

LIFE CYCLES

An Original Play
By
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FIRST OLD ACTOR

Grumpy Narrator
Douglas (The Canadian)
Father of the Bride
Divorcing Husband
Al (The old friend)

SECOND OLD ACTOR

Jack
Randal
Grieving Husband
Mellow Old Narrator
Robert Stein (patient)
Mr Seagal (job applicant)

OLD WOMAN ACTRESS

Ruthie (A little overweight with dyed red hair).
Miss Litz (Former English Teacher)
Mom (Janet's Mom)
Nervous Narrator
Mother of the Groom
Divorcing Wife
Dr. Knaus

YOUNG WOMAN ACTRESS

Rachel
Young Woman Narrator
Former English Student
Janet (Internet Dater)
Daughter-in-law
Bride
Divorce Attorney
Tiffany Rawls (Job Interviewer)

YOUNG MAN ACTOR

David
Mugger
Jeff (Internet Dater)
Son of Grieving Father
Bridegroom
Narcissistic Narrator
Divorce Attorney

The set is as simple as the director chooses. Most of the set can consist of stools, tables, and lighting. There should be one simple dining table with chairs. The action should never stop. Grips change scenes as the narrators speak).

NARRATOR

(He is an older man with poise and command of any situation. He is also a gruff character in the Louis Black mold. Somewhat sarcastic and always a little pissed off.) (Enters and goes D.L.)

Good Evening. Welcome to our world. This play is about Cycles. Hence **the** title. I'll come and go offering occasional pearls of wisdom. Not a terribly taxing job and I get my own dressing room.

Does anyone here believe in reincarnation? That's a rhetorical question. I don't expect you to shout out your answer. I always find it interesting that people who claim to be reincarnated always were someone grand in a previous life. It seems they were Cleopatra or Napoleon or Valentino. No one is ever some poor schnook living from one paycheck to the next. As I am now closer to the end than the beginning of this current "carnation" I am wondering if I came back what I would be. I would like to think I'd be taller, thinner, with more hair. At least some hair. Of course there is no guarantee I would come back as a human being. I could be reincarnated as a dog.

I have a dog who really doesn't like me. I find this very disheartening because I've always been a dog person. She always looks at me with such distrust, and I've never done anything to her. Some experts say that dogs are perennial two year olds. I've always felt that they are just playing dumb. You know the expression that someone had a dog's life? Like that was bad. Actually dogs have it pretty good. Free food, lodging, grooming, and sex without guilt or begging.

At any rate here I am. Short, fat, and bald. It always surprises me when I look in the mirror. I'm usually first shocked and then just disappointed to see this old guy reflecting back. I don't think of myself that way. I still see and feel the same way I did thirty years ago.

I like to think, however, that I am a little smarter for the journey.

Now I don't want to sound too maudlin tonight. I've had it okay. Hell I was born here instead of some desperate third world country. I was born Caucasian when Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics had it much harder. I was born a man when being a woman had a lot more challenges. In some ways, I've been a lucky little cocker spaniel. I think I've talked enough. It's time to get this show on the road.

(From SR a young man and woman enter. They are in their mid to late twenties. He sits down at the table DR. She brings two mugs of coffee and sits down too.)

RACHEL

Your mom called today. She wants us to drive over on Sunday.

DAVID

What did you tell her?

RACHEL

I told her you would get back to her. You know I hate to say no to her. She always takes it as a personal insult. But if you say no it's....okay.

DAVID

I have a talent in learning to live with guilt. Did she say why she wanted us to come by?

RACHEL

No. She just wanted to see us. I don't feel like driving all the way over there, but I always feel so guilty when I say no. Maybe I'm insecure, but I never feel like your Mom really likes me.

DAVID

Actually Rach, she has always treated you like the daughter she always wanted and never had. She's a very strong personality. Did I ever tell you that both my brothers and me were named Judy before we were born? Three boys. She used to

joke she was a three time loser. At least I think it was a joke. I always wondered why Judy? So when we got married she finally had the girl. Of course, she missed your formative years, and had to mold you into the daughter she always wanted.

RACHEL

I know I know. I just don't like being a lump of clay. *(David gives her a shrug)*
Okay, I'll call her back and say we're coming. I just don't want a long conversation

DAVID

No problem. Just call her precisely at 7:29

RACHEL

Why?

DAVID

Jeopardy goes on at 7:30 *(Jeopardy Music plays as lights go down on the couple and up on the Narrator)*

NARRATOR

So there you see it. *(He rubs his hands)* Generational friction. The older generation wants to be part of their kid's lives. The younger ones feel a need to establish boundaries. Of course everyone want's to be in control without alienating anyone. It's like the old conundrum. Do you want to be liked or respected? Of course being loved is another kettle of fish all together. *(Lights out on the Narrator and up on two chairs SC. Older couple are seated. He is reading the paper and she is reading a cookbook).*

RUTHIE

I invited the kids over for dinner on Sunday.

JACK

(A sweet looking man who obviously has worked hard his whole life) That's nice
(He turns a section of the newspaper)

RUTHIE

What do you think I should cook?

JACK

Ruthie, you have at least 200 cookbooks. Why ask me?

RUTHIE

Jack. You know I never actually use a recipe from a cookbook. I just like to read them. The books inspire me, but I don't have the patience to actually

JACK

You know when I have to put something together and don't follow the directions you're all over me like a cheap suit.

RUTHIE

That's different. You need directions. I just need inspiration.

JACK

Okay, how about Italian?

RUTHIE

We had Chicken Parmesan last time they were here. I was thinking maybe I could make a curry.

JACK

That's good. Just not too spicy. You know David doesn't handle spicy food well. Which is unfortunate. I really like hot food. I think as you get older your taste buds are less sensitive, and you really need to goose it up a little. Okay so make a mild curry.

RUTHIE

No I'll think of something else. I really want this to be a nice evening. I always feel like Rachel doesn't want to be here. Do you think she likes me?

JACK

What's not to like?

RUTHIE

Exactly. I'm always nice to her. So why doesn't she like me? Maybe I'm trying too hard. What do you think? Am I too pushy?

JACK

Come on Ruthie you're not pushy. You're *(telephone rings)* Good timing.

RUTHIE

(Gives Jack a look) Hello. Oh hi Rachel how are you sweetie? You can make it on Sunday that's great! No you don't have to bring anything. *(Jeopardy theme music begins)* Oh honey I got to go. Jeopardy is going on. *(Lights out)*

(Lights up D.L.)

NARRATOR

That is what we call in the play writing business *as* "setting the table." Now you're all invited for Sunday Night Dinner. Since it takes a little time to cook dinner let's talk. What I means is I'll talk and you'll listen. It's less confusing that way. I

started out in the theater business when I was a teenager. Couldn't get enough of it. Just not good enough looking to play leading men. So I played character parts, which are usually more interesting anyway. I was able, at a tender age, to play parts of much older characters. Now that I'm actually the age of these characters, it's even easier. Definitely don't have to put make up lines on this mug. Some things you can never completely achieve with makeup. As you get older your face shrinks a bit. That makes your ears and nose appear bigger. Now does that make you feel better? You thought your ears were growing, and it's only your face shrinking away. Well dinner appears to be ready. Bon Appetit!

(Lights up on SC . Table with four chairs. Table is set casually for a summer dinner. Music on the stereo is "Theme from a Summer Place" David and Jack are seated in chairs DR)

DAVID

Dad you been playing any golf lately?

JACK

I get out a couple times of month. It seems I play better if I play less.

DAVID

Aren't you suppose to play better if you practice more?

JACK

In my case, it's not a matter of practice. It's a matter of talent. Which I don't have. How about a glass of wine?

(Jack rises and goes to a bar table UC)

DAVID

Sounds good.

JACK

Red or white?

DAVID

The red sounds good.

JACK

(Coming back to the chairs with two glasses of red wine)
So how's work?

DAVID

Well the truth is I got laid off.

JACK

Oh no. When did this happen?

DAVID

About two months ago.

JACK

Two months? Why didn't you tell me?

DAVID

I was hoping to find something else before I told you. Unfortunately, in this economy finding something else takes more time than I expected. I've got my resume all over the place, but so far no bites. Can't even get an interview.

JACK

How is Rachel holding up?

DAVID

Fine. (*Walks D.L.*) I haven't told her yet.

JACK

You haven't told her? How can you keep something like that a secret?

DAVID

It's easy. I just get up every morning and get dressed for work same as **usual**. I leave at the usual time, get home at the **usual** time. When she asks how work is I just say the usual.

JACK

How are you surviving? Do you have enough money?

DAVID

We had some savings. That's pretty much gone. I've been floating cash advances on our credit cards. Rachel doesn't do the bills so she isn't aware of any of this. I would appreciate it if you keep this just between us. Don't tell Mom either. I wouldn't have told you except I needed to talk to someone.

JACK

You can always talk to me. You know that. But you should talk to Rachel. She has a right to know what's going on.

DAVID

I know. It's just that I feel like such a failure. Now I've waited for so long she's going to be really upset. I just wanted to fix it and then tell her afterwards. Rachel

has always been so sweet. I just wanted to protect her.

JACK

You're not protecting her by not including her. She's your wife. Your partner. She has a stake in what's going on. Right now your ego doesn't want to admit you lost your job. You'll get another job. You might not get back her trust, and that's much more important than a paycheck.

(Ruthie and Rachel enter from UC carrying food)

RUTHIE

Okay boys let's eat. *(They all take places at the table.)* Rachel has been showing me some interesting techniques she picked up on the Food Channel. I had no idea that the flower on a zucchini squash was edible. I've been throwing them away all this time.

RACHEL

This smells so good.

DAVID

Yeah Mom. Everything looks great.

RUTHIE

So Jack, what do you think?

JACK

(Preoccupied) Oh yes...it looksvery nice.

RUTHIE

So what have you boys been talking about?

DAVID

Oh you know Mom. The usual.

(Lights down on the four and up on the Narrator)

NARRATOR:

So this old couple goes to see the Doctor for their annual check up. The doctor takes the husband first and gives him a thorough examination. After he's done, he says, "Sam you look great. Your blood pressure is that of a thirty year old, and you've managed to keep the weight off too. So, how are you feeling?" Well Sam thinks for a second and says, "Everything is okay except when I make love with Sarah. The first time is fine, but the second time I'm drenched in sweat." The doctor says, "I don't understand that. There's nothing to indicate any kind of problem. Let me talk to Sarah." So after he examines Sarah he says, "You guys are doing great. You're both in excellent shape. Do you have any concerns?" She says, "Everything is fine". The doctor then tells her that Sam said the first time you two are together everything is fine, but the second time he perspires a lot. She says, "Don't listen to that old fart. The first time is in January. The second time is in August." Communication is a tricky thing. Today we have the Internet, email, texting, Facebook, and Twittering. Anything to avoid actual talking. I feel sorry for younger people today. We dated when we were young. We learned the art of conversation. The past few generations such as Gen X or Gen Y or whatever they call themselves next just hung out in groups. The days of love letters and direct and candid conversation are gone. It's a pity that the most technological generation in the history of mankind won't know how to simply say what they feel.

(Lights up S.C. David and Rachel are sitting side by side simulating driving home in their car).

RACHEL

That was a nice evening. I actually had a good time with your Mom. For the first time she let me help her. I was her sou chef. She didn't say it, but I think she was dying to know if we are planning to have children anytime soon. She kept talking about how much fun you were as a baby.

DAVID

Honey we've got to talk.

RACHEL

About what?

DAVID

I've been keeping something from you. I didn't want to upset you, but I can't keep it a secret anymore.

RACHEL

What are you talking about?

DAVID

I got laid off two months ago. There I said it!

RACHEL

Thank God! I was wondering how long it would take you to tell me.

DAVID

You knew? Why didn't you say something?

RACHEL

I wanted you to have enough faith in me to tell me yourself. I'm not made out of glass David. I won't crack and shatter just because things are tough. I'm here with you and I'm not going anywhere.

DAVID

Now I really feel like a jerk.

RACHEL

Good! Admitting you're a jerk is the first step to recovery.

DAVID

I love you too. How did you find out?

RACHEL

Well the first clue was when Human Resources from your old job called to see if you had applied for unemployment

DAVID

Oh.

RACHEL

Yes, oh.

DAVID

I'm sorry Rach, I just wanted to handle this and not worry you. I promise I won't hide anything from you ever again.

RACHEL

I promise too... I'm pregnant.

(There is the screech of brakes as the scene blacks out)

(Lights up on older couple sitting in bed reading)

RUTHIE

That was the nicest evening we've ever had with the kids. Rachel and I really got along in a long time.

JACK

(Still reading) That's nice.

RUTHIE

I really like having a daughter. I think of her as a daughter not a daughter-in-law. I hate saying in law. It's like saying step- children or step- parents. As far as I'm concerned if you're in this family there are no special categories. Jack, are you listening?

JACK

No I'm reading. In fact, I've read this same paragraph three times.

RUTHIE

Boy are you in a grumpy mood. What's wrong with you?

JACK

(Annoyed) There's nothing wrong. I just want to read a little before I go to sleep.
(Suggestively) Unless you don't want to go to sleep.

RUTHIE

No sleep sounds good. *(She quickly turns over.)*

JACK

You know it's been awhile.

RUTHIE

I'm just awfully tired tonight.

JACK

I'm more effective than Ambien, and no side affects.

RUTHIE

Come on. It hasn't been that long.

JACK

Really? Let's see I can remember we lit the fireplace.

RUTHIE

Yes. It was a very romantic evening.

JACK

It's now July.

RUTHIE

You're right. Tomorrow, I promise. Or Tuesday the latest.

JACK

If I drop dead before Tuesday, I'm going to be really pissed off.

(He puts down his book, claps his hand, and the lights

NARRATOR

So a Priest, Minister, and Rabbi walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and says, "What is this a joke?" Humor is a delicate balance of timing and absurdity. I've heard that comics say funny things and that a comedian sees things funny. One deals in one liner schtick, and the other sees even life's most mundane acts as great material. I believe it was a Barrymore who said "Death is easy. Comedy is hard."

My mother was a showgirl. She ran away from home at age 14 after the death of her beloved father. At the funeral she found out that she was adopted. Having no love for her adopted mother she hit the road. This was tough times in the the

1930's. She joined Burlesque and was standing backstage the first day when Bud Abbott's wife Betty spotted her. Now Betty was a very devout woman. She called my Mom over and said, "You're not eighteen. You're staying with us". And that's how Mom became a straight man to Bud Abbot before he met Lou Costello. In fact, all the classic routines such as "Who's On First" were written by Bud Abbot and performed with my mother first. Mom stayed in show business for the next twelve years. In those days if a show wasn't doing well they would just close it and strand the performers in the middle of nowhere. She finally got tired of being stranded in Dayton and Toledo. She quit the biz and returned to NY where she took a job working in a luncheonette. That's where she met my Dad. He was a truly nice man. My favorite story of them was when they were newly married and they were on a bus somewhere in Brooklyn. The bus stopped to pick up passengers when a holy roller woman dressed in a full length white gown spotted my showgirl mom in the window. She pointed her long bony finger at her and announced in a loud voice "You're a sinner. You drink. You smoke. You have three husbands." At which point, my Dad indignantly proclaimed, "My wife does not smoke!" Needless to say, the bus didn't move for a couple of minutes.

(Lights down on the Narrator and up on the Older Couple sitting in the living room)

RUTHIE

(Puts down her magazine) Jack. Why are you in such a grumpy mood?

JACK

(Looks up from his book) I'm not in a grumpy mood. I'm just reacting to you being grumpy.

RUTHIE

You've been in a bad mood for days.

JACK

Please let's not get into a big argument. I just want to sit quietly and read my book. Don't aggravate me.

RUTHIE

(Rises and paces)

You're doing it again. I say I want to discuss something and you shut me down. You never want to discuss anything.

JACK

(He rises and faces her)

Okay! You call it discussion. I call it harassment. Your idea of a discussion is to go back twenty years and bring up everything that has ever pissed you off.... I'm sorry. I'm old. I can't remember what I ate for **dinner** last night let alone something that happened when Nixon was President.

RUTHIE

Boy are you grumpy. Do you remember when we first got married how you would always have to be right. It took me years to break you out of that habit.

JACK

And now you're always right. Please let's just drop it so I...

RUTHIE

No I won't drop it. You never let me get my thoughts and feelings out.

JACK

Are you kidding? I haven't completed a thought or a sentence for that matter in...

RUTHIE

That's what I mean

JACK

...in years. The last sentence I finished was "I do".

RUTHIE

So why are you so grumpy? What are you upset about?

JACK

Okay. You really want to know what I'm upset about?

RUTHIE

(She rises triumphantly)

I knew it! You are upset! When you are in a grumpy mood I can always tell that there is something wrong going on. I can remember when David was in kindergarten you were always moody....

JACK

Give me a break. He's thirty- two years old.

RUTHIE

Don't you realize how your attitude affects me? Donyou know how hard it is to live with a grumpy person? It's like walking on egg shells. It's exhausting trying to cheer you up.

JACK

Do yourself a favor. Take a rest from cheering me up. I don't need cheering up. I need a little peace.

RUTHIE

You are the most ungrateful person in the world. I do everything to make you happy and you don't appreciate it. I can remember on our first wedding anniversary....

JACK

Are you kidding? We've been married for 40 years, and you're going to bring up our first anniversary? This is why I'm grumpy. You drive me crazy. Just let me sit and read my book. *(He sits)*

RUTHIE

No we have to finish this. It's important that we resolve your problems

JACK

AHHH

RUTHIE

What was that?

JACK

A primal scream.

RUTHIE

Well if you're going to scream then I'm not going to try to cheer you up. Go ahead be miserable. See if I care. *(She sits)*

JACK

Thank you. Now I'm happy. You did a great job. *(He picks up his book).*

RUTHIE

Pot Roast.

JACK

What?

RUTHIE

You said you couldn't remember what you had for dinner last night. We had Pot Roast.

JACK

Was it good?

RUTHIE

You said it was the best you ever had.

JACK

(He gets up and goes behind her and kisses the top of her head) Now I remember. It was good. *(Fade Out/ Up on Narrator)*

GRUMPY OLD NARRATOR

Funny how people can live a lifetime together and still manage not to kill each other. It might be hard to believe but I've never been married. Came close a couple of times, but never made the leap. Slaves used to perform a wedding ceremony where the bride and groom jumped over a broom. Taking a leap of faith so to speak. Now, I'm way too old to consider sharing my life with another person. Every now and then I do wonder what it might have been like to always have someone to share life's most mundane moments. It's like the old joke a man is not complete until he's married and then he's finished. I told you it's old. Now don't get me wrong. I like women. It's just that they think totally different. For instance I play golf with three other guys. We've been playing together for over ten years. Three or four times a month we go out and spend 4 ½ hours playing a round of golf. I can't remember once ever discussing our feelings about anything. I can't imagine a group of women getting together for twenty plus hours a month and not discussing every *(he holds up his finger like quotes)* "feeling" they have. Now there is nothing wrong with that. It's just different from my experiences. As

I said I like women. I just don't understand them. I'm always amazed when I hear of a fellow getting married for the third or fourth time. What optimism! Mark Twain said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Yes. He was married. There's this old story about a fellow finding a small brass lamp on the beach. He rubs it and a Genie appears. The relieved Genie thanks him and says he was in there for years. Then the Genie says okay you get one wish. The fellow says "I thought it was three wishes." The Genie says, "No. You only get one so make it good." The fellow thinks for a moment and then says, "I've always wanted to go to Hawaii, but I'm afraid to fly and I don't swim so I'm afraid to go in a ship across the ocean. I want you to build me a bridge to Hawaii so I can drive." The Genie is dumbfounded. "Are you crazy? Do you have any idea how much cement that would take?" The fellow says, "Okay, if that's too hard how about this. I've never been successful with women. Make it so I understand women completely." The Genie then says, "Do you want two or three lanes?" So the question is, are we born crazy or do we drive each other crazy? Maybe in my next incarnation I'll come back with the answer.....stay tuned. (Fade Out)

(David is seated DR with a phone and Jack is DL with a phone. Pools of light on each of them.)

DAVID

Hi Dad. I just wanted to thank you for the advice.

JACK

What advice?

DAVID

I told Rachel I lost my job. It seems she already knew it, and was waiting for me to come clean and tell her.

JACK

She knew it and didn't say anything? I'm impressed. I can't imagine your mother waiting for me to tell her anything she already knew. That takes a tremendous amount of will power and patience. You're luckier than I thought. Rachel is a good girl.

DAVID

I know. So how are you and Mom getting along?

JACK

Oh, you know. We have our ups and downs. Mostly she wants to discuss our feelings.

DAVID

God, I hate that!

JACK

You're preaching to the choir. At any rate we cleared the air last night, and that should last a week if I'm lucky. So what's on your mind?

DAVID

Why do you assume there is something on my mind? Can't I just want to call my Dad up?

JACK

Sure you can. Soooo what's on your mind?

DAVID

I hate to ask you Dad, but...

JACK

How much?

DAVID

A couple of thousand to make the mortgage payment would be real helpful.

JACK

E mail me your account number, and I'll go to the bank tomorrow and make a direct deposit.

DAVID

E mail and direct deposits. I'm very impressed. Thanks Dad you're a life saver. I promise I'll repay the loan as soon as I can.

JACK

I never lend my children money. Call it an advance on your inheritance.

DAVID

Thanks Dad. By the way, I do have some good news for you, but we want to tell you in person. Why don't you and Mom come over to our place for dinner on Sunday afternoon? Come early so we can watch the game.

JACK

Great. Sounds like a plan. Mom will be thrilled. Please let her bring something so she doesn't drive me crazy that Rachel doesn't like her.

DAVID

That's crazy. Rachel likes her. *She* thinks Mom doesn't like *her*.

JACK

Well maybe we can watch the game, and they can get in touch with their feelings on Sunday. *(Fade out)*

GRUMPY OLD NARRATOR

Fathers and sons are always an interesting dynamic. Boys use their fathers as role models, but are usually closer to their Moms. It's funny that each generation always thinks it had it so much harder than the current one. You know your father walked five miles to school in the snow uphill in both directions. Reminds me of story. A fellow goes into his usual barbershop. When he's paying the barber he gives him a dollar tip. The barber says, "Your son always gives me two dollars". The father replies, "My son has a richer father than I do".

(Fade out on Narrator and up on SR. Table set for dinner. Jack and David are seated at the table).

JACK

So what's the big news? Did you get a new job?

DAVID

No job yet, but I've got an interview Tuesday. Keep your fingers crossed.

JACK

That's great! So what's the news already?

DAVID

Wait for Mom and Rachel.

(Rachel and Ruthie enter carrying plates of food.)

RUTHIE

I can't believe this is Afghani food. It looks like ravioli.

RACHEL

(Putting down plates) Don't forget Marco Polo brought pasta back from China.

RUTHIE

Really? Beautiful and smart.

RACHEL

Okay, Dad this is called Aashak. It's an afghani meat-filled pasta. The sauce has cinnamon for sweetness and red pepper for heat. On top is yogurt and mint.

JACK

Looks great! Have the red pepper handy just in case I need more heat.

RACHEL

Try it first. It's pretty hot already.

RUTHIE

(Trying the food) Oh this is very different. Doesn't taste Italian at all. Hey Jack, remember when I took that belly dancing class? Maybe I'll do an after dinner show.

JACK

Now that I would pay to see! *(They all laugh)* Sooo what's the big news?

RACHEL

(Rachel and David look at each other and smile. Then Rachel puts Ruthie's hand on her belly) Well, Mom if it's a girl we're naming her Judy. *(Fade Out)*

YOUNG WOMAN NARRATOR

No I didn't have a sex change. The playwright's wife decided he needed to get in touch with his feminine side. You know - deal with his feelings. I think that's a good thing. He wasn't so sure at first, but his wife said he REALLY needed to expand his thought processes. So now you have a man putting words into my mouth he thinks I would think. It's a little confusing for both of us.

You'll notice everyone from now on is different. We'll all be different people. I'm now the narrator, and the old narrator is now....well you'll see.

(Slow fadeout on the narrator and lights up on two older men sitting on a bench. Randal is reading the classified and is played by the previous Jack. Douglas played by the former narrator is feeding the pigeons.)

RANDAL

(Mumbling to himself) Incredible. Just unfriggenbelievable.

DOUGLAS

Are you talking to me?

RANDAL

(Taxi Driver Impersonation) Are you talking to me? Who are you? Robert De Niro?

DOUGLAS

No. I'm sorry. I thought you were talking to me that's all. I didn't mean anything by it. Please forgive the intrusion.

RANDAL

Please forgive the intrusion. What planet are you from? This is New York. We talk to ourselves. We talk to the flying rats that you keep feeding. We talk to the

yellow cabs that are trying to run us down.

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry really. I didn't mean to upset you. It's just that I see you here everyday, and I thought you were talking to me. That's all.....so what in the paper upset you?

RANDAL

Everything in the paper upsets me, but this section is the Help Wanted Classifieds.

DOUGLAS

Oh. So you're looking for employment?

RANDAL

You think?

DOUGLAS

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to presume.

RANDAL

Stop apologizing already. You're making me feel guilty, and I didn't even do anything. Yeah I'm looking for a job. Not a lot out there for sixty year old men. All these companies want to hire kids. Every time I interview they say, "Well sir, where do you see yourself in ten years? Like I've got ten years. Then they usually say they're look for a candidate that will be there for the long haul. The funny thing is I would probably be there longer than the twenty-two year old who changes jobs every five minutes. That's the problem with this country. They don't respect experience. I can do more in half the time than some kid right out of school. But the people in "Human Resources"...now there's an oxymoron for you. They're not human, and they wouldn't recognize a real resource if it bit them on the *tuchas*.

DOUGLAS

What's a *tuchas*?

RANDAL

You're not from here are you? A *tuchas* is a rear end.

DOUGLAS

No, I'm not from here. I'm Canadian actually. I've only been in New York for a few weeks.

RANDAL

Canada? No kiddin. So what brings you to our lovely city?

DOUGLAS

My daughter lives here. I'm thinking about moving here so I can be closer to her and the grandchildren.

RANDAL

That's nice. I don't have any grandchildren. My wife and I never had kids. Now she's gone so...

DOUGLAS

Oh I'm sorry. When did she pass away?

RANDAL

No she's just gone. She traded up. Found a guy with a fullhead of hair and a condo in Boca. It's okay. We never really liked each other that much.

DOUGLAS

Oh, I'm sorry.

RANDAL

Boy you Canadians sure apologize a lot.

DOUGLAS

Yes I know. I'm sorry.

RANDAL

So I guess you're retired. What kind of work did you do in Canada?

DOUGLAS

Personnel. I guess you would call that Human Resources.

RANDAL

You're shittin' me.

DOUGLAS

No I would never do that. In fact I could probably assist you with your interviews. I know all the questions and all the answers they want to hear. What kind of work are you looking for?

RANDAL

Sales. I've been a salesman all of my life. Most people look down on salesman. They think we'll say anything to close the deal. The fact of the matter is we only say what people want to hear. For instance, I used to work in a furniture store. A husband and wife came in looking for a living room sofa. He was the take charge kind of guy, and was attracted to an ox blood leather style with brass buttons.

like you would find in a man's study. I could see right away that she liked the crushed velvet, but acted like she would be happy with anything he chose. The fact is there's not a lot of middle ground between those choices. In the end I encouraged his decision to make his wife happy. That's why I'm such a good salesman. I don't sell anything. I just reassure them that they are making a good decision. In this case, the good decision was making his wife happy.

DOUGLAS

That's really quite excellent. You read people so well. That's a talent you should sell when you're interviewing.

RANDAL

Thanks. I'll keep that in mind. I'm Randal by the way. *(He sticks out his hand)*.

DOUGLAS

Oh I'm sorry. *(He takes his hand and shakes)* I'm Douglas.

RANDAL

Well, Douglas nice to meet ya. You're my first Canadian.

(A young man enters from SL. He nervously looks around)

YOUNG MAN

Excuse me gentlemen. *(He takes out a gun and points it at them)* Give me your money. Now!

DOUGLAS

I don't think so.

RANDAL

(Beginning to take out his wallet) Are you crazy? He's got a gun.

DOUGLAS

That doesn't make it right. Why are you robbing us?

YOUNG MAN

Hey mister. Don't mess with me. Give me your money or I'll shoot you. Do you understand?

DOUGLAS

Yes, I understand your intent. I'm just curious why you would act like this. Do you come from a broken home? Are you on drugs? Or have you no other way to survive?

YOUNG MAN

Are you nuts?

RANDAL

No. He's Canadian.

DOUGLAS

So, if I don't give you my money what are you really going to do? Would you kill me for a few dollars?

YOUNG MAN

Right now I'd kill you for free. *(He puts the gun under Douglas' chin.)* Now cut the crap and give me your wallet!

RANDAL

(Stands up and puts his hand on the young man's shoulder) You don't want to do that. If you shoot my visiting friend here, I'll have no choice but to do something about it.

YOUNG MAN

(Points the gun at Randal) So now you want to be hero?

DOUGLAS

(He stands up too and gets between them)

No. Heroes have a tendency to die. That's how they become heroes. But since there are two of us we could simply kick the living crap out of you. *(Turns to Randal)* Sorry about the language.

YOUNG MAN

I can't believe this. *(He puts the gun away and sits down with his head in his hands.)* I can't even rob two old guys. I'm a complete failure.

DOUGLAS

(Sits down next to him and puts his hand on his shoulder) Don't take it so hard. You're not a complete failure. Randal started to give you his wallet. Do you want to try again? Maybe we could give you some pointers.

RANDAL

(Completely confused) Doug, boy. Maybe we should just leave.

DOUGLAS

No, I feel responsible for this young man's sense of failure. It is the responsibility of the older generation to encourage youth.

RANDAL

(Sits down. The young man is between them and looks back and forth as the two older men talk) You want to teach him to be a better mugger?

DOUGLAS

Of course not! But we could show him how to better present himself. He needs to be more confident. He obviously isn't going to be successful as a stick up artist, but maybe we can find a better path for him to follow

RANDAL

Unfriggenbelievable! I suppose when you watch a Western you root for the Indians.

DOUGLAS

Of course. They were oppressed.

RANDAL

(Turns to the young man) Okay you so what's with the gun? Don't you know you could kill someone with that thing?

YOUNG MAN

It's not loaded. I would never really shoot someone.

RANDAL

You really are pretty crappy at this. Okay stand up *(They both stand up)* Give me the gun. *(He hands over the gun)* Now I'm going to show you how to sell it.

YOUNG MAN

You want to sell the gun?

RANDAL

No, not the gun. I'm going to show you how to sell the idea of you being a real mugger. *(He points the gun at the young man)* Okay, what's your favorite thing?

YOUNG MAN

I like lying in bed with my girlfriend. We eat breakfast and read the Sunday paper. That's the best time I have. It's my favorite thing.

RANDAL

Okay, so here's your choice. Give me your money if you ever want to have breakfast in bed with your girlfriend again! *(The young man begins to reach for his wallet, but Douglas stops him)* You see you have to lay it out for the buyer. Give them an obvious choice. Sales is all about eliminating choices. Narrow down the options so you can get them to choose the one you want them to. *(Hands the young man the gun)*. Now you try it.

YOUNG MAN

(Points the gun at Randall) If you want to live, give me your money.NOW!

RANDAL

Not bad. What do you think Douglas?

DOUGLAS

He shows potential and follows directions. *(He picks up the want ads and they all sit down)* Let's see if we can narrow his choices.

(Fade Out)

YOUNG WOMAN NARRATOR

My mom can be a royal pain in the butt. No matter what I do, it's not good

enough. I know everyone says the same thing about their parents. My Mom probably said the same thing about her Mom. Come to think of it, Grandma did give her a tough time. Maybe that's the way it's supposed to be. Each generation wants its kids to do better. The other narrator told jokes. I don't do jokes.

(Cont)

Men are better at jokes anyway. Men can get away with saying things that a woman can't. For instance, if a man used some "colorful" language and sexual inferences you would accept it. If I used the same material, you wouldn't like it. On the other hand, I can talk to you about really personal situations and you would think that was okay coming from me. It's all a matter of knowing your audience.

Lately I've been thinking about do overs. Are there any times in your life you said something you wish you hadn't? I have. Five times I said really stupid things that hurt someone else's feelings. At the time I didn't mean anything by them. You know sometimes you say to yourself before you say something maybe I shouldn't say that and you don't. But these five times I said it anyway. I've been thinking about those five times a lot and wishing I could have a do over. One of the people is now dead so that's not going to happen. A few others I have no idea where they are. There is one though that I could try to do over.

(Fade out on Narrator and lights up on Old Woman. She enters the room looking through her mail. She puts down the junk mail and begins to examine a letter as she sits down. She opens the letter and begins to read to herself. As she reads the young woman narrator is lit up and begins to speak the words of the letter).

YOUNG WOMAN

Dear Miss Litz,

Getting this letter from me I'm sure is unexpected. You might remember that I had your English class twelve years ago. Even though you were a good teacher I never liked going to your class. I just never felt you thought I was very smart. I can't remember you ever doing anything mean to me, but that is the way I felt. You could write it off to being an insecure teenage girl. But even though I never felt you liked me I always wanted you to. For some reason it was important that you approve of me. Is that silly? At any rate lately I've been thinking about the mean things

I've done in my life. I've narrowed it down to five things in particular. You were one of them. I spread a rumor that you didn't give girls good grades because you had a thing for young boys. I know it wasn't true, but the rumor took off. Next year when I came back for my senior year you were gone. No one knew where you went. I couldn't help but think you were gone because of me. If that is the case I wanted to say I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I've included my phone number if you would ever like to talk.

Sincerely,
Pam Bader

(Lights out on the Narrator. Miss Litz picks up the phone and dials the number).

MISS LITZ

(She has a Southern Accent) Hello, Pam this is Eleanor Litz. I got your letter *(She listens.)* Yes, I remember you. In fact, I liked you. *(Listens)* I think it was very brave of you to write me and I appreciate it. I just wanted to tell you that I didn't leave Jefferson High because of you. The fact is I just didn't feel I was a very good teacher. *(Listens)*

Well I went back to school and became a court stenographer. I know it might sound funny, but I found it really interesting recording the most difficult times in other people's lives. The fact is I was much happier observing other people than being an active participant. *(She listens)*

I'm retired now. You have my address. If you ever want to drop by and discuss books I'm usually home. By the way, what you said was true. I usually gave the boys better grades. *(Fade Out)*

YOUNG MAN NARRATOR

At last ...my turn in the hot seat. This is kinda cool. No script. I just sit here and talk. So far this evening you've had grumpy old guy and guilt ridden insecure young woman. I guess you could call me happy younger guy. Unlike my narrating predecessors, I don't suffer from angst. In fact, I like me. Why not?

I'm likeable. I'm the guy you can't quite remember when you go through your high school yearbook. I wasn't invisible just not apparent to the naked eye. I didn't play sports or date a cheerleader. I wasn't a nerd either. Never played for the school chess team or joined the debating society. The fact is, I always knew that high school was not the best time of my life. I was just waiting around to get out and get on with my life.

As you can see, I did exactly that. So here I am 17 years later. I've got an MBA. That's taught me why businesses don't work, but I don't have clue as to how to fix it. Isn't higher education grand? I've never been married. Still looking for Ms. Right. Since I don't have a biological clock ticking away, I'm not in any hurry. My parents married when they were 21. By the time they were my age they'd been married for fourteen years and had me. What's the rush? Just remember. By the time Mozart was my age, he was dead. Well this has been fun sitting here talking about my favorite subject.

(Fade out on Narrator and up on a mom with adult daughter. Mom is sitting and reading a magazine when her daughter enters)

JANET

Okay Mom. How does this look? *(She turns around showing her business suit outfit).*

MOM

You look fine honey. So what do you know about this guy?

JANET

Just what I read on his Profile page. He's 35 and works in acquisitions. Whatever that means. His picture looks nice. But you know sometimes people post pictures that aren't accurate. I just hope he's not a frog.

MOM

Janet I'm always nervous when you go out with someone you meet on the internet.

JANET

Well that's why we're meeting for coffee and he doesn't know my last name or address.

MOM

What a world we live in.

JANET

(Sits down next to Mom) Tell me about it. Dating must have been easier for you. I can't imagine it could be any worse then it is now.

MOM

Yeah. We just went to bars and waited to get picked up.

JANET

Mom!

MOM

I'm kidding. I'm kidding. The fact is we had to get guys to think it was their idea to ask us out.

JANET

Yeah, but how did you meet them in the first place?

MOM

Oh, lunch counters, supermarkets, at work. Just about anywhere. We didn't make a big deal. Just a little conversation and if you hit it off he'd ask for your number. Sometimes they called and sometimes they didn't. We didn't have them fill in a questionnaire. We didn't have a list of rules and requirements. He just had to be nice and look half decent. If he had a car, **that** was a plus.

JANET

I think I might give up dating. I'm just going to hang around supermarkets and wait for some guy to ask me how to cook zucchini. Actually, if a guy came up to me waving a zucchini, I'd probably think he was bragging. *(They both laugh)* *(Janet gets up)* Okay, once more into the breach. Another cup of overpriced coffee and hopefully decent conversation. Let's hope, at least, he pays for the coffee.

MOM

You know Janet you might try wearing something a little younger. That suit is fine for the office, but it might be a little intimidating.

JANET

You think so? This is the suit I usually wear to court. I always feel so confident in it.

MOM

I know but some guys are looking for a little more fun and little less confidence.

JANET

So what do you think? Jeans or school girl plaid skirt with a white blouse.

MOM

Actually the short skirt with the high black boots looks really hot.

JANET

Mommm

MOM

Okay wear what you like.

JANET

(Resigned) No. You're right. I'll change. I just hate being objectified. *(She exits to change)*

MOM

(Shaking her head and talking to herself) Objectified.

JANET

(From offstage) Did you say something?

MOM

No. Just talking to myself. *(Goes over & picks up a photo and speaks to it)* I don't remember did you objectify me? *(She smiles)* God, I hope so. I really do miss you. Maybe I should go on the computer and meet someone too. I just feel guilty at the idea of going out with someone new. It will be eight years next Tuesday. *(She kisses the photo and puts it back)*

JANET

(Re enters wearing a plaid skirt and black boots) So is this more the look?

MOM

You know you were right. When you meet the right guy he'll be looking at your eyes. However, you do look hot!

JANET

I hope so Mom because these boots are killing me. *(She goes over and gives Mom a kiss)* Don't wait up I don't know how long this will be. *(She exits)*

MOM

If you're lucky it will last for years. *(Fade Out)*

OLD MAN NARRATOR

Yes, I'm the new Old Guy. The playwright's wife felt everyone should get a chance in the spotlight. Can't really disagree with her. So let's review we've had Old Curmudgeon Guy, young Insecure Woman, and Narcissistic Young Man. Now you get the Somewhat Mellow Older Guy. Wasn't that last scene touching? I'm thinking about asking her out. I've been alone for too long. I was married for over forty years. She was the love of my life even though we could drive each other a little crazy. We met when I was in the service. Used to go to these Sunday brunches for single Jewish servicemen at the JCC - that's the Jewish Community Center on California Street in San Francisco. It was the sixties and I had run out of money for college. I joined the Air Force because it seemed more civilized than the Army. So on these Sundays I'd go into the city from Travis Air Force Base with four or five other Jewish guys who'd also lost their student deferments. At the brunch, there were these nice girls who wanted to meet a nice Jewish boy. That's where I met her. She was getting her teacher's credential at San Francisco State. We hit it off right away. Funny how when you meet the right one, conversation is so easy. Well to make a long story short we started to date. I spent every dime on gas driving into the city in my clunker 1960 Plymouth Valiant. We dated for three months, and then got engaged. Two months later we got married. That's how it worked then. Now people seem to get married later in life. They want to get their careers going before they commit to a relationship. Of course, by the time that happens, they're used to being on their own.

(Lights up on Janet sitting at a coffee shop table with a cup in front of her. Young man enters and looks around. He sees Janet and approaches her).

JEFF

Excuse me. Are you Janet?

JANET

Oh yes. Jeff?

JEFF

(Points to the other chair) May I?

JANET

Of course. Did you want to get some coffee?

JEFF

Don't really like coffee, but you enjoy yours. I hope I'm not too late.

JANET

Actually you're right on time. I'm always early. I've got this built-in clock in my brain. Never lets me be fashionably late. Not only am I the first to arrive I'm always early.

JEFF

Wow. I don't think I've ever met a woman who is that punctual.

JANET

So Jeff let's cut to the chase. Do you like these boots?

JEFF

(Looking at the boots) Yeah. They're a...nice. Are they comfortable?

JANET

No. They hurt like hell!

JEFF

God! Why did you wear them?

JANET

To be honest my Mom said they make me look hot.

JEFF

Well she has a point, but I could never wear shoes that hurt just to look good. Do you want to take them off?

JANET

I would love to. Would you mind giving me a hand? *(He gets up and begins to pull her boots off. Eventually he pulls off the second boot, but falls back on his butt.)* Oh I'm sorry. Are you okay?

JEFF

I'm fine *(He gets up and sits at the table)* This is the most unusual start of any first date I've ever had.

JANET

Oh, I'm sorry.

JEFF

Don't be sorry. I said it was unusual not bad. The fact is I hate first dates. They're so stiff and uncomfortable. Kind of like tight boots. It's nice to fall on my butt at the beginning rather than the end of a date. How do you feel about first dates?

JANET

Usually they're a cross between a root canal and getting a coffee stain on your white blouse right before an important business meeting.

JEFF

How about we pretend this is our second date. You don't have to ask me about where I grew up or what books I'm reading.

JANET

You read books?

JEFF

Sure I read books. Don't you?

JANET

I love to read. It's just that I don't meet too many men these days that actually read books. So what book are you reading?

JEFF

"Lovely Bones" It's about a nondescript man that kills a young girl. It's a difficult book to get through.

JANET

I know. I read it last year.

JEFF

Okay I might as well jump in. How do you feel about the theater and museums?

JANET

Both on my list of things I like to do.

JEFF

Yankees or Mets?

JANET

Mets. Hate the designated hitter.

JEFF

Fat Elvis or thin Elvis?

JANET

Thin.

JEFF

Beatles or Rolling Stones?

JANET

Stones. Even if they are rocking out in their eighties.

JEFF

Democrat or Republican?

JANET

I think they both suck.

JEFF

My God this is freaky.

JANET

Okay. My turn. Beer or Wine?

JEFF

Never liked the taste of beer. Love wine

JANET

Favorite Star Trek Captain?

JEFF

Jean Luc Picard. Most people would say Captain Kirk, but I never liked him.

JANET

This is really scary. I've never had this much in common with anyone before.

JEFF

Me neither. So does this mean you would like to have another date?

JANET

Yes if you're asking.

JEFF

I'm asking. *(They smile at each other)* Would you like to go out to dinner?

JANET

That would be great. My Mom will be so happy I met someone nice and normal on the Internet who actually has a job. Acquisitions right?

JEFF

Acquisitions...yeah that's right. There's just one thing I need to do first. (*He stands up and pulls out a gun and shoots it into the ceiling*) Listen up everyone. If you want to live, give me your money. **NOW!**

BLACK OUT - END OF ACT 1**ACT II****NARRATOR (Older Woman)**

(*She is pushed out on to the stage and is obviously not happy*). It was inevitable I would have to take my place on this chair. The others liked doing it. I would rather have passed. The fact is - I've always been so much more comfortable with a script. Now the playwright says "Go out there and wing it." What the heck kind of direction is that? I told him, "It's your job to tell me what to say." He said his wife says, "He's too controlling and that he should allow the actors to express themselves." I really wish that woman would just go read a cookbook! Okay, so here goes (*she stares silently at the audience for 10 seconds or so*). So how am I doing so far? Alright, so what can be so hard? I just tell you something about myself or life or death. (*Looks pleased with an idea*). How about I invite all of you to attend my funeral? I understand it's going to be a very nice affair. Enjoy!

(*Old Man enters and puts his suit coat on a chair. He then goes over to a table S.L. and begins to talk to a photo of his dead wife. He speaks with an educated Spanish accent.*

OLD MAN

So you were first. Didn't expect that. You were the one who always watched what you ate. You hardly drank and you never smoked. I figured you'd last forever. At least my forever. *(Angry)* It really pisses me off that you died on me. *(Sadly)* Who's going to worry about me now? You know I never liked being alone. Even when you went to the store I would get restless alone. I think that's why I wanted to get married young. The fact is I was ready to be married at twelve. I could never have been a swinging bachelor. I've never understood why people would want to live alone. Seems so sad. I guess I'll find out now. *(Young Man and Woman enter from UC and walk down to the old man.)*

YOUNG MAN

Dad are you alright?

OLD MAN

No I'm not alright. I'm upset. I'm angry! I'm confused. How could she up and die on me?

YOUNG WOMAN

Dad. It was an aneurism. She didn't even know she had it.

OLD MAN

Yeah...blah, blah, blah. I know. The Doctor told me what happened. It's still not fair.

YOUNG MAN

Dad everyone is waiting outside. It's time to do the graveside ceremony and then we're having a nice simple reception for the mourners at our house.

OLD MAN

That's good. She would have liked that. She always liked nice simple receptions. What the heck. People gotta eat. Life goes on. Right?

YOUNG WOMAN

That's right Dad. Life is for the living. Mom wouldn't want you to be sad.

OLD MAN

Now there you're wrong. She was a very competitive person. If she knew I was going to outlive her, she would have killed me first.

YOUNG MAN

Dad!

OLD MAN

Richard, my boy, your Mother was a complicated woman. She liked to be in control. That's why she hated to fly. She wanted to be the one driving even though she wasn't a pilot. She never liked giving anyone else the opportunity to screw up. All these years I followed her orders. It never occurred to her to tell me what comes next. I really don't know what I'm going to do without her.

YOUNG MAN

We'll work it out Dad. We're here for you. Whatever you need. I promise.

OLD MAN

That's sweet of both of you. The fact is, I'm going to figure this one out on my own. It's time to start making my own decisions. I've been thinking about a book I read when I was a kid. It was an autobiography by George Abbot. He was a big Broadway Director. I think he lived to over a hundred. At any rate, his wife of fifty plus years died when he was about eighty. He says in the book that the rata tat rata tat sound of the train tracks as he rode the train home after the funeral kept

repeating in his mind the phrase “I’m Free” rata tat- “ I’m free” rata tat. At the time I thought that was strange. So cold. Maybe that’s why I still remember it after all these years. But now, in someways, I understand it. I now only have me to worry about. She’s gone and for the first time in my entire adult life, I only have to consider how I feel. Does that sound selfish?

YOUNG WOMAN

Dad you’ve had a shock. You’re not thinking rationally yet. Things will look clearer when you’ve had time to deal with it all.

OLD MAN

(He rubs her hand) Thanks sweetie. Why don’t you two go outside and tell them I’ll be right out. I just need a minute to pull myself together.

YOUNG MAN

Okay, Dad. Take your time. *(They exit)*

OLD MAN

(He stands D.C. as the sound of train become louder he begins to move to rhythem) Rata tat - I’m free - Rata tat - I’m free Rata tat - I’m free- Rata Tat (He looks up and realizes he is free. He then strikes a flamenco dancer pose and begins to dance toward his wife’s picture. He throws her a guess and picks up his jacket. He puts the jacket over his shoulder and exits as if he is a matador)

Fade Out

NARRATOR (Old Grumpy Guy)

(Lights up on the narrator DL).

I’m baaack. Did you miss me? Let’s face it those other guys couldn’t tell a decent joke. I figured after the funeral you could use some cheering up. I know I come off a little flippant. The fact is I’m the biggest crier at a funeral. Just can’t help it. It’s not that I’m afraid of death. It just makes me feel so sad for the ones left

behind. And then it makes me feel so hungry. I remember an old joke that Myron Cohen used to tell. I don't know if you know who he was. A master storyteller who used to appear regularly on the old Ed Sullivan T.V. show. He didn't do one liners or insult people in the audience. He told stories. Funny stories. At any rate, he told this story about an old fellow lying on his deathbed in New York. He's lying there when his adult son arrives from California. The old man is so happy that his son came to say goodbye. He says to his son, "I am now ready to go. But before I go, please bring me a slice of Mama's apple strudel. With that strudel on my lips, I can die a happy man." The son says, "Of course Papa I'll get the strudel." After a few minutes the son returns and the old man croaks out "the strudel?" "I'm sorry Papa", the son says "but Mama says the strudel is for after the funeral." Now I know that death is a big deal, but you've got to admit that they don't write material like that anymore. You know what would be really nice after a depressing funeral. How about a wedding? Weddings are so optimistic. The lovers future is all before them. They haven't screwed anything up yet..We all smile as they take their vows even though we know there is a 50/50 chance they won't make it. Still maybe they'll be on the side that succeeds or, at least, survives marriage. At any rate, the band is cool and the food is hot, and the chicken dance awaits us. *(He does a little chicken dance as the lights fade).*

*(Bride and her Dad are on one side of the stage and the Groom and his Mom are on the other side. The lighting should indicate that they are in separate rooms)
(Lights up on Groom and his Mother)*

MOM

Are you okay honey? You seem very nervous.

GROOM

(Trying to put studs into his tuxedo shirt) Mom, of course I'm nervous. I'm getting married. It's a big step. It's scary. You know I've seen this same scene in a million movies. It's always so predictable. I hate being a cliché. I'm a grown man. It's time to stand up and be counted or co-joined or whatever. *(He sits.)*

MOM

(Goes behind him and rubs his shoulder) You know it's not too late. You can still change your mind.

GROOM

(Jumps up) Thanks Mom. That's really helpful.

MOM

Don't get all smart with me. I was just trying to reassure you.

GROOM

Telling me I have time to run for my life is not reassuring. *(He shrugs his shoulders and takes a deep breath)*. Mom I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap at you. I'm just a little tense. I just wish we weren't having a big wedding with three hundred people. All these witnesses put a lot of pressure on a relationship. What if we don't make it? There'll be hundreds of people out there who will say - "I knew they wouldn't make it!"

MOM

Stop it! Do you love her?

GROOM

Yes.

MOM

Is her happiness more important than yours?

GROOM

Yes.

MOM

Then you're good to go. Just remember if things don't work out...

GROOM

Mom..

MOM

Kidding. Just kidding. *(She gives him a kiss)* You'll be fine. You'll both be fine. Take it from me. I always know how things are going to end. Don't I always know who did it in the mystery movies?

GROOM

That's true Mom. Colonel Mustard is going to bless us with the candelabra in the library.

MOM

You really are a little smart ass.

GROOM

I know. I get it from your side of the family.
(Fade out on Groom and up on the Bride and her Father)

FATHER

(Pacing) You didn't do anything stupid like signing a prenuptial, did you?

BRIDE

(She is facing forward as if looking in a mirror as she adjust her wedding veil).
Come on Dad. You taught me better than that. Anyway, he loves me so much he wouldn't dare ask me.

FATHER

Good! The last thing I need is for you to wind up like your sister. Pregnant, broke, and in my **guest room**.

BRIDE

You're so sentimental. Just relax. Richard is a really nice guy. We'll be fine.

FATHER

I can't believe I'm buying dinner for three hundred people. Fifty bucks a head for soggy salad and rubber chicken. You better stay married or I'll sue you for misappropriation of funds. Or should I say misappropriation of my 401K?

BRIDE

Okay, enough about money. Give me some advice. Something I can really use. You're suppose to be bucking me up. So start bucking.

FATHER

You're right. I'm sorry. It's not your fault that your sister married a jerk. It's not your fault that I married your Mother. That would be your older sister's fault!

BRIDE

Mom was pregnant when you got married?

FATHER

You know me and you know your Mother. Do we look like the type of people who would choose to be together?

BRIDE

Then why did you get married?

FATHER

Because it was a different time, and if you knocked up someone, you did the right thing. Anyway, I'm pretty sure we loved each other at the time.

BRIDE

So when did you discover you didn't love each other?

FATHER

I kinda realized it when I got the bill for the Sexy Couples Resort in the Caribbean.

BRIDE

What's wrong with that?

FATHER

She went with someone named Janet.

BRIDE

Mom is gay?

FATHER

Yeah. She said I drove her to it. At any rate, that was the end of that. The fact is we are both happier now. Listen honey. Just because Mom and I and your sister and the jerk didn't make it doesn't mean you and Richard won't have a great life - provided he doesn't change sides.

BRIDE

Richard isn't gay.

FATHER

Neither was your Mother when I married her. What I'm saying is stuff happens you won't expect. I can't begin to prepare you for every curve ball life will throw. Just remember that I love you, and if worse comes to worse, I have two guest rooms.

(Fade Out)

NARRATOR (Young Man)

Hi! How are you doing so far? Hope you're not too confused by all the story changes. The playwright did title this "LifeCycles" His wife told me he wanted to create a whole spectrum of situations that the audience could relate to. Of course no one would have gone through all of these cycles - at least I hope not, but hopefully you can empathize with them. So let's review. So far we've seen young married couple, old married couple, old and young generations dealing with each other, old guys dealing with modern times, guilt, dating, death and a wedding. Be interesting to see what's left. I can remember that my Dad once told me he went to a show in San Francisco when he was in his twenties called "The Improv." Actors would create scenes based on suggestions shouted out from the audience. His favorite bit was if the scene wasn't successful the audience would shout out "die". like in a Roman Colosseum. The actors who had failed then had to come up with a really creative way to die on stage. Now, how's that for life and death pressure? At any rate, you don't get to put your thumbs up or down tonight. That is reserved for the Playwright's wife and she is one tough...well you get the idea. Oh, I just remembered what comes next. It's time to play what's yours is mine and what's mine is mine. Gotta run.

(Fade out on Narrator and up on SC. Set is arranged for a hearing. One table in the center and two chairs on either side. The Old Man and his young female attorney are on one side, and the Older Woman and her young male attorney are on the other side.)

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

(Checking off items on a sheet) Okay, I think that takes care of the division of property.

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

Not so fast. My client has one more item that has not been disposed of yet.

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

What item?

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

The burial plots. They have not been distributed yet, and they have substantial value.

HUSBAND

Susan are you kidding? You got the house, half the business, a new car, and financial support until I die and you're worried about the burial plots?

WIFE

I want everything I deserve.

HUSBAND

(Angry and frustrated) Believe me I would love to give you everything you deserve!

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

Please Mr Stern let me handle this.

HUSBAND

So handle it.

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

So what does your client want?

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

She wants the burial plots.

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

Both of them?

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

Yes, both of them.

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

She's only entitled to one. The other one belongs to my client.

WIFE

They're a matched set. The contract says we can't split them up.

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

Please Mrs. Stern I'll handle this.

WIFE

Okay. Handle it already. Just make sure I get the plots.

HUSBAND

Over my dead body you'll get those plots!

WIFE

However you choose is okay by me!

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

Please Mr Stern calm down. Okay how about we sell the plots and divide the proceeds?

WIFE

Sweetie, since you're a lawyer you'll understand the contract Mr. Brilliant here signed thirty years ago says we can give away the plots, but we can't resell them.

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

Then why don't you keep yours and my client will keep his.

WIFE AND HUSBAND

No way is that going to happen! *(They look at each other amazed they both had the exact response).*

HUSBAND

Listen, I've spent 49 years with this woman. I'm not spending eternity next to her!

WIFE

You should be so lucky!

HUSBAND

So lucky? You would still lay there like you're dead.

WIFE

It's always about sex with you. Why don't you grow up and get over it.

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

Please Mrs. Stern this isn't helping. Let's just see if we can work this out amicably.

WIFE

I don't want to be amicable or reasonable or fair. I want him plotless.

HUSBAND

Okay, how about this? If you promise to die first, I will give you my plot, and you can lie in the middle.

WIFE

And what if you die first?

HUSBAND

If I die first, you win! Does that make you happy?

WIFE

(Sadly) No. It won't make me happy.

YOUNG MAN ATTORNEY

So we have an agreement?

YOUNG WOMAN ATTORNEY

I'll write up the paperwork. *(The two lawyers rise shake hands and exit)*

HUSBAND

You'd be sad if I died?

WIFE

Sure I'd be sad. I'm sad we didn't make it to our 50th anniversary. I'm sad you don't love me. I'm sad your side of the bed is never wrinkled in the morning.

HUSBAND

(Stands up and goes around to her side of the table. He offers her his hand and she takes it and rises).

What the hell are we doing here. How did this happen?

WIFE

I don't know. We just weren't happy anymore. I don't remember when we became unhappy.

HUSBAND

I thought if we split up I'd feel free. I thought I would be happy without you. The fact is - I'm not. I'm sorry we didn't make it to our 50th. I never wanted to hurt you. I was just mad and now I can't even remember what I was mad about.

WIFE

So now what?

HUSBAND

Let's make it to 50. *(She smiles and they kiss)*

WIFE

Did you think when we bought those plots they would keep us together?

HUSBAND

Yes - forever.

(Fade Out)

YOUNG WOMAN NARRATOR

(She smiles and waves to the people in the audience and she goes DL). Nice to see you. Do you have good seats? Can you hear okay? Wonderful. Okay let's get down to brass tacks. I really resent that the young guy said I'm insecure and guilt ridden. I'm very secure. I just feel bad when I hurt someone's feelings. That's not being guilt ridden. I'm just sensitive which he obviously isn't. Now normally I would never say anything derogatory about a fellow actor, but he really is a bit too much. He thinks he's so cool. Well I think calling someone insecure isn't cool. I would never treat someone I work with that way. I've been talking to the Playwright's wife about it. I kind of suggested he might suffer from a disease and die early in the second act. I didn't feel the least bit guilty about it either. So there!

(Fade out on Young Woman and lights up on Young Man DR)

YOUNG MAN

(Coughing) Sorry about that. Ever since intermission I've felt under the weather. It's almost like I've come down with some kind of disease. Have you noticed that the young woman in the play has been a bit distant lately? I wonder if I said something to upset her. I was going to ask her out for a drink after the show, but now I'm not sure that would be a good idea. I thought she was nice, but lately she's been kind of stuck up. Maybe I'm just being insecure. *(Coughs)* Anyway I don't feel so hot. *(Fade out on young man and up on young woman)*

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm feeling guilty about having him killed. He really wasn't that bad. To be honest, I am a little insecure and guilt ridden. So I talked to the Playwright's wife again. I suggested instead of having him die maybe he could just have shooting pains in his shoulder. She seemed cool with it.

(She puts a needle into the doll's shoulder as her light fades)

YOUNG MAN

(Lights up on young man).

(Rubbing his shoulder in obvious pain) God that hurts! What the heck is going on? First the cough and feeling like I was going to die, and now this shooting pain in my shoulder. At least the cough went away. Do you ever feel that matters outside of your control are affecting you? You know some people believe in predestination. They think everything is planned out and you really don't have any control over what's going to occur. For instance, I've been thinking of taking a chance and asking that young woman out anyway. I wonder if that's predestined and I shouldn't do it. Or if it's not, I should.

YOUNG WOMAN

You know in some ways he's kind of cute. I wouldn't mind if he'd ask me out for a drink. I think we might even hit it off. Oh well, if it's meant to be, it will be.

(Fade Out)

(Lights up on older couple. She's straightening up and he is taking a nap in his chair.)

RUTHIE

(She goes over to Jack and gives him a nudge) Come on Jack wake up already. Al will be here anytime now.

JACK

(Stretching) Okay, okay I'm up. Why are you so nervous? It's just Al. We've known him for over fifty years. Can you believe that? I never thought I'd know another person for fifty years. I can still remember the day we met. We were in the seventh grade. This other kid was giving me a hard time at lunch recess. He was pushing me around. I was the shortest kid in the seventh grade. Even the girls were taller than me. I hadn't had my growth spurt yet, and this kid figured I would be an easy victim to build his reputation as a tough guy. Any way, all of sudden

Al walks up and gives this a kid a shove in his back and knocks him flat on his stomach. The other kid jumped up and was ready to come at Al, but then he saw Al was just smiling at him. Like he didn't give a damn. That must have unnerved my bully, because he just turned and walked away. That was Al. Nothing ever scared him. We became friends on the spot.

RUTHIE

I know sweetheart, but could you put on your shoes, and tuck in your shirt. You look like you just woke up.

JACK

I did just wake up.

RUTHIE

I know that. I just don't want you to look like you just woke up.

JACK

Okay Boss whatever you say. *(He gets up and brushes his fingers through his hair, and tucks in his shirt).* Is that better?

RUTHIE

Put on your shoes. *(Door bell rings)* I'll get the door. *(Ruthie exits to answer the door and Jack puts on his shoes.)*

RUTHIE

(Entering with Al) So look who's here.

JACK

(Goes over and hugs Al) Hi Al. How are you doin'?

66

AL

Hi Jack. I'm dying. Just dropped in to say goodbye.

JACK

(Laughing) You're always the joker. Come on and have a seat. What are you drinking these days?

AL

I gave up drinking, smoking, and salt.

JACK

No wonder you're dying. Nothing to live for anymore.

RUTHIE

I've been trying to watch Jack's diet too. So you look good. What have you been up to? It must be five years since we saw you.

AL

Well, I retired about three years ago. Ever since then I've been traveling quite a bit. I even went on a safari.

JACK

What was that like?

AL

The best part was a hot air balloon ride over the Savannah. We saw thousands of animals. Huge migrating herds of wildebeests. *(He stares into the audience as he recalls it all)*. Really something to see.

JACK

Wow. That's amazing! I wish we'd travel more.

AL

Well you still can. You've got plenty of time now.

JACK

You know the old saying. When I was young I had the money and no time. Now I have the time and no money.

AL

Are you guys okay? Financially speaking.

JACK

Yeah, yeah. We're fine. We've got enough to get by. We're just not going on safari anytime soon.

RUTHIE

How about I get us something. I have a nice cinnamon bundt cake. Do you still drink coffee?

AL

De caf.

RUTHIE

Coming up! *(She exits to the kitchen offstage.)*

JACK

So are you seeing anyone?

AL

Like a woman?

JACK

Yeah, like a woman. You're the only straight guy I know who never married. I always assumed you were a ladies man. I kind of envied you. I even lived vicariously through you.

AL

That's funny. I always envied you.

JACK

You gotta be kidding. I've never done anything. You got the great job, the sports car, the exciting life!

AL

Yeah, that's true. But you got Ruthie.

JACK

You're still not holding a grudge? Honest Al I don't know why she chose me. I always thought you'd be the one she chose.

AL

Me too.

(Ruthie enters from the kitchen with a tray of cakes)

RUTHIE

Here we go gentlemen. *(She puts the tray down)* So what did I miss?

AL

I was just telling Jack that I was always envious because you chose him.

RUTHIE

(Somewhat embarrassed) Oh that's sweet, but I'm sure you've done fine.

AL

Not really. After you chose Jack, I kind of lost interest in social activities. That's why I was so successful at work. Nothing to distract me. I've been thinking about something for a long time. I always wanted to ask you a question, but I don't want to embarrass you. Do you mind if I ask it now?

(Ruthie and Jack look at each other confused.)

JACK

Sure, Al. You can ask us anything. You know that.

AL

Actually, the question is for Ruthie. I always wanted to know why you chose Jack over me. *(Ruthie looks at both men concerned)*

RUTHIE

The fact is, Al, you never asked.

JACK

What? You mean if Al had asked you first you would have said yes?

RUTHIE

Sure. The fact is I really liked you both. So I decided whoever asked me first, I would say yes. People say you can't love two people at the same time. I know you can. I've always loved you both. I still do.

JACK

Are you kidding me? After all of these years you're telling me you're in love with another man?

AL

I never asked? I can't believe it. All these years I thought you didn't choose me, and the fact is I never gave you the choice.

RUTHIE

The answer to both of your questions is yes. Jack I do love Al. I also love you. Al, yes you never gave me the choice to choose you. So there you have it. For forty years I've considered myself the luckiest woman in the world. I found two men to love and they loved me.

JACK

I find this very disturbing.

RUTHIE

Honey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you. Could you do me a favor and let me talk to Al alone for a minute.

JACK

(Shaken) Yeah, sure. I'll get the coffee I guess. *(He exits to the kitchen looking back at them as he leaves.)*

AL

I feel terrible. I never meant to upset Jack. I just always wondered. That's all.

RUTHIE

(She goes over to the chairs and sits down and pats the chair next to her) Al come here and sit down. I need to talk to you. *(Al sits down next to her)* Remember the movie 'The Graduate'? I loved that movie. It came out about a year or so before I married Jack. The last scene always made me wonder. Remember the Dustin Hoffman character bangs on the church window and stops Elaine from marrying the young doctor- to- be. She then escapes with Ben - that was his name. They jump onto a bus, and are sitting on the back bench. She's in a wedding gown, and he's a sweaty mess with his car out of gas probably miles away in the other direction. She's sitting there in her gown with a look of what have I just done, and did I do the right thing? He's got this goofy grin on his face. They never say what happens next. I've always wondered. I think everyone who saw the movie wondered if they would make it. To Hollywood's credit, just for once, they didn't make a sequel. *(Jack is standing in the kitchen doorway listening)* So here's the deal. You and Jack were very different. You were the bad boy, which I must admit I found attractive. You were fearless, and always seemed to get what you wanted without having to try too hard. Jack, on the other hand, was quiet and kind. The fact is on the day he proposed he was braver than you. He was willing to risk being rejected, and took a chance. For over forty years, he has given up things he wanted to do to make sure that the kids and me got to do what we wanted. To look at him you wouldn't think, but he is the bravest man I've ever known. So answer to your question. I have no doubt at all that I made the right choice. *(Jack steps back into the kitchen)*

AL

I'm sorry Ruthie. I shouldn't have brought this up. *(They both stand up)* It's just when you're getting older, and you're alone you wonder if you made the right decisions. Listen, tell Jack I said goodbye. *(He gives her a kiss on the cheek and exit. Ruthie then walks downstage and peers off into the distance. Jack enters and walks down to her. He puts his arm around her.)*

JACK

The sky is really red tonight. Should be a hot one tomorrow.

(Fade Out)

(Lights up on Grumpy Narrator DL) Stage is set with two chairs

GRUMPY NARRATOR

Have you ever said to someone “What are you nuts? Are you crazy?” Seems like a fairly common statement. No one really means it when they say it. It’s kind of an expression. A rhetorical expression. We don’t really expect an answer. The fact is - if you were really crazy you wouldn’t know it. You would think everyone else was crazy. They were the different ones. Not you. I once read a statement by George Bernard Shaw that the Earth is an insane asylum for the rest of the Universe. It’s an interesting thought when you think about it. All the planets in the Universe would have simply dumped all of their crazies here. If we’re all nuts, that would explain a lot. Welcome to “The Analysis”

(Set is for a Family Counselor. Just a couple of chairs are needed).

(Janet Knaus is a woman in her fifties. She is professionally dressed)

DR. KNAUS

(Knock at the door. She has an Eastern European Accent) Come in.

ROBERT

(Robert Stein a man in his fifties. Seems to have OCD. He twitches and waves at imaginary flies)

Dr. Knaus?

DR. KNAUS

Yes.

ROBERT

I'm Robert Stein. I think I have an appointment. (*Nervous*) Sorry I'm a little early. I can't help it. I'm always early for everything. Drives my family crazy.

DR. KNAUS

(*Looks at her watch and rises*) Oh yes, Mr Stein. You are a bit early, but if you would like to begin, that would be fine.

ROBERT

Sure, as long as I'm here. Where should I sit?

DR. KNAUS

Wherever you're comfortable.

ROBERT

Can't say I'll be comfortable anywhere. Never been to a shrink before. Sorry. I hope that didn't insult you.

DR. KNAUS

I've been called worse. Please take a seat. (*They both sit*) So Robert how about we call today a "get to know you better session". Let's find out what's upsetting you. Is that okay?

ROBERT

Not really. At \$150 an hour, I just assume we skip the small talk and get down to the nitty gritty. You see, I don't really **need** to see you. I'm only here so my family will get off of my back. They're the ones who really need your help.

DR. KNAUS

Why do you think your family wanted you to come and see me?

ROBERT

Good question. I really don't know. I mean, they say I'm not involved. The fact is - they get all upset about everything. Almost everyday there is another crisis. At one point, I thought about keeping a journal of all the different crises just to show them. *(He ticks them off of his fingers)*

Monday - The computer blue screened. Whatever that is.

Tuesday - The dog doesn't look well.

Wednesday - Our grown children don't like us.

Thursday - Our friends don't like us.

Friday - You never take me anywhere.

Saturday - I'm too tired to go somewhere we were suppose to go.

Everyday there's another problem. It's not that I'm not involved. I just don't want to be involved. I've lost interest. All I want is peace and quiet. Is that being crazy?

DR. KNAUS

So you feel your family is too demanding?

ROBERT

That's a little simplistic. They just feel things differently than I do. They say I have emotional defensive walls. What's wrong with that? Walls are a good thing. I read Robert Frost. He wrote a great poem, about good fences make good neighbors. I don't think there is anything wrong with staying calm is a crisis.

DR. KNAUS

But do you think your apparent calmness might make you family think that you don't care?

ROBERT

(Sarcastically) You think? Why do you think I'm here?

DR. KNAUS

There is no reason to be defensive. I was just trying to clarify your family relationship. I'm not here to judge you.

ROBERT

I'm sorry. I guess I'm a little sensitive about being here. I just don't like talking about personal things with a stranger. I've always felt people should handle their own problems. Now I understand that would put you out of business, but that's how I feel.

DR. KNAUS

So getting back to your family. Do you care when they get upset?

ROBERT

Not really.

DR. KNAUS

Really?

ROBERT

Really.

DR. KNAUS

I've been doing this for a very long time, and I've never had anyone admit that. Don't you care what I think about you? What kind of person you are?

ROBERT

Not really.

DR. KNAUS

Really? Then, what do you care about?

ROBERT

I care about not being blamed for everyone else being unhappy. I feel like I'm the emotional whipping boy in our family. Everyone is unhappy and it's my fault. The fact is I think in some ways I'm an emotional sociopath. I've watched enough crime shows on television to know that a sociopath doesn't have any conscience when they kill someone. I would never kill anyone. I just wouldn't care if they kill themselves. I guess what I'm saying is, it's not a matter of being involved in all of their problems. It's a matter of not caring about their problems. What does that mean? Am I nuts?

DR. KNAUS

We really don't use terms like nuts.

ROBERT

(Looking at his watch) Come on Doc. Tick. Tock. Let's not get tied up in semantics. Just give it to me straight. Is there something wrong with me?

DR. KNAUS

Well, I can't diagnose you on the spot. Do you think you're a nice person?

ROBERT

A nice person? Funny you should ask. Yes, I think I'm a nice person. I've never done anything mean on purpose to anyone. Could that be the definition of a nice person?

DR. KNAUS

Yes and no. You haven't done anything mean to anyone on purpose, but have you done something nice for someone without having to?

ROBERT

Now that's the \$150 question. You're right. I've always done what is expected of me. By doing the right thing, I guess I've always thought that made me a good person. A nice person. But if I only did what was required, is that enough?

DR. KNAUS

Well is it?

ROBERT

You bet your sweet ass it is. *(He jumps up and runs over and shakes her hand)*
 You are worth every dollar you charge. When I came in here today, I thought maybe there is something wrong with me. Now I realize I'm fine. I'm happy. Thanks Doc you cured me. *(He laughs as he exits.)*

DR. KNAUS

(Picks up a small tape recorder and begins to speak into it)

Patient Robert Stein arrived early for his 43rd appointment with me. Still insists he is here for the first time. Haven't been able to get him to focus on his wife's death, and his attempted suicide.

(Fade Out)

GRUMPY NARRATOR

Times have been tough lately. I went to Vegas, and I was amazed at the amount of seniors working in the casinos. People thought they were ready to retire, and found out how expensive retirement can be. As for me, I'm never going to retire. As long as I can find a job, I'm working. I read years ago that more people die

sooner after retiring than those who continue to work. I don't know why that is so, but you can't argue with insurance actuarial tables. The, Casino management have it figured it out. Seniors work hard and, don't take sick days. They really want the job. The Playwright calls, this next scene "The Interview". Have your social security card, photo i.d., and a number two pencil ready.

(Fade out on narrator and up on two chairs facing each other with a desk between.)

Old man enters and looks around. He is holding an application and takes a seat.)

YOUNG WOMAN

(Enters and walks over to him holding out her hand) Mr. Seagal.

MR. SEAGAL

(He corrects her pronunciation of his name). Seegull. *(Shakes her hand)*
How do you do?

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm fine thank you. Please take a seat and let me see your application. *(He gives her the form and she begins to read it.)* I see you were in the service. The Gulf War?

MR. SEAGAL

No. Vietnam.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wasn't that in the sixties?

MR. SEAGAL

And seventies too. It lasted over ten years.

YOUNG WOMAN

I see. I see. Mr. Seagal, your resume is very interesting. You've been an executive. You've traveled extensively. You speak three languages.

MR. SEAGAL

Four actually - if you count Latin. But since it's pretty much a dead language, most people don't count it. *(He laughs self consciously)*

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm just wondering if you would be happy working here. You might get bored.

MR. SEAGAL

Young lady, excuse me what is your name?

YOUNG WOMAN

Tiffany. My name is Tiffany Rawls.

MR. SEAGAL

Nice to meet you Ms. Rawls.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, you can call me Tiffany. Everyone does.

MR. SEAGAL

I'm sure they do Ms Rawls. I mean Tiffany. You know what is really boring Tiffany? Not having any money is boring. As long as you pay me, I promise not to be bored.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's just that the job we have available right now is in Customer Service. All day long you have to deal with unhappy customers. It's a really demanding job.

MR. SEAGAL

Tiffany that's exactly why you need to hire me for this job. Your clients are unhappy dealing with people younger than they are. They want to talk to someone who understands their problems. Someone who gets pissed off when they call someone on the phone and gets voice mail or fourteen options on the phone to choose from. None of which is to actually talk to a human being. Which is why they called in the first place! Let me ask you a question Tiffany. How long does your average Customer Service person stay?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well I don't know exactly.

MR. SEAGAL

You do the hiring don't you? You must have a general idea.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well I suppose, two or three months. As I said, it's a very demanding job.

MR. SEAGAL

So let me get this right. You have to interview and train a new person to do this job five or six times a year. Has it occurred to you that you're hiring the wrong people?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well I never thought of it that way. Well, Mr Seagal, I'll keep your resume on file, and let you know if something that fits your background comes up.

MR. SEAGAL

Come on Tiffany. What's the real reason you're not offering me this job that no one else wants?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well to be frank, you're a little scary. You just seem angry.

MR. SEAGAL

I see. Have you ever noticed that when TV Reporters interview the neighbors of a mass murderer they always say the same thing? "He was such a nice quiet man. He never caused any trouble. Everyone in the neighborhood liked him".

YOUNG WOMAN

I guess so. *(Stands up)* But I don't like being bullied. I don't have to take this anymore. Dealing with people all day long that only want you to give them a job. They only care about their problems. No one cares about my feelings. Enough is enough! I quit! *(She stomps out and Mr. Seagal gets up and sits in her chair)*

MR SEAGAL

(Picks up the phone and pushes the intercom button) Hello. Who is this? Heather, nice to meet you. I'm Mr. Seagal in Human Resources. Would you please send in the next applicant.

(Fade Out)

(The stage is dark except for the young couple holding a baby wrapped in a blanket DL and the Old Couple standing in half lights UR. These are the same characters from the beginning Act 1. Two chairs are by the young couple SC).

RACHEL

I wish your parents had been around long enough to see him. They would have been so proud.

DAVID

It's kinda of funny you would say that. I was just thinking the same thing. All those years they kept hinting about us having a baby, and when we finally do they're not here to enjoy it.

RACHEL

I feel kind of cheated. Not just for me, but for Judy too. She'll never know her grandparents. It's just not fair. I finally started to get along with your Mom and now she's gone. It's so strange that they would both die so close to each other.

DAVID

I know. I asked the Doctor about that. He said when a couple is together for that long it's not unusual for them to pass one after the other. It's as if their lives depended on each other.

(Lights lower to half light on the young couple and go up to full light on the Ruthie and Jack).

RUTHIE

Did you ever hear such crap?

JACK

(Looking around worried) Ruthie don't talk like that.

RUTHIE

Why not? We finally have a grand daughter and we can't hold her. This really sucks!

JACK

I know. I know. The important thing is she is healthy. She's a beautiful baby girl. We should be proud and not pissed off. At least we have each other and they have each other too. It's like everything came full cycle.

RUTHIE

Well I'm not ready to get off of this merry-go-round! I want a few more spins.

JACK

I don't think we get to choose when the ride is over. When it's your time it's...

RUTHIE

Well I'm not ready. I'm not leaving until I'm good and ready!

JACK

So what are you going to do? Tell God you have other plans.

RUTHIE

God has nothing to do with this. That son of bitch playwright is the one who did this! Well I'm not going to take it. He's going to write a better ending or I quit!
(Main Narrator enters nervously. He looks around as he goes up to Ruthie and Jack).

GRUMPY OLD NARRATOR

(In a stage whisper) What the hell is going on here? The playwright, is really upset. He says you're off script. He says to say the words the way he wrote them.

RUTHIE

No!

GRUMPY OLD NARRATOR

What do you mean no?

RUTHIE

I mean no. I don't like the ending. Tell him to change it.

GRUMPY OLD NARRATOR

You don't get a vote. He's the playwright. You're supposed to say what he writes.

RUTHIE

And if I don't what's he going to do? Kill me? Oh that's right he's already done that! Sometimes a woman has to stand up for what she believes in. And I believe I should get to hold my granddaughter. So you can tell that pompous ass of a playwright that I've decided to change the ending of this play. *(The Grumpy Narrator crosses D.L. and stands away from the other actors)*

JACK

What do you have in mind?

(Ruthie takes Jack's hand and begins to walk towards the chairs SC. The lights begin to rise as she sits on the empty chair next to Rachel. Jack stands behind her)

RUTHIE

Come on Rachel let me have her for a while.
(Rachel smiles and hands the baby over to Ruthie).

RACHEL

Enjoy. You deserve it.

(Jack and David look at each other and shrug. Rachel sits down on the chair next to Ruthie holding her grand daughter. David and Jack stand behind them forming a tableau. The lights around them fade and one spot is left on the four of them which begins to slowly fade as they all smile at the baby).

GRUMPY NARRATOR

Well here we are again. We return to the beginning. A full cycle.
In Life Cycles there are some tears and a bit of warped fun
Each actor has had their 15 minutes of fame in the sun.
The Playwright informs this show has had it's run.
With that said. Turn off the lights. We're done.

BLACK OUT**THE END**