts out laughing, the dialog continues.)

JESSICA (cont.)
Well?

(Giving no audible response, THOMAS begins to nod slowly.)

JESSICA (cont.)
Good. Then here, look it over and I'll go get her.

(THOMAS takes the brochure, and JESSICA heads to the kitchen, pausing to listen once more outside its door.)

EMMA
(Laughing at ZACHARY'S antics.)
Will you please stop!

ZACHARY
(Singing "I Can See Clearly Now," by Johnny Nash.)
I can see clearly now that Emma's come. I can see all....

EMMA
I'll give you obstacles! Now shush!

ZACHARY
(Continuing to sing loudly.)
Gone are the dark clouds....

(JESSICA enters the kitchen, Startling both EMMA, who freezes as though guilty, and ZACHARY, who begins laughing hysterically.)

JESSICA
Everything ok in here? What's taking you so....

EMMA
(Attempting, with only moderate success, to compose herself.)
All fine, just cleaning up the spill. Did you need something?
JESSICA
No, I was wondering when you were going to join us.

EMMA
Well, coffee's coming. I'll be right there, go ahead and keep your brother company.

(JESSICA watches EMMA for a few moments, lowers her face, and exits back to THOMAS. They sit silently until EMMA returns, THOMAS staring blankly at the brochure.)

EMMA
(Entering with coffee.)
Here we are then. Who's for coffee?

JESSICA
(Gently.)
Mom, we have to talk with you.

EMMA
Did you want coffee, Dear?

JESSICA
No. No, Mom, please, this is hard enough.

EMMA
What is?

JESSICA
We want you to be evaluated at St. Elizabeth's.

ZACHARY
(Rushing to the door.)
Oh, no. Not that place. You tell them, Emma! Tell them right now!

EMMA
Well, what on earth for? I just went to see Dr. Dove this morning.

JESSICA
(Gently.)
I know, I know you did. But something's wrong, and...maybe it's one of those things that just takes time to see.

(EMMA looks to THOMAS and sees that he's holding the brochure.)
THOMAS

(Gently.)
You don't really seem like yourself.

(EMMA completely deflates. ZACHARY begins tugging on his thread and pacing frantically.)

EMMA
I'm fine. (Beat.) I made your cobbler.

ZACHARY
Please, Emma! Your mother never came out of that place! I was here, I heard the whole thing. (Under breath.) Don't let them take you from me.

EMMA
I just got a clean bill of health this morning.

JESSICA
It's different now. They have a voluntary program, and you wouldn't have to....

ZACHARY
Please don't let them take you from me.

EMMA
(Flustered.)
Look, I'm getting old, I'm in menopause, I'm forgetful. You know, they say the mind is the first to....

JESSICA
No, Mom, it's more than being forgetful, and it seems to be getting....

EMMA
I...I cooked all day, I'm not hungry.

JESSICA
You aren't yourself.

EMMA
(Beginning to regain strength.)
Well, who do you think I am?

JESSICA
(Taking the brochure from THOMAS and attempting to hand it to her.)
I don't know, but I think they can help us find out.
EMMA

(Getting up and not taking it.)

No. No way. Not there. I'll tell you what, after my neurology appointment....

JESSICA

You have a neurology appointment?

EMMA

Dr. Dove suggested a consult, just as a precaution, and an MRI.

JESSICA

Why didn't you tell us? When is it?

EMMA

I was planning on telling you after.

(Lights out, and spotlight up on the examining table. EMMA walks over, and lays down with the top of her head to the audience. We see a close up of her face projected on screen, and intermittently we hear the noise of an MRI machine. EMMA is wearing headphones, which cause her to shout.)

DOCTOR

(Voice over.)

Comfortable?

EMMA

Not made to sleep on are they?

DOCTOR

Good.

EMMA

But I'm snug as a bug.

DOCTOR

You hear a buzz?

EMMA

No, no, I said a bug. Snug as a....

DOCTOR

It's a normal sound, don't worry. The headphones will cover most of it. Ok, now relax. (EMMA attempts to get comfortable.) But don't move.
What?

(An uncomfortable amount of time goes by and EMMA becomes anxious. She calms herself by breathing deeply in and out for some time before speaking.)

Hello? Anybody out there?

Take a deep breath.

(She inhales and exhales deeply.)

And hold it.

(She quickly inhales again and holds it. The noise winds up.)

(Holding her breath, but shouting.)

It's a bit on the noisy side, isn't it.

(The noise abruptly stops.)

No talking.

(The noise winds up.)

And take a deep breath.

(Forcibly exhaling.)

Hang on, I've still got the last one.

And hold it.

Wait, wait, I'm not breathing.

Black Out.
ACT ONE
Scene 5

Lights up as EMMA enters the house, throws her things down, stomps to the kitchen, and barrels through the door.

ZACHARY
Went well then?

EMMA
Swell.

ZACHARY
You know, maybe it's the doctors who are making you....

EMMA
Will you please, please, just leave me...this isn't working...I can't....

You aren't sick.

ZACHARY
No, no, I'm just delusional. (Beat.) And a very fine breather!

EMMA
I'm not an delusion, Emma, and you know it. I know you do. It's time to tell them.

EMMA
What you are, is a ticket to the loony bin. And I've seen it before, and I am not going!

ZACHARY
Good! But don't you think you should at least give the truth a try? They love you. If you could just be yourself, be...comfortable with this, comfortable with me, then maybe they would be.

EMMA
Just be myself.

ZACHARY
Yes.

EMMA
Comfortable.

ZACHARY
Yes.
EMMA

Talking to a dead man.

ZACHARY

People do it every day.

EMMA

Yes, but the dead don't talk back now do they?

ZACHARY

They listen.

EMMA

They listen! Oh that's rich.

ZACHARY

It's a skill.

EMMA

You don't know my daughter, this is anything but comfortable. And I distinctly remember you telling me that you don't listen, which if I remember correctly was actually comforting at the time.

ZACHARY

I do know Jessica, I know her quite well actually, her and Thomas both. I know the scar on her right knee from the tricycle mishap, and how petrified he was to tell you that he's gay.

EMMA

I don't care that he's gay, I care that he's happy.

ZACHARY

I know, and I know he wanted nothing more than to follow in his father's footsteps, and to serve his country proudly.

EMMA

Yes, well I always wanted him, even when his country didn't.

ZACHARY

And that none of you slept for weeks after Elliot passed.

EMMA

He was a great man. The love of my life, and a terrific father.

ZACHARY

Yes, he was.
EMMA
But an even better husband.

ZACHARY
Middle of the night campfires, twins hopped up on s'mores and circle stories...you were lovely
with them, and they never knew how completely devastated you were.

EMMA
Yes, well, the thought of you spying on my family for all our lives isn't exactly comforting. To
think that you witnessed....

ZACHARY
I had no choice.

EMMA
You could have chosen not to look.

ZACHARY
Try being locked in a kitchen for fifty years.

EMMA
How do you think they're going to feel, when I tell them that we've been watched like some kind
of real life reality show?

ZACHARY
Fifty years unable to eat! Most of them with you winning ribbons in the kitchen.

(SEVERAL BEATS GO BY.)

ZACHARY (CONT.)
They're worried about you, Emma. And you're going to have to tell them, there's nothing else to
do. Just try. Try telling them the truth.

EMMA
Back to that again.

ZACHARY
Yes.

EMMA
Tell them I have an imaginary friend?

ZACHARY
I'm not imaginary, but I'm very pleased to be your friend.
EMMA
Tell them I keep a man in the kitchen? Tell them that I've been living with someone they've never met - for decades? Tell them that they used to? That all of a sudden I've got some kind of psychic power? That I'm now some kind of medium? Tell them what exactly? What, precisely, would you have me....

ZACHARY
Yes.

EMMA
Yes? Yes what?

ZACHARY
Yes to all of it. Except that you don't keep me here. But, yes, you are a medium. Yes, I'm confined to the kitchen. Yes.

EMMA
And then what?

ZACHARY
See what they say.

EMMA
Right! Good plan. I'll tell you what she'll say alright. I might as well pack.

ZACHARY
Don't be so certain. They're very smart. Why not have them quiz me.

EMMA
Quiz you?

ZACHARY
I can answer any question they can ask.

EMMA
Oh, I see, it's a little game of Q and A you're after. Well, fine then, I'll play. What keeps you here? Why are you stuck in my kitchen?

ZACHARY
Well, I....

EMMA
And why can I all of a sudden hear you?

ZACHARY
I....
EMMA

And see you?

ZACHARY

I....

EMMA

When can no one else?

ZACHARY

I....

EMMA

I, I, I... I'm overflowing with confidence! Questions are an excellent plan, just great. Don't you think they're going to want to know why? How are they going to believe me, when half the time I don't even believe myself.

ZACHARY

Ok, so there are some things I can't completely explain, but I....

EMMA

Like just a few of the more crucial elements.

(She stands and mimes talking to her children.)

EMMA (cont.)

Yes, well he's stuck in the kitchen because...because he likes a good stew!

(She glares at him and sits.)

EMMA (cont.)

They can't even see you.

ZACHARY

Please, Emma, I've only just met you really. I don't want to lose you, and you are not your mother, you're perfectly sane. Don't let them convince you otherwise.

(Several beats go by, and EMMA becomes resigned.)

EMMA

(Commanding.)

Right. You're right. I'm fine. Just newly gifted maybe. (ZACHARY nods.) But if I'm going to throw myself to the wolves, you had best stop hovering all over the bloody....

ZACHARY

I will.
EMMA
And you had better stay out of my....

ZACHARY
I will.

EMMA
And don't you say so much as a single word until after I've....

ZACHARY
I won't.

EMMA
Not one word! Don't even think about it. And we'll just hope they'll believe me. (Beat.) Well, get out of the way, I need to start cooking.

ZACHARY
(Incredulously.)
Now?

EMMA
(Getting out a large pan.)
Of course now, this one calls for the iron skillet!

Black Out.
ACT ONE
Scene 6

EMMA is cooking as ZACHARY watches. There is food everywhere. Emma picks up the phone and calls THOMAS who enters with a phone downstage left.

EMMA
Good morning, Dear, would you rouse your sister and head this way, I have breakfast, and news!

THOMAS
Can’t make it this morning, Mom, I’m in the middle of....

EMMA
You absolutely can make it, and you will, in one hour. I’m making the hollandaise, now fix it up and I’ll see you shortly.

(EMMA hangs up, and continues cooking)

THOMAS
You want me to bring Jessica? Mom? I thought we were going to see you tomorrow night like usual? Mom, are you there? Mom?

(THOMAS hangs up the phone, stares at it for a moment, and then calls JESSICA, who enters with a phone downstage right.)

JESSICA
What happened?

THOMAS
Good Morn....

JESSICA
What happened?

THOMAS
She wants us over there for breakfast in an hour.

JESSICA
Us?

THOMAS
That’s what she said. She’s making the hollandaise.
Shit.

And she hung up on me.

Hmm.

Hello? She hung up on me.

Shit.

Yes. Pick you up in forty-five?

No, I’ll meet you. Don’t set foot in there without me.

I know, I know already.

Yeah, now agree.

Right. I’ll see you there.

Good.

Bye.

(They hang up and exit. Lights brighten on the kitchen, where ZACHARY continues to watch EMMA prepare the meal, being careful to stay out of her way.)

EMMA
Maybe they’ll just be pleased I’m all right. (Beat.) Yes, I think so, I mean they should be. Or at least relieved. (Beat.) Not that I care if they are. (Beat.) I mean, it's my life and I'm certainly entitled to talk to whomever I...oh, damn! (Beat.) There. Well, there's nothing more to do really. Nothing.
EMMA

Good morning, Dears.

(EMMA hugs THOMAS and sits him down at the table. She then simultaneously hugs and moves JESSICA out of her way, grabs the skillet, and turns back to THOMAS.)

EMMA

(Dishing out food to THOMAS, who still has his coat on.)

How was your morning?

JESSICA

(Sitting.)

It hasn't started yet. Why are we here, Mom?

EMMA

(Still dishing food to THOMAS.)

Enough, Dear? You look starved.

JESSICA

Is there something you....

EMMA

All right! You then, plate up already.

JESSICA

(Holding her plate up.)

What's going on?

(EMMA is about to serve Jessica, but suddenly stops, remembering something.)

EMMA

Fruit!

(EMMA has put nothing on JESSICA’S plate, and walks away with the skillet.)

JESSICA

Fruit.
EMMA
You see that, even when you're quiet you've got me all distracted.

(ZACHARY bows, as EMMA puts the skillet back on the stove, and gets the fruit.)

JESSICA
You who? Who's distracting you? What....

EMMA
(Dishing an immense quantity of fruit to THOMAS.)
Here you are, Dear.

THOMAS
Mom, is there something you want to share with us?

JESSICA
(Still holding her empty plate.)
Fruit.

EMMA
Well, yes. Because I know I've seemed a bit odd of late, but....

JESSICA
We noticed.

EMMA
I want you to know I've got a handle on the whole thing, and I just need a little help and we'll all be fine.

JESSICA
You want our help now? You're willing to try St. E's....

EMMA
No, no, definitely not. What I want is for you to, to trust, well, to accept, really....

You want our acceptance?

EMMA
It's a leap of faith, that's all it is. A leap of faith in your poor old Mom. You can do that for me, can't you? You can just take me at my word? Because I'm not crazy, and I need the two of you to agree, all right? You trust me, don't you?

THOMAS
Of course we trust...
EMMA
Good, excellent. You see, I knew I could count on you. Nothing to be worried about.

THOMAS
Mom, why don't you sit and tell us....

EMMA
We'll all be fine.

JESSICA
You want our trust?

EMMA
Exactly.

JESSICA
That's the help you want? Acceptance and trust?

EMMA
That's it.

THOMAS
Well, of course we accept you, you're our....

JESSICA
Acceptance and trust of what exactly?

EMMA
No, no, not me, Dear, my new...friend.

JESSICA
Your new friend?

EMMA
Yes.

JESSICA
What friend?

EMMA
Well, a male friend actually. A rather unique....

JESSICA
You have a boyfriend?
THOMAS
You're dating?

EMMA
Well, no, that's not what....

JESSICA
Then what exactly?

THOMAS and JESSICA
(Simultaneously.)
What's his name?

EMMA
Zachary.

THOMAS
Zachary?

EMMA
Yes.

THOMAS
Zachary who?

EMMA
Zachary Poolesville.

THOMAS
And how long have you been....

EMMA
Oh, for a while now....

JESSICA
Were you ever planning to tell us? I mean where did you....

EMMA
Well, you see, the thing is, we've been living together for some time now, quite a long time actually, and....

JESSICA
(Abruptly standing.)
You've got some man living here and we've never even heard of him? What are you....
EMMA
Now, you see, that's precisely the attitude I was hoping to avoid!

JESSICA
Attitude? You're living some kind of...of secret double life, and you're worried about my attitude? Where is he?

THOMAS and JESSICA
I want to meet him right now!

EMMA
He's here.

JESSICA
Where?

EMMA
Here. Right here, beside me.

JESSICA
What...what are you talking about, Mom? There's no one else here.

EMMA
Yes, there is. His name is Zachary, and....

THOMAS
Mom, what are you....

EMMA
He's invisible. Well, not to me he isn't, and...well, that's why I need your help.

JESSICA
You have an invisible friend named Zachary?

EMMA
Precisely! And I just need the two of you to accept....

JESSICA
Who is standing right beside you?

EMMA
Yes, and....

JESSICA
You want us to accept him....
EMMA
As a part of my life. Of our lives. Of our family.

JESSICA
So you're admitting you need help?

EMMA
Yes, well, sort of.

JESSICA
And you want us to help you?

EMMA
Yes, because it's not about all those fool doctors. They don't know there's nothing wrong with me.

JESSICA
Got that right.

EMMA
I mean, I know mental illness, and this is not it.

JESSICA
Mom, I think that having an imaginary friend at your age....

EMMA
Zachary is not imaginary, and don't you talk about my age. He's here, he's real.

JESSICA
As the velveteen bunny.

THOMAS
Rabbit.

EMMA
No, no! I mean (to ZACHARY), how do you explain something that can't be seen?

JESSICA
Try me.

ZACHARY
You're doing great, go on, you've got it.

THOMAS
I thought you said you could see him, this...Zachary?
EMMA
Yes, well of course I can. It's just that you, well, you....

JESSICA
Go on.

EMMA
You have to have faith.

JESSICA
Oh, I've got faith.

EMMA
It's just so improbable....

JESSICA
I'll say.

EMMA
So....

(EMMA trails off, staring at ZACHARY who gazes back. There is a long pause.)

ZACHARY
Need a push?

JESSICA
(Getting out her cell phone, glancing at THOMAS, and dialing.)

So? So what?

EMMA
(Still looking at ZACHARY, smiling.)

It's a miracle really.

JESSICA
A miracle.

EMMA
Yes.

JESSICA
(On the phone.)

And what miracle would this be exactly?
EMMA

I see ghosts.

Curtain

(Curtain song = Les Paul and Mary Ford's "Auctioneer I'll Buy That Dream.")
Act Two
Scene 1

BEFORE RISE: The final song of intermission is "Nuevo Laredo," as performed by Les Paul and Mary Ford. The curtain rises as the song plays, and we see ZACHARY attempting to entertain EMMA by dancing. Slow lights up, as the song transitions into Les Paul and Mary Ford's, "Tiger Rag." As ZACHARY dances, EMMA sits at the kitchen table, staring at a cup of tea. Though she has reserved a small area for eating, there are stacks of books on every surface, and many lie open. As lights reach full, ZACHARY chimes in with the song, hoping to cheer EMMA up.

ZACHARY
Meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow.

EMMA
Not comforting.  (Switching the radio off.) They're going to be here any minute.

It's going to be ok.

EMMA
Because you say so?

ZACHARY
Because it is.

EMMA
Wisdom from the grave only worked for Shakespeare.

Well, I'm not in the grave.

EMMA
Therein lies the problem.

ZACHARY
(Exaggeratedly waltzing.) Thereout waltzes the gallant knight!
(ZACHARY trips up, and EMMA laughs.)

EMMA

The jester revealed!

(THOMAS enters the living room with JESSICA, who is on the phone. As they cross to the kitchen, THOMAS gestures and stares at her, but she hangs up without comment and they enter the kitchen, where they are startled by all the open books. They exchange a look.)

JESSICA

Ready?

EMMA

No.

THOMAS

Mom, it's just a few tests, I promise. We need to figure this out.

EMMA

I've done the tests, and I've told you well enough what's happening. You just need to believe me.

JESSICA

We'll believe you when we're certain it's nothing real.

EMMA

You mean when you have no other choice.

(EMMA, THOMAS, and JESSICA, cross to the examining room. ZACHARY attempts to sound calm as he calls after them, but begins pacing and wrestling with the thread on his uniform.)

ZACHARY

It's going to be fine.

(DR. COOLEY enters and acknowledges THOMAS and JESSICA before turning to EMMA who has seated herself away from the examining table.)

DR. COOLEY

Good morning, Emma. Can you tell me your full name today?

EMMA

You seem to know it well enough.
DR. COOLEY
Could you tell me anyway?

EMMA
You didn’t say please.

JESSICA
Mother, you aren’t playing well with others....

EMMA
I’m sorry, Dear, I didn’t realize this was a game. In that case I’ve had enough.

(EMMA stands to leave.)

DR. COOLEY
(Reaching out to stop EMMA.)
Not yet, Mrs. Parker, we’d like to run a few tests. Just to check things out.

EMMA
Things?

DR. COOLEY
Is that all right?

EMMA
What more am I to have lost besides my mind?

DR. COOLEY
Do you think you’ve lost your mind?

EMMA
I still recognize my children.

JESSICA
Nice, Mother.

EMMA
They seem to be hanging on a bit.

DR. COOLEY
How about if you accompany me down the hall?

EMMA
Do I have a choice?
DR. COOLEY

We'll only be a few minutes.

EMMA

Why is it that one is always led down and never up? It's always down. *(With Shakespearean flair.)* Down, into the darkness of the grave...but I do not approve. It's to the depths of hell I go.

DR. COOLEY

This way.

EMMA

And once more into the breach!

*(EMMA exits with DR. COOLEY.)*

THOMAS

Well, what did Edie say?

JESSICA

Something about Mom sending her tampons.

What?

JESSICA

I don't know, you know how she is, it's hard to tell. She laughed and asked me if I'd been to any good exorcisms lately.

THOMAS

Great.

JESSICA

No, it's fine. I mean, she's the best we've got.

And you're sure she's on our side of....

THOMAS

No.

JESSICA

Right.

THOMAS

But I think so. And between now and then, Mom will have us busy with the list, so we'll have the perfect excuse to be there watching.
THOMAS
If she's even made one this year.

JESSICA
Are you kidding? If ever there was a year, it'll be this one. We just haven't seen it yet. She's probably got you adding gold leaf to the baseboards.

THOMAS
Well, it can't be much, we've only got a few weeks, and Edie's coming early.

JESSICA
That'll just add glitter. You'll still have bulbs, faucets, painting, picture moving, garbage hauling, and the yard.

THOMAS
Ah, but you'll have shopping, cleaning, weeding out, re-arranging, and more shopping.

JESSICA
I'll have Edie!

THOMAS
Cheater.

(They exit, as EMMA storms into the living room, crosses to the kitchen, and slams herself down at the table. ZACHARY immediately stops pacing, but continues to pick at the thread on his uniform.)

ZACHARY
That well, huh?

EMMA
Brilliant.

ZACHARY
So?

EMMA
So there is absolutely nothing wrong with me. Nothing "physical," but they're determined to run every test ever invented to find a cause for my "imbalance."

ZACHARY
Well, they can't find something that isn't there.

EMMA
Oh they'll find something, trust me. Every day another part falls off and breaks.
(THOMAS and JESSICA enter. ZACHARY begins to pick on his thread with ever increasing momentum.)

THOMAS

See, that wasn't so bad.

(EMMA glares at him.)

EMMA

Now you listen. Edie is coming, I am having our fiftieth birthday party, and Christmas, and you two had better just deal with it, because if either of you try to....

JESSICA

We're just trying to help.

EMMA

By hauling me across God's green earth to have plucky little men toy with me? (Under her breath.) Very useful.

JESSICA

By doing whatever you need.

EMMA

What I need is for you to believe me, not haul me to every damn doctor in the city when I'm not even sick!

(THOMAS and JESSICA are shocked by her tone/use of, "damn.")

JESSICA

Fine! Fine. Truce. Fifty is a big occasion, we want you to have a great party. So come on, out with the list, we know you've got one.

EMMA

You do.

THOMAS

Of course we do.

EMMA

Still predictable, even in the throws of madness? (Beat.) Well, fine then, good.

(EMMA retrieves a sheet of legal paper, tears it, and gives them each half.)

EMMA (cont.)

Here. Now go get busy somewhere else.
THOMAS
Can we at least have lunch first?

EMMA
There's nothing in the house, you'll just have to grab take-out.

(THOMAS looks scandalized. JESSICA takes him by the arm and they exit. ZACHARY explodes.)

ZACHARY
A half century plagued by a thread!

EMMA
I can't even see it.

ZACHARY
Here, look!

EMMA
(Examining his jacket.)
It's barely an eighth of an inch.

ZACHARY
Might as well be a mile!

EMMA
My sister is coming, we're about to be a half century old, you are living in my kitchen, and my children are staging a coup! Of course you're having a fashion crisis.

ZACHARY
I'm stuck! I'm stuck in this wreck of a uniform, in this blasted kitchen, in your bloody life, in this purgatory of a house!

EMMA
Sorry you have a loose thread.

(Several beats go by, as they stare at each other.)

EMMA (cont.)
(Suddenly.)
A costume party! I'll make it a costume party. Then, if I need to, I can slip off undetected. It's perfect!

(EMMA jumps up and begins hurriedly turning pages on ZACHARY'S books.)
EMMA (cont.)
Gives me a bit more to tackle, but....

ZACHARY
This isn't a costume, and whose life would you be escaping into?

EMMA
(Still turning pages.)
Wore it the whole time you were living then, did you?

ZACHARY
I wore it for my dying.

EMMA
Rather attached to your job then.

ZACHARY
(Still tugging on the thread.)
And now it's a curse.

EMMA
Well, thank God you didn't work in customer service. You'd be spending eternity with a badge that read, "Welcome! I'm glad you're here."

ZACHARY
(Still distracted by the thread.)
I was a failure and a fool.

EMMA
Good to know in advance.

ZACHARY
(Collapsing.)
I...I failed her.

EMMA
(Ceasing to rush about.)
Her?

ZACHARY
Elizabeth, my wife. She died here. Here. Right here, and I should have been with her. I should have been with her, but I wasn't. I wasn't here. I wasn't with her.

EMMA
I'm sorry.
ZACHARY
And now she's gone...and I...I couldn't even manage to kill myself properly.

EMMA
I'm sure she....

ZACHARY
I took an oath! To honor, and to protect, and I....

EMMA
She was your wife, not a soldier. (Beat.) Death happens, you know that.

ZACHARY
Well, it didn't have to happen then. Not to her.

EMMA
But it did. (Several silent beats pass. EMMA springs into action.) How about some tea?

ZACHARY
Tea? Great, that's just great. One problem (viciously), I'm dead!

EMMA
Well, sound the violins!

ZACHARY
Menopause chewing up more synapses?

EMMA
You already killed yourself, how much pity do you really need? (More gently.) Look, I'm sorry. I'm sorry your wife died, and I'm sorry you foolishly decided to follow suit.

ZACHARY
It wasn't foolish.

EMMA
No, you were auditioning for Romeo. (Beat.) Guilt is a wake-up call, not an end it all. The whole point was to give yourself a do over.

ZACHARY
I was supposed to "do over" my dead wife?

EMMA
Not what I had in mind, but your choice I suppose.

ZACHARY
You think I'm choosing this?
I think you're getting something.

EMMA

A headache!

ZACHARY

Good. Nothing like sickness to make change more palatable. Knock yourself out.

EMMA

From the woman who hasn't dated in over twenty years.

ZACHARY

I haven't wanted one!

EMMA

Right.

ZACHARY

Well, at least I've left my room!

EMMA

For soccer matches and the P.T.A.

ZACHARY

Hey, I have a life!

EMMA

Well, why don't you use it?

ZACHARY

(Several beats go by, they quiet.)

EMMA

What happened?

ZACHARY

She had a heart attack.

EMMA

And you?

ZACHARY

I was afraid to live without her.

EMMA

I'm sorry.
ZACHARY
Yeah, well you're stuck here too, my cage is just smaller.

(Several beats go by. EMMA looks at the clock.)

EMMA
You know, I have an idea about that, and two children eager to be underfoot.

ZACHARY
About what?

EMMA
About a few changes and a little renovation project I've been pondering for quite some time. One that might just broaden your world a bit, and give us both a bit of fresh air!

(EMMA exits to the living room, and walks back and forth along the wall separating it from the kitchen, staring about, considering. Zachary paces opposite her on the kitchen side.)

ZACHARY
You know, I don't really need fresh air. I mean, I'm a ghost, I don't breath anyway. Plus, I...I'm comfortable here. It's nice, cozy...you're here, and...I don't need any more change, really. This is good, perfectly safe, secure - plus you're not crazy! And, well, see, we're fine, really.

(EMMA re-enters the kitchen, picks up the phone, and dials.)

EMMA
(To the phone.)
Steven? (Beat.) Oh, I'm fine, Dear, thank you, but I do seem to have a wee crisis in the kitchen. (Looking surprised.) No, no, he's fine, but would you ask Tommy to zip back over for a minute? Thank you, Dear, I won't keep him long. You too, bye, bye.

(EMMA hangs up and stares at the phone.)

ZACHARY
W-what's that about?

EMMA
(Distracted.)
He asked if you were ok.

ZACHARY
(Perking up considerably.)
Excellent! Well, that's a good sign, right? Maybe we're ok after all!
EMMA  
(Still distracted.)

Maybe.

ZACHARY

So, I...I suppose I'm the wee crisis in the kitchen?

EMMA

You, are your own crisis, but (she begins removing things from the interior wall), I'm plotting a little prison break of my own!

ZACHARY

Excuse me?

EMMA

We're ripping out this wall!

ZACHARY

What? No, I'm using that wall!

EMMA

The entire thing!

ZACHARY

And, uh...uh, not to side with your children, but...are you feeling ok?

EMMA

Absolutely! And I've been wanting a bigger kitchen for my entire life. Everyone knows it, and here you are, completely stuck, and in the way, and it's the perfect excuse! You're the answer!

ZACHARY

I claim no responsibility.

EMMA

No, really, this will work.

ZACHARY

For who? I'm perfectly content....

EMMA

For both of us, liar.

ZACHARY

Emma, please don't put whatever this is on me, they already don't like me!
EMMA
It's not on you, you're just the catalyst.

ZACHARY
Of what? Why am I responsible? You're the clairvoyant. And I like that wall!

(EMMA reaches for the poem print, and takes it down.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
Not my poem!

EMMA
You've read it a thousand times, it's memorized.

ZACHARY
Yes, but I like to read it.

EMMA
Well, you've got plenty to read now, and me turning pages, so you'll just have to like this one elsewhere.

ZACHARY
Wait! One more time.

(EMMA holds the poem for ZACHARY who reads it aloud.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
"Come to the edge. We might fall. Come to the edge. It's too high. COME TO THE EDGE."

(We hear a car pull up. EMMA takes over, rushing through the remainder.)

EMMA
"And they came. And he pushed them. And they flew."

(THOMAS arrives, holding a pipe wrench and wearing a coat which he does not remove. EMMA carries the poem out of the kitchen and descends on him.)

EMMA
I need you to tear down this wall! How quickly can you do it?

THOMAS
Excuse me?
(EMMA sets the poem down, points, and speaks slowly as though he were thick.)

EMMA
I need you, to tear down this wall. How quickly....

THOMAS
You want to remove the wall?

EMMA
Exactly!

THOMAS
This is the emergency in the kitchen?

EMMA
Yes!

ZACHARY
(Yelling from the kitchen.)
Not my fault!

THOMAS
Not a leaky faucet or a broken pipe?

EMMA
No.

(THOMAS sets the wrench down, takes his coat off and throws it on the sofa.)

THOMAS
Not even a flooding toilet?

EMMA
Thank heavens, no!

THOMAS
The crisis is that you want to re-model the house?

EMMA
Just a bit.

THOMAS
Just a bit?
EMMA

Yes.

THOMAS

(Cautiously.)

Did...um, Zachary ask you to....

ZACHARY

(Yelling from the kitchen.)

Not on me, Mate, it's all her! Really fine here. Nice, cozy, no problems.

THOMAS

You would like me to tear a load bearing wall out of the house that taught me everything I know about historic preservation.

EMMA

Yes.

THOMAS

A house which has been so lovingly restored that Jess and I plan to inhabit it in rotation when you die!

EMMA

Yes. And I recommend that you go first.

THOMAS

No. No, I'm not doing it. I won't, and I won't let you....

EMMA

It's my house!

THOMAS

It's not possible!

EMMA

Really? (Beat.) Well, whatever you say then.

(EMMA exits to the kitchen, THOMAS follows.)

ZACHARY

Please tell him I had nothing to do with this.

THOMAS

Whatever I say?
EMMA
Yes, Dear, whatever you say.

THOMAS
Are you certain?

ZACHARY
I'm certain!

EMMA
(Getting herself something to eat.)
Well, I know that my son would never lie to me, so since I seem to have asked the impossible, so be it.

THOMAS
It's not going to work, Mom.

EMMA
So I hear, Son.

THOMAS
No. This isn't going to work, this little act of yours. I'm not going to do it.

EMMA
I know.

THOMAS
I can smell the smoke coming from your ears, Mom, and I'm telling you right now....

EMMA
That must be the garbage. Would you take it outside for me, Sweetheart?

THOMAS
Mom!

EMMA
Yes, Dear?

THOMAS
Really, I'm not doing it.

EMMA
Even the garbage is too much to ask?

THOMAS
No, fine. I'll take the garbage out.
THOMAS grabs the bag.

EMMA
Thank you my only son. Here, let me get the doors for you.

EMMA opens the doors for THOMAS. Once he exits the house, she flips the lock. We now see THOMAS through the glass.

THOMAS
Mom! Let me back in there.

EMMA
Not until you regain some manners I won’t. This is still my house and I can do what I bloody well like with it!

THOMAS
Mom, it’s cold, I don't have my coat, I need....

EMMA
Then go home.

THOMAS
I'd love to, but my keys are in the jacket.

EMMA
Well that is a shame, Son, now isn’t it.

THOMAS
Yes, Mother, it is. What do you suggest we do about it?

EMMA
I suggest that we open up this cagey old kitchen!

THOMAS
You’re right, Mother, that would make it much warmer outside.

EMMA
And then, I'd like to spruce the place up a bit.

(SEveral beats go by.)

THOMAS
Fine. Whatever you say.

EMMA
Whatever I say?

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THOMAS
Yes, Mom, it's your house. Whatever you say.

EMMA
Are you certain?

THOMAS
No. But you win.

EMMA
Win what precisely?

THOMAS
In a tremendous feat of engineering marvel, I will remove the kitchen wall.

EMMA
A grand proposal! And do you promise your crazy old mom that you’ll be a good boy and do as you say?

THOMAS
I promise. Now can I come in?

EMMA
Swear on your poor old mother’s grave.

THOMAS
I swear on your ever approaching grave, that I will destroy the interior of your stunning and formerly historic home. Unless Jess kills me first, which is possible.

EMMA
And then you and Steven will help me re-decorate.

THOMAS
Fine, fine. Just let me in.

EMMA
(Walking away.)
Nothing stopping you.

THOMAS
(Calling after her.)
Mom, Mom, you forgot to unlock the door.

EMMA
No I didn’t, Dear. That lock has been broken for ages. Remember? The next time one of those fool physicians is around you must have your memory tested!
Black Out.

EMMA

(In Dark.)
Oh, and don’t forget to wipe your feet, Dear.
ACT TWO
Scene 2

Lights up on JESSICA at her desk.

JESSICA

It's Alzheimer's!

(Lights up on THOMAS at his desk, and back in his coat.)

THOMAS

It's maddening!

JESSICA

Finally. So, what are you going to do about it?

THOMAS

Tear out the wall I guess.

JESSICA

Or not!

THOMAS

It might be ok actually, I've got a couple old floor joists left from....

JESSICA

Jesus! A little tug of the line, and wham! You're all hers.

THOMAS

(Totally defeated.)

Happy to oblige.

JESSICA

Look, I'm sorry, but this isn't ok. We can't let her destroy that house. Maybe we shouldn't wait for Edie.

THOMAS

Well, it's not my choice, but I promised her I'd do it.

JESSICA

So un-promise, she'll forget!

THOMAS

Right.
Seriously, Tommy.

She'll just hire someone else.

She doesn't have time.

Whose mother are you talking about? Trust me, she'll do it.

Well, I'm calling Edie, maybe she can come even sooner.

Look, I can make it work - I'm not happy about it, but I can make it work. (Beat.) It'll have kind of a warehouse vibe...and at least I'll know how to un-do it.

Comforting.

I mean the kitchen *is* kind of tight.

She lives by herself!

Not anymore.

Not funny.

Maybe if the wall's gone her ghost will leave.

Because ghosts exist - and are bound by walls?

Maybe.

Fine, maybe. But will *she* come back?
(Lights out on THOMAS and JESSICA, and lights up on the living room. The kitchen wall is gone, and the poem now hangs on an exterior living room wall. ZACHARY stands at the spot where the poem used to hang, staring into the living room. EMMA is twirling.)

ZACHARY

I can't.

EMMA

Oh, come on, don't you love it! It's so open and full of possibility.

It's so big.

EMMA

I know, isn't it wonderful!

I remember it smaller.

EMMA

Well, come take a look then, you must remember this mantle.

ZACHARY

(Still in the kitchen.)

I carved it.

EMMA

You did not!

ZACHARY

I did! It took months. Well, years actually...I never did feel finished with it.

EMMA

It's my favorite thing in the house!

I know.

EMMA

You didn't carve this. You couldn't possibly have.

And why not?
Well, because...because it's....

It's initialed on the bottom corner.

Really? Where?

Just there, on the left edge.

(EMMA purposely looks on the right.)

No, no, on the other side, right beside the....

(EMMA looks on the left, but purposely on the inside edge.)

No, on the outside edge, just there, by the....

(EMMA purposely looks on the outside edge of the right side.)

I don't see it.

On the left side!

(EMMA looks at the left side, but again purposely at the inside edge.)

On the outside edge.

(EMMA looks at the outside edge, but purposely only at the top.)

Well, I still don't see it.

(ZACHARY stomps over to show her.)

There! Right there.
EMMA

(Smiling at him.)

So it is.

(ZACHARY realizes where he is and freezes.)

I can't breathe.

EMMA

You're dead.

It's so big.

EMMA

And wonderful. And you see, (pointing at the poem), there's your poem, leading out to the garden, and...and...that's it! The garden. Oh, you marvelous man. You gift of the universe! Why didn’t I think of that to begin with? We’ll just take that wall down too, it'll be perfect!

ZACHARY

(Still frozen.)

I feel sick.

EMMA

The whole bloody thing must go! We'll open the living room right up to the garden, expand the deck, and then....

ZACHARY

(Still frozen.)

I can't....

EMMA

Of course I can! It'll be great, you'll see. I just wonder if there's time....

(EMMA crosses back to the kitchen and picks up the phone. Lights up on THOMAS, downstage left. His phone rings, he answers.)

EMMA

Thomas! You must come over right this minute! I’ve been all wrong about this house business, all wrong.

THOMAS

What? Wh...Mom what happened, are you ok?
EMMA
I’m fine, fine. You just get over here right now and lets see if we can’t undo this mess I’ve made!

THOMAS
The last time I rushed over there you dragged me into doing it!

EMMA
Yes, yes, fine. Just get over here!

THOMAS
Ok, ok. I’ll call Jess and we’ll be there in a....

EMMA
I don’t need her underfoot, you just get over here already.

(They hang up. EMMA walks back to speak with ZACHARY, who is still frozen by the mantle. THOMAS hesitates, but calls JESSICA, who enters downstage right with a phone.)

THOMAS
Hey, she just called and told me that she’d been all wrong and wants to un-do everything.

JESSICA
Hmm. (Beat.) What gives?

THOMAS
I’m telling you, she said she made a mess of things and wants us to un-do it.

JESSICA
We need to be very careful here.

(EMMA helps ZACHARY walk slowly back to the kitchen.)

THOMAS
She’s our mother, not a venereal disease.

JESSICA
Exactly. Don’t set foot inside without me.

THOMAS
Right, sister as condom.

JESSICA
Precisely.
(THOMAS and JESSICA hang up, and exit, as EMMA and ZACHARY return to the kitchen. Once there, ZACHARY turns back to gaze at the living room. EMMA dons her apron as though she were suiting up for battle.)

ZACHARY

All this time.

EMMA

You're fine.

ZACHARY

Yes. (To himself.) But what now.

EMMA

Food. Works every time...especially when it's been a little while. (Rifling through the freezer and removing a large container.) Perfect! I'll just thaw this out, and we'll be in business.

(Zemma puts the food in the microwave and turns it on. As it's heating, she turns the radio on. We hear the end of Les Paul and Mary Ford's version of the Chaplin song, "Smile," as she moves the books and cleans. ZACHARY remains still, quietly staring at the living room.)

ZACHARY

All this time. Decades.

(Les Paul and Mary Ford's "Smoke Rings," comes on the radio. EMMA stops what she's doing, goes to ZACHARY, and without touching, they dance together. By the end of the song, ZACHARY is comfortable and having fun. The microwave beeps, and EMMA transfers the soup to a pot on the stove. She then places bread and butter on the table, turns the radio off, and begins using her apron to waft the scent of the soup towards the front door.)

EMMA

Now all I need is for him to be hungry.

(ZACHARY walks cautiously to the poem, where he stays for some time, before exploring the mantle and the rest of the room. He moves slowly, eyes wide, and oblivious and deaf to the others around him. THOMAS and JESSICA enter, THOMAS in the lead. EMMA sees JESSICA, and attempts, unsuccessfully, to cover up her wafting.)

EMMA

I thought I told you not to bother her.
Nice to see you too, Mother.

Yes, well, it’s not that I didn’t want to see you, Dear, it’s just that....

I think you’ve lost your mind and you find that belief annoying.

I’m so pleased you understand.

(Catching the scent.)

Is that my soup?

(EMMA smiles, taking THOMAS by the arm and leading him away from JESSICA.)

Shall we go to it then?

What?

The soup of course.

(JESSICA follows them to the kitchen, noting the absence of books. EMMA quickly ladles a steaming bowl of soup, and hands it to THOMAS.)

Now, what I’ve realized is that this room is still much too small to be comfortable with all this fiftieth birthday fuss. So. What I want to do is take that wall completely out.

Mother? We did take the wall out, it’s gone. You don’t still see it, do you?

No, no, that one, and of course I don’t. (She points to the exterior wall.) That one. The whole entire thing!

They call that camping mother.
Hush.

THOMAS
Mom, I don’t understand, I...I thought you realized that you made a mistake by removing the other wall and that....

EMMA
(Absentmindedly handing a cup of soup to JESSICA.)
Who said anything about that old wall? Good riddance! (Noting ZACHARY and pausing for a minute.) And the room is lovely, just lovely. (Returning.) But can you imagine the expansiveness, the grandeur?

THOMAS
I don't think....

EMMA
I mean you’ve done a wonderful job, beautiful, really, and....

THOMAS
Thank you.

EMMA
I just know you can make it even more splendid!

THOMAS
By removing the exterior wall?

EMMA
Exactly!

THOMAS
I’m speechless.

JESSICA
Well, I’m not.

EMMA
Now that is precisely why I didn’t want you here.

JESSICA
Mom, you can't just open the house to the yard. You're not an animal. You live indoors, where there are walls and ceilings and floors, and apparently, ghosts. Besides, it’s not safe.

EMMA
As if that’s your concern.
JESSICA
You’re right, it’s not. But it’s true. I mean…why are you doing this? Is it because of Zachary or some other voice you're hearing? Did he tell you to tear apart the house....

EMMA
He is not a voice, he's a man, and he didn't tell me to tear out anything, thank you very much.

JESSICA
Well, then why are you doing it?

EMMA
Because I can and I want to.

JESSICA
Just like that?

EMMA
Yes, just like that.

JESSICA
Kind of late for a mid-life crisis, isn't it?

EMMA
No. And I'm not in crisis. Not anymore. (*Catching ZACHARY'S eyes.*) In fact, I've never felt better!

JESSICA
Mom, we backed off on St. E's, because as you so curtly pointed out....

EMMA
As Zachary pointed out.

JESSICA
It was word against word. Belief against belief.

EMMA
And because you can't satisfactorily prove that I'm nuts.

JESSICA
And because Edie is coming for an important birthday, and because we love you - regardless of what you think. But there is no way either of us are going to help you knock down this wall!

EMMA
Well, lucky for me it's still my house, and I would like it gone! So, I'll just do it myself then.

(*EMMA begins to exit, but THOMAS stops her.*)
THOMAS
Wait, wait. Let's just talk this idea through.

EMMA
*(Taking THOMAS by the arm.)*
Thank you.

JESSICA
Great, good, sure. Way to stay the course. Why not? She's gone, why not the house?

EMMA
*(To THOMAS.)*
Now, think of this as expansion....

*(JESSICA takes out her cell and walks away dialing. EMMA, with gigantic gestures, begins to walk THOMAS through her plans, but he cuts her off quickly.)*

THOMAS
No, Mom, really. You can't just ignore the preservation codes.

EMMA
Why not? *(Pointing to where the kitchen wall used to be.)* You took that one out.

THOMAS
That one was on the *inside* where no one could see, and really, I shouldn't have.

EMMA
Oh, nonsense! You rip this old eyesore out and give me some fresh air already!

THOMAS
And if the neighbors complain?

EMMA
Do you really think that Gabriel is going to turn me in? I want to feel the wind!

JESSICA
*(Returning.)*
So, Mom, since Edie's coming in early, how about if we hold off on any more construction until after she....

EMMA
No! I want it done before our party, that's the whole entire point! I want us to build an enormous fire, roast marshmallows, and make s'mores like we used to.
While camping.

JESSICA

EMMA
Not always. *(To THOMAS.)* It's not that much, it's just - becoming more open.

THOMAS

It's a little more complicated than that.

EMMA

So you've got a plan!

THOMAS

Not exactly.

JESSICA

Today the wall, tomorrow the roof.

EMMA

Actually, skylights aren't a bad idea.

THOMAS and JESSICA
*(Simultaneously.)*

No!

EMMA

I'll get it.

*(The phone rings in the kitchen, and EMMA goes to answer it. THOMAS and JESSICA are directly in front of ZACHARY.)*

THOMAS and JESSICA
*(Simultaneously, relieved.)*

Edie.

JESSICA

I just gave her the update and she said she'd call. I mean, are we really just supposed to let her deconstruct the entire house?

THOMAS

I don't know, more light wouldn't be bad.

*(JESSICA looks as though she'll explode. THOMAS heads her off.)*

THOMAS (cont.)
If I scale her back a little and do two sets of pocket doors, or French...it might be nice actually.
JESSICA
Tommy, Dr. Cooley called. They've got an in-patient eval spot available January second. We have to decide.

THOMAS
Did you take it?

JESSICA
Of course I took it, the next one might not open for weeks or even months.

ZACHARY
(Turning quickly to look at them.)
What?

THOMAS
Oh, come on, the day after her birthday?

JESSICA
Of at home camping with the invisible man! It wasn't my choice, it's the spot they had.

(ZACHARY runs over to EMMA and begins speaking to her frantically, but because she's on the phone, she brushes him aside and gestures for him to wait - which he does with decreasing patience.)

THOMAS
My money's on Edie. Besides, does it really matter so much?

JESSICA
Excuse me?

THOMAS
I mean, if she's happy and healthy who cares if she has an imaginary friend?

JESSICA
I do! And I don't believe that any of this qualifies as healthy or normal.

THOMAS
They don't lock people up just for talking to themselves, she's perfectly functional.

JESSICA
She isn't just talking to herself, she's hearing answers, and she needs to be observed!

THOMAS
She's not hurting anybody.
JESSICA
She's hurting me. I want my mother back!

THOMAS
You're almost thirty!

JESSICA
And she's almost fifty, what's your point?

THOMAS
That I didn't realize there was an age limit on fantasy.

JESSICA
Well, I hope hers ends before New Years, because after that, I want a whole team of doctors to tell us she's fine.

(EMMA hangs up the phone and crosses back to them. ZACHARY is hot on her heels.)

THOMAS
(Under breath.)
Happy birthday.

EMMA
Well! That was Edie, and she thinks the whole thing sounds splendid!

JESSICA
(Confused.)
Really? She does?

EMMA
What a "marvelous idea," she told me. Can't wait to see the improvements I'm making.

(THOMAS looks to JESSICA, who looks at her phone and shrugs in disappointment and confusion.)

ZACHARY
Emma, we need to talk.

EMMA
Just a minute!

ZACHARY
No, now!
(EMMA brushes ZACHARY off in a flourish, THOMAS and JESSICA exchange a look, and EMMA continues.)

EMMA
She completely agrees that being open is far better than being closed, and that the....

THOMAS
(Gesturing to JESSICA to hold her tongue.)
Ok, ok, I'll do it.

EMMA
(Still fending off ZACHARY.)
Excellent!

ZACHARY
This really can't wait.

THOMAS
Well, we'd better get going, I've got designing to do and doors to find.

JESSICA
And I've got another call to make.

EMMA
Not hungry then?

THOMAS
Who's got time to be hungry with so many changes being made?

EMMA
Improvements.

THOMAS
Right. Call you later, Mom. Love you.

JESSICA
(Holding back tears.)
Bye, Mom, I love you too.

EMMA

(THOMAS and JESSICA exit, whispering to one another.)

ZACHARY
They want to lock you up the day after your birthday!
(EMMA brushes him off again, and focuses excitedly on the wall.)

EMMA
Nonsense, they're done with that, and Edie will be here anyway.

ZACHARY
I'm telling you, I just heard them!

EMMA
(Dismissively.)
Don't worry, I'm fabulously sane, and Edie is my ace!

Black Out.
ACT TWO
Scene 3

Lights up on the kitchen/living room as EMMA is turning pages for ZACHARY. The radio is on which conceals EDIE and JESSICA'S arrival outside the new glassed doors. We hear Les Paul and Mary Ford's "Hawaiian War Chant," as JESSICA brings EDIE'S bags in, sets them down, kisses her goodbye, and exits. EDIE looks around, watches EMMA for a while, and then flips the radio off.

EDIE
So, you've got a cadaver in the kitchen? Going through the ice I imagine.

EMMA
Edie!

ZACHARY
Nice to more officially meet you.

EMMA
I've missed you.

EDIE
(Gesturing at all the changes in the house.)
Right! Seems like you’ve been occupied well enough.

EMMA
You look....

EDIE
Fabulous, thank you. Where's the stiff?

EMMA
Right here.

EDIE
Can he speak or what?

EMMA
Yes.
And hear me?

Yes.

(Opening the door.)
Excellent! All right, carcass boy, time to rot yourself away!

Edie!

Nice.

(Still holding the door open.)
Go on now, Buh-bye.

Edie, please.

This is what we've been waiting for? I've had enough.

(ZACHARY walks over to stare at the poem.)
What?

You haven't even....

(Joining EMMA, but leaving the door open.)
There's no "even" here, Darling, you're completely off keel and the neighbors are talking. It's time to rejoin the fold. Come on now, let's get you....

I don't care what the neighbors are....

Yes, you do. You absolutely do. And I hear old Gabriel is still aiming his horn your way, God love him, so let's reign it in and put forth some effort.
EMMA

I don't....

EDIE

Yes, well he's hot blooded and alive. Please don't tell me you've developed a thing for the cold ones.

EMMA

Zachary isn't dead.

EDIE

Really?

EMMA

Well, I mean....

EDIE

Precisely how un-dead is he? (Greatly amusing herself.) Stiff but not rotten? Hard but not decayed? Rigid but not rancid?

EMMA

Would you please....

EDIE

Sounds firm without the fun.

ZACHARY

(Crossing back to EMMA and completely offended.)

Some twin.

EMMA

I really thought you'd....

ZACHARY

If this is your ally, we're done for.

EMMA

(To ZACHARY.)

Don't you give up on me!

ZACHARY

This isn't helpful.

(ZACHARY, still pulling on his thread, turns away again, and begins pacing.)
Give her a chance, she's slow.

Am I?

Painfully.

Fine. How's he look?

(Over his shoulder, now positively tearing at his thread.)

Tattered.

Splendid.

For an old dead man.

She can leave at any time.

No, just splendid.

For a dead old man.

Seriously. Party be damned.

Ok, ok, I get it.

(Attempting to cover his ears, which fails.)

And family too.

I’m not certain. Old and dead, dead and old, I can’t decide...old and dead has more of a freshness...I’ll go with dead and old.
ZACHARY
Would you please tell her to shut up already!

EMMA
And neither is the case.

EDIE
Wake up and smell the formaldehyde! He's been dead since before we were in diapers! That makes him what? A ripe old hundred and whatever it is - and for half that time he’s been dead, and the other half ripe! Damn jarheads.

ZACHARY
Enough! I don't have to listen to this.

(ZACHARY stomps to the open door, and unseen by EMMA, walks through it and freezes. He panics briefly, but then takes a deep breath, checks to be sure he's ok, and is relieved.)

EMMA
It hasn't been half.

EDIE
Fine. A third, or, I know - let’s ask him. (Yelling.) Hey, Zach, how long since you’ve taken a shit?

(ZACHARY turns to EDIE, and steps back in to face her.)

EMMA
Edie!

ZACHARY
Excuse me?

EDIE
What? He can hear me, right. Men have bowels like clocks. (Under her breath.) Strange the things you miss.

EMMA
(To ZACHARY.)
She married a Marine.

EDIE
I divorced a Marine, thank you very much. And I had the good sense to do it twice.
EMMA
Do you have a point? Some deep-seated need to ruin even my smallest pleasure? I thought you'd be ok with this.

EDIE
Well, why on earth would you ever think that!?

EMMA
Because you're my sister, because you're....

EDIE
He's dead, Emma! You just admitted it yourself.

EMMA
He's alive to me.

ZACHARY
Thank you. But maybe....

EDIE
And only to you.

EMMA
What?

ZACHARY
She's right. Maybe I don't belong here.

EDIE
He's dead to everyone but you! Finish him off already, if he isn't man enough to do the job himself!

EMMA
Don't say that!

EDIE
What, did I hit a nerve? Oh, don't tell me, old Zachary's in some kind of self inflicted purgatory? Please! You're so indulgent. (To ZACHARY.) Get over yourself already and finish the job!

EMMA
Maybe once you're in menopause, you'll be able to....

EDIE
I will never be in menopause!
EMMA
Yeah, good luck with that.

EDIE
Back to your dead and cradle robbing boyfriend.

ZACHARY
Enough!

(Observed by EMMA, ZACHARY turns, walks straight out the door, and disappears. EMMA freezes.)

EMMA
I...I can't breathe.

EDIE
Of course you can. You're alive.

(EDIE watches EMMA as she remains still for several beats, staring at the open door.)

EDIE
Ok, back to earth, Dear.

EMMA
(Turning back to EDIE.)
He...he...we, we're not sleeping together. We weren't.

EDIE
Well, praise be to maggots!

(EMMA turns back to the door and is relieved to see ZACHARY step back in, smiling at her.)

ZACHARY
All this time.

EMMA
I...I know.

(ZACHARY walks around, gazing. EMMA follows at a distance, watching him.)

EDIE
Do you remember when it first started with Mom?
EMMA  
(Still focused on ZACHARY.)
This isn't the same....

Do you?

EDIE  

ZACHARY  
(Stepping outside again.)
It's been so long.

I....

EMMA  

EDIE  

How she couldn't sleep, how she started....

I'm in menopause!

EMMA  

EDIE  

Well, you don't need to be.

(EMMA and ZACHARY make eye contact. She shares his joy.)

EMMA  
(To ZACHARY, gently encouraging.)
I know.

EDIE  

Well, let's set you up to be done with it then!

EMMA  

What?

EDIE  
(Moving to be directly in front of EMMA'S face.)
Ok, enough of the invisible man routine. Look at me!

EMMA  
You know, there are benefits to being selectively visible. Just because you're aging yourself down like Mrs. Robinson doesn't mean I have to. I'm happy to be fifty!

EDIE  

Not yet.
EMMA
Well, unless you plan on dying this week, it's going to happen.

(EDIE blows a party horn at EMMA, which startles and annoys ZACHARY. Un-noticed by EMMA, he walks out again and disappears.)

EMMA (cont.)
I don't see why it's so upsetting for everyone.

EDIE
That you're in love with Captain Invisible?

EMMA
Poolesville. And I am not in love with him!

EDIE
Still a dreadful liar.

EMMA
He makes me want to be a better person.

EDIE
How noble! Longing to be superior to a corpse...a worthy goal, but perhaps something a bit more lively?

EMMA
I am more alive than ever, thank you. And (noticing he's gone), it's entirely thanks to...to him.

EDIE
Well, it's a wash then isn't it.

EMMA
(Looking for him.)
No, and you're prejudiced.

EDIE
Against the dead?

EMMA
Yes.

EDIE
Guilty!
EMMA
I have my life back! And what harm is he doing? (Trying to conceal her nervousness that he's gone.) Could we please just drop it and have a good time. I mean, fifty. We're as old as Dad.

EDIE
Fine. Truce. For now. But don't give me any of your "half way to perfection" crap, (looking at herself approvingly), I got there early.

EMMA
You got enough for the both of us.

EDIE
True, little sister, true. But it's never too late to make a start. We could get you a little tuck here, and a little tuck there. (Attempting to tickle EMMA.) Here a tuck, there a tuck, everywhere a tuck, tuck.

EMMA
(Fending EDIE off.)
I think I'll gracefully sag, thank you.

EDIE
Sag, hag. Wrinkle yourself, but I intend to stay taut!

EMMA
No worries there.

EDIE
Thank you.

Black Out.
ACT TWO
Scene 4

Lights up on EDIE and EMMA, each reclining on a spa table where the examining table used to be. Utopia is projected on screen, and peaceful chirping forest sounds are heard in the distance. Flower petals periodically fall, annoying EMMA.

EDIE

You don't have to thank me.

EMMA

I won't.

EDIE

Little sister, you're going to get a life even if it's mine.

EMMA

You can keep it. And I am perfectly capable of....

EDIE

No, you're very clearly not, but not to worry, I am. Once these spa boys have gotten you in the mood, we're going to....

EMMA

No, next I'm heading home to start dinner.

EDIE

Enough with the cooking, that's why God made restaurants!

EMMA

People cook in restaurants.

EDIE

Yes, but we don't. The kids will learn to feed themselves. We're going out.

EMMA

But....

EDIE

But nothing, it's time to re-join the fold. Husbands come, and husbands go, but....
Christmas won't wait!

(EMMA rises, throws off her spa robes, walks to the kitchen and looks at the phone.)

EMMA

Don't you want to ring?

ZACHARY

(Entering.)

Hi.

EMMA

Hi. (Beat.) I...I was scared you were gone.

ZACHARY

So was I.

EMMA

Want something to....

(Beat, as EMMA remembers he can't eat.)

ZACHARY

Tea would be good.

EMMA

I'm sorry, I know you cant....

ZACHARY

I can smell it. That used to be the worst part, to smell but not eat.

EMMA

And now?

ZACHARY

Earl Grey, hot!

EMMA

Aye, aye, Captain.

(She makes the tea, which ZACHARY then hovers over, inhaling deeply.)
EMMA (cont.)

I'm sorry you....

ZACHARY

Don't be, I've gotten used to it. Watching you cook's become soothing. Reminds me of Elizabeth, she was a great cook too.

EMMA

You really loved her.

ZACHARY

Like you loved Elliot.

EMMA & ZACHARY

I still do.

ZACHARY

Think they're together somewhere?

EMMA

I don't know, a month ago I would have said, no, but now...maybe.

ZACHARY

It makes me happy, thinking he's there to take care of her.

EMMA

Or that she's there to take care of him.

ZACHARY

(Smiling.)

Right.

EMMA

Why'd you do it, really? I mean, if I killed myself every time I thought I failed...there aren't enough deaths in a lifetime.

ZACHARY

It was simple. I knew she was gone from here, and I was willing to search for her there. It seemed rational at the time. I just wanted to be with her. It's all I've ever wanted, really.

EMMA

Then why stay?

ZACHARY

In case she came back.
EMMA

Right.

ZACHARY

And it just kind of took.

(EDIE enters, looking fabulous and carrying multiple bags.)

EDIE

(Dropping the bags.)

You should have stayed for the facial (gesturing to her face), I lost a decade!

EMMA

I didn't think you still had one to lose.

EDIE

Now, now, there's always something to lose - like an invisible corpse!

ZACHARY

You know, she's shockingly repetitive.

EDIE

(Removing an insanely gaudy holiday decoration from one of her bags and holding it up.)

Or the dull, drab, tedium of the infinite suburban abyss.

ZACHARY

Wow.

EDIE

So, (gesturing to the newly expanded room), now that you're open, it's time we add a little sparkle and give you an edge!

ZACHARY

Did she say ledge?

EMMA

Either way I'm going over it.

EDIE

I'm going to fix it up, little sister - Winter Wonderland is on its way!

EMMA & ZACHARY

What is that?
EDIE
(Digging through her bags and pulling things out.)
Everything! A Hanukkah garland - and wreath, a beautiful hand carved Kinara, with the seven Mishumaa Saba candles....

EMMA & EDIE
Of course.

EDIE
And a Menorah because you can never have too many candles, really. A Solstice sun, mistletoe....

EMMA
Why celebrate one holiday, when you can celebrate them all?

EDIE
Precisely! Look at this Star of David tree topper!

ZACHARY
Subtle.

EMMA
Her specialty.

EDIE
If you insist on talking to him maybe carcass boy can give me a hand? You know, make himself useful. Oh, wait, I forgot - he's not really there!

EMMA
Zachary is very much....

EDIE
Hey, here's an idea, how about speaking to the living while you're here, and the dead when you're there? You know, be present in your life!

EMMA
I am....

EDIE
Living in the past with spooky.

ZACHARY
Time for a walk I think.

(ZACHARY exits.)
EMMA

(Calling after ZACHARY.)

Wait, Zac, I....

(EMMA starts to follow ZACHARY, but EDIE cuts her off.)

EDIE

Come on, spare some time for the living?

EMMA

No, no. I've got to get started on the stuffing, you go ahead. Have at it.

EDIE

It'll be fabulous.

EMMA

I have no doubt.

Black Out.
ACT TWO
Scene 5

Christmas Eve. Lights up on EDIE and EMMA, each posing on a yoga mat where the spa tables used to be. A large portrait of Buddha is projected on screen, and the house is now fully decorated.

EMMA
(Changing pose, breathing deeply, and reciting affirmations.)
I am in the present moment.

EDIE
I had the most glorious affair with an Indian once.

EMMA
(Changing pose, breathing deeply, and reciting affirmations.)
I am happy in the present moment.

EDIE
His sweat was like curry.

EMMA
(Changing pose, breathing deeply, and reciting affirmations.)
I am happy and calm in the present moment.

EDIE
Went by Paul though, which was a huge mistake. I mean who wants to be with an Indian Paul?

EMMA
(Changing pose and reciting affirmations.)
I am happy, calm and sane in the present moment.

EDIE
Such a gloomy name.

EMMA
I am happy, calm, sane, and....

(The phone rings.)

EMMA
Thank You.

(EMMA rises, crosses to the kitchen and picks up the phone.)
EMMA
Hi, Dear.

(JESSICA, on a telephone headset, enters downstage right at a cubicle desk.)

JESSICA
How did you know?

EMMA
Because Edie's at the ashram temple thing.

JESSICA
Oh, well, Tommy's on his way and then we'll be over. Do you need anything from the market?

EMMA
No, thank you, Dear. We're more or less under control over here.

ZACHARY
(Looking at the decorations, mouth gaped.)
I'd say less, way less.

JESSICA
Ok, we'll see you in a bit then.

EMMA
Sounds good.

EMMA & JESSICA
Love you.

(EMMA hangs up, and JESSICA exits.)

ZACHARY
I mean, it's, it's....

EMMA
Everything.

ZACHARY
And everywhere. Look at my mantle, it's absurd.

EMMA
She means well.
ZACHARY
Not for me she doesn't. How could you possibly have come from the same womb at the same time?

EMMA
We're more alike than we seem.

ZACHARY
That wouldn't be hard.

(EDIE enters dressed as a Vegas Mrs. Claus.)

ZACHARY (cont.)
Case in point.

EDIE
(Handing EMMA bedazzled holiday attire.)
Here you go, Doll. Since you keep walking out on me I took the liberty of choosing yours too.

EMMA
My what?

EDIE
Holiday cheer! You can't keep wearing that old sweater, Mom's been dead forever.

ZACHARY
She's really not a fan of death, is she.

EMMA
No.

ZACHARY
She seemed so together back then.

EMMA
She's good in a crisis.

EDIE
That I am. And a crisis is exactly where we're headed if you keep chatting it up with the ether. We'll be spending our golden jubilee in the psycho ward!

EMMA
Not....

EMMA & EDIE
If you....
EDIE
Don't snap to already! I'm trying to steer you straight here, little sister. Because the kid's backup plan is in full swing, and don't you think I won't let them lock you up, I will.

EMMA
It's nice to know you have faith in me.

EDIE
Faith? What's that got to do with anything? Faith is like junk food for the mind! Might as well use crack and have some fun with it. I'm talking verifiable reality here. Here, now.

ZACHARY
Is it really so impossible?

EMMA
You don't believe that, I know you don't.

EDIE
Honey, listen. People change their beliefs like underwear. Believing something doesn't make it real for anyone else but you. Why do you think we fight? Maybe he's here, maybe he isn't. The point is that he's only here for you. And of the seven billion souls on the planet, why you?

EMMA
Because of the house. Because he...he lived here, he died here...he....

EDIE
He got stuck here. I get it. (Beat.) Just don't you.

(EDIE exits. There is a long pause. EMMA looks at the clothing EDIE gave her, and holds up an oversized battery operated tiara that flashes "50!")

EMMA
I'm going to turn fifty.

ZACHARY
.

EMMA
Yes.

ZACHARY
In a psychiatric hospital.

EMMA
No, not if I can help it.

Black Out.
ACT TWO
Scene 6

Night. Lights up on an immense banner that reads "HAPPY 50th BIRTHDAY'S," which has been added to the holiday decorations. There is applause coming from the garden where a fire crackles and burns. The glass doors are open, and we hear a single guitar playing "Vaya con Dios," which EDIE sings. At the chorus, other voices join her, and EMMA enters, carrying a tray of used desert plates and coffee cups. She sets the tray down and walks to ZACHARY who is staring at the poem. Side by side, they dance. The song ends to applause, and conversation breaks out. EMMA and ZACHARY have danced into the kitchen. They part.

EMMA
So foolish, all this fuss about birthdays. Every year it's the same thing...I mean we're all born, it isn't the most important thing.

ZACHARY
No, living is. Living well is.

EMMA
And dying?

(JESSICA enters.)

ZACHARY
Happens.

JESSICA
What are you doing in here? Edie's got the crowd in stitches.

EMMA
Saying good bye I think.

JESSICA
Good bye?

EMMA
To Zachary.
JESSICA
Oh. Has he...he's gone?

EMMA
Not yet.

JESSICA
Are you....

EMMA
Fine. I'll be out in a few.

JESSICA
I...I love you, Mom.

EMMA
I love you too, Dear. You go ahead, I'll just be a minute.

(JESSICA gives EMMA a kiss and exits.)

EMMA
(Looking at the clock.)

Almost time.

ZACHARY
(In a comforting tone.)
I'm here.

EMMA
I know.

ZACHARY
(Gently.)
But I shouldn't be.

EMMA
I know.

ZACHARY
You're amazing...beautiful, and I can't let them take you to a place you don't belong. You don't need doctors. You I can save.

(EMMA sits, facing the audience, and away from him. A few beats go by.)
ZACHARY (cont.)
Just tell them I'm gone, you'll be fine. They don't really want to take you anyway. They're just frightened.

EMMA
I know. *(Beat.)* Where will you....

ZACHARY
I'm not sure, but it's time. Past time, really.

EMMA
*(Quietly after several beats.)*
I've been thinking of getting out a bit more myself.

You deserve it.

EMMA
We both do.

*(EMMA turns to him and several silent beats pass between them.)*

EMMA
Need a push?

ZACHARY
And he flew....

*(ZACHARY departs. We hear the party going on outside, and EDIE'S voice eventually rises above the others.)*

EDIE (voiceover)
So then I tossed that one out in his recliner! I mean the old ones can't keep it up, the young ones can't keep it down...thank God for the mid-life crisis! Makes 'em hungry and wild.

*(Laughter and glass clinking.)*

EDIE (cont. voiceover.)
You know what I say....

EDIE (O.S.) and EMMA
*(Simultaneously.)*

To life!

*Curtain, The End*
*(Curtain song = Shirley Horn, "Here's to Life")*
Vita

Juli Ré Van Brunt is a writer and a literary advocate in love with New Orleans and her wife, Bethany. This is her first full length play.