

QUE SERA SERA

A One Act Play

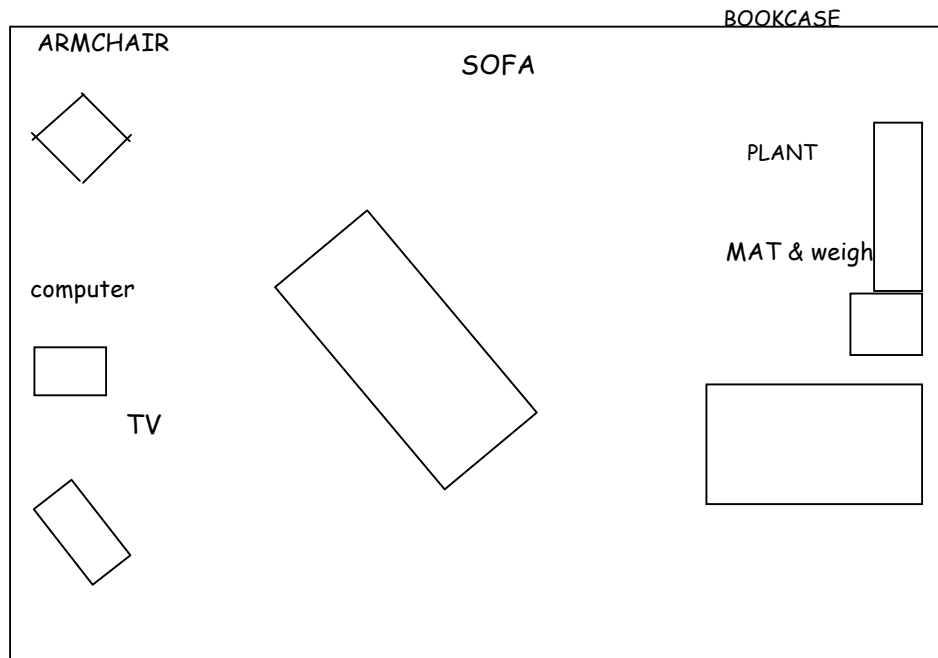
- by -

Jane Eastwood

October, 2014

EXIT stage RIGHT
STAGE PLAN

EXIT stage LEFT
for QUE SERA SERA



CHARACTERS :

SUZANNE: an elderly woman

RON: an elderly man

TIME :

Present

LOCATION :

A Care Home

PROPS :

TV screen, laptop, sofa, armchair, cell phone, stuffed toy dog, 2 wheelchairs, bookcase, plant, yoga mat and weights

Scene 1:

(lights up. Suzanne is sitting on sofa watching TV)

Voice from TV:

Nothing but bad news today, I'm afraid. The Russians have moved troops into

Lithuania. The Pentagon has been hacked by the Chinese. There's been a major

earthquake in Chile. Forty women and girls have been abducted in Somalia ...

(enter Ron in wheel chair stage LEFT)

Ron: (sarcastically) Another sunny day at Sunnyview.

Suzanne: Yup.

Ron: Can't we turn that off?

Suzanne: They took the remote.

Ron: Why?

Suzanne: Too much control in the hands of the residents, I suppose.

Ron: Is that right? Well we'll see about that. *(he wheels over to a socket and pulls out*

the plug)

Suzanne: You shouldn't have done that.

Ron: Nope.

Suzanne: You'll get in trouble.

Ron: Yup.

Suzanne: You're a trouble-maker, you are.

Ron: Yup. Nurse Ratcher'll get me ... again

(Sue laughs)

Suzanne: Why do they call it Sunnyview anyway?

Ron: They say there used to be a view out of that window. You could even see the

white rock and the pier. That was before they put up another condo high rise.

Suzanne: Probably a leaky one at that.

Ron: *(clutching his crotch)* Don't mention that word.

Suzanne: *(looks at him, raises eyebrows, smiles, sighs)*
Add that to the list of unmentionables,

eh?

Ron: They should rename it Shadyview.

Suzanne: Think of it as a New Age kind of thing ... you know, to remind us to take a sunny

view of things ...

Ron: As the sun sets on our golden age. Hmm ... the power of positive thinking, huh?

Suzanne: You should try it. *(reaches into her handbag and takes out pocket book)*

For example, the Dalai says ...

Ron: *(interrupting)* Oh Lord, here we go, 'the Deli says'
...

Suzanne: Not the 'Deli' ... he doesn't sell salami ... the Dalai

Ron: Whatever.

Suzanne: The Dalai says *(reading)* "Our task becomes one of discarding the things that

lead to suffering and accumulating the things that lead to happiness."

Ron: Well what about the things that have been discarded that used to make us

happy that we didn't choose to have discarded ... if you know what I mean?

Suzanne: Well that's impermanence. Nothing you can do about that. But up here (*taps*

head) we can change the things we don't like.

Ron: Hmm ... well they could have at least called it the 'Sunnyview Ex-Teachers Care

Home'. I mean that's what it is. That's what we are. All the residents here are

ex-teachers. I mean I don't know if they're proud of that fact but the benefactor who

funded this place was, and I sure am. People should know that. The name should

reflect that. That's meaningful. That's authentic. Besides teachers never get the credit

they deserve.

Suzanne: (*silence, thinking, starts chuckling*) Hey, Tom ...

Ron: (*interrupting*) Who's Tom?

Suzanne: (*scolding*) You know who I mean! ... YOU ... you, Tom, you.

Ron: Ron. My name is Ron, not ... the other guy ... it's Ron, Ron, Ron.

Suzanne: O.K. ... sorry, er Ron. I'm afraid I'm beginning to forget things ... and more

things ...

Ron: It's O.K. ... Ron. I'm Ron ... and you're Sally.

Suzanne: Yes, that's ... wait a minute, I'm not Sally ... I'm Suzanne.

Ron: (smiling) Just checking. Anyway you looked like you had something important to

say.

Suzanne: What were we talking about?

Ron: Re-naming this place Sunnyview Ex-Teachers Care Home.

Suzanne: There was something I was going to ask you. Something to do with Bronwyn.

Ron: Who?

Suzanne: Bronwyn, my daughter ... oh yes, now I've got it. You use a computer. Do you

have one of those ... phone things?

Ron: Cell phone? Yes I do. My son gave me one.

Suzanne: Well, maybe if I can find the number, you could call Bronwyn.

Ron: Why don't you call her?

Suzanne: No ... I don't think that's a good idea.

Ron: She lives in Australia, doesn't she?

Suzanne: Yes. I would pay you for the call.

Ron: Well, I suppose so. It seems a bit strange. Why don't you call her?

Suzanne: I can't. We're not on speaking terms. I just want to know that she's O.K.

Scene 2:

(Lights up. Ron is wheeling back and forth clearly agitated. Enter Suzanne, stage LEFT

with watering can. Goes to plant and starts watering it)

Loudspeaker Intercom:

'BINGO is starting in the Recreation Room. I repeat, BINGO is starting

in the Recreation Room.'

Ron: *(seeking Suzanne's attention)* Ratcher again!

Suzanne: You know we really shouldn't call her that. One of the residents will hear us.

Ron: Ratcher. Thatcher. The Iron Lady. Whatever. The point is they can't do that.

Suzanne: Can't do what?

Ron: They're telling me I can't stay in my room. That I've got to 'participate'.

"Why don't you join the others at Bingo?" she says. Mike always goes off to

play so I could've had the room to myself. I mean, you're upstairs ... thanks

to your extra pension, you don't have that problem. Nice room to yourself.

They leave you alone. 'Upstairs, Downstairs' ... things don't change much, do

they ... despite 'impermanence'?

Suzanne: You know I've only been here a few months but it seems to me you're always

complaining. It gets you nowhere. You just get stuck in negative thinking.

There should be a Resident's Committee to deal with complaints.

Ron: Oh yes, I forgot, you were Vice-President of the Teacher's Union.

Suzanne: *(confused)* Was I?

Ron: Committees! *(he spits the word out)*. Had enough of those in my day. You sit

around wasting time, trying to establish what you're there for in the first place. And

then after all the talk, you may or may not have some kind of resolution. And even if

you do, it gets squashed when you take it to the Administration.

Suzanne: *(indignant)* Listen! We got things done. If it hadn't been for the Union, the

class sizes would have been bigger, your wages would have been smaller, and you

might not have had a pension at all. Yes, you may be sharing a room, but at least

you've got food, shelter and medical services. Be grateful!

Ron: O.K, O.K, you're right. Maybe we should organize something.

Suzanne: The staff wouldn't be against it. There are some good people here, you know.

It's just that man at the top, the owner-operator. He's the kind of guy ... oh

never mind ...

Ron: What? The only man in the place and he's a control freak.

Suzanne: Like most men.

Ron: And most women aren't?

Suzanne: What?

Ron: Aren't control freaks?

Suzanne: Well ...

Ron: Hmm ...

Suzanne: Maybe we should avoid gender discussions. (*looks at watch*) I'm waiting for my
daughter.

Ron: Your daughter is in Australia.

Suzanne: Well I want her to come here.

Ron: I think you should call her.

Suzanne: Yes, well what were we talking about?

Ron: You had an idea for a complaints committee ... a grievance committee, I guess you'd
call it.

Susan: A grievance committee? No I was thinking more like an Educational Committee.

I mean, we haven't known each other that long but I can tell we were both

committed teachers. We cared. And I wouldn't say that about everyone here.

Ron: Who are we trying to educate? Ratcher? We'd need a special ed. Sub-Committee for

the likes of her. She's got a developmental disorder.

Suzanne: Maybe we start with the residents. Or maybe even ourselves.

Ron: A two person committee, that's more like it. We might get something done.

Suzanne: It's about learning right? What do you want to learn? What do I want to learn?

What do we need to learn? What do people need to learn?

Ron: We need to learn to stand up for our rights.

Suzanne: You can't stand up for your rights if you don't know your rights.

Ron: Do I have a right to stay in my room if I want to, or not?

Suzanne: Do I have a right to get an explanation as to why I keep forgetting things? I

know what Alzheimer's is supposed to be, but is that what this is and if so how

fast does this thing progress? I'm scared. The doctor has written to my

daughter but he doesn't tell me anything. We're kept in the dark.

Ron: Right ... and what about depression? Half the people in here are depressed in one way

or another. And what's the solution? Drugs and recreation activities. Batting balloons

around. Singing 'Irene Goodnight' for the one millioneth time. Being dressed up like

clowns for some fest ...

Suzanne: (*interrupting*) Maybe you're right. Maybe I should call her.

Ron: Yes maybe you should. I'm lucky, I'm on good terms with both my son and my two

daughters. Anyway, I was trying to tell you something. Before you moved in here,

I had a severe depression, a 'clinical depression' they call it. I didn't want to get out

of bed. I lost my appetite. I couldn't sleep. I felt like I'd been sucked into a black

hole. I know what severe physical pain is like but this was different. This was like a

pain in the brain - psychological pain. And yes, they gave me drugs, and yes, the

drugs helped - once they kicked in. I'm not against drugs. But the thing is people

don't understand mental illness. They don't want to talk about it. There's such a

stigma.

Suzanne: Well, I don't believe in all these drugs. There's nothing that a Naturopath can't

deal with.

Ron: *(indignant)* Oh like chamomile tea and valerian root. Look I've been down that road.

It didn't work when I couldn't sleep. It didn't work for depressions I've had in the past.

Suzanne: I don't really believe there's such a thing as depression. Not if you are mindful. You

just have to become an observer, a witness to your own mood swings.

Ron: I see. If the chamomile tea doesn't work, just pulls yourself up by your bootstraps.

Sorry but you don't know what you are talking about. You've never been there.

Suzanne: Aren't you being a bit aggressive? Look, we've all suffered. We've all had our fair

share of pain. You just have to learn to deal with negative thinking.

Ron: *(sarcastically)* Like the Deli!

Suzanne: What? Who?

Ron: The Deli, the Dalai.

Suzanne: *(sharply)* Listen, do me a favor? No more 'Deli'
O.K. Some things deserve respect,

 even reverence.

Ron: *(holding hands up in 'OK truce' posture)* Namaste.
(turning towards the computer)

 I'm going to google for some facts on Alzheimer's
and Depression. *(bitingly)* You can

 have both, you know.

(lights out)

Scene 3:

*(Lights up. Ron is sitting at the computer. A tennis match
is on TV. Suzanne enters stage RIGHT*

*and sits in armchair. Ron turns his head slightly and then
turns back to face the computer*

*screen. Tension broken only by sound of tennis balls being
served and then hit back and forth in*

*long rallies, grunts and groans from the players, applause,
& the announcer's voice)*

TV: Forty Fifteen Forty Thirty Deuce
Advantage Williams

 Deuce Advantage Sharapova Game to
Sharapova.

Sharapova leads four games to three in the second set.

(During this sequence which should last a few minutes, Suzanne gets up, waters the plant and

then sits on the sofa. Eventually she turns the TV off with the remote controller)

Suzanne: Sorry if I was a bit outspoken there about ... er ... depression and drugs. I've

been a mediator ... or is it meditator? ... anyway we don't do drugs.

Ron: *(ignoring her remark)* You got the TV controller, I see.

Suzanne: Yes well ... I knew it was Ratcher's birthday yesterday so I made her a card. I think

she was touched. After our ... er, discussion, I asked her nicely if I could use the

remote. It's Wimbledon. She told me she used to play tennis. It was kind of sweet.

Ron: *(still piqued)* You know if that discussion had happened in my class, I'd have made

sure there was a follow-up.

Suzanne: Which discussion?

Ron: Yesterday when you said there no such thing as depression.

Suzanne: Did I say that? *(Ron nods)* Really? Is that so? Maybe I did.

Ron: I read somewhere that depression is anger turned inwards.

Suzanne: Bit simplistic isn't it? Look Ron, anger is a poison. What are you so angry about?

Ron: What am I angry about? Where do I start? O.K. ... what about Tibet? I read this

book called 'Warrior Monks'. About the Buddhist monks who ...

Suzanne: (*surprised*) I didn't know you were interested in Buddhism

Ron: I was a History teacher. What about the Buddhist monks who took up arms

against the Chinese, during and after the invasion? They chose not to escape over

the mountains. They did their best to defend the monasteries. They were upset. They

were angry that they were being burned down. The poison wasn't in their anger, it

was in the actions of the Chinese troops. And what about now - 50 years later?

You've heard about the spate of monks burning themselves to death in protest about

the ongoing destruction of their culture. They still revere the Dalai Lama, but they

don't think his policies have changed anything. They're upset and angry and they're

prepared to take their own lives to show it. Read the book. It's called 'Warrior

Monks'.

Suzanne: Well I don't know about that. Anyway, I don't think this discussion is very

productive. What about ... (*she struggles to remember*) ... the er, you know, the

thing?

Ron: What thing?

Suzanne: The thing thing.

Ron: Maybe you mean the Education Committee. (*Suzanne nods*) I'll tell you what I

think. We don't need more fun and fantasy. We need facts. People need to tell

their stories. People need to listen more. No-one listens. Or they pretend to listen

but they don't hear. We're all cut off from each other.

Suzanne: Funny you should say that. I was talking to Sally the other day and I found out

that she's from the Prairies, from a little town close to where I was born. She's in her

nineties, a good bit older than me. She was saying that when she was a kid,

sometimes the snow would get so deep that she would be taken in a horse-drawn

carriage to school. And then she says that when her parents first settled they lived in

a 'soddy'.

Ron: That's right. The early settlers would live in these cabins cut from the sod. Can you

imagine - in the winter! Anyway, I agree with you. People should hear Sally's story.

They're not going to see it on TV. I mean you and I have discussions. But most people

here don't talk to each other. That's one thing an Education Committee should be

doing. Getting people to talk, making connections, telling their stories.

Suzanne: Do you have a story you would like people to know about?

Ron: Well

Suzanne: Come on. We may have our disagreements but I'd like to hear what you have to say.

Ron: Well, that's the thing. Maybe that's why people our age don't tell their stories.

They've got so many of them they don't know where to start.

Suzanne: Or they've forgotten them.

Ron: Or they don't want to bother people with sad stories. They're worried that

people'll think they're complaining. You know, too much negative thinking.

Suzanne: Hmm ... Ron, did you ever love somebody?

Ron: Love? I loved my children. I loved my students.

Suzanne: No, I mean did you ever love a woman?

Ron: Yes.

Suzanne: Well, that's a story I'd like to hear.

Ron: But it's depressing.

Suzanne: I'd like to hear it anyway. You've got some bee in your bonnet. And besides I've

got a story I'd like to tell you - I'd like to tell someone before I forget it. But you

know what? We should share some things we have in common.

Ron: Like what?

Suzanne: Our stories about teaching. You said you loved your students. I don't even know

what you taught.

Ron: I taught English lit., History and Drama.

Suzanne: You taught Drama, eh?

Ron: *(with thick Irish brogue inflection)* Indeed I did. I was a very dramatic teacher, especially when I slipped out for a pint of Guinness at lunch break.

Suzanne: *(with equally authentic Irish accent)* Well now, Holy mother of God and all the

Saints, ain't that a coincidence?

Ron: *(normal voice, surprise)* You did too?

Suzanne: *(normal voice)* Well not exactly, I taught ESL, but I used role plays and improvisation a lot. Music too. You can learn language through song. We'd be studying how to give instructions, grammatical imperatives, and I'd teach them the song 'My Bonnie lies

over the ocean' ... you know, 'bring back, bring back, bring back my bonnie to me

to me', and then I'd spin that off into an activity where they would have to ask each

other, 'if you visited your country, what would you bring back?' 'If' and 'would'

- conditional. And then we'd do the song again ... for instance, 'my mother is over

the ocean, my mother is over the sea ... yada yada, oh bring back my mother to

me'... or 'mom's kim chi lies over the'... etcetera, etcetera ... you get it.

Ron: That's good. That would work.

Suzanne: Yes it did. At coffee break I would hear students using what they'd learned. You

know, I'd hear someone saying, 'Bring back a coffee for me', or in request form, 'can

you bring back a coffee for me?' or offering, 'would you like a coffee?'

Ron: Real language.

Suzanne: Yes, real language. Real situations. And I would also use chants. If the function was

'suggesting', I would get everyone clapping and then we would do this chant:

(gesturing to one side, i.e. first speaker; clapping on the beat, i.e. '|')

| Let's have | lunch today | -

(gesturing to the other side)

O.|K.

| Let's have | lunch today | -

O.|K.

| Let's have | lunch, | let's have | lunch,

| Let's have | lunch today

O.|K.

I mean it would bring out the rhythms of language and they would retain that. Right

brain learning. *(thick Irish brogue again)* Are you following me, Brother Patrick?

Ron: *(Irish)* Oh I am that, Suzanne, I am that. But hold your horses, will ya? I have to go

and drain the snake.

(Ron starts wheeling towards EXIT stage RIGHT)

Suzanne: *(imitating Scarlett O'Hara)* Oh but Rhett... if you go, where shall I go, what shall I

do?

Ron: *(imitating Rhett Butler)* Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Suzanne: You Sir are no gentlemen.

Ron: And you Miss are no lady.

Suzanne: *(as Ron exits) (with Irish inflection)* What do you call a diseased Irish criminal?

A leper-con *(she laughs)*. Jesus Murphy, I remembered the punch line!

(Lights out)

Scene 4:

(Lights up. Suzanne is sitting on the sofa holding a spiral exercise book and a pen. Enter Ron

stage LEFT. He wheels up to the left of the sofa)

Ron: Can you help me out of this thing? I want to sit on the sofa.

Suzanne: Are you sure you should try that?

Ron: Well I'm not a paraplegic, just arthritis. Can you bring that walking cane from

over there?

Suzanne: That woman ... she'll get mad ...

Ron: Which woman?

Suzanne: That woman ... I don't remember her name.

Ron: What about her?

Suzanne: I ... I don't know ... what was it you wanted me to do?

Ron: The cane ... *(points)*

(Suzanne gets the cane, gives it to Ron, and slowly helps him to his feet. He takes a

couple of steps and slides into the sofa. Suzanne sits down beside him.)

Suzanne: Ron, I've decided. I want you to call my daughter. I've got the number. Can you do

it right now? Now's a good time. It would be 8 a.m. in Australia. She'll be home.

Ron: Are you going to speak to her?

Susan: I'm going to tell her to come over, that I want to see her. *(she rummages*

around in her handbag) Now where did I put my address book? *(getting frustrated)*

Oh for goodness sake! Maybe somebody took it .. oh, here it is. Here's the number.

(she hands the address book to Ron)

Ron: O.K. *(he takes out his cell phone and slowly dials all the numbers)* It's dialing.

Oh ... message machine ... woman's voice ... she's not in ... leave a message at

the ... oh yes, hello, my name is Ron. I'm a friend of your mothers. She asks if

you can call her at this number ... that's 604-832-7015 ... thank-you ... good-

bye.

Suzanne: It's 8 in the morning. Where would she be? She should be home. Can't think about

that. Maybe she's lost too. Now what was I going to do? Why doesn't she talk to

me? She thinks I don't accept her the way she is, which is ridiculous. I mean she's

political which is good, but not political in the way we used to be. But you know, of

course I accept her. She's my daughter (*she gets up in a daze, spots the hand*

weights on a bench, walks over and lifts one)

Ron: (*mildly concerned*) Suzanne, come back ... I'm sorry your daughter wasn't

there. We were going to discuss the EEC (*said like 'EEK'*).

Suzanne: The what?

Ron: The E-E-C. The educations and entertainment committee. (*Suzanne puts down the*

weight and sits down beside Ron). But maybe this isn't the time to have a ... er ...

'business' meeting. A while back, when you asked me if I ever loved a woman, you

said you had a story for me.

Suzanne: Yes but you didn't tell me your story ... or did you?

Ron: Not yet, but I think we should start with yours. Bronwyn, your daughter. Who was

the father?

Suzanne: Oh, he's not the story. That was just my husband. He was abusive, like my father. I

think I remember ...

Ron: What do you remember?

Suzanne: It was after we broke up. It was the 80's or was it the 90's? I joined a women's

group. I'd had it with men ... I remember that ... I needed to escape. I took a year off from teaching. A friend and I went to ... you know that place ...

Ron: What place?

Suzanne: Oh ... that place ... you know ... mountains ... so high ... snow

Ron: Nepal?

Suzanne: Yes, yes ... Nepal ... how did you know?

Ron: Just a wild guess.

Suzanne: So beautiful, the scent, the aromas.

Ron: And did you meet someone there?

Suzanne: Yes ... a man ... he was Afro-American ... from L.A. I think. He was searching

like me, like everybody. We had the same Buddhist teacher.

Ron: And what happened?

Suzanne: He was beautiful. So alive. I lost some of my anger at men.

Ron: So you had anger?

Suzanne: You're a man, you wouldn't understand.

Ron: Is that right? *He* was a man.

Suzanne: Yes but he wasn't a white man. It was different.

Ron: Now where have I heard this before? *(to himself)*
O.K. Ron, keep your cool.

(losing his cool) What about middle class
white women's anger! Oy vay!!

(followed by cowering gesture) ... oops,
shouldn't have said that, sorry, sorry,

that was a patriarchal senior's moment ... bad,
bad senior ... bad white man senior.

Suzanne: *(holds hands up like Ron in previous scene)* Whoa!
Namaste. Easy does it. Namaste.

*(several moments silence while both Suzanne and Ron
compose themselves)*

Ron: O.K. ... like you said, 'let's avoid the gender
stuff'. Did you see him again?

Suzanne: Oh yes. He moved up to Vancouver. My mother died.
I got an inheritance. I

bought some land. He built a house for me ...
with me. A beautiful house. The

house of my dreams. We lived and loved in that
house, and ...

Ron: And?

Suzanne: And then he died. Car accident. He was still
young. And Bronwyn was only 10 or

11 at the time.

Ron: *(genuinely moved)* Oh Suzanne ... I'm sorry.
That's sad.

Suzanne: Sad ... yes. Our love was ... well it was ... like a
deep river. I don't have words. I

don't want to talk about it anymore.

Ron: Gee ... relationships are hard, eh? You don't want to
hear about mine, you really

don't. Tales from the war zone *(Ron looks depressed. They sit in silence for a while*

then Ron takes the remote and turns on the TV)

TV: And it's McIlroy on the fifth tee *(sound of a golf ball being struck)* and that's a

whopper ... oh, but it catches the edge of that bunker ... that's not an easy shot

from there ... now over to Bill Costas with Tiger Woods ...)

Ron: *(turning off TV with remote ... turning to Suzanne)*
Can I see your hand for a

moment?

Suzanne: My hand?

Ron: Please. I want to look at your palm. I know a bit about Hasta Abhyanga - Ayurvedic Hand Massage.

Suzanne: *(surprised)* You went to India?

Ron: No. I got to know some of the families of my Punjabi students. One of them taught me.

Suzanne: Well O.K. *(she holds out her hand, palm outstretched. Ron surveys her hand)*

Nobody has touched me for such a long time ... I love it when they bring cats

and dogs in ...

Ron: I hear you. We all need to be touched. We need massages more than the yuppies or metrosexuals or whatever they're called these days.

Suzanne: Ooo, massages ... with a young good looking man. *(doing Mae West*

impersonation) 'Is that a pickle in your pants or do you really love me? ... ten

men waiting for me at the door? Send one home, I'm tired.' Maybe it should be

the Massage, Education and Entertainment Committee.

Ron: That would make us MEEEC. But better meek than geek ...
hmm ... that could

work too ... the geriatric educational and entertainment committee.

Suzanne: And Ron ... breathing ... so important ... deep breathing, that's something we

can do ourselves. Like this ... in *(takes deep breath in)* ... hold, and out *(she*

breathes out) ... try to focus all your attention on the out breath. Try it with

me. *(They do it together)*

Ron: Yes. Feels good. Now give me your hand.

(lights out as Ron starts to massage her hand)

Scene 5: *(6 months later. A box of percussion instruments & a keyboard have been added to the stage set.)*

Ron : *(sitting in his wheel chair with a small portable cassette recorder on his*

knees; he speaks into a microphone connected to the tape recorder)

Well here I am speaking into this dinosaur of a cassette tape recorder.

Didn't think these things existed any more. The school district was trying

to get rid of them so we ended up getting four of them. So anyway, this is a

Sunnyview Education and Entertainment Committee meeting of one - me and myself.

I would like to call this meeting to order. The time is *(looks at watch)* 11.05 a.m. on

Sunday, October 17th. Present, Ron Blakely. Absent, Suzanne Hutchinson. Suzanne

sends her regrets. She had a bad fall and is in hospital. O.K. ... 'old business': have

completed interviewing Sally to get some of her stories on tape. Sent card to school

district thanking them for tape recorders. Er ... *(shuffles papers)* 'New business':

drum up interest for a Residents' Newsletter with a ...

(Cell Phone rings)

Ron: Yes, hello ... who? ... sorry, I'm having trouble hearing you ... bit deaf ... oh,

Bronwyn ... yes, I know who you are ... no ... I'm afraid she's not here ... she

had a bad fall and she was in hospital for quite a while ... she's supposed to be

coming back today ... yes, I'm sorry, I could have called you ... I suppose I should

have called you ... O.K. ... yes you can certainly call me again ... yes I can do that

... you're welcome ... goodbye. *(Ron puts away his cell phone ... sighs)*

Oh boy! *(he wheels over to beside the sofa, takes the remote and turn on the TV).*

Voice on TV:

'We are chasing the devil. We have him on the run so we don't have to worry about anything. We don't have time to listen to anything he says.

Ron: Oh, here we go, my favorite TV evangelist.

TV: The Lord thy God is here amongst us, my Son is here ...

Ron: Your son!?

TV: And the Holy Ghost is here.

Ron: *(singing)* 'Hey, hey, the gang's all here, what the hell do I care, as long as I get my share' ...

TV: 'God's prophecy of the Gospel is spreading like wildfire. For I am the Lord: I will

 speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass (Ezekiel 12:25).'

Ron: *(picking up the controller, using like a microphone, in a booming voice)* And I am Satan with the Power to silence you ...

TV: I want to tell you a little bit about myself ...

Ron: *(putting down the controller)* Oh this I have to hear ...

TV: I was raised a poor farm boy in a home filled with the Holy Spirit. And even as a child, the Lord came to me and gave me a vision of souls. Later when I was 21 years

 of age and facing death, He made me whole. Then I dedicated my life to the Lord.

 Over the years, the Lord called me to perform many long fasts, many of them going 40 days at a time ...

Ron: Of course, it had to be *forty* days ... what about the forty nights?

TV: And The Lord called me to be his Prophet and I was humbled. I surrendered all to the

 Lord and that is what you must do here tonight. Tonight He is giving you that opportunity and it may be the last chance you will ever have.

Ron: Thought you said there was nothing to worry about.

TV: Last night I told the congregation there would be miracles. And there were:

 225 people received miracles for various deadly diseases and 174 were delivered from AIDS as the Lord said 'I am the Lord who healeth thee.'

Ron: *(imitating preacher's voice)* And then the 399 of them and 23 of my workers, and myself of course, went off to a McDonalds for a burger and fries. *(angrily in his usual*

voice) O.K. that's it! If there's one thing that I can't stand, it's false prophets ...

 what did Scott Peck call them? ... 'people of the lie' *(mutes the volume ... talking to the TV)* You sir, have your own personal 747, and you have tax free status! And the Lord said to his good shepherd, 'go forth and fleece my sheep'. And Suzanne and the Dalai want us to accept this crap! To pretend that we are all spiritual beings and turn

 a blind eye to what is happening in the material world. The Education Committee should be about giving people the facts *(to the TV)* Did you know that the city of

 Vancouver spent \$5000 a month for portable toilets because too many homeless were defecating in the streets. Yes Lord, that's defecation as in crapping, shitting,

dumping, number two-ing. And they say 'we are all in the same boat'! Maybe on the

spiritual level. In the real world, the material level, you guys all have your own boats. Why should you be interested in the quality of community parks, public transit, public education and public health care if you live in gated communities, send your children to private schools and avoid waiting lists by getting your MRI's done at exclusive private health clinics? Oh but saving souls, that's different. And another ...

(Cell phone rings):

Ron: Hello ... oh it's you again Bronwyn ... no that's fine, I'm just getting overheated

about the 1% ... oh really? You're a social worker? ... with inner city aboriginal

kids ... well we would have lots to talk about ... you what? A message to your mother ... O.K., what message? ... are you serious? ... you want your mother to cut

you out of her Will ... no inheritance ... well I don't know if I can ... well it might

hurt her ... O.K. ... O.K. ... alright ... I understand ... O.K. ... goodbye.'

(ENTER Suzanne in wheel chair stage LEFT)

Suzanne: Oh it's that awful preacher man ... what's his name again?

(Lights out)

Scene 6:

(Ron is at the computer for a minute, then he wheels his chair to EXIT stage LEFT just as

Suzanne appears to enter)

Suzanne: *(angrily)* Get out of my way!

Ron: O.K., sorry ... just a minute.

Suzanne: Why did you let them take me away? *(She sees the plant)* Did no-one water the plant?

 Jeez! It's important to be mindless about these things.

Ron: Mindless?

Suzanne: Who's mindless?

Ron: You just said 'it's important to be mindless' about watering the plant.

Suzanne: No I didn't. I said 'mindful'. Who's on TV? I want to watch TV. Charlie Rose.

 Now *there's* a good man ... where did all the good men go? I should have been a

 lesbian.

Ron: I'm with you there. I should have been gay. Would have had *way* more sex.

Loudspeaker:

 Lunch is being served in the dining room. I repeat lunch is being served now in the

 dining room.

Ron: Are you coming to lunch?

Suzanne: I'm not hungry.

Ron: You weren't hungry yesterday either.

Suzanne: I just want to sleep.

Ron: O.K. but Suzanne ... I've got something to tell you. My son was here visiting. He's

a musician. Well anyway, he had this old keyboard that he doesn't use anymore and

he's donated it to us. See, look. It's over there. I always wanted to be a good musician

but well ... I know enough to pick out a tune. So I thought you might like to hear

one or two.

Suzanne: I don't have time. My daughter's coming to visit.

Ron: Actually, your daughter called while you were in hospital. I forgot to tell you.

Suzanne: To say when she's coming?

Ron: Not exactly. She er ... well she wanted me to pass on a message. She doesn't

want any inheritance.

Susan: *(shocked and angry)* You discussed that with my daughter!? Who do you think you

are? I don't even know your name.

Ron: Yes you do Suzanne. I'm Ron. I'm your friend.

Suzanne: Some friend, talking with my daughter behind my back.

Ron: Suzanne. I understand why you're angry. It's O.K., I'm your friend. You've been

through a lot. You had a bad fall and ...
(Susannah looks stony)

You stay here *(with Irish accent)* this is Patrick here and I'm going to play some of

your old favorites, OK? *(Ron wheels over to the keyboard, turns it on and with*

right hand picks out the melody of 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling') ... (Suzanne turns

her head and starts humming the tune)

Suzanne: *(singing on the last line) 'Sure they'll steal your heart away' (with Irish accent) Oh*

that was lovely. My mother used to sing that song. She was from Ireland you know.

Ron: *Good Suzanne, that's good. How about these? (he plays 'My Wild Irish Rose')*

Suzanne: *(no response)*

Ron: *No. O.K. How about this one? (he plays 'It's a long way to Tipperary')*

Suzanne: *(no response)*

Ron: *(Ron starts playing 'My Bonnie lies over the ocean')*

Suzanne: *(singing) 'My bonnie my bonnie oh bring back, bring back. (pause) They wash me you know. My body is no longer private. No-one sees me. I think I may be*

disappearing.

Ron: *Listen Suzanne. You know you have Alzheimers. There's no point denying that. I've*

been doing research on the Internet. I understand much more about it now than I

used to. In some ways it's similar to Depression. It becomes hard to speak, hard to

remember things. But you, Suzanne, you are bigger than your disease.

Suzanne: *My 'disease'! That sounds so awful. I just want to go home. What am I doing in this*

place? I hate it. I hate it. I hate it! There are a lot of crazy people here.

(Suzanne becomes agitated and begins wheeling here and there erratically. Then she

drops her handbag on the floor and the contents spill out)

Now look what you've made me do!

Ron: *(indignant)* I did not make you do that. Why can't you just ...? Oh forget it! ...

If I'm not helping, I'm leaving ... (Ron starts wheeling towards EXIT stage right)

Suzanne: No, Tom, Tom ...

Ron: It's Ron.

Suzanne: I'm sorry Ron. I don't know what's happening. One minute I'm here, the next

minute I'm being swallowed up by some black hole. I'm scared. I don't want to

live like this.

Ron: I know about black holes. And I know about wanting to find a permanent way out.
(lights out)

Scene 7: *(Three months later)*

Ron: *(dialling on cell phone)* Hello, Bronwyn, it's Ron here ... I'm O.K. and you ... yes,

I'm worried too. She's not eating. She doesn't want to come out of her room. When

I do see her, she doesn't always recognize me ... the Will? ... yes she did react but

we're beyond that stage ... forget about your differences ... she needs you ... yes I

am sure ... I know you've been angry with her ... mm ...
yes ... I understand ...

don't blame yourself ... no ... right ... mm ... yes ... she
wanted you to be like her

and you're not ... you're you and that's good, but
Bronwyn, she needs to see you

... she needs to know that your heart is open to you ...
she needs to forgive and be

forgiven ... what? ... no, it's never too late ... and you
need that ... you only hurt

yourself by being hard of heart ... your mother once
said 'anger is a poison' and I

argued with her ... because anger can be a catalyst to
fight for what you believe in,

but she is also right that if you let the anger
harden, it twists you, it corrodes your

love, it imprisons your soul. So let's look at what
you can do, what I can do, what

we can do ... what? No, don't go ... Bronwyn ... listen ...
please just give me a

minute. Your mother and I started an Education and
Entertainment Committee. She's

lost interest and well, she can't really ... anyway,
I'm trying to arrange some kind of

Show and invite the residents and the staff and
relatives. I've persuaded my son to

play. Amanda, my younger daughter plays Celtic
fiddle and she's coming. And my

eldest Jessica is going to organize the whole thing.
And I know you don't have

much money but I could help with the air fare. Could you try to get over sometime in

the next month or two? (Suzanne ENTER stage LEFT)
Oh here she comes now ...

Suzanne, it's your daughter on the phone. She'd like to say hello. *(he hands phone*

to Suzanne)

Suzanne: *(she listens for a while without saying anything)*
The lights are going out ... black

holes keep appearing ... oh come if you want ... I just think it's so ... come and go,

up and down ... come if you want ... come as you are ... whoever you are ... I just

think it's so ... don't really care ... *(starts singing)* 'Bring back, bring back, bring

back my daughter to me to me, bring back bring back, oh bring back my daughter

to me.' *(Suzanne hands phone back to Ron)* *(to Ron)* What's my daughter's name

again?

Ron: Bronwyn. That was your daughter *(to Bronwyn)*
No ... no ... listen, no she didn't

mean that ... she does care ... O.K. ... will you try? ... *(suddenly struck by a*

thought) look Bronwyn, do you have an e-mail address O.K. ... I'd like to send you

an article on Alzheimer's that I think would help you understand ... O.K. ... just a minute *(taking a pen out of his pocket)* what was that again? ... yes ... at hotmail dot

com? ... O.K. ... got it ... I'll send this to you soon. O.K. ... yes ... bye. *(to*

Suzanne.) Your daughter was crying. She's going to try to make it over.

Suzanne: That's nice. You two seem real cosy.

Ron: *(ignoring the comment)* I was telling her that we were going to put on a show.

My son has said that he'll provide the music and I thought you and I could tell a

few Irish jokes.

Suzanne: I just can't tell what is and what isn't.

Ron: How is your sleep?

Suzanne: Can't sleep.

Ron: You know what I think. I think that quite apart from the Alzheimer thing, it's quite

possible you are depressed. I recognize the symptoms. Often doctors can't tell where

one starts and the other leaves off. They can't give you pills for Alzheimers but they

can for depression. They would help. Trust me, they would help.

Suzanne: No pills ... no pills ... NO PILLS!!

Ron: O.K. Suzanne ... O.K. ... I've an idea ... let's do a little music ... you know you

like music ... my son brought some rhythm instruments the other day. We haven't

had a chance to try them. O.K. ... I'm going to play a tune on the piano and let's

first of all see if you recognize it.

(Ron plays tune of 'Oh Susannah'. No response from Suzanne. Ron plays it again and sings the

lyrics)

Well I come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee

I'm going to Louisiana my Susannah for to see

It rained all day the night I left, the weather was
so dry

The sun so hot I froze myself, Susannah don't
you cry

Oh Susannah, don't you cry for me

I come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee.

Suzanne: Oh Susannah, oh Susannah.

Ron: *(picking up a small drum)* You don't have to sing
it. You could play along with me.

*like this. (He sings the first few lines and
play a simple rhythm in time with the*

*beat) Here, you try. (He hands the drum to
Suzanne who accepts it. She seems*

*curious and turns it over in her hands, looks at it
from different angles, and feels the*

*texture of the wood and the skin. Then she starts
beating 4 even beats in 4/4 time.*

*Ron picks up the tune again on the piano and starts
singing. Suzanne doesn't sing*

except for 'Oh Susanna').

Ron: That was great! Good for you. We could do this in
the show. Let's do it again.

*(They repeat, the music decreasing in volume as the lights
dim and then go out)*

Scene 8:

(Suzanne is sitting in her wheel chair alone on the stage. She is looking at the TV)

Suzanne: Who do you think you are? Who? You are no gentleman. *(she smiles and in a*

Southern drawl repeats) sir, you are no gentleman ...
(ENTER Ron stage LEFT ...

Suzanne sees him) and you ain't no gentleman neither.

Ron: *(without missing a beat and also in a southern drawl)* And ... once again, you miss

are no lady.

(Suzanne looks at him for a moment with a blank expression, and then laughs)

That's good to hear you laughing. Maybe you're not depressed

Suzanne: *(starts singing)* Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li

Ron: *(sings with her and plays tune on keyboard)* hush now, don't you cry ...

Suzanne: Don't you cry *(starts to cry)* ...

Ron: *(coming beside her)* It's O.K. Suzanne. You can cry. *(stroking her arm gently)*

It's O.K. Let's sing it together and if you want to cry, you cry, O.K?

(They sing it together, Ron holds both her hands and swings them from side to side in

time to the 3/4 rhythm)

Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li

Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, hush now, don't you cry

Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li

Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, that's an Irish lullaby

(with Irish accent) D'ya fancy one of those hand massage thingies?

(Suzanne nods assent and Ron starts)

Ron: You know when I was deep down in the black hole of depression, I thought I was so

bad, so worthless, so useless that I had nothing to offer. And I didn't even know

who 'I' was. Whatever 'personality' is, or 'character' for that matter, just

disintegrated and left this amorphous blob of negativity. I couldn't get through the

day, I couldn't get through the night. Time stretched out infinitely such that the

prospect of putting up with that inner pain for another minute, let alone hour or day

... became agonizing. And that's when you start looking for an exit from the pain.

You know, they say that the pain centre in the brain is the same for psychological

pain as it is for physical pain. When people say, "I know what you're going

through," no they don't, not unless they've been there too. I mean the psychologists

talk about depression and it's good, they give a pretty accurate description of the

symptoms; feeling hopeless and helpless, ashamed, guilt-ridden, irritable, intolerant

of others, no motivation, unable to make decisions,
a kind of anguished agitation.

But here's the thing - they don't mention pain. And
then you listen to the people

who've been there and that's all they talk about.
Pain, worse than any physical pain.

You just want to end it all And *that's* what people
don't understand ... unless,

perhaps, it's someone like Robin Williams ... (*pause
in reflection*) Anyway one day I

remembered that song 'This Little Light of Mine'
and that became my theme song

because that's what it felt like ... somewhere in
that black hole was a tiny flicker of

light and your task ... the only thing that got you
from one day to another was a

stark choice ... either you let that light go out or
deliberately put it out, or you

protected it like you would kindling in a wind, and
by allowing it to glow, to shine,

the light and warmth slowly spread and you began to
have an inkling of hope that

maybe just maybe there was a way out of the black
hole. So Suzanne, I know you

hear me. I know you understand. Your light is there.
It will always be there.

Suzanne: Phew ... too many words ... in a maze ... where the
hell am I? The lights are going

out. (*she makes a gesture like shutting off circuit
breakers*)

Ron: Yes, but this light isn't in your mind. Anyway,
here's the song (*Ron gives Suzanne the*

hand drum and sings while playing C, F & G chords in R.H. on piano)

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine

shine
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it

shine
This little light of mine, I'm going to let it

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Suzanne: Shine. Shine, shine

Ron: I won't let anything snuff it out, I'm going to let it shine

I won't let anything snuff it out, I'm going to let it shine

I won't let anything snuff it out, I'm going to let it shine

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Yes and maybe we don't need committee meetings now. Maybe it's time to leave that

kind of work to the younger folk. But I'm going to make sure that our Show happens.

My son and daughters say they will come. Bronwyn said that she is going to come

over ...

Suzanne: Shine, shine, shine *(Ron's cell phone rings)*

Ron: Hello ... yes ... Bronwyn ...it's Bronwyn ... what was that? ... they what!? ...

who? ... Ratcher called you ... why? ... it doesn't make sense ... this is her home ...

they can't move her ... did you say you're coming over? ... when? ... really, so soon?

(sarcastically) oh that's just great ... yes, damned right ... we'll put a stop to this ...

O.K. ... *(he looks at S.)* ... er, no, probably not ... we'll see you next week ...
bye. *(Lights out)*

Scene 9:

Suzanne: Train ... *(Suzanne is holding drum and taps out a train rhythm i.e. | pa-pa-pa | pa,*

in 6/8 time) and then keeps repeating it ...) bring back my train, bring back my

train ... rain, rain ... what's my name, what's my name ... where's the train ...

(Enter Ron stage RIGHT holding a balloon)

Ron: I know a song that fits that. *(He puts balloon down on sofa and goes to piano*

where he plays melody of 'Que sera sera')

(Suzanne joins in on the drum after a while)

Suzanne: When I was just a little girl

I asked my mother what will I be?

Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?

Here's what she said to me

Que sera sera, whatever will be will be

The future's not ours to see

Que sera sera

What will be will be

... And now I need to pee

Sorry, only kidding! Just went. Should be good for at least half an hour.

Suzanne: My mother wanted me to be a dancer (*she swings her arms in a flowing motion*).

Why didn't you tell me that Bronwyn had died?

Ron: Bronwyn hasn't died. She's coming to see you next week.

Suzanne: Just a little girl (*Suzanne cradles her stuffed dog and rocks it back and forth*) ... just

a little girl ...

Ron: (*producing a CD*) I got some music for you. It's the Dalai Lama chanting. I really

like it. It's relaxing. (*He puts the disk into the computer drive and the music*

comes from the TV speakers). And ... I brought a balloon ... I thought we could

play a little (*he bats the balloon towards Suzanne several times without response until*

finally she bats it back)

See ... isn't this fun? You know, your daughter and I had a really good talk ... well

actually it was an e mail discussion. We seem to be on the same page about a lot of

things. She is involved with a gender equality group of women ... and men. She said

they were influenced by, amongst others, Naomi Klein, Daphne Patai and bell hooks,

who insists on spelling her name in lower case letters by the way. I don't think you will

have heard of them. Anyway they both believe that women and men should work

together to achieve equality, to get rid of racism, sexism and class distinction ... bell

hooks is Afro-American by the way. Kind of the other end of the spectrum to someone

like Sarah Hoagland ... anyway your daughter has guided me to all kinds of stuff on

the net and I'm more up to date now on the history of the last 30 to 40 years, the

transition from second wave feminism to third wave feminism, or at least equality ...

Suzanne: *(furious, interrupting)* Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

Ron: *(angry)* Hah! There are probably others here who would like me to shut up, certainly

all the ideological misandrist dinosaurs wherever they are. No, I am not going to shut

up. I have a right to my opinion. Women of the younger generation, like your

daughter, realize that hating men isn't the answer. So don't lecture me about anger,

you've still got lots of anger about men, and I do mean men, not just white men,

bottled up inside you. And you'll like this, bell hooks is friends with Thich Vanh Han,

the celebrated Buddhist monk, and she and him have this discussion about needing to

restore love and community so that power politics don't dictate what's happening in

our communities, in our schools in our homes, in our colleges.

Suzanne: *(throwing her stuffed dog on the floor)* STOP!!!

Ron: Suzanne ...*(Ron wheels his chair close to her and puts out his hand; Suzanne.*

smacks it hard and pushes it away)

Suzanne: GO AWAY!!

(Ron looks at her for a long moment and then wheels away, circles the stage and returns)

Ron: *(quietly and gently)* Suzanne, I did not mean to pit your daughter against you and

certainly not her and I against you. But at the same time, I have reached a stage,

and an age, where I am going to say what I believe ... and not feel somehow

ashamed or guilty because I'm a man, or a white man, or a lowly teacher, or a renter

with no money in the bank. I loved my students and I love my children. I am not a

'bad' man ... *(pause)* why don't we both do some deep breathing for a moment?

(Ron breathes deeply while Suzanne looks at him for quite a while then reaches out and begins to

feel the cuff material of his shirt. Ron does not withdraw his hand and for several minutes she

rubs the material between her thumb and forefinger.)

Suzanne: *(taking a deep breath and briefly putting her hand on Ron's)*

You can have my room. I don't need a room all to myself *(smiling)* not when I've got

so many sisters around.

Ron: *(unsure whether gesture is from the heart or not)*
Thank-you but I don't think so.

(Ron opens his palm and offers it to Suzanne)
Suzanne, I really really care for you. I

think we are a deep river. I may say the wrong
thing, or talk too much, or be too full

of myself, but underneath all the crusty exterior I
have a big heart ... and you are in

my heart ... we both still have charged feelings from
the past but in the present it's

different ... we can just try to forget all that and ...
(smiling) er well, bat balloons and

sing songs and invite our kids to shows, leave the
committees and organizing to

others and *be* rather than *do* and ... have fun ... what
can I say ... second childhood

(Suzanne puts her hand in Ron's) oh and google ...
(lights start dimming slowly) wait

until I teach ... er introduce you to google and e
mail ... and skype ... you're not

going to be alone, Suzanne, you're going to be loved
and touched and I know ... I

just know that your little light is going to shine
on.

*(Lights dim while audio up on vocal + orchestra version of
'Shine on Harvest Moon' ... LIGHTS*

OUT ... music continues)

THE END