

PREVIEW

SILVER BELLES

(A Christmas Comedy)

by

Lauren Grove



yourstagepartners.com

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: *Silver Belles* (the “Play”) is fully protected by copyright under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, Australia, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including, but not limited to professional/amateur stage rights, film, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio, television, video or sound recording, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

PROHIBITION OF ALTERATIONS: There shall be no changes of any kind made to this Play, including deletions, alterations, changes of character gender, changes of character race or ethnicity, cutting of dialogue, cutting of music, addition of dialogue or text, or alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized in writing by Stage Partners. The title of this Play shall not be altered in any way. Please Note: Some authors include pre-approved alterations in the Production Notes, Cast Notes, and/or Author’s Note sections of the script. Please refer to those sections for more information.

PERFORMANCE: *Professionals and Nonprofessionals are hereby warned that performance of this Play is subject to payment of a royalty, whether or not admission is charged.* The stage performance rights throughout the world for this Play are controlled exclusively by Stage Partners. No professional or nonprofessional performances of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Stage Partners and paying the requisite fee. Current Nonprofessional royalty rates and performance information may be found at our website: www.yourstagepartners.com. Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to the Authors c/o Stage Partners:

STAGE PARTNERS
P.O. Box 4795, Stamford, CT 06907
www.yourstagepartners.com
info@yourstagepartners.com

UNAUTHORIZED COPYING AND DISPLAY: Any unauthorized copying of this Play, or excerpts from this Play is strictly prohibited by law. For productions of this Play, sufficient scripts must be purchased for all cast members and crew. No part of this Script may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Stage Partners. No one shall display, upload, post, or make available, this Play, or part of this Play, to any websites, including, but not limited to, social media sites.

REQUIRED CREDIT: Anyone receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the Author(s) as sole and exclusive Author(s) of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The name of the Author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in the Play. The bio(s) for the Author(s) shall be included in any program that contains cast and/or creative team bios. Author bios can be found on Stage Partners’ website at www.yourstagepartners.com. Credit shall be given to any other parties, such as producer credits and commission credits, in the form and manner specified in the Script.

Stage Partners Attribution: Licensee shall include the following notice in all programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the production of the Play:

Silver Belles
is produced by special arrangement with Stage Partners.
(www.yourstagepartners.com)

RECORDING/REPRODUCTION: Recording: Rights to perform this Play does not grant the right to make, use and/or distribute a mechanical recording (rehearsal, performance or otherwise) of the Play or any portion of it by any means whatsoever, including, but not limited to, audiocassette, videotape, film, CD, DVD and other digital sequencing. Broadcast: Except for the usual right to advertise and publicize the Play by means of print, radio, and television (in which no radio or television commercial shall contain excerpts of more than 30 seconds), the right to perform the play does not allow you to broadcast, televise, and/or electronically post on the Internet any part of the Play, either audio or visual or both, including, without limitation, musical selections. Program note: You must include the following warning in your program: "The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited."

SONGS AND RECORDINGS: For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in these Plays, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted. For further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions, visit the websites of ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org).

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION INFORMATION:

If you have licensed performances of this Play, please consult your Performance Licensing Agreement for details about your specific license and an associated performance royalties and fees.

Scripts: Production Scripts must be purchased along with your performance license. The Production PDF Scripts may only be photocopied in connection with the needs of your licensed performance and may not be photocopied or shared for other uses. You are only allowed to perform the Play as it appears in the Script published and approved by Stage Partners.

Production Date Changes/Cancellation: Promptly notify Stage Partners in writing (email acceptable) of any changes in the Production Dates whatsoever, including, but not limited to, additional performances, rescheduled performances, postponements, etc., all of which are subject to prior written approval of Stage Partners. Should you desire to present additional performances, you must agree to enter into a new agreement with Stage Partners and to make additional royalty payments for any and all performances in addition to those already licensed. You should not announce, present, or sell tickets for such additional performances without prior written permission from Stage Partners AND payment of the additional royalty and fees due.

.....
**NAVIGATING THEATRICAL RIGHTS CAN BE CONFUSING. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, THAT'S OKAY.
REACH OUT TO US AT [INFO@YOURSTAGEPARTNERS.COM](mailto:info@yourstagepartners.com). WE ARE ALWAYS HAPPY TO HELP!**

Cast of Characters

(14–20 actors possible. Double casting is encouraged.)

NICK, a young man who works at Davenport & Associates, has dueling loyalties.

KATE, the general manager at Silver Meadows, cares deeply about her work.

MEGAN, a new and energetic nurse at Silver Meadows.

STEVE, a sometimes lazy but well-meaning nurse at Silver Meadows.

FRANK, local mogul, Nick's father.

JERRY, Frank's loyal lackey.

Belles

CLARA, the heart of Silver Meadows, often lost in the past.

YOUNG CLARA, Clara in her late teens/early twenties.

VIVIENNE, a fun and flirtatious lady, was once a B movie star.

HARRIET, kind and grandmotherly, always thinking of family.

PEARL, a feisty old broad with a chip on her shoulder.

GERTIE, sweet, naïve, and hard of hearing.

Ensemble (can be played by as few as two actors)

TOMMY

MR. JOHNSON

YOUNG VIVIENNE (VOICE)

GUY MORGAN (VOICE)

DR. LEE

MAMA

SOLDIER

WAITER

Optional Alternate Ending Characters

ROGER

LEEANN

MOLLY

Setting

Silver Meadows, present day

Frank Davenport's office, present day

Café and mall, present day

Various flashbacks set between 1950 and 1953

Set Description

The cozy Silver Meadows' living room should be center stage. It may have a bit of wear and tear but should exude warmth. There should be space for other scenes and various flashbacks stage right and stage left.

It is recommended that scene transitions should be done with instrumental Christmas music, small light adjustments, and minimal furniture (other than the main living room) to help move the play along.

Alternate Ending and Scenes

If your organization is interested in casting more actors, seeing Pearl's oft-mentioned family, and/or seeing Vivienne's movie performed, please refer to the "Silver Belles Alternate Ending" pdf.

Notes On Wheelchairs, Walkers, and Hearing Aids

Directors may decide if they wish to have various Belles use walkers, wheelchairs, or canes. (It is recommended that Pearl have a cane throughout the play and Clara have a wheelchair in Act Two.) The ladies should move as though they are elderly, but not to the detriment of the performance or flow of the play. Gertie is hard of hearing and sometimes needs others to repeat what they have said. She does have a hearing aid, however, and does hear many of the lines. For the lines she misses, Gertie should be facing away from the speaker or positioned far from the speaker.

Acknowledgments

Silver Belles was originally produced by Lower Dauphin High School in Hummelstown, PA in November 2019 with the following cast and staff:

NICK Matt Little
KATE Emma McQuinn
CLARA Olivia Meyers
MEGAN Dale Sanders
STEVE Hudson Millar
YOUNG CLARA Angelina Smith
VIVIENNE Sofia Walsh
HARRIET Christianna Harchuska
PEARL Morgan Earley
GERTIE Alicia Jones
TOMMY Jack Wolfe
FRANK/SOLDIER Matheus Neves
JERRY Aden Weigle
GUY MORGAN/MR. JOHNSON Dylan Hassinger
MAMA/DR. LEE Mauricette Musser
YOUNG VIVIENNE Liz Harnish
LEEANN Leah Tierney
ROGER Donovan McDonald
MOLLY Maggie Hesser
WAITRESS Nora Holahan
Directors Lauren and Doug Grove
Technical Director/Set Designer Mike James
Stage Manager Annie Linker
Costume Manager Kristen Ajala
Assistant Stage Manager Katelynn Groscost
Stage Crew: Zoe Baer, Ethan Elicker, Aysha Pich, Jacob Pegher, Drew Rhodes, Deneysa Roman, Anna Schmidt, Caitlyn Umidi
Technical Crew: Mae Bretz, Katelyn Hanft, Tad Hummer, Maddie Sanders, Zack Sholder, Kameron Stepp

SILVER BELLES

by Lauren Grove

Scene One

(Lights up on a park bench stage right. TOMMY and YOUNG CLARA enter, laughing. CLARA is in a dress and TOMMY is in a soldier's dress uniform. They are lost in the glow of young love, when everything seems possible and it feels like nothing will ever go wrong.)

TOMMY: I don't think I've had that much fun in... Well, I don't think I've ever had that much fun!

YOUNG CLARA: You didn't stop dancing the entire night. They practically had to kick us out.

TOMMY: I couldn't help it, Clara. I had the prettiest girl in the whole place on my arm.

YOUNG CLARA: The prettiest, huh?

TOMMY: Yep. And I love her, and she loves me, and it makes me want to dance!

(He begins spinning her around. She stops him and drops onto the bench.)

YOUNG CLARA: Wait, Tommy. I need to sit down. My feet are killing me. *(She takes off her shoes.)*

TOMMY: *(Slightly panicked:)* Oh no, I didn't step on them, did I? I tried really hard not to step on them. I practiced all week, and...

YOUNG CLARA: *(Rubbing her aching feet:)* You didn't step on me. They're just sore. You try dancing for three hours in heels!

TOMMY: Ah, see, that's where you went wrong. It's much more comfortable to dance in these. *(He shows off his boots.)* Government issued.

YOUNG CLARA: *(Rolling her eyes and laughing:)* I'll remember that for next time.

TOMMY: Come on, the car is parked just over there.

YOUNG CLARA: Nope, I can't walk another step. *(She lounges dramatically on the bench.)* I live here now.

TOMMY: Is that so?

YOUNG CLARA: Yes. Have all my mail forwarded to this bench.

TOMMY: It seems dangerous to live out here all by yourself.

YOUNG CLARA: *(Sitting up and smiling:)* Well, you could move in with me.

TOMMY: Is there enough space for me in your new place?

YOUNG CLARA: I think we can manage.

(CLARA pats the seat next to her and TOMMY sits.)

But we'll have to sleep snuggled up close together.

TOMMY: I don't see that as a problem.

(TOMMY puts his arm around CLARA. She giggles and kisses him. As they kiss, church bells begin to chime.)

YOUNG CLARA: I guess it's later than we thought.

TOMMY: *(Checking his watch:)* Oh hell, it's after 10! *(He stands up abruptly and reaches for CLARA's hand.)* Come on, I've got to get you home.

YOUNG CLARA: I don't want to go just yet.

TOMMY: Your old man made me promise to get you home by 9:30.

YOUNG CLARA: Daddy can wait.

TOMMY: But he showed me his shotgun collection!

YOUNG CLARA: Tomorrow morning they're sending you half a world away and I don't know when I'm going to see you again. Please, Tommy.

(TOMMY looks into CLARA's pleading eyes, and he is undone.)

TOMMY: Okay, we'll stay a while longer. *(He holds her.)* I didn't mean to upset you.

YOUNG CLARA: You didn't, I just... I wish you didn't have to go.

TOMMY: I know. I sure am going to miss you.

YOUNG CLARA: Write to me every chance you get.

TOMMY: I will.

YOUNG CLARA: And promise you'll come home to me.

TOMMY: I will.

YOUNG CLARA: I'm serious. If anything were to happen to you... *(She begins to cry softly.)*

TOMMY: Hey, none of that. I'll come back; I promise.

(She continues to cry.)

Do you remember what I told you on the first day I met you?

(She shakes her head.)

Come on, you must remember.

YOUNG CLARA: I don't.

TOMMY: I told you I was going to marry you one day.

YOUNG CLARA: We were eight.

TOMMY: That may be so, but I meant it then and I mean it now. I'm going to marry you one day. Nothing could stop me.

YOUNG CLARA: Nothing?

TOMMY: Not even this war. In fact, I think it's time we make it official. *(He gets down on one knee.)* Clara Lewis, will you make me the happiest guy in the world and become my wife?

YOUNG CLARA: Tommy Rhoades, what are you doing?

TOMMY: I'm asking the love of my life to marry me.

YOUNG CLARA: We're too young! And you haven't asked Daddy yet—you know how he feels about you...

TOMMY: I don't care about any of that. I want you to be Mrs. Clara Rhoades.

YOUNG CLARA: This is crazy!

TOMMY: No, it's not. I love you and you love me. That's all the matters. You do love me, don't you?

YOUNG CLARA: You know I do.

TOMMY: So, what do you say? Will you marry me?

YOUNG CLARA: I say... I say...yes! Yes, I'll marry you!

(He jumps up and wraps her in a big hug.)

TOMMY: I promise I'll buy you a ring as soon as I get back. And then we're going to throw the biggest wedding this town has ever seen!

YOUNG CLARA: I don't need a ring, Tommy. I just need you to stay safe and come back to me.

TOMMY: You'll wait for me?

YOUNG CLARA: Of course I'll wait for you. Just promise me you'll come back.

TOMMY: I will, Clara...Clara...

(Lights fade on park bench and come up on the Silver Meadows living room center stage. Present-day CLARA is asleep in a chair. MEGAN is setting up a CD player. The BELLES are gathered together in the living room and seem less than thrilled to be there. STEVE is sitting in a corner reading a magazine. HARRIET is gently shaking CLARA.)

TOMMY/HARRIET: Clara...

HARRIET: Clara... Wake up.

CLARA: Tommy?

HARRIET: No, it's Harriet. You dozed off.

CLARA: Oh, I'm sorry.

HARRIET: Were you having another one of your dreams?

CLARA: I guess so. Was I asleep long?

HARRIET: No, but it's about to get loud in here and I didn't want you to be startled.

CLARA: What's happening?

PEARL: *(Her tone revealing exactly how she feels about what's about to happen:)* Megan has planned another one of her "activities" for us.

CLARA: Oh dear.

(MEGAN stands in front of the ladies.)

MEGAN: Okay ladies, are we ready?

ALL: No / Not even a little bit / Absolutely not / Etc.

MEGAN: Come on! Exercise is good for you!

PEARL: Getting out of bed this morning was enough of a workout for me.

MEGAN: Regular exercise supports better digestion, better sleep, and helps you live longer. Now, everyone find an exercise buddy.

(The LADIES begin to begrudgingly pair up.)

HARRIET: But we're going to miss *Wheel of Fortune*. We always watch *Wheel of Fortune* after dinner.

VIVIENNE: That Pat Sajak is so handsome! I'd let him be my exercise buddy...

PEARL: You'd let the mailman be your exercise buddy.

MEGAN: Focus, everyone. *(She puts on some upbeat workout music.)* This routine is specifically designed for seniors. It's low impact and, most importantly, fun! Right, Steve?

STEVE: *(Not looking up from his magazine:)* Woohoo...

MEGAN: Let's start with some slow arm stretches! Left! Right! Left! Right!

(The older women follow what MEGAN is doing, with varying degrees of success. Some women are standing, some are sitting, some are leaning on a walker.)

MEGAN: That's it, ladies! You doing okay over there, Miss Clara?

CLARA: Yes, I think so.

MEGAN: Good! Feel the burn!

HARRIET: How will I know when it starts burning?

MEGAN: And reach! Reach! Reach for the sky!

GERTIE: Did she say reach for the pie? Is there pie?

VIVIENNE: No, Gertie, sky! Reach for the sky!

MEGAN: We're going to pick up the pace just a little bit. Twist at the waist! And 1 and 2 and 1 and 2! *(MEGAN starts to get really into it.)*

HARRIET: Oh dear, I was fine until we picked up the pace.

VIVIENNE: I was fine sitting on the couch.

PEARL: This is elder abuse!

MEGAN: No, this is good for you!

PEARL: Steve!

STEVE: *(Not looking up from his magazine:)* Hmm?

PEARL: The new girl's trying to kill us!

STEVE: No one's trying to kill you, Pearl.

PEARL: I see a bright light!

VIVIENNE: Do us all a favor and run straight for it...

(PEARL glares at her.)

GERTIE: I'm still unclear on the pie issue. Is there pie?

HARRIET: I'd love some pie!

CLARA: Oh, yes! Apple, or blueberry!

PEARL: Banana cream! I want banana cream!

VIVIENNE: I thought you were dying?

PEARL: Pie is worth living for.

HARRIET: I think there's some leftover pie in the kitchen.

PEARL: Well, come on!

(The LADIES exit stage left whispering excitedly as MEGAN continues the workout. STEVE shakes his head, gets up, and turns MEGAN around so she can see them walk away.)

MEGAN: Ladies! Wait! Studies show that regular exercise keeps you... And, they're gone.

STEVE: *(Patting her shoulder:)* You gave it your best shot.

MEGAN: I spent three hours putting together this exercise routine last night, and they dismantled it in three minutes. I just wanted to get them moving more.

STEVE: You did get them moving...right into the kitchen...where the pie lives.

MEGAN: Thanks for the support, Steve. *(She turns to go check on the ladies.)*

STEVE: Anytime.

(MEGAN exits stage left. STEVE puts away the magazine he was reading. He straightens up the living room. He goes to the welcome desk, organizing papers. After a moment, KATE enters through the main door in a rush.)

KATE: Hey, Steve. Sorry I'm late.

(She hangs her coat and bag over the chair behind the welcome desk.)

STEVE: No problem. Today's logs are on the desk. Clara had a rough morning, but we handled it.

KATE: Again? Clara seems to be having more bad days recently. Dr. Lee isn't scheduled to come in until January, but we should see if...

STEVE: Megan already called her. She'll be here Tuesday.

KATE: Perfect. How's Megan doing?

STEVE: Great! She's very...enthusiastic. She tried to get the ladies to work out after dinner.

KATE: How did that go?

STEVE: They're currently in the kitchen attacking the leftover pie.

KATE: Sounds about right.

STEVE: Oh, and Mr. Johnson's here. He's in his office, and he's not alone. I think they're signing the last of the papers.

KATE: I still can't believe he sold this place.

STEVE: Do you know anything about the new owner?

KATE: Davenport & Associates? They own mostly fast food restaurants and strip malls.

STEVE: What do they want with a retirement home?

KATE: According to Mr. Johnson, they're looking to branch out.

STEVE: Branch out? They're just going to turn Silver Meadows into another Burger Palace!

KATE: He says he has the word of Frank Davenport that Silver Meadows will stay open.

STEVE: And you believe Frank Davenport?

KATE: Mr. Johnson seems to.

STEVE: What about you?

KATE: I don't know...he gave his word.

STEVE: And rich businessmen never lie...

KATE: We've got to stay positive, Steve.

STEVE: Positivity doesn't pay the bills. I'd like to know if I'll still have a job next year.

(MR. JOHNSON, carrying a moving box, enters upstage left with JERRY.)

JERRY: Well, everything seems to be in order. I'll get these papers to Mr. Davenport and we'll be in touch.

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Jerry.

(They shake hands and JERRY heads for the door, nodding to KATE and STEVE on the way out. MR. JOHNSON, then sees KATE at the desk and crosses to her.)

MR. JOHNSON: Hey, Kate! I was hoping you would get here before I left.

STEVE: *(Pointing to the box:)* Is that the last of your stuff?

MR. JOHNSON: Yep. My office is all packed up. *(He looks around one last time.)* I guess this is it.

KATE: What do you mean? You said your last day was going to be tomorrow! We were going to throw you a farewell party with cake and balloons.

MR. JOHNSON: I told you I didn't want to make a fuss. No parties, no big goodbyes.

KATE: I wish we weren't saying goodbye at all.

MR. JOHNSON: It's the right time, Kate. Nancy and I are empty nesters now and we want to travel. Besides, I'm hardly ever here. You do such a great job running this place! You don't need me.

KATE: Of course I do! I couldn't do it without you!

MR. JOHNSON: You're being modest.

KATE: What's going to happen to Silver Meadows once you're gone?

MR. JOHNSON: I've told you, Kate, I have the word of...

KATE: I know, I know. You have the word of Frank Davenport himself that Silver Meadows will stay open.

MR. JOHNSON: They'll just spruce the place up a bit; some new carpet here, a coat of paint there...

STEVE: *(Quietly to KATE:)* A drive-thru out back.

MR. JOHNSON: And with all their resources, you'll be able focus more on that marketing plan you're always talking about. Maybe you can get this place to full capacity again.

KATE: It would be nice to welcome some new residents.

STEVE: And hire a few more nurses.

MR. JOHNSON: Davenport & Associates can help with all of that. One of the partners will be by tomorrow to talk with you. Everything will be fine, you'll see.

KATE: *(Starting to warm up to the idea:)* The ladies can definitely stay?

MR. JOHNSON: The ladies can definitely stay.

STEVE: And no one's losing their job?

MR. JOHNSON: No one's losing their job. Think about it. This could be exactly what Silver Meadows needs.

(A car honks from offstage.)

That's Nancy now, I better go.

(KATE hugs MR. JOHNSON.)

KATE: We're going to miss you around here.

MR. JOHNSON: Good luck, Kate.

(STEVE shakes MR. JOHNSON's hand.)

STEVE: Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Steve. Look after my girls for me.

STEVE: I will.

MR. JOHNSON: *(Exiting stage right:)* Merry Christmas!

KATE: Well, that's that, I guess.

STEVE: That's that. *(He puts his arm around her shoulder, comforting.)* You know what we need now?

KATE: What?

STEVE: Pie...

Scene Two

(Lights come up stage right on an ornate desk with a chair on either side, representing Frank Davenport's office. FRANK sits, looking over some papers. After a moment, NICK knocks and enters.)

NICK: Hey, Dad. Your minion said you wanted to see me?

FRANK: Jerry isn't my minion.

NICK: I'm sorry, your lackey said you wanted to see me?

FRANK: Nicholas...

NICK: Your stooge?

FRANK: I didn't ask you here to talk about Jerry. Have a seat.

(NICK sits. JERRY enters.)

JERRY: The papers you wanted, Mr. Davenport.

(He hands FRANK papers and then stands obediently in the corner.)

NICK: Speak of the stooge...

FRANK: Thank you, Jerry. *(To NICK:)* Son, we need to talk about the future of this company. The fast food business has been good to us, and our retail complexes provide a steady stream of income, but it's time for us to branch out.

NICK: Finally! I've been telling you that for years.

FRANK: That's why I called you in here.

(He hands the papers to NICK.)

I acquired a new property today. Silver Meadows Retirement Home, over on Maple Street.

NICK: You want to branch out into elderly care?

(FRANK and JERRY turn to each other and laugh in unison.)

FRANK: Don't be ridiculous. The home sits on 12 acres of undeveloped land. It's the ideal location for the first ever... *(He pauses for effect.)* Hotel Davenport.

JERRY: Or simply, "The Davenport."

FRANK: I like it.

NICK: Are you serious? I've been trying to get you to go into the hotel business since I started working here.

FRANK: I know, I read your last proposal. It's a good plan, ambitious. But it takes a lot of land and a lot of money.

NICK: We've got the money, Dad.

FRANK: And now the perfect property has presented itself. We're going to bulldoze Silver Meadows to the ground and, in its place, build a luxury five-star hotel the likes of which this town has never seen.

NICK: You have to let me take the lead on this project.

FRANK: I'm not sure you're ready, son. This could very well be the future of Davenport and Associates, and you've never managed a project of this size. I need someone with more experience.

NICK: But this was my idea!

FRANK: And it's my money.

NICK: Dad, I'm ready. I can do this.

FRANK: It will take a lot of hard work.

NICK: Hard work doesn't scare me.

FRANK: And there's a...delicate matter that needs to be addressed.

NICK: I can handle it, whatever it is.

FRANK: If you're sure...

NICK: I am.

FRANK: Then, the project is yours. *(He extends his hand.)*

(NICK shakes FRANK's hand.)

NICK: You won't be sorry! I'll get started right away. *(Remembering:)* What's the delicate matter?
(FRANK and JERRY look knowingly at each other.)

FRANK: The owner wouldn't sell without certain...*assurances* that Silver Meadows would stay in business.

(NICK takes a moment to think, then catches on.)

NICK: And you gave him those assurances...

FRANK: I did what was necessary for the company. Now it's your turn.

NICK: What do I have to do?

FRANK: I plan to break ground on January 15th. Tell them they have 30 days to vacate the building.

NICK: You need me to kick a bunch of old people out of their home right before Christmas?

FRANK: Precisely.

(FRANK and JERRY look pointedly at NICK.)

NICK: Couldn't we start construction in the spring?

FRANK: I'm starting in January, Nicholas.

NICK: Where are they going to go?

FRANK: Other retirement homes, state run facilities, I don't really care. I just want them gone come January.

NICK: But it's Christmas.

FRANK: I didn't realize you were so soft. If you're not up to the task I'll find someone who is, and *they* will be VP of our hotel division.

JERRY: I'd like to offer my services.

NICK: No!

JERRY: I would be honored to lead Davenport and Associates into the future, sir.

NICK: Jerry is not the future of this company, I am.

FRANK: *(Playing his son like a fiddle:)* You can't even handle evicting a few senior citizens.

NICK: Yes, I can!

FRANK: Are you sure?

NICK: I'll do it. Whatever it takes.

FRANK: Good! They're expecting you at Silver Meadows tomorrow morning. Take Jerry with you.

NICK: I don't need a babysitter, especially not *him*.

FRANK: If you want to head our hotel division, he goes with you, Nicholas. Take it or leave it.

NICK: Fine. Come, minion. *(Exits.)*

JERRY: It's Jerry! *(Exits.)*

Scene Three

(Lights up on the Silver Meadows living room. The ladies are sitting around having a quiet afternoon. CLARA is knitting, VIVIENNE and GERTIE are playing cards, PEARL is reading a book, and MEGAN is sitting with them.)

VIVIENNE: Gin!

GERTIE: Gin? I thought we were playing pinochle.

VIVIENNE: No, we said gin! Turn on your hearing aid, Gertie.

GERTIE: It is on!

VIVENNE: *(Sighing:)* Deal the cards again.

(HARRIET enters from upstage left with pink yarn.)

HARRIET: Kate found the pink!

CLARA: Oh, good!

HARRIET: She's still looking for the yellow.

(She sits and begins to knit.)

CLARA: What are you making?

HARRIET: A scarf. It's a Christmas gift for my daughter, Julie.

MEGAN: Will I get to meet her over the holidays?

HARRIET: No, she's staying in Wisconsin this year. Her daughter, my granddaughter, is about to have a baby, and Julie wants to be there to meet her first grandchild.

MEGAN: You're going to be a great-grandmother?

(HARRIET nods.)

That's wonderful!

HARRIET: Yes, it is; but I'll miss them.

PEARL: Consider yourself lucky. My son is insisting on coming over for Christmas.

MEGAN: You don't want to see him?

PEARL: I don't mind seeing Roger. I'm even excited for him to bring his little girl, Molly. But the she-devil is coming too.

MEGAN: Who is the she-devil?

HARRIET: Her daughter-in-law, Leeann. She's actually very nice.

PEARL: You shut your mouth, Harriet! She's horrible! Oh, she may seem sweet, but I see right through her.

GERTIE: Gin!

VIVIENNE: What? You said you wanted to play pinochle!

GERTIE: But you wanted to play gin!

VIVIENNE: *(Rolling her eyes:)* How about Go Fish?

STEVE: Okay, ladies, lunch should be ready soon, and to tide you over *(Brandishing the tray with relish:)* I've got Jell-O!

GERTIE: *(Clapping:)* Jell-O!

PEARL: It doesn't take much to impress you, does it, Gertie?

GERTIE: I love Jell-O! It's the perfect treat for when you don't want to put in your teeth.

(STEVE begins to hand out Jell-O.)

STEVE: Cherry for Clara and Pearl. Orange for Gertie and Harriet. And for Vivienne *(with a wink:)* zesty lime.

VIVIENNE: Oh Steve, you know the way to my heart.

GERTIE: All it takes is Jell-O? Oh, my. Is that why you've had so many husbands?

PEARL: Don't you know Vivienne's motto for her love life? There's always room for... "Jell-O."

VIVENNE: Don't you listen to them, Steve. You're the only man for me.

(STEVE shakes his head and laughs.)

HARRIET: What are you doing for Christmas, Megan?

MEGAN: I'll just be hanging out at home, watching old movies. My boyfriend has to work.

HARRIET: That's too bad.

CLARA: What does he do?

MEGAN: He's a firefighter.

VIVIENNE: *(Suddenly full of excitement, the Jell-O forgotten:)* A firefighter! Honey, that's the dream! *(Leaning in:)* Do you ever ask him to wear his uniform when you two...

MEGAN: *(She gets up quickly.)* Okay, it's time for lunch!

STEVE: But the potatoes need another ten minutes.

MEGAN: *(Pointedly:)* It's time for lunch Steve. Or we could change the subject to your love life.

STEVE: Come on, ladies. Lunch time!

(MEGAN and STEVE usher the ladies off stage left.)

(NICK and JERRY enter stage right and stand outside the door.)

JERRY: This shouldn't take long. Just three staff members to fire and five residents to evict.

(KATE enters from upstage left with yarn. She lays it down on the table and begins straightening up the knitting and playing cards.)

NICK: We're not evicting them, exactly. We're merely telling them they have thirty days to find other living accommodations.

JERRY: Whatever you say.

NICK: Let's get it over with

(He opens the door, sees KATE, and then quickly shuts the door again. He presses his back to the door, eyes wide as though he has seen a ghost.)

JERRY: What are you doing?

NICK: It's Kate!

JERRY: Kate who?

NICK: Kate Bradley is in there.

JERRY: Oh. *(He looks through his papers.)* Yes, Katherine Bradley. She's the general manager.

NICK: I know her. We went to high school together. *(He peeks in the window.)* We lost touch after graduation. I haven't seen her in years...

JERRY: This should be quite the reunion.

NICK: Uh, hey, Jerry, why don't you head back to the office. I can handle this.

JERRY: Absolutely not. Your father told me to...

NICK: I know what my father said, but trust me. I should go in there alone. I can explain the situation and break the news to her gently.

JERRY: I don't think so.

NICK: Dad said this was a delicate matter. It will make everything go a lot smoother if she hears it from me.

JERRY: I can be delicate!

NICK: She knows me. It'll be fine. I'll take care of this and meet you back at the office in a couple hours. We can get started on the budget proposal this afternoon.

JERRY: Very well. Exchange some pleasantries, catch up on old times, and then kick her to the curb.

NICK: Delicate as ever, Jerry.

JERRY: Here is their 30-day notice. *(JERRY hands NICK a blue paper.)* I'll see you back at the office.
(JERRY exits. NICK smooths his hair, checks his breath, straightens his tie, and enters through the front door.)

NICK: Kate Bradley...

KATE: May I help you?

NICK: It's me, Nick.

KATE: Oh my god, Nick Davenport?!

NICK: Hey Kate.

(They hug.)

KATE: What are you doing here?

NICK: Weren't you expecting me?

KATE: We were expecting *someone* to stop by today, but it never crossed my mind that it would be you! You always swore you would never work for your father.

NICK: I worked for a bunch of different firms for a while, but I was just fighting the inevitable. I moved home about three years ago. Dad had a corner office waiting for me, and you don't say no to Frank Davenport.

KATE: I suppose not.

NICK: I'm just as surprised to see you here.

KATE: I've been working here for years.

NICK: What a small world. It's so good to see you. *(He stares.)* You look great.

KATE: Oh, thanks. You don't look half bad yourself.

NICK: Thanks. *(Small, awkward pause.)* You know, I saw you once not long after I got back to town.

KATE: You did?

NICK: Yeah, on Second Avenue. I was going to say hi, but you were with some guy, and I didn't want to interrupt.

KATE: Some guy?

NICK: Yeah, about this tall *(he shows height with his hand)* with sandy hair. He was wearing scrubs.

KATE: Oh, you mean Steve!

NICK: *(Dreading the answer:)* Is he your boyfriend?

KATE: No, Steve is one of the nurses here. I'm single.

NICK: Really? *(His spirits lift.)* I'm single too.

KATE: *(Not sure how to take that:)* Okay. *(Awkward pause.)* Um, should we get down to business?

NICK: *(Pulling out the blue paper:)* I guess we have to.

(She gestures to the couch and NICK sits.)

KATE: We were so surprised that Davenport and Associates was interested in elderly care. Steve was worried you were going to turn Silver Meadows into another one of your fast food places.

NICK: I can honestly say we're not turning it into a Burger Palace.

KATE: You don't know how relieved I am to hear you say that.

(She gets a few folders from the welcome desk and then joins him on the couch, spreading the folders out on the coffee table. NICK can't take his eyes off her.)

KATE: I thought maybe I could show you a few of my plans.

NICK: Actually, Kate...

KATE: It will only take a minute. I have some ideas that could really help Silver Meadows reach its full potential. How much do you know about us?

NICK: Not a lot.

(She hands him a pamphlet.)

KATE: Silver Meadows is a continuing care facility for seniors. We offer everything from independent living to nursing care and even hospice services. We're not very big, but we're committed to giving our residents the best care possible.

NICK: That's nice.

KATE: *(Handing him some papers:)* We have so much land and most of it is just sitting there, unused. We could put in a swimming pool or a walking path. We could even build a new wing and add some more rooms. All that's missing is the money. I guess that's where you come in.

NICK: Oh, well...

KATE: And this *(dropping a very heavy folder into his lap)* is my ninety-eight-point marketing plan for attracting new residents.

NICK: Wow.

KATE: On page one I've laid out a comprehensive...

NICK: Kate, stop.

KATE: Why? Is it too much?

NICK: No, I'm sure it's fine. It's just that, um...

KATE: What?

NICK: You see, the thing is... *(He looks at the blue eviction notice and doesn't know how to finish the sentence.)*

KATE: What's wrong? You can tell me, Nick.

(She puts her hand on his arm. He looks at her hand on his arm, transfixed.)

NICK: I...I, uh... *(He loses his courage.)* I should show these to my father, before I make any decisions.

KATE: Oh, of course! Sorry, I'm just really excited.

NICK: It's okay.

KATE: We'll table the business talk for now. How about I go get our residents. I know they'd love to meet you.

NICK: I don't want to bother them.

KATE: It's no bother. Wait right here.

(KATE exits stage left.)

(NICK watches her leave, puts his hand on his heart and smiles, clearly smitten.)

NICK: Oh, this is bad. Very bad.

KATE: *(Ducking her head back in:)* Did you say something?

NICK: What? No! No. I didn't say anything.

KATE: I thought I heard something. Okay, I'll be right back! *(She exits again.)*

NICK: *(Calling after her:)* I'll be counting the minutes! *(To himself, embarrassed:)* I'll be counting the minutes? *(He runs his hands through his hair.)* Okay, pull yourself together, Nick. This isn't high school. You've got a job to do.

(NICK's phone rings. He answers.)

Hey, Dad. Yeah, I'm here. No, Jerry isn't with me. Because, I told you, I don't need a babysitter. I can handle this myself. Not yet, but I will. I will, Dad, okay? Okay. Okay. *(Checks his watch as his father rambles on.)* Okay. Look, I've got to go. I'll see you at the office.

(He hangs up.)

(KATE enters, leading the ladies and staff of Silver Meadows. NICK stands.)

KATE: Nick, I'd like to introduce you to the Belles of Silver Meadows!

(CLARA sees NICK and rushes towards him, as much as an unwell older woman can, and reaches out.)

CLARA: Tommy!

(KATE stops CLARA and takes her extended hand.)

KATE: No, Clara. This is Nick Davenport. Mr. Johnson sold Silver Meadows to Nick's company.

NICK: Nice to meet you, Clara.

(She shakes his hand. With the other, she gently touches his cheek.)

CLARA: You look so much like him.

(NICK looks to KATE, unsure what to do. KATE takes CLARA's hand away from NICK's face.)

KATE: But he's not Tommy, Miss Clara. He's Nick.

CLARA: Yes, Nick. Nice to meet you.

(MEGAN leads CLARA away to a chair.)

KATE: And this is Pearl, Harriet, Gertie, and Vivienne.

NICK: It's a pleasure, ladies.

VIVIENNE: Oh, it could be, if you play your cards right.

KATE: Vivienne!

STEVE: Hey, I thought I was the only man for you?

(STEVE has no actual interest in VIVIENNE, but her harmless flirting makes the day go by faster.)

VIVIENNE: Are you the heir to a real-estate fortune, Steve?

STEVE: No...but I bring you lime Jell-O...

KATE: Nick, this is Steve.

STEVE: Be careful around that one.

(He points at VIVIENNE, who gives a flirty wave.)

KATE: And this is Megan, another one of our nurses.

MEGAN: Hi!

NICK: Nice to meet you.

GERTIE: Having a new owner is so exciting!

VIVIENNE: Yes, come sit down and tell us about yourself.

(She and the other ladies lead NICK to the couch before he can protest. He sits in the middle, and everyone sits/stands around him. NICK is very uncomfortable. The ladies begin to bombard him with quick-fire questions, barely letting him get a word in.)

NICK: There's not much to tell.

GERTIE: Sure, there is!

HARRIET: Do you like your job?

NICK: Oh, well...

VIVIENNE: Of course, he does. He works for the most successful real-estate company in the state, and his daddy owns it.

NICK: Actually... *(He looks at the blue paper knowing what he must do.)*

GERTIE: It must be nice to have all that money.

NICK: Well, uh...

PEARL: When is some of that money going to come our way?

NICK: Oh, um...

KATE: It will take time, Pearl. He needs to show everything to his father and get his approval.

NICK: Yes, but...

PEARL: He can tell us some of his ideas at least.

NICK: Well, I mean I...

VIVIENNE: Yes, Nick. What are your big plans for Silver Meadows?

NICK: Uh...

(Everyone leans in, finally letting him speak. He looks at all the ladies, and then MEGAN and STEVE. The silence grows longer. NICK is in over his head. He looks at KATE. He simply can't tell them.)

NICK: I have to go.

(He abruptly gets up.)

GERTIE: What?

HARRIET: But you just got here.

KATE: Is everything okay?

NICK: Yes, I just... I forgot about a meeting. Very important meeting. Must go.

(He begins to rush for the door.)

KATE: *(Grabbing the folders off the desk:)* Don't forget the plans!

NICK: *(Turning back around:)* Right.

(He hurriedly takes the papers and then stops when he looks at KATE. He takes her hand in his. Everyone watches them.)

NICK: It was really good to see you again, Kate. Really.

KATE: Yeah, you too.

(NICK leaves and KATE stares after him.)

VIVIENNE: Did you all see that? Definite sparks!

HARRIET: Their children will be beautiful.

KATE: Oh stop, he was just being nice.

MEGAN: What did he mean, it was good to see you again?

KATE: We went to high school together.

STEVE: You didn't tell me you knew Frank Davenport's son.

KATE: I didn't think it mattered. I've never met Frank, and I didn't know Nick was working for his dad. We haven't seen each other in years.

CLARA: Were you two an item back then?

KATE: No, we were just friends.

HARRIET: Was he not your type?

VIVIENNE: Honey, tall, rich, and handsome is everyone's type.

HARRIET: Not everyone.

PEARL: Yeah, Steve's girlfriend is proof.

STEVE: Well, we'll just see who gets Jell-O tomorrow and *(looking at PEARL:)* who doesn't.

(STEVE exits. MEGAN shakes her head at PEARL and follows STEVE out.)

PEARL: *(Calling after him, sarcastically:)* Oh, no, don't take away my Jell-O. How will I survive?

CLARA: *(Turning the attention back to KATE:)* Did you ever want to be more than friends?

KATE: With Nick? He was nice enough, but...

CLARA: But, what?

KATE: I was more focused on studying than boys.

VIVIENNE: And now all you do is focus on work. Don't you ever wish you had a man in your life, honey?

KATE: I like my life just the way it is, Vivienne.

CLARA: Still, it must have been nice to see an old friend again after all this time.

KATE: *(Looking at the door where NICK exited:)* Yes, it was...

(The ladies smile at each other.)

VIVIENNE: Kate, would you mind getting me a glass of water?

KATE: Sure.

(She exits stage left.)

(VIVIENNE watches to make sure KATE is out of earshot before turning back to the ladies excitedly.)

VIVIENNE: Well, that settles it.

CLARA: She likes him!

PEARL: She said they were just friends.

HARRIET: But the way they looked at each other... You can't deny chemistry like that.

VIVIENNE: Are you girls thinking what I'm thinking?

CLARA: We need to get those two kids together!

GERTIE: Should we be meddling in Kate's business like this?

VIVIENNE: Honey, it's not meddling, it's matchmaking!

Scene Four

(In blackout, we hear FRANK and NICK's voicemail messages. A phone rings a few times, followed by NICK's voice.)

NICK: You've reached Nick Davenport with Davenport and Associates. Please leave a detailed message and I'll return your call as soon as possible.

(Beep sound effect.)

FRANK: Nicholas, it's your father. I'm calling for an update on Silver Meadows. Since you sent Jerry back yesterday, I'm in the dark here, and I do *not* like it. I don't need to remind you how much is riding on this project. The future of our company is in your hands. Call me as soon as you get this.

(Lights up. NICK is standing outside the door of Silver Meadows. The ladies, MEGAN, and STEVE sit inside the living room, having a quiet morning. NICK has his phone to his ear, listening to his dad's voicemail.)

NICK: Thanks, Dad. No pressure... *(He shakes his head, puts his phone away, and takes a deep breath.)* Okay, it's a new day, a fresh start, and you can totally do this. Just go in there and tell her. Ignore the fact that you've secretly had a thing for her since the tenth grade. And that her eyes are as blue as the sky on a clear day... *(He becomes smitten again.)* And she has the cutest little dimple in her cheek when she smiles, but only on the left side. And... No! *(He begins rehearsing his speech and pacing.)* "Kate, we're closing Silver Meadows. The residents need to be out by January 15th." *(He takes a deep breath and tries again.)* "Kate, we're closing Silver Meadows. The residents need to be out by January 15th."

(He nods to himself and enters Silver Meadows, speaking loudly:)

Kate, we're clos...!

HARRIET: Hey Nick! Nice to see you again.

MEGAN: Kate's at the pharmacy.

NICK: Oh. I need to talk to her. Do you know when she'll be back?

CLARA: Shouldn't be too long. You could wait with us.

VIVIENNE: Yes, come sit by me!

NICK: I just really need to talk to Kate.

HARRIET: Come on, now. We don't bite.

(VIVIENNE pats a seat near her. NICK sits.)

VIVIENNE: Unless you want us to.

PEARL: Ignore her.

(The ladies all give each other looks. HARRIET turns to NICK.)

HARRIET: So, Nick, I was wondering... Are you single?

NICK: I am.

HARRIET: Interesting. You know, Kate is single too.

NICK: Yes, I did know that.

HARRIET: She's such a lovely girl, don't you think?

MEGAN: Let it be, Harriet.

HARRIET: What? He's single, she's single...

CLARA: We hear you two knew each other back in school.

NICK: Um, yes, we did.

CLARA: Did you have a crush on her back then?

NICK: What?

VIVIENNE: Seems to me you might still have a crush on her now.

NICK: Who told you that?

CLARA: You should ask her out on a date.

HARRIET: Imagine what your children will look like!

NICK: *(Pulling at his collar, feeling the heat of the Belles' grilling:)* Is it hot in here? It feels really hot.

MEGAN: Let it go, ladies.

HARRIET: Kate's a great girl and any man would be lucky to have her, that's all we're saying.

NICK: I know.

VIVIENNE: Good, then we'll leave it at that. *(She turns to her GERTIE.)* How about a game of pinochle, Gertie?

GERTIE: Okay!

(GERTIE shuffles the cards. The ladies start to resume their other activities.)

HARRIET: Hand me the purple yarn, Clara? *(CLARA does so.)* Thank you. *(HARRIET begins knitting.)* When I'm done this scarf, I could make something for you, Nick! A sweater, or a blanket maybe.

VIVIENNE: Big enough for two...

MEGAN: I said let it go!

STEVE: You're like a bunch of clucking hens sometimes.

VIVIENNE: Especially when a handsome new rooster shows up. It doesn't happen very often.

NICK: Yeah, I noticed there are only female residents here.

VIVIENNE: Just us hens. *(Matter-of-fact:)* Women live longer than men.

PEARL: It's because we're smarter.

GERTIE: Gin!

(VIVIENNE throws her cards down and shakes her head.)

PEARL: Well, some of us...

NICK: None of you are married?

HARRIET: My husband George is right down the street.

NICK: Oh?

STEVE: *(Quietly to NICK:)* In Shady Hill Cemetery.

NICK: Oh...

HARRIET: I visit him every Tuesday and bring him fresh flowers.

GERTIE: *(Putting her arm around HARRIET:)* Some of us are widowed, some of us are divorced.

PEARL: Happily divorced!

GERTIE: And some of us just never found Mr. Right.

VIVIENNE: I found plenty of Mr. Rights.

PEARL: We know. You've had more husbands than movie roles.

NICK: You were in movies?

VIVIENNE: Yes, honey. Have you ever seen *The Widow's Revenge*?

(NICK shakes his head.)

*Or *Zombie Brides From Hell*?*

NICK: No.

VIVIENNE: My biggest role was in *Death of the King*. Surely, you've heard of that one.

NICK: Sorry, no.

VIVIENNE: Oh... Well, we'll have to fix that. I have them all on DVD.

PEARL: Should have just said yes...

(KATE enters with shopping bags. She hangs up her coat and puts the bags on the front desk.)

HARRIET: *(Whispering to VIVIENNE, excited:)* She's here, she's here!

VIVIENNE: Hi, Kate! Look who dropped by.

KATE: *(Smiling:)* Hey, Nick. Nice to see you again.

(She walks towards him. NICK gets up and walks towards KATE.)

NICK: Yeah, you too.

(NICK and KATE look at each other for a moment, smiling. The ladies look at one another, smirking. VIVIENNE and HARRIET make a big show of wanting to move rooms.)

VIVIENNE: Well, we should let you two catch up. I'm sure you have a lot to talk about. Come on, ladies. Let's go to the drawing room and open all the curtains. It is such a beautiful, sunny day.

HARRIET: What a splendid idea, Vivienne. We could do some painting. The light is wonderful in the drawing room.

STEVE: Oh, no. No painting.

GERTIE: I love that idea! We haven't painted in months.

VIVIENNE: Steve, you can be our model.

STEVE: No, absolutely not.

VIVIENNE: Wonderful, it's settled. Come on, girls.

(The ladies begin to exit stage left. MEGAN chuckles at STEVE's annoyed face and goes with the Belles.)

STEVE: I said no!

(PEARL pulls STEVE by the sleeve.)

PEARL: It's happening, Steve. Deal with it.

STEVE: Fine, but I'm not wearing the toga again!

(They exit.)

NICK: Toga?

KATE: Don't ask.

NICK: There's never a dull moment here, is there?

KATE: Not usually, but that's part of what I like about working here. Every day is different.

(KATE grabs her folders off the front desk and goes to sit on the couch. NICK joins her.)

Sorry I was out when you arrived. I didn't know you would be stopping by.

NICK: Oh, it's fine.

KATE: Are you ready to talk some business today?

NICK: Actually, yes. *(He pulls out the blue paper.)* There's something I need to tell you. *(He looks at the blue paper.)* Kate, we're...

(CLARA enters stage left.)

CLARA: Kate?

(KATE turns to CLARA.)

It's a little chilly in the drawing room, but I can't find my shawl.

KATE: Do you know where you last had it?

CLARA: In my room, I think.

KATE: Let me go check. *(To NICK:)* I'll be right back.

(KATE exits upstage left. CLARA sits next to NICK.)

NICK: Hi again.

CLARA: Hello.

(CLARA stares intently at NICK's face. He becomes very self-aware under her gaze.)

NICK: Do I have something on my face?

CLARA: I'm sorry, I was staring. You just look so much like my Tommy

NICK: Who is Tommy?

CLARA: Tommy was my first love. My only love, really. We met as kids and we only had eyes for each other; like you and Kate.

NICK: What? No. Kate and I are just friends. We don't have feelings for each other. At least, I don't have any...feelings, I mean.

CLARA: It's not nice to lie to a little old lady.

NICK: I'm not lying.

(CLARA looks at NICK, raising her eyebrow.)

I'm not.

(CLARA continues to stare at him. NICK realizes he can't lie to a sweet old lady.)

Okay, fine. Yes, I like Kate. I have since high school. I thought I was over her, but when I saw her yesterday, all those feelings came rushing back.

CLARA: I knew it! You should tell her.

NICK: I...I can't.

CLARA: Why not?

NICK: *(Looking at the blue paper:)* It's complicated.

CLARA: Yes, affairs of the heart can be complicated. I know all about that.

NICK: Please don't tell her, or anyone.

CLARA: I won't tell, I promise. But I think you should. Love is a wonderful thing, Nick. Everyone should have someone to love in their lives. Vivienne says you should have as many as possible, but I only needed the one.

NICK: Even if there weren't... *(he looks at the blue eviction notice)* complications, I haven't seen her in so long. I don't know where I would start.

CLARA: The same as you would for any girl. You have to find out her likes and dislikes.

NICK: Her likes and dislikes?

CLARA: Yes. When Tommy was getting up the courage to ask me to go steady, he found out how much I loved yellow daisies. For the next month, I found a single daisy each day. Sometimes they were hidden in my locker at school. Sometimes they were in our mailbox at home. Once I even found one pinned to my ponytail. I don't know how he managed that! *(She touches her hair and smiles.)* He gave me thirty daisies in all. Thirty perfect little yellow daisies. I still have them. My mother helped me press them with a book. My father thought it was silly. He said they were nothing more than weeds. But I thought they were beautiful. *(She smiles softly.)* I fell in love with Tommy over those thirty days... *(CLARA gets a faraway look in her eye.)*

(NICK stares at CLARA, his panic rising in the face of CLARA's seemingly perfect love story. He throws up his hands.)

NICK: I don't know what kind of flowers Kate likes!

(She laughs and takes his hands in a sweet gesture, almost like the grandmother she never got to be.)

CLARA: It doesn't have to be flowers. Find out what matters most to her, whatever it is, and then show her you care about the same things.

NICK: *(Nodding:)* Okay. I can do that.

CLARA: Don't wait too long. Time's a funny thing. Just yesterday I was 17 and happily in love, and today I'm an old woman who sees Tommy's face everywhere...

(CLARA places her hand gently on NICK's cheek. He touches her hand.)

(After a moment, KATE enters upstage left.)

KATE: Found it! It was on your bed.

(CLARA stands. KATE gently wraps CLARA up in her shawl, tying it around her with care.)

There, now. Better?

CLARA: Yes, thank you.

KATE: How are you feeling today?

CLARA: Okay. A little tired.

KATE: Well, Dr. Lee will be here on Tuesday.

CLARA: She's not supposed to be here again until January.

KATE: I know, but I thought it would be best if she came by next week and just gave you a little checkup. Would that be alright?

CLARA: Yes.

KATE: Good. *(She hugs CLARA gently.)* We want you as healthy as can be, Miss Clara. Enjoy your painting.

(CLARA picks up some of the yarn and needles on the coffee table to take with her.)

CLARA: I think I'll stick with the knitting. Maybe I'll make you another tea cozy!

KATE: I would love that!

(CLARA exits, smiling. KATE sits next to NICK.)

KATE: She's made me nineteen tea cozies, but I can't bring myself to tell her I don't drink tea.

NICK: Why does the doctor need to stop by? Is she sick?

KATE: *(Nodding:)* Clara's been sick for a long time.

NICK: I'm sorry.

KATE: Me too. *(She looks in the direction of CLARA's exit.)* I just want all my residents to be happy and healthy.

NICK: You really care about them, don't you?

KATE: Of course, I love working here. Nothing matters more to me than these women.

NICK: Nothing? *(He looks at the blue paper, desperate.)* How do you feel about daisies?

KATE: What?

NICK: Forget it.

(STEVE ducks in from stage left. He's wearing a toga.)

STEVE: Hey, Kate, I can't find the paint brushes anywhere and the ladies are getting restless.

KATE: I'll be right there.

(STEVE nods and exits.)

NICK: Well, there's something I'll never unsee.

KATE: Like I said, never a dull moment. *(KATE stands.)* Sorry for all the interruptions.

NICK: *(Standing:)* It's fine. I have some important errands to run anyway. We'll talk business another time.

KATE: Okay. I'll see you tomorrow?

NICK: Definitely.

(KATE exits. NICK sighs and looks at the blue paper. He thinks, and then comes to a decision.)

Daisies would have been easier...

(He rips up the eviction notice.)

Scene Five

(The montage is fast-paced and takes a lot of choreography, but when done correctly it is a real crowd-pleaser! Lights come up as the song "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" begins to play. A montage of NICK and the ladies begins. NICK is doing all he can to win over KATE and the Belles. For each part of the montage, everyone should look slightly different to show the passage of time, such as a random scarf, a different cardigan, etc. There should be a few seconds of blackout between each moment of the montage to allow actors to move and gather props.)

MONTAGE:

1. *Lights up center. Everyone is sitting on the couch and chairs. NICK enters, carrying a giant Christmas turkey with a bow into the living room. Everyone is excited. KATE is shocked. Lights down.*

2. *Lights up stage right. NICK and STEVE are hanging Christmas lights on the welcome desk as CLARA and GERTIE watch. NICK hands the cord to CLARA. She plugs in the Christmas lights and everyone claps. Lights down. (These decorations remain for the rest of the play.)*

3. *Lights up center. NICK, CLARA, and HARRIET are knitting on the couch. KATE enters. HARRIET holds up an almost finished Christmas sweater. KATE is impressed. CLARA holds up an almost finished scarf. KATE is again impressed. NICK, struggling with the knitting needles, sheepishly holds up a tangled mess of yarn. KATE shakes her head and laughs. Lights down.*

4. *Lights up stage left. KATE and MEGAN stand stage left, going over some charts. NICK enters, holding mistletoe. He holds it above KATE's head, closes his eyes, and puckers his lips. KATE and MEGAN leave without even seeing him. NICK opens his eyes and is disappointed. VIVIENNE enters and taps NICK on the shoulder. He turns around to see her standing there, lips puckered. He runs away. Lights down.*

5. *Lights up center stage. All the ladies are standing near a CD player. NICK wears a sweatband around his forehead. NICK and MEGAN lead the ladies in an exercise routine. NICK is very enthusiastic. KATE watches and laughs. Lights down.*

6. *Lights up stage right. NICK gives KATE a stocking with her name on it. She is delighted and goes to hang it from the welcome desk. She turns her back to the door. Just then, JERRY walks through the door. NICK panics and shoves him out, closing the door behind him. NICK puts his back against the door so JERRY cannot get back in. KATE turns back to him, and he smiles and gives a thumbs up like nothing is wrong. Lights down.*

7. *All lights up. They are all seated in the living room drinking hot chocolate and chatting together. As the song ends, they clink their mugs together, laughing, and freeze on the last note of Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree.*

(Blackout while the audience cheers! During the blackout, a very large, beautifully decorated Christmas tree comes in. Lights up on NICK and the ladies decorating the big tree. CLARA sits on the couch, handing out ornaments from a box. PEARL sits on a chair, watching. MEGAN is behind the desk. NICK's phone rings. He pulls it out of his pocket, sees who is calling, shakes his head, and puts it back in his pocket)

PEARL: Don't focus so much on the front. There aren't enough ornaments on the back. It will look uneven.

VIVIENNE: No one's going to see the back. Who cares?

CLARA: I care!

NICK: Me too. I want this tree to be perfect.

VIVIENNE: To impress Kate?

NICK: What?

HARRIET: We all know you like her, dear.

(NICK looks at CLARA.)

CLARA: I didn't say anything, I promise!

PEARL: Even Gertie figured it out, and she only hears about half of what everyone says.

GERTIE: What?

NICK: Is it that obvious?

HARRIET: To everyone but Kate, bless her.

VIVIENNE: We think it's about time you asked her out.

MEGAN: Ladies, I've told you, let it go! *(She goes to NICK, quietly.)* Though, if you did ask her out, I bet she'd say yes...

NICK: Really?

(MEGAN nods. NICK's phone rings.)

One sec. (He pulls it out of his pocket.)

MEGAN: You're a popular guy today.

NICK: It's my dad.

MEGAN: Do you need to get it?

NICK: Uh, no... No, I'll talk to him another time. *(He puts his phone back in his pocket.)* How are we doing with the decorating?

HARRIET: Do we have any more tinsel?

NICK: I think so, let me check.

(NICK exits stage left.)

VIVIENNE: *(Picking up an ornament:)* This is one of mine!

GERTIE: Wow, look how sparkly it is!

PEARL: It looks expensive.

VIVIENNE: It was a gift from husband number five. He gave it to me a week before I left him for husband number six. *(She smiles and hangs it on the tree.)*

PEARL: So, he got you a giant, diamond crusted ornament, and you got him a divorce?

VIVIENNE: They're not diamonds, honey. *(Quietly to HARRIET:)* Maybe if they were, I wouldn't have left.

(VIVIENNE winks and HARRIET shakes her head.)

(KATE enters through the main door and begins to take off her coat. She stops short when she sees the tree.)

KATE: What is this?

GERTIE: Surprise!

VIVIENNE: Do you love it?

KATE: It's wonderful! But where did it come from? How did it get here?

MEGAN: Take a guess.

KATE: Nick?

HARRIET: He brought it this morning, with all these decorations!

VIVIENNE: He sure has been by a lot recently; spending time with us, decorating the place. I wonder why... *(She winks at KATE.)*

KATE: It's just because his company owns Silver Meadows now.

HARRIET: *(Looking at KATE:)* That's not the only reason.

(KATE smiles.)

(NICK enters.)

NICK: Found some! Oh, hey Kate. *(He hands HARRIET more tinsel.)*

KATE: You did this?

NICK: I went to the tree lot last night and found the biggest one they had. These ladies deserve the best, don't you think?

KATE: *(Taken aback as NICK takes the words right out of her mouth:)* Yes, I do.

CLARA: Isn't it the most beautiful tree you've ever seen? I just love Christmas.

KATE: Me too, Clara.

(CLARA pulls out an ornament and recognizes it.)

CLARA: This is one of my ornaments! It used to belong to my mother.

KATE: It's beautiful. Do you want me to put it on the tree for you?

CLARA: No, I can do it.

(CLARA gets up, but sits back down again after getting dizzy.)

KATE: Are you okay?

CLARA: I'm fine.

MEGAN: What's wrong?

CLARA: Nothing. I just got up too fast.

(MEGAN feels CLARA's forehead.)

MEGAN: You're a bit warm. Are you sure you feel okay?

CLARA: Yes. A little tired, maybe.

MEGAN: Do you want to lie down?

CLARA: But the tree...

MEGAN: The tree isn't going anywhere.

KATE: We'll save you some ornaments, I promise. Go rest, Clara.

CLARA: I guess a nap does sound nice.

MEGAN: Good. Come on, Miss Clara.

(MEGAN helps CLARA exit upstage left.)

(The ladies look at each other and then to KATE and NICK. HARRIET clears her throat and speaks loudly so KATE can hear.)

HARRIET: Thank you again for bringing the tree, Nick. It was so thoughtful of you.

NICK: I was happy to do it.

VIVIENNE: Isn't Nick thoughtful, Kate?

KATE: Yes, very thoughtful.

(The ladies smile at each other. VIVIENNE nudges NICK and points to KATE.)

NICK: What... now?

VIVIENNE: Go for it!

(She pushes him towards KATE.)

NICK: Hey, Kate. Could I talk to you over here for a second?

(They walk to the welcome desk. The ladies continue decorating, though are obviously eavesdropping.)

I was wondering if...

(STEVE enters from upstage left, carrying a big box.)

STEVE: I found the last of the Christmas orna...

(The BELLES all quickly turn and glare at STEVE, loudly and harshly shushing him. STEVE stops short, looking bewildered. The ladies turn their attention back to NICK and KATE.)

NICK: Um, I was wondering if we could grab coffee sometime. Maybe tomorrow?

KATE: As friends?

NICK: Yeah, as friends. But also... more than friends?

KATE: So, like a date?

NICK: Yes, a date.

KATE: Oh, um...

(Behind NICK, at the tree, the ladies smile and give thumbs up and encouraging nods to KATE.)

Sure, why not.

(NICK looks relieved. The ladies smile and high five each other.)

GERTIE: Did she say yes?

HARRIET: *(Loudly to GERTIE:)* She said yes!

VIVIENNE: Love is in the air.

NICK: Well, I guess I better head out. *(He grabs his coat and heads for the door.)* I'll pick you up tomorrow at 6, sound good?

KATE: Sounds great.

(They both smile. NICK waves goodbye to everyone and exits out the front door.)

STEVE: *(Still standing frozen at the tree:)* Uh, am I allowed to talk again?

PEARL: If you must.

STEVE: Okay, well, like I was saying, I found the last of the Christmas ornaments in the attic.

(HARRIET digs an old ornament from the box and puts her hand on her heart.)

HARRIET: Oh my, this is one of George's old ornaments!

GERTIE: Is that a bird?

HARRIET: It's a stork. I gave this to George on our first Christmas together to let him know we had a bundle of joy on the way.

KATE: That's so sweet, Harriet.

HARRIET: George wanted a boy so bad, it's all he could talk about. George Jr., his little slugger. He bought blue baby clothes, blue cloth diapers, blue blankets... He even found a teeny little baby-sized baseball mitt. And then, of course, we had Julie!

KATE: You miss him very much, don't you?

HARRIET: Always, but especially around Christmas. At least I have Julie, though. She's the spitting image of her father.

VIVIENNE: *(Turning to KATE:)* Do you think your children will look more like you or Nick?

KATE: I beg your pardon?

(The BELLES begin to chatter quickly and excitedly, almost as though KATE isn't there.)

GERTIE: You have to name your first daughter after one of us!

VIVIENNE: Vivienne is a fabulous name.

PEARL: We have to get her down the aisle before we get her knocked up.

KATE: Um, I'd like to get through this coffee date first, ladies.

HARRIET: Oh, yes. What should she wear for a first date?

PEARL: She should wear her black dress.

VIVIENNE: No, the red!

GERTIE: Yes, the red one!

KATE: Do I get a say in this?

HARRIET: *(Waving KATE off:)* Hush, dear.

VIVIENNE: What should we do about her hair?

(The BELLES continue to plot KATE's future near the tree as KATE throws her hands up and goes to sit on the couch next to STEVE. STEVE is reading a magazine, ignoring the ladies' meddling.)

KATE: *(Looking back at the ladies:)* Do you ever get the feeling the monkeys are running the zoo?

STEVE: *(Not looking up from his magazine:)* Every day...

Scene Six

(Lights come up on Frank's office. FRANK is sitting behind his desk. JERRY enters, knocking.)

JERRY: Mr. Davenport, can I steal a minute of your time?

FRANK: Of course. Come in, Jerry.

(JERRY enters the office and sits.)

JERRY: Sir, I've noticed some unusual charges on Nick's expense account.

FRANK: Unusual?

JERRY: See for yourself.

(He hands FRANK the report.)

FRANK: A 30 lb turkey, a 12-foot Christmas tree, two hundred bundles of yarn? What is all this?

JERRY: I have a sneaking suspicion it's for the ladies of Silver Meadows.

FRANK: He's supposed to be getting them out of there, not showering them with gifts.

JERRY: That's why I wanted to bring it to your attention right away.

FRANK: There must be a reasonable explanation.

JERRY: I went to go check on how things were progressing, like you asked me to, and Nick was very rude to me. He shoved me out of the door and wouldn't let me back in.

FRANK: He won't return my calls, he's missed the past three staff meetings, and now this... What has gotten into that boy?

JERRY: I believe he's got a thing for the manager.

FRANK: The manager?

JERRY: Yes; Katherine Bradley. Apparently, they knew each other back in school. I think Nick is stalling, and it's because of her.

FRANK: No. There's no way my son is letting some girl get in the way of his responsibility to this company. He begged me to let him lead this project, and he knows better than to cross Frank Davenport.

JERRY: Perhaps you're right, sir. *(He plucks the report out of FRANK's hand.)* Maybe he won't completely ruin a multi-million-dollar business venture.

(FRANK ponders, then looks at JERRY, steepling his hands.)

FRANK: See that he doesn't...

(JERRY smiles and nods, then exits.)

Scene Seven

(For an alternate Scene Seven, see Appendix.)

(NICK and VIVIENNE are seated on the couch, watching one of VIVIENNE's old movies. Blue light flickers on their faces to indicate the screen. The audience hears YOUNG VIVIENNE and GUY MORGAN's voices—this can be prerecorded or spoken live from offstage.)

VIVIENNE mouths the words along with Young VIVIENNE and acts out a bit of the blocking. NICK is struggling to take the terrible movie seriously.)

GUY: Your majesty, I came as soon as I heard. Is it true?

YOUNG VIVIENNE: It is true. The king is dead.

GUY: But how did it come to be?

YOUNG VIVIENNE: I poisoned him!

GUY: My queen, you didn't?

YOUNG VIVIENNE: I did!

GUY: How could you?

YOUNG VIVIENNE: Don't you see, Sebastian? It was the only way we could be together! I did it for us!

GUY: I never asked for this!

YOUNG VIVIENNE: You did! Every time you sent me love poems, you asked for this! Every time you wished there was a way for us to be together, you asked for this. Every night that you stole into my chambers and professed your love for me as we held each other close, you asked for this!

GUY: But I never asked for it with my words! I cannot bear this! I must turn you in, my queen.

YOUNG VIVIENNE: You will not betray me, Sebastian!

GUY: You cannot stop me.

YOUNG VIVIENNE: Oh, can't I?

VIVIENNE: *(Loudly whispering:)* I had a dagger hidden in my garter the whole time! Did you see?

NICK: Yes, I see.

GUY: You wouldn't!

YOUNG VIVIENNE: I would! And I will!

(VIVIENNE acts out stabbing someone as GUY makes a pained grunt.)

GUY: You stabbed me! I'm dying!

YOUNG VIVIENNE: Oh Sebastian, my love! What have I done? How could I?

GUY: I...will...always...love...you...

YOUNG VIVIENNE: I cannot live without you. I will join you in the great beyond, my love!

(VIVIENNE acts out stabbing herself in the stomach as YOUNG VIVIENNE makes a pained grunt.)

Goodbye, cruel world! I die a queen, but I would have rather lived as the wife of Sebastian!

(She too dies dramatically, with VIVIENNE acting out every moment on the couch. VIVIENNE turns off the movie with the remote, and turns to NICK, smiling expectantly. He is at a loss for words. Finally...)

NICK: Wow.

VIVIENNE: Did you love it?

(It turns out NICK CAN lie to an old lady.)

NICK: Uh, yes.

VIVIENNE: I was good, wasn't I?

NICK: So, so good.

VIVIENNE: Can you believe this was the last movie I ever made?

NICK: *(Yes:)* No... How did you get the role?

VIVIENNE: The director was my third husband.

NICK: That explains a lot.

VIVIENNE: I had supporting roles in a few horror movies, but *Death of the King* was supposed to be my big break! Instead, it bombed at the box office. No one would cast me after that.

NICK: Go figure.

VIVIENNE: At least I got to meet Guy Morgan, my costar. He became husband number four. He was a dish. Dumb as a box of rocks, but so pretty. I think we could have gone the distance if it weren't for that unfortunate snorkeling accident.

NICK: How many husbands have you had?

VIVIENNE: Seven. But Guy was my favorite.

NICK: You had seven husbands?

VIVIENNE: Well, look at me! *(She points at the TV.)* I was a knockout. Men fawned over me. *(She sighs.)* But that was then.

NICK: You're still beautiful, Vivienne.

VIVIENNE: You're sweet, but I'm well aware of what I look like now. Don't get me wrong, I'm a stunner for a broad my age, but I miss that girl. *(Points at the TV again and sighs. She truly knows how fast it all goes by.)* One day, when you least expect it, time sneaks up and bites you right on the ass.

(KATE enters through the front door.)

NICK: Kate!

KATE: Hey there you two. What are you up to?

NICK: *(Through a forced smile:)* Vivienne is showing me her movies.

KATE: *(She smiles back, knowingly.)* Lucky you.

NICK: Hey Vivienne, can we finish this later? Kate and I should get going.

VIVIENNE: Oh yes, the big date. Don't worry about me. You young people have fun and enjoy your fleeting youth.

(She exits.)

KATE: How did she convince you to watch her old movies?

NICK: I got here a little early. Steve told me you were at the bank and before I could go back to my car, Vivienne cornered me.

KATE: Sorry to keep you waiting.

NICK: It's okay. You're worth waiting for.

(KATE smiles. NICK nervously hands her a bouquet of flowers that was next to him on the couch.)

These are for you.

KATE: Oh Nick, they're beautiful! Thank you.

NICK: I didn't know what kind of flowers you liked.

KATE: Roses are perfect. I love them. *(There's an awkward but sweet pause.)* Should we get going?

NICK: Let me just grab my coat.

(NICK grabs his coat off one of the chairs and notices CLARA entering from stage left.)

Hey, Clara.

(She doesn't respond.)

KATE: Did you need something, Miss Clara?

(CLARA is visibly agitated and confused. She makes little noises. KATE goes to her.)

Clara, what's wrong?

(NICK gets up and crosses to CLARA and KATE.)

NICK: Is she alright?

(CLARA sees NICK and goes to him.)

CLARA: Tommy?

KATE: No, Clara, this is Nick.

CLARA: *(Clinging to NICK:)* Tommy, it's me, it's Clara!

NICK: I'm Nick, remember?

CLARA: Tommy! I waited for you!

(NICK tries to gently disentangle himself from CLARA.)

NICK: Clara, I'm Nick.

CLARA: Stop saying that, Tommy!

(MEGAN enters stage left.)

MEGAN: What's going on?

KATE: Clara's having a bad day.

(MEGAN tries to get CLARA off NICK.)

MEGAN: Come on, Clara. Let go of Nick.

CLARA: Don't touch me! I don't know you!

KATE: Clara, Let's go to your room.

CLARA: No!

MEGAN: All your things are there, Clara. Your knitting, and the shawl your mother gave you, and all your pictures.

KATE: *(To NICK:)* It helps when she's surrounded by things that are familiar to her.

(MEGAN and KATE manage to get CLARA off NICK. They start heading upstage left.)

CLARA: Don't let them take me Tommy! Don't let them take me!

NICK: *(Gently:)* Hey, shh. It's okay. Listen to me. *(He takes her hands.)* These nice ladies are going to take you to your room, okay?

CLARA: My room?

NICK: Yes, I want you to go with them. Can you do that for me?

CLARA: Anything for you.

NICK: That's my girl.

MEGAN: Come on, Clara.

(She gently leads her upstage left. They exit.)

KATE: Thank you.

NICK: Is there anything else I can do?

KATE: No, we've got this covered. But I can't go out tonight. She needs me.

NICK: Of course, I understand.

KATE: I'm sorry.

(She exits upstage left.)

(Lights go down on the living room and come up on CLARA's bedroom stage left, represented by a simple bed. MEGAN helps CLARA sit on the bed. KATE enters a moment later. KATE finds the shawl and wraps it around CLARA.)

KATE: Here's your shawl.

MEGAN: Do you want your knitting?

CLARA: Yes.

MEGAN: *(Handing CLARA her knitting:)* Here you go.

KATE: What are you working on, Miss Clara?

CLARA: It's a tea cozy.

KATE: Do you remember who it's for?

CLARA: It's for...for...

KATE: Is it for me?

CLARA: Maybe. I...I can't recall.

KATE: That's okay, Clara. You just relax.

(MEGAN and KATE step away from CLARA's bed.)

KATE: This one hit her fast.

MEGAN: It's a good thing Nick was here to help. He handled that really well.

KATE: *(Nodding:)* He came to pick me up for our date, but that's off now, obviously.

MEGAN: What? No! You have to go!

KATE: We'll reschedule. It'll be fine.

MEGAN: You practically live here, Kate. When's the last time you had some fun?

KATE: I can't leave now, not with Clara like this.

MEGAN: She's calming down. I can handle it. And Steve will be here at eight if I need any help.

KATE: I can't.

MEGAN: Kate, do you have a nursing degree?

KATE: No.

MEGAN: I do. It's why you hired me. Now, go.

KATE: You're sure?

MEGAN: Yes, Kate. Go have fun! I've got this covered. If things get worse, I'll call you. I promise.

KATE: Well...okay. I could use a night out. But please, call me if you need *anything*.

(MEGAN nods. KATE hugs CLARA.)

Bye, Miss Clara.

CLARA: Goodbye.

(KATE exits. MEGAN sits down with CLARA.)

Who was that nice lady?

(MEGAN smiles sadly at CLARA.)

Scene Eight

(Lights up on stage right. There are a few café tables with customers. JERRY sits in the corner with a hat pulled down to cover his eyes. KATE and NICK sit at a table, their chairs close. A waiter comes to their table.)

WAITER: One black coffee with two sugars, and a mocha latte.

NICK: Thank you.

(WAITER exits.)

I'm glad we didn't have to cancel.

KATE: Me too.

NICK: And Clara will be alright?

KATE: *(Trying to convince herself:)* Yes, Megan's got it covered.

(She checks her phone, which is on the table.)

NICK: Good.

KATE: You were wonderful with her; calm and patient.

NICK: It was nothing.

KATE: No, it was impressive. Really.

NICK: Oh, well, I'm glad I was there to help.

KATE: Me too.

NICK: And I'm glad we're doing this...you and me.

KATE: Me too.

NICK: I just wish it hadn't taken me ten years to ask you out.

KATE: Better late than never, I guess.

NICK: Yeah, better late than never...

(The air is still and there is something happening between them. They both slowly lean into each other until the WAITER breaks the spell.)

WAITER: Your blueberry scones.

(KATE and NICK break apart. KATE smiles and checks her phone. NICK glares daggers at the waiter.)

NICK: Thanks.

(WAITER exits.)

Great service here.

KATE: Yeah...

NICK: *(Trying to get the date back on track:)* So, uh, what were we talking about?

KATE: Clara.

NICK: Right. I'm sorry she wasn't feeling well. Is she like that often?

KATE: Some days she's herself. She knows where she is and who we all are. Other days she's lost in the past.

NICK: Like tonight?

KATE: *(Nodding:)* On those days she gets confused and agitated.

NICK: How long has she been like that?

KATE: It started a few years ago. But it's gotten worse since her diagnosis.

NICK: Diagnosis?

KATE: Clara has cancer.

NICK: *(Taking that in:)* Oh. You mentioned she was sick, but I didn't know it was cancer.

KATE: She doesn't like to talk about it.

NICK: I'm so sorry.

KATE: She's beaten it twice before, but we found out a few months ago that the cancer came back.

NICK: What kind of treatment is she on?

KATE: She isn't being treated.

NICK: What?

KATE: She doesn't want to fight anymore. The chemo made her so sick, she doesn't want to go through that a third time. She wants to live as close to a normal life as she can with the time she has left. We do our best to make her comfortable and happy.

NICK: How long does she have?

KATE: The doctors aren't sure. It could be months... But they don't think it will be more than a year.

NICK: Are you okay?

KATE: I'm not the one who's sick.

NICK: I know, but you love those women.

KATE: I do.

NICK: This must be awful for you.

KATE: It's worse for Clara.

NICK: Kate...

(She looks down at her hands, then admits quietly:)

KATE: It's the hardest part of my job... Saying goodbye. Clara is such a sweet lady. It breaks my heart watching her body and her mind fail her.

NICK: Why do you keep doing it?

KATE: Because of the residents. Some of them don't have anyone else. My job is to help them live their golden years with love, laughter, and dignity. *(Regaining her composure:)* And it's my honor to do it.

NICK: You truly are amazing.

KATE: They're the amazing ones; Clara and the rest of the ladies.

(She glances at her phone yet again.)

NICK: You keep looking at your phone.

KATE: Sorry. It's just, Megan said she'd call if she needed anything.

NICK: *(Knowing what truly matters to KATE:)* Do you want to go check on Clara?

KATE: No, no. We're on our date. *(She puts her phone in her bag and takes his hands in hers.)* Let's change the subject. *(She glances at her bag.)*

NICK: Kate, it's okay. I know you're worried about her. We can go. Really.

KATE: Are you sure?

NICK: Of course. *(He throws some money on the table.)* I'll drive you back.

KATE: Thank you, Nick.

(He takes her coat off the back of her chair and helps her into it.)

I'm sorry I got emotional. I don't open up to many people.

NICK: You can talk to me anytime.

(KATE smiles at him.)

Now, let's get you back to your girls.

(NICK takes his jacket off the back of his chair and puts it on. KATE, touched by his concern, makes a decision.)

KATE: Hey Nick?

NICK: Yes?

(He turns back to face her.)

(She takes his face in her hands and kisses him. He's shocked at first but then wraps his arms around her and kisses her back. After a moment, they break apart. They take a second to collect themselves, both moved by the kiss.)

KATE: Maybe we could do this again sometime? Soon?

NICK: *(Completely besotted:)* Absolutely.

(They exit hand in hand. At that moment, JERRY takes his hat off and watches them leave. The WAITER goes to him.)

WAITER: Can I get you anything else?

JERRY: No, I got everything I need.

Scene Nine

(Lights up stage left. TOMMY, in uniform, sits with a few other soldiers. A SOLDIER enters with letters. As he calls out names, soldiers raise their hand and take a letter, then exit excitedly.)

SOLDIER: Mail's here, boys. Garcia. Tucker. Rhoades.

TOMMY: That's me!

(TOMMY quickly opens his letter and begins to read. YOUNG CLARA's voice is heard.)

YOUNG CLARA: Dear Tommy. I can't believe you've been gone for three months now. It feels like three years. I miss you terribly. Mama says hi. Daddy says...well, nothing, but I think he's finally accepted that we're engaged. At least he's stopped turning red and muttering under his breath any time your name is mentioned. I'm fine. Nothing new to report. I wish you would write more, though. I know it's difficult to write every day, but when I don't hear from you, I worry. Remember your promise, Tommy. Come home to me. I'll be waiting for you. Love always, Clara.

(Lights fade on TOMMY and come up stage right on YOUNG CLARA. She sits on her porch—represented by a bench—reading a letter. TOMMY's voice is heard.)

TOMMY: Dear Clara, thank you for your letters. They keep me going. I'm sorry I haven't replied until now. We moved again; further north, I think. Sarge says we'll probably be here awhile, so I should be able to write more often. I'm glad your dad has finally started to calm down. I think he might scare me more than the war. Tell your mom I said hi. I miss you every day and I can't wait until we're together again. Thinking of you, Tommy. P.S. I remember my promise and I plan to keep it.

(Lights fade on YOUNG CLARA and come up on TOMMY. He sits alone reading, looking worse for wear. YOUNG CLARA's voice is heard.)

YOUNG CLARA: Tommy, guess what...I found the dress! THE dress. Mama and I were walking by Holbert's department store and there it was, in the window. I tried it on, and it was a perfect fit! Mama says that's a sign, like it was meant to be. It's so lovely, darling. Ivory satin with little pearl buttons, and...well, I guess I should let you see it for yourself on our wedding day. I can't wait to marry you, Tommy Rhoades. I'm counting down the days until I'm in your arms again. All my love, Clara.

(TOMMY clutches the letter to his chest, desperately. Lights fade on TOMMY and come up on YOUNG CLARA. She sits on her porch, reading a letter. TOMMY's voice is heard, it sounds hollow as the war starts to change him.)

TOMMY: Clara, last night I had a dream about you in your wedding dress. The boys and I were in the middle of fighting when everything abruptly went silent. There was no gunfire, no explosion, no shouts, not a sound. Everyone was moving in slow motion. And then, suddenly, you were there in your ivory dress with the pearl buttons. You walked towards me, surrounded by a warm, white light. You were holding a bouquet of little yellow daisies and smiling from ear to ear. I couldn't stop staring at you. I woke up calling your name. I wish I was with you now. Keep praying for me, and all of us over here. I love you. Tommy.

(MAMA enters with some laundry to hang on the line.)

MAMA: You reading that same old letter again?

YOUNG CLARA: Yes. I can't help it. It's the only one I've gotten in almost six weeks. What if something's wrong, Mama?

MAMA: I'm sure everything is fine. Why don't you get out of the house for a little while? See if you friends want to go shopping or to the movies. I'll let you borrow the car.

YOUNG CLARA: I am out of the house. I'm on the porch.

MAMA: Don't get smart with me, Clara.

YOUNG CLARA: I can't leave, Mama. I have to be here when the mailman comes.

MAMA: All right, but tomorrow we're going to go into town. I need to buy a new vacuum and you're going to come with me.

CLARA: Yes, Mama.

(MAMA exits. YOUNG CLARA reads her letter again to herself. A SOLDIER enters and walks towards the porch. CLARA gets up.)

SOLDIER: Are you Miss Clara Lewis?

YOUNG CLARA: I am...

(The SOLDIER hands YOUNG CLARA a letter. She slowly takes the letter with shaking hands. She opens the letter and begins to read, not breathing.)

SOLDIER: I'm sorry, miss, but...

(She falls to her knees and screams for her mother.)

YOUNG CLARA: Mama!

SOLDIER: The commandant of the United States Armed Forces has entrusted me to express with deep regret that Thomas Michael Rhoades was...

YOUNG CLARA: No, no, no! *(She covers her ears, weeping.)*

MAMA: *(Running in:)* Why are you hollering? *(She notices the soldier.)*

SOLDIER: Ma'am.

MAMA: Oh, God...

SOLDIER: The army extends its deepest sympathy for your loss.

(MAMA kneels beside YOUNG CLARA and clutches her as YOUNG CLARA screams through tears.)

YOUNG CLARA: Tommy! No! Tommy!

(Lights fade on the porch and rise on CLARA's bedroom stage right. She is tossing and turning.)

CLARA: Tommy! Tommy!

(MEGAN runs in.)

MEGAN: Clara? Clara, wake up!

(She takes CLARA's hands and checks her pulse and then feels her forehead.)

You're burning up. Clara, can you hear me?

(CLARA does not open her eyes, reliving the horror in her mind over and over.)

CLARA: Tommy! Tommy!

MEGAN: Steve!

(STEVE hurries in.)

STEVE: What's wrong?

MEGAN: Call the doctor! And then call Kate! Hurry!

End of Act I.

END PREVIEW

To request the entire script to read for free, please visit:

groveplays.com/perusals

To ask a question or inquire about rights, please contact Lauren Grove:

lauren@groveplays.com

717-317-4488

groveplays.com

Or visit:

www.yourstagepartners.com/silver-belles

