

AND SAID, "SLOCUM, JUST TASTE IT—
IT'S GREAT!"

NINE TIMES OUT OF TEN,
I WOULD NOT TASTE WHAT I ATE!
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE—

(They ALL sigh deeply.)

ALL BUT FINEBERG. *(Singing.)*
FOR A FEW MINUTES!
TWO MINUTES!
EVERYTHING'S FINE!

SLOCUM.
I AM DRINKING TO LIFE,
AND I'M TASTING THE WINE!

ALL BUT FINEBERG.
FOR A FEW MINUTES,
TWO MINUTES!
I'M A NEW MAN!

TWENTY YEARS MIGHT NOT DO
WHAT THOSE TWO MINUTES CAN!

FINEBERG. I fail to see the connection between Cathy and fish!

SLOCUM. It's simple. You've got to enjoy life while you can.
(Singing.)

IF YOU LIVE TO A HUNDRED
THERE'S NO GUARANTEE
THAT YOUR LIFE'LL BE NICE,
BEING HAPPY CAN BE AS UNPREDICTABLE
AS A ROLL OF THE DICE!
SO YOU STRUGGLE AND STRIVE,
AND YOU FAIL, OR YOU THRIVE,
AND YOU FINALLY GO DOWN THE DRAIN!
FROM THE DAY THAT YOU ARE BORN
LIFE'S A BELLYFUL OF PAIN!
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE—

(They ALL sigh deeply. Swept up in it, FINEBERG joins them.)

ALL.
FOR A FEW MINUTES,
TWO MINUTES!
LIFE IS WORTHWHILE!
IT'S LIKE FALLING IN LOVE,
AND YOU ONLY CAN SMILE.

FOR A FEW MINUTES,

Peter &

Heloise

Scene # 1

TWO MINUTES!
EXCELSIOR!
AND YOU'D GIVE ALL YOU'VE GOT
FOR JUST TWO MINUTES MORE!

(They ALL sigh deeply.)

SLOCUM. *(Over music.)* Come on, Fineberg. Fall in love!

CATLAN. Yeah! Live it up, Sidney. If not, tell her I'm available!

FINEBERG. I think . . . I think you're all degenerates!

CATLAN. *(After a pause.)* I'll buy that! *(CATLAN, SLOCUM
and ARIAS follow FINEBERG as he walks Off.)*

SCENE 3

→ start

PETER'S "Room." Lights up on PETER. He sits alone in his
"room." HELOISE walks to the edge of the light, as if in the
"doorway."

HELOISE. May I come in, Mr. Schermann?

PETER. Oh, sure. Come on in.

HELOISE. You didn't have any luck with Doctor Keller, did
you?

PETER. That's right. I didn't.

HELOISE. Well, we've all had similar experiences. And I just
thought I'd drop in and tell you not to be upset. It's happened to all
of us.

PETER. That's very nice of you.

HELOISE. *(Leaving.)* Well . . .

PETER. Please, sit down. My name is Peter.

HELOISE. *(Sitting.)* My name is Heloise.

PETER. Hello, Heloise.

HELOISE. Hello, Peter. *(A pause.)* There are enough big things
in life to worry about without getting yourself excited about all the
little things.

PETER. I wish I could be that way. Trouble with me is some-
times I think *everything* is worth getting excited about. And after two
heart attacks I'm not supposed to get excited.

HELOISE. Then you shouldn't. *(A beat.)* Did you happen to
notice that piano downstairs?

PETER. The mahogany?

HELOISE. You know pianos?

PETER. I know woods. I was a carpenter.

HELOISE. When I first came here I wanted to play that piano, but it was locked. So I went to Mrs. Stone. And you *know* what happened.

PETER. I don't understand. Why is it locked? What have they got against music?

HELOISE. I don't know. All Mrs. Stone said was "it's a very valuable instrument—it's opened whenever we have entertainment." Which is once a year. Christmas.

PETER. What did you do?

HELOISE. I got excited. But it didn't do me any good. Do you see what I mean?

PETER. Are you really a good piano player?

HELOISE. I used to be, but that was a long time ago. My father taught me. He used to play for the silent movies, you know.

PETER. Well, I think you should play the piano. And I'm going to see that it's opened.

HELOISE. Well, that would be very nice but I'm afraid you'd be wasting your time.

PETER. No, this time it's different. I'm not going to ask them.

HELOISE. What are you going to do?

PETER. I'm going to open it.

HELOISE. You're going to open it?! That would be like a breath of spring. Sometimes this place is like a tomb.

PETER. Then we'll do it.

HELOISE. Really?

PETER. Sure! What can they do to me? Take away my pills? Give me the big meal at lunch?

HELOISE. That would be terrific! *(Singing.)*

.. "WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE"

WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE MUSIC, MUSIC.
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE NOISE.
SOMETHING THAT WILL
STEP UP THE PACE,
PEP UP THE PLACE, .
PUT A LITTLE SMILE ON
EVERYONE'S FACE!

(Reconsidering.)

You know we might get into trouble . . .

PETER. Who cares!

HELOISE. *(Singing.)*

WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE ENTERTAINMENT,
SOMETHING THAT WILL
WAKE UP THE GIRLS AND BOYS!

PETER. *(Singing.)*

GOSH, THERE MUST BE
SOMEBODY HERE,
WHO'LL VOLUNTEER,
TO PLAY A LITTLE TUNE OR TWO.
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE SOMEONE
WHO CAN MAKE SOME MUSIC,
HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT,
HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT YOU!

HELOISE.

THERE'S A BARREL OF FUN
IN A LITTLE BOOGIE-WOOGIE.

PETER.

THERE'S A ZIP AND A ZING
IN A LITTLE SWING!
AND ALL WE NEED IS
SOMEONE WHO HAS
LOTS OF PAZAZZ,
BANGIN' OUT BARRELHOUSE,
DIXIELAND JAZZ!

HELOISE. *(Spoken.)* I agree. But that ain't me!

PETER and HELOISE.

WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE LIBERACE,
SOMEONE WHO COULD
MAKE THAT PIANA' SING!

PETER.

GOSH, THERE MUST BE
SOMEBODY HERE
WHO'LL VOLUNTEER
TO PLAY A LITTLE TUNE OR TWO!

PETER and HELOISE.

'CAUSE WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE SOMEONE
WHO CAN MAKE SOME MUSIC.

HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT,
HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT YOU?

HELOISE. *(Spoken.)* You!

PETER. Don't look at me! I can only take the top off.

HELOISE. Don't look at me—I can only play some silent movie music—and I don't do *that* very well.

(Singing.)

SO IF I HIT A CLINKER
EVERY NOW AND THEN,
REMEMBER, I HAVEN'T TOUCHED A PIANO
SINCE WAY BACK WHEN!

PETER. *(Spoken.)* Since 1910.

HELOISE. Hey! Wait a minute! I don't go back *that* far!

PETER. How old *are* you, Heloise?

HELOISE. Well, let's put it this way—I don't remember anybody before Elvis Presley.

PETER. Who?

PETER and HELOISE. *(Singing.)*

WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE MUSIC, MUSIC.
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE NOISE!
SOMETHING THAT WILL
STEP UP THE PACE,
PEP UP THE PLACE,
PLAY A LITTLE TUNE OR TWO,
'CAUSE WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE . . .

(Dance extension.)

WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE . . .
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE . . .
WHAT WE NEED AROUND HERE
IS A LITTLE SOMEONE
WHO CAN MAKE SOME MUSIC,
HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT,
HOW'S ABOUT, HOW'S ABOUT YOU!

(For a moment they are close together. He does not let her go. Suddenly she breaks away.)

PETER. Something wrong?

HELOISE. No . . .

PETER. Then what's the matter?

HELOISE. Nothing. Nothing at all. I just don't want to get involved. That's all.

PETER. I'm sorry . . . I didn't really mean anything by it.

HELOISE. I just met you, Peter. And I'm an old fashioned girl.

PETER. That's fine with me. I'm not exactly a rock star, you know. Actually, I'm pretty conservative . . . although I must say I fell in love once in five minutes and it lasted thirty-five years. Her name was Rose . . .

HELOISE. *(Softly.)* That's a pretty name, Rose. *(A pause, then brightly.)* Well! You'll make a lot of friends here. *(She starts to exit.)*

PETER. I hope so . . .

HELOISE. It'll be easy for you—you're a very attractive man. *(She waves as she goes out.)*

PETER. Hey! Wait a minute! *(PETER smiles, and after a moment sits back down. He fingers his wedding ring, thoughtfully.)* You know, Rose . . . the kids used to fix me up with nice, sensible women. I never liked any of them. But this woman seems different somehow . . . I don't know why—First time I've felt like this in three years. *(A beat.)* What do you think, Rose? Don't misunderstand, no one could ever take your place . . . *(Singing.)*

“OH, MY ROSE” — *end*

OH, MY ROSE,
I LOVED YOU MORE
THAN I COULD EVER SAY,
SO MUCH SO,
THAT WHEN YOU WENT AWAY
I HELD ON,
I HELD ON LONG AFTER
YOU WERE GONE.

OH, MY ROSE,
I'M GLAD YOU'LL NEVER KNOW
THIS LONELINESS,
I SUPPOSE
I MANAGED MORE OR LESS,
LIFE GOES ON,
EVEN THOUGH MY ROSE HAS GONE AWAY.

CATLAN. Let's keep that wagon train moving, folks. We have to make the river before the rains set in. (HELOISE switches to an Indian rhythm.)

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. What's that?

ARIAS. Giddyap, caballo. This is Indian country! (ARIAS suddenly starts slapping his thigh as if to urge his horse on to a greater speed.)

SLOCUM. (Picking it up.) Look! Smoke signals!

FINEBERG. (Joining in, melodramatically.) High above the wagon train, a lone figure looks down.

SLOCUM. Who is it, Fineberg?

FINEBERG. It is Lone Eagle, Chief of the Mighty Sioux. He speaks.

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. What does he say?

CATLAN. (Rising, and crossing his arms.) What he always says! "White Man come . . . shoot buffalo . . . steal land . . . Put up Condominium . . ."

FINEBERG. What say the Sioux?

CATLAN. Fagowee! Fagowee!

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. What means that?

CATLAN. "Hit 'em!"

SLOCUM. Kill 'em!

ARIAS. Scalp 'em!

MRS. COOPER. Power to the Red Man!

CATLAN. Quick! Get these wagons in a circle. And save your ammunition. We've got to make every shot count, folks.

SLOCUM. Keep loading those rifles!

PETER. Look out! Behind you, Slocum!

SLOCUM. (Recoiling, as if shot.) Ah!

PETER. Oh, Slocum! They got you!

CATLAN. It's nothing. It was in the heart. It's only a flesh wound.

ARIAS. Look out, Mrs. Cooper, here comes another one!

MRS. COOPER. (Grabbing Mrs. POLIANOFFSKY's cane.) Bang! Bang!

CATLAN. Good shot, Mrs. Cooper! You got one of their best braves.

MRS. COOPER. That's what you think. I'm shooting White Men!

SLOCUM. Somebody put out that fire!

CATLAN. (In a high falsetto.) Save my baby! Save my baby!

FINEBERG. Captain, sir. We're almost out of ammunition.

CATLAN. You're under arrest, Fineberg, for overacting. Besides, dummy, I told you to save the ammunition!

HELOISE. (Tearfully, to PETER.) Goodbye, John . . .

Peter & Heloise

Scene #2

PETER. Goodbye, Betsy . . . (The music changes.)

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. Wait! They seem to be stopping . . .

HELOISE. No, they're just massing for another attack!

MRS. COOPER. I certainly hope so.

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. Why are they coming back?

CATLAN. The government forgot to send their Social Security checks!

FINEBERG. Somebody's got to go out and talk to them!

ARIAS. You go, Fineberg.

FINEBERG. No. You go Arias. You speak Spanish.

ARIAS. I can't—I don't have a white flag.

SLOCUM. If only somebody had a clean handkerchief!

HELOISE. Too late! Here they come again! But . . . (HELOISE plays a cavalry gallop.)

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. What is that?

FINEBERG. (Recognizing the tune.) It's the William Tell Overture!

HELOISE. No, no! It's the United States Cavalry! (EVERYONE start cheers wildly.)

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. What's going on here? (They ALL continue cheering.) What on earth is going on here? (One by one, the RESIDENTS fall silent and turn in the same direction—toward the unseen "MRS. STONE.") What's the piano doing open? I would like to know who opened the piano?

PETER. (Firmly.) I did. I opened it.

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. Really? And how did you manage that, Mr. Schermann?

PETER. With a screwdriver, Mrs. Stone.

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. How clever!! And where is that screwdriver, Mr. Schermann?

PETER. (Hostile.) It's in my pocket, Mrs. Stone. Would you like to come and get it?

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. (Avoiding the confrontation.) Not at the moment, Mr. Schermann, I think we've had enough excitement for one evening. Now let's just all calm down, calm down. Mr. Slocum, Mr. Arias would you please put the piano back where it belongs? Thank you. Now I think we should all sit down and rest for a moment.

PETER. I'm going for a walk, Heloise. You want to come?

HELOISE. Yes, I'd like that very much.

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. Mrs. Polianoffsky, have you had your digitoxin today? (She shakes her head "no.") I thought not. Mrs. Cooper, a package came for you this morning. I left it in your room. Did you get it?

HELOISE. It's my fault! I never should have said yes to opening the piano.

PETER. It doesn't matter. I'm not sure this place is for me, anyway. I'm probably better off living with my kids . . .

HELOISE. I thought you said that was impossible . . .

PETER. Well, I don't know . . . one thing's sure, this place is not what I expected. What do you think I should do?

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. Now I think we should all write some letters. It's Thursday, and on Thursday we write letters home, don't we?

HELOISE. Well, if you really hate it, and you want to leave—then I think you should.

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. Yes, that's a good idea. Mr. Fineberg, would you please get the papers and pencils this time? Thank you. *(He goes Off silently.)*

HELOISE. What's the matter, did I say something wrong?

PETER. No, I guess I thought you'd say something else. That's all.

HELOISE. Like what?

PETER. Like Peter, you're the only man in the world for me, and if you leave I'm going to kill myself by eating a double portion of Turkey GIBLETS . . . *(FINEBERG returns with the writing materials and distributes them.)*

~~VOICE OF MRS. STONE. *(Sweetly.)* Mr. Catlan, now you know your brother would like to hear that your blood pressure's down . . .~~

CATLAN. *No. *(A pause.)** Not since I made him a beneficiary.

HELOISE. I wouldn't go that far. But I would miss you, Peter . . . *(He takes a step toward her but she instantly backs away. She looks at her watch nervously.)* I've got to go, but I'll be back tomorrow, okay?

PETER. Where are you going?

HELOISE. *(Going out.)* I'll see you tomorrow . . .

PETER. Just a minute, Heloise . . . *(She stops.)*

HELOISE. Yes . . . ?

PETER. Suppose I really left. Packed up and left. Wouldn't you care?

HELOISE. *(Softly, almost sadly after a pause.)* Of course. But people have to do . . . what they have to do . . . *(HELOISE exits.*

PETER looks after her silently for a long moment. *He exits music in softly.)* —end

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. Where are my glasses?

St.OCUM. *(Gently.)* You're wearing them . . . *(They ALL sing as they write.)*

"DEAR JANE"

ARIAS.

DEAR JANE,

CATLAN,

MURRAY,

FINEBERG.

KEITH,

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.

MARTHA,

SLOCUM.

DICK,

MRS. COOPER.

WHAT'S TODAY?

CATLAN.

TODAY I'M FEELING FINE,

ARIAS.

BETTER,

SLOCUM.

GOOD!

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.

TERRIBLE,

MRS. COOPER.

SICK! ALTHOUGH I'VE GOT A LITTLE PAIN

ARIAS.

IN MY

CATLAN.

NECK,

FINEBERG.

SHOULDER,

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.

CHEST.

MRS. COOPER.

I CAN'T REMEMBER FEELING WORSE—
ALL.

SEND EVERYONE MY BEST.

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.

I WATCH T.V.

Peter &

Heloise

GETTLINGER'S "office," immediately following.

GETTLINGER. Sorry to pull you away from the party like that.

FINEBERG. Oh, that's all right. It had to be done.

GETTLINGER. Times like these I wish I had become an accountant.

FINEBERG. You can't get too attached, Mr. Gettlinger, or you'll be crying every time you turn around. Believe me. I know.

GETTLINGER. Yes. You'd think by now I'd get used to it.

FINEBERG. You never get used to it.

GETTLINGER. (*Looking at his papers.*) He didn't have any family here today, did he?

FINEBERG. Not that I know of. He said he ate too much.

GETTLINGER. Yeah, well . . . what he thought was heartburn was the onset of a coronary occlusion. (*PETER comes into the light, and stands silently for a moment. GETTLINGER looks up.*) Yes, Peter?

PETER. The mattress is rolled up. All his things are gone.

GETTLINGER. Yes.

PETER. So fast? This afternoon he lived in that room . . . now it looks . . . no trace he was ever there.

GETTLINGER. That's right. Sidney, would you sign the disposition and the Exec Report, please. (*FINEBERG takes out his pen and unscrews the cap, and signs the papers.*)

PETER. Who do you send his things to?

GETTLINGER. Like what?

PETER. Whatever was his . . . He owned some things . . .

FINEBERG. They pack them away.

GETTLINGER. The usable clothing goes to the thrift shop. Anything else that's usable goes to the Salvation Army or St. Vincent de Paul's.

PETER. What did you take, Fineberg?

FINEBERG. Nothing. I don't want anything.

PETER. But you . . . you knew him a long time . . .

FINEBERG. (*Matter-of-factly.*) Yes, but now he's gone. People die here.

PETER. I know that. But this was his home. I would think . . . something should be left to show that the man lived! Isn't that right? Well . . . he made a bench! I want it! I want Wally Slocum's bench!

GETTLINGER. It's yours.

Same #3

FINEBERG. Death is one thing we don't have to be reminded of. PETER. Why not? Why not? If you really lived your life, then what's so terrible?

FINEBERG. Because here we face—

GETTLINGER. Take it easy. Calm down.

PETER. (*Angrily.*) Calm down? Doesn't anybody mourn around here?

GETTLINGER. Peter, my job is to keep these people happy.

PETER. Happy! Anyone who is always happy is already dead. What are we, cripples? That we can't have a moment of sorrow? You can always go back to your cha-cha-cha five minutes later. Slocum! This afternoon he lived. He made something! That's when happiness comes. From the working . . . and in the living!

GETTLINGER. Well, here you can work.

PETER. We don't work here. We just keep busy.

FINEBERG. Legitimate! We're all friends, we have a good time. What's wrong with that?

PETER. You're gonna die, Fineberg. Isn't there something else you want to do before you die? (*FINEBERG does not respond.*)

GETTLINGER. (*Exploding with anger.*) Wait, wait a minute. What do you want, Peter? You want it all! You can't get it! Since when are you the great expert? What do you know about it? You don't like this place? I've seen the real places, I worked as a State Investigator, I saw places where the stench alone would stain your clothes—places where no matter what I asked, the patients wouldn't look at me. And when they did they said, "Please don't beat me today." Now, that is the business I'm in! And this place is the best! The best there is. Sure, it's a waiting room . . . for a lot of people . . . people who have nowhere else to go and no better place to die—and it's the best there is! (*PETER stares at him silently, then slowly turns and walks out. To FINEBERG.*) You want coffee?

THE LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 10

Music starts under, softly. TWO COUPLES are waltzing quietly Up-stage. PETER enters. He crosses down to HELOISE.

Start

PETER. I've been looking for you, Heloise.

HELOISE. I came up to get a sweater. I got chilly all of a sudden.

PETER. Heloise, listen. I'm leaving. And . . . I want you to come with me.

HELOISE. You're what?

PETER. I'm leaving. I'm not going to stay here any more.

HELOISE. I don't understand. Where are you going?

PETER. I'm going back to work.

HELOISE. Back to work?

PETER. Back to work. It hurts like hell when I bend over too long, but I'm not ready to lay down. No! I'm not dead yet!

HELOISE. Peter, you're not talking sense.

PETER. I've never talked more sense in my life. We don't belong here, Heloise, this is no place for us. This is a sandbox for white-haired children to play in all day. It's tiddly-winks!

HELOISE. That's not true! I like it here. They cook for you, clean for you, shop for you—and they have good people here. If you fall down, there's always somebody to pick you up.

PETER. But you won't be alone, Heloise. *I'll* be with you. And we'll be good together. You'll cook and I'll clean—or *I'll* cook and you'll clean! Why should we give up? Not while we're still . . . when we've still got some life left!

HELOISE. And what about Jack? You expect me to just forget I have a husband?

PETER. No, you'll visit him. Like always.

HELOISE. I couldn't do that . . .

PETER. But what if he's like that for the next ten years? Then what? Aren't you entitled to something more than that? I'm not saying you should stop seeing him. See him. Visit him. Take care of him, but give us a chance, too!

HELOISE. I couldn't . . . I can't!

PETER. *(After a pause.)* I'm going upstairs to pack, Heloise, and by tomorrow morning I'll be gone. *(No response.)* I guess there's nothing left to talk about, is there? *(They look at EACH OTHER; finally, he turns to leave.)*

HELOISE. Peter . . .

PETER. *(Turning back.)* Yes? *—end*

"OUR TIME TOGETHER"

HELOISE. *(Singing.)*
OUR TIME TOGETHER
WILL SOON BE OVER,

AND I HAVE NOT YET SAID
ALL I WANT TO SAY.

I NEVER TOLD YOU
WHEN YOU WERE WITH ME,
HOW MUCH YOUR NEARNESS
BRIGHTENED MY DAY!

I SHALL MISS THOSE MOMENTS
WHEN YOU'VE GONE AWAY,
THOUGH I KNOW IT'S FOOLISH,
I KEEP HOPING,
SOMEHOW YOU COULD STAY.

I KNOW THAT NOTHING
CAN LAST FOREVER,
AND NOW WE'VE DIFFERENT HILLS
TO CLIMB,
STILL, OUR TIME TOGETHER,
OUR TIME TOGETHER,
WAS A VERY SPECIAL TIME.

(Spoken over music.)

Would you dance with me, Peter?

(PETER takes her in his arms, tenderly, and slowly they waltz. For a moment they seem to join the OTHER COUPLES as they ALL dance silently.) ♪ ♪

HELOISE. *(Singing.)*
I KNOW THAT NOTHING
CAN LAST FOREVER,
AND NOW WE'VE DIFFERENT HILLS
TO CLIMB
STILL, OUR TIME TOGETHER,
OUR TIME TOGETHER,
WAS A VERY SPECIAL TIME.

(Spoken.)

I love you, Peter.

PETER. *(Quietly, as he goes out.)* No, you don't.

THE LIGHTS FADE

AND OLD, RELIABLE DIGITALIS,
SO I DON'T WAKE UP DEAD!
(Sung.)
SO I CAN LIVE,
LIVE, LIVE, LIVE, LIVE!
TO FEEL THE PAIN IN MY HEAD!

OH, HOW SWEET,
FRIENDS OF MINE,
IF YOU SHOULD DROP IN
WHEN I'M SICK,
THEN I'M FINE.
AND EVERY PILL KNOWING,
JUST WHERE IT IS GOING!
TO AN ARM THROBBING WITH ARTHRITIS,
OR THE COLON, CRYING WITH COLITIS,
OR A TRIP TO A HIP WITH BURSTITIS.
MY OLD FRIENDS,
BLESS YOU ALL,
NIGHT OR DAY .
YOU ARE THERE
WHEN I CALL.

(He peers at one of the "labels," unable to read it. He takes out his
eyeglasses, puts them on, and bends closer to see.)

(Spoken.)

No, no, I wouldn't forget you . . .
MY LITTLE BOX OF BORIC ACID,
IF MY EYES START TO TEAR,
AND MY OLD PAL, AURALGAN
FOR THAT ACHE IN MY EAR.

(Sung.)

SO I CAN HEAR, HEAR,
HEAR, HEAR, HEAR!
WHAT I WOULD RATHER NOT HEAR!
Look at all those colors!
BLUE AND GREEN!
RED AND WHITE!
THE PHARMACEUTICAL FLAG I SALUTE
EVERY MORNING, NOON, AND NIGHT!
AND EVERY PILL KNOWING

Heloise

Group Scene

#2

JUST WHERE IT IS GOING!

(Spoken.)

BUT TO BE HONEST MY FRIENDS,
NOTHING COMES FOR NOTHING,
EVERY NOTHING'S GOT TO COST YOU SOMETHING,
(Sung.)
WITH THE PILL, COMES THE BILL—
AND IT'S FOURTEEN DOLLARS!

(Music continues under. PETER speaks, as if looking at someone.)

What? . . . Drugs? No, no! They're pills! I take them some-
times . . . if I have a headache, or— (A pause.) Hey! What are
you doing? Hey! Don't take— (A long pause, then to himself.) Take
it easy . . . They must know what they're doin' . . . Must be a
good reason . . . (Singing softly, as he looks off after them.)
MY OLD FRIENDS,
BLESS YOU ALL,
EVER STRONG, EVER TRUE.
HERE I AM SOMEPLACE NEW,
WISH ME WELL,
MY OLD FRIENDS,
WISH ME WELL . . .

Start

SCENE 2

The dining room. The RESIDENTS walk into the "dining room" and
arrange the chairs as if they were sitting around various tables.

SLOCUM. What's for lunch?

ARIAS. If it's Wednesday, it's turkey giblets.

SLOCUM. It's Wednesday.

ARIAS. It's turkey giblets.

SLOCUM. Yeech!

MRS. COOPER. Hey! Polianoffsky! You're sitting in my chair!

MRS. POLIANOFFSKY. So I'll tell you what you can do about it.
You can write a letter to City Hall. It'll only be your fourteenth letter
this week. I could go to Miami on what she spends on postage.
(HELOISE laughs.)

MRS. COOPER. You can laugh if you want to, but one of these days
there's gonna be some action around here. You'll see.

SLOCUM. Sure, sure. Hey! How come Jose is serving? Where's Cathy?

HELOISE. She went bike riding. It's her day off.

CATLAN. She always goes bike riding on her day off.

ARIAS. That's why she looks the way she does. Exercise!

SLOCUM. Very good for the . . . pachangas . . .

CATLAN. You ought to try it, Mrs. Cooper, don't you want to be a sex symbol?

MRS. COOPER. *(Rising.)* I am a sex symbol. *(PETER enters and comes over to SLOCUM and HELOISE who are seated at the same "table.")*

PETER. *(To SLOCUM.)* Excuse me, is this table six?

SLOCUM. *(Friendly.)* Sure is.

PETER. Anyone sitting here?

SLOCUM. No. Sit down.

PETER. *(Sitting.)* Thanks.

SLOCUM. My name is Wally Slocum, 309. And this is Heloise Michaud, 224.

HELOISE. How do you do. If we can help you with anything, please don't hesitate.

PETER. My name is Peter Schermann. Yes, as a matter of fact, there *is* something. Some woman took my pills away when I came in. Who do I talk to about getting them back?

HELOISE. Did she look a little like a bull dog with glasses?

PETER. *(After considering a moment.)* Yeah!

HELOISE. That's Mrs. Stone—and she's the one you have to talk to—or you could talk to the wall, it's the same thing.

SLOCUM. Don't worry, Mr. Schermann. They'll give you everything you need.

MRS. COOPER. Only trouble is by the time you get it you won't need it anymore.

CATLAN. Shh! Here comes Mrs. Stone.

PETER. *(Calling as if "she" were passing by the table.)* Mrs. Stone? Could I see you for a minute?

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. Yes, Mister Schermann?

PETER. I'd like to have my pills back if you don't mind. That way I don't have to bother you all the time. If I need . . . whatever . . .

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. *(Pleasantly.)* We administer all the medication, Mr. Schermann. That way you won't get confused. And do you find the food satisfactory?

PETER. Er . . . the taste is fine, but this is the big meal. I like to have the big meal at night.

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. We find that it's better for the digestive

system if the big meal is eaten in the afternoon. We eat less at night and sleep better.

PETER. That may be, but I'm accustomed to—Mrs. Stone? . . . *(He rises quickly from his chair and follows after "her." He stops Upstage, by the "staircase" and calls upstairs after "her," his hand resting on the "newel post.")* Mrs. Stone . . .

VOICE OF MRS. STONE. I'm busy now, Mr. Schermann, but I'll take the matter up with Doctor Keller, and maybe we can talk about it tomorrow.

PETER. *(Shakes the newel post and notices that it is loose.)* While you're at it, you better tell him about this newel post. It's loose. People lean on a newel post for support. Someone could fall and get hurt. *(PETER waits for the reply, but there is no response from MRS. STONE. PETER returns to the table.)*

SLOCUM. How'd you make out?

PETER. Well, she says she's going to talk to Dr. Keller.

CATLAN. Dr. Keller? There is no Dr. Keller!

SLOCUM. He's joking. Of course there's a Dr. Keller!

MRS. COOPER. Would you like me to write a letter to the Food and Drug Administration? They're in Washington, you know.

CATLAN. Yes! You can expect immediate results!

SLOCUM. But in the meantime do yourself a favor, don't make trouble.

PETER. Where is this Doctor Keller?

SLOCUM. In the office.

PETER. I think I'll go talk to him.

HELOISE. I'm going that way. C'mon, I'll show you where it is.

(PETER and HELOISE walk Off. MRS. POLIANOFFSKY and FINEBERG go Off in different directions. CATLAN and SLOCUM remain seated, eating.)

ARIAS. *(Rising and calling after PETER.)* While you're at it, see if you can get my cha-cha records back.

CATLAN. *(From his chair.)* Or better yet, see if you can get him to put some chicken in the chicken salad!

MRS. COOPER. Mr. Arias, I want you to know that I've sent a long letter to the Human Rights Commission about your records.

ARIAS. Thank you, Mrs. Cooper. Tell them Mrs. Stone is the one who had them recognized.

MRS. COOPER. You mean, requisitioned. Do you have any other complaints? I can include them in my next letter.

ARIAS. Yes, I do. English

MRS. COOPER. English? What do you mean?

ARIAS. It is a very difficult language, English. I do not understand it sometimes. For instance, everything here has come from someplace else. It's all been thrown away. But some things, when they get old, they are worth a lot—you call them antiques. Other things when they get old, you call them junk. I don't understand. How is that?

MRS. COOPER. I don't know.

ARIAS. Maybe you could write a letter.

MRS. COOPER. I will. (*A pause, then to herself.*) Who do I send it to?

ARIAS. I don't know. (*Mrs. Cooper exits.*)

SLOCUM. Hey, what's Cathy doing here? I thought it was her day off.

CATLAN. She's talking to Fineberg.

ARIAS. On her day off?

SLOCUM. She's always talking to Fineberg.

CATLAN. What do they talk about? What could those two people possibly have in common besides their height?

SLOCUM. Well, for one thing they both read a lot. They talk about Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway . . .

CATLAN. (*Approving.*) And a lot of other musicians.

ARIAS. (*Looking Off.*) Man, look how close she stands to him.

CATLAN. Yes, it's very literary. (*Calling Off.*) Hey! Fineberg!

SLOCUM. Leave him alone, Mickey. He's having a good time.

CATLAN. I just wanna find out if he's having a good time. (*FINEBERG enters.*)

FINEBERG. (*To CATLAN.*) Did you call me?

SLOCUM. I hope we didn't break up anything.

FINEBERG. No, it's all right. Cathy was just leaving. She only came by to say hello.

ARIAS. She came by to say hello on her day off?

FINEBERG. Well . . . yes . . . And also, she wanted me to go bicycle riding with her.

CATLAN. You know, Fineberg, I think she's attracted to you.

FINEBERG. Cathy? Don't be ridiculous. I'm almost 70 years old!

SLOCUM. And she's twenty-eight, so what?

FINEBERG. Twenty-nine. But what's the difference? For a man of my age—

SLOCUM. Sidney! Opportunity knocks! Open the door!

CATLAN. Or give her the key to my room.

FINEBERG. Please! Do we have to have this kind of talk?

CATLAN. Yes! We have to have this kind of talk! It's good for my heart! What are you afraid of, Fineberg? Take a chance!

SLOCUM. Fineberg, what's the matter with you? Just look at her . . .

"FOR TWO MINUTES"

— end

(*Singing.*)

I GET SO MANY CRAZY, SEXY FANTASIES
WHEN SHE COMES INTO VIEW,
AND I STOP AND I WONDER
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
IF WHAT I'M THINKING CAME TRUE:
IF SHE CAME UP, AND SAID,
'SLOCUM, TAKE ME TO BED,'
I'D START TREMBLING FROM HEAD TO TOE,
AND NINE TIMES OUT OF TEN,
THAT'S AS FAR AS IT WOULD GO!
BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE—

(*He sighs.*)

FOR A FEW MINUTES,
TWO MINUTES,
OOO, WHAT I FEEL!
WATCHING CATHY GO BY,
IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE REAL.

FOR A FEW MINUTES,
TWO MINUTES,
I'M A NEW MAN!
TWENTY YEARS MIGHT NOT DO
WHAT THOSE TWO MINUTES CAN!
Let me put it to you another way, Fineberg . . .

(*Singing.*)

I SIT DOWN TO MY LUNCH AND GEE, I'M LOOKING
AT
SUCH A NICE PIECE OF FISH,
AND I HOPE AGAINST HOPE THAT THE TASTE'LL
GET THROUGH TO ME!
BUT IT'S NO USE TO WISH!
IF YOU COOKED A SURPRISE,
AND YOU COVERED MY EYES,