

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 sometimes 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 cheers wildly.)

**Start** 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?

SLOCUM. *(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 &amp;

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

FINEBERG.  
A TOURNAMENT AT TWO,  
CATLAN,  
BILLIARDS, BRIDGE, OR PING-PONG,  
RESIDENTS.  
IT'S ENTIRELY UP TO YOU!  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
SLOCUM.  
MOST PEOPLE WORK FOR FIFTY WEEKS  
TO GET AWAY FOR TWO,  
RESIDENTS.  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.  
BUT HERE YOU'RE ON VACATION  
EVERYDAY, THE WHOLE YEAR THROUGH!  
RESIDENTS.  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
FINEBERG.  
IT'S LIKE A LEISURE VILLAGE,  
WITH ACTIVITIES GALORE,  
RESIDENTS.  
AND WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE DONE THEM ALL  
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING MORE!  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
FROM THREE TO FOUR YOU FOLK DANCE,  
AT FIVE YOU LEARN GUITAR,  
AT SIX YOU DRESS FOR DINNER,  
CATLAN. (To Mrs. POLIANOFFSKY.)  
HELLO THERE, MOVIE STAR!  
(He dances with her. Speaking over music.) Arriba, arriba! One  
more lesson and I'm ready for the Palladium.  
ARIAS. But is the Palladium ready for you, Mr. Catlan?  
SLOCUM. Probably. It's been closed for ten years. (Singing.)  
AND THE RULES ARE NEVER RIGID  
YOU CAN ALMOST DO NO WRONG.  
RESIDENTS.  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
MRS. POLIANOFFSKY.  
YOU CAN GO TO BED AT FOUR A.M.  
CATLAN.  
AND TAKE A FRIEND ALONG!

# Peter & Slocum

Scene #1

RESIDENTS.  
CHA-CHA-CHA!  
FINEBERG.  
FOR ANYONE OF ANY AGE  
IT'S QUITE A PLACE TO BE—  
(GETTLINGER enters.)  
RESIDENTS. (Pursuing him.)  
IT'S A LOT OF FUN  
AND IT'S THE ONE  
AND ONLY PLACE FOR . . .  
ONLY PLACE FOR . . .  
ONLY PLACE FOR ME!  
THANK YOU, MR. GETTLINGER!  
CHA-CHA-CHA!

BLACKOUT

SCENE 7

Start

Lights up on PETER. He is sitting in his "room." SLOCUM enters.

SLOCUM. Hey, Peter! They're looking for a fourth in a gin rummy game. You interested?

PETER. No, I never was much for cards. Thanks, anyway.

SLOCUM. There's a good football game on television. Want to watch it with me?

PETER. No, thanks.

SLOCUM. I'm goin' over to the Crafts Room. Wanna come?

PETER. I don't think so. Thanks, anyway.

SLOCUM. You know, they're beginning to call you "Thanks, Anyway" around here. What happened to you? You used to be . . . more with it.

PETER. I don't know. I just can't seem to get interested in anything. Maybe I'm getting old.

SLOCUM. C'mon! We'll go over to the Crafts Room. You'll get old later.

PETER. Well . . .

SLOCUM. Last chance . . .

PETER. (With a shrug.) All right. Why not? (PETER rises and they start to walk to the other side of the Stage.)



SLOCUM. What's doing with you and Heloise?

PETER. Nothing's doing. You can't build a fire when the wood's wet. *(They enter the "Crafts Room." A large wooden work bench with a vise on one end stands in the center of a pool of light. PETER seeing the work bench.)* A work bench! When did that happen?

SLOCUM. A couple of days ago. That Gettlinger—he's a magician! He got some tool company to donate it.

PETER. *(Runs his hand over the work bench, appreciatively.)* Must be three years since I picked up a piece of wood . . .

SLOCUM. That's a long time. You must be a little rusty.

PETER. When you've done it for forty three years you don't forget so fast.

SLOCUM. People who work with their hands always amazed me. I was a necktie salesman. I was good with words—but terrible with knots.

PETER. How did you get into that?

SLOCUM. It was an accident. I went to work in my uncle's tie shop one summer. Next thing I knew I was 65 years old and still a tie salesman.

PETER. I started as a delivery boy for the Acme Quality Lumber. And I liked the smell of the wood. Next thing I knew I got a job as cabinet maker's assistant. Four dollars a week. Big money in those days.

SLOCUM. And you became a carpenter . . .

PETER. That's right. — end

"I WORK WITH WOOD"

*(Quasi-sung.)*

I WORKED WITH WOOD.

THAT'S WHAT I DID

I WORKED WITH WOOD.

THEY USED TO SAY, HEY, KID!

YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD,

FOR JUST A KID—

NOT SO LONG AGO

WHEN I WORKED WITH WOOD.

I LEARNED MY TRADE,

IT TOOK SOME TIME

BUT I LEARNED MY TRADE,

AND OUT OF WOOD JUST LIKE THIS

OH, THE THINGS I MADE!  
FROM WINDING STAIRS  
TO ROCKING CHAIRS,  
AND ALL OF THEM STILL STANDING  
AS THEY STOOD,  
WHEN I PUT THEM UP,  
WHEN I WORKED WITH WOOD.

I MUST HAVE BANGED THIS THUMB  
ABOUT A HUNDRED TIMES,  
I MADE MISTAKES SO DUMB  
AT LEAST A THOUSAND TIMES,  
BUT WHEN I'D BOTCH IT UP  
I'D BEGIN AGAIN,  
TAKE IT ALL APART,  
IF IT TOOK ALL NIGHT,  
BUT I ALWAYS FELT  
BEFORE I WALKED AWAY  
THAT THE JOB WAS RIGHT.

*(PETER rolls up his sleeves, examines a piece of wood, and begins preparing his project.)*

SLOCUM. Well, what are you going to do?

PETER. I think I'm going to make a Christmas present for my grandson. You want to be a carpenter's assistant?

SLOCUM. *(Exiting, smiling.)* No thanks. Thanks anyway. *(The music continues, and as PETER works we feel a passage of time. HELOISE appears.)*

HELOISE. *(Softly.)* Too busy to talk?

PETER. *(After a moment.)* How've you been, Heloise?

HELOISE. Okay. *(Blurting it out very quickly.)* There's a Fred Astaire movie in town on Thursday and I thought if you weren't doing anything you might like to go. It's got Ginger Rogers, too. *(PETER doesn't respond.)* Well, what do you say?

PETER. *(After a moment.)* Sure . . .

HELOISE. *(Pleased.)* Then it's a date. We'll go Dutch, okay?

PETER. No, I'll pay, but I think you should know something, Heloise. I don't kiss on my first date. *(She turns to go. Then turns back at the "door.")*

HELOISE. Peter . . .

PETER. Yes?

## Peter &amp; Slocum

HELOISE. (*Softly.*) I'm glad you decided to stay. (*She goes out.*)  
 PETER *continues working.*

SLOCUM. (*Entering.*) Hey, Peter, I wanted to ask you something . . . what's that smell?

PETER. (*Cheerily.*) A glue pot. I'm cooking up some glue.

SLOCUM. It sure stinks, doesn't it?

PETER. (*Happily.*) Yeah.

SLOCUM. Hey, that's coming along pretty good.

PETER. (*Singing.*)

THIS PIECE OF WOOD  
 COULD BE THE START OF MANY THINGS,  
 A LITTLE MUSIC BOX THAT PLAYS TUNES,  
 OR MAYBE HOLDS A LADY'S RINGS.

SLOCUM. I thought you were going to make a present for your grandson?

PETER. I am. It's going to be a rocking horse.

SLOCUM. A horse?

PETER. (*Holding up an unfinished piece of wood. He sings.*)

THIS IS A HORSE  
 IT MAY NOT LOOK THAT WAY TO YOU  
 BUT, ALL YOU NEED TO SEE A HORSE HERE  
 IS ELBOW GREASE, FOUR LEGS, AND GLUE.

(*Music continues under. SLOCUM exits. FINEBERG enters with package, his right hand in a sling.*)

FINEBERG. Hey, Peter! I was in Gettlinger's office. He asked me to give you this. He said you'd know what it is. (*He hands PETER a small package.*)

PETER. (*Taking it.*) Oh, yeah. Some old friends . . . They're reliable . . . they're dependable, and they never talk back . . . except for the Bromo Seltzer . . .

SLOCUM. (*Seeing the sling.*) What happened to your arm, Fineberg?

FINEBERG. They took my training wheels off yesterday.

PETER. (*Putting the package aside.*) How bad is it?

FINEBERG. It's just a slight sprain. See? (*He takes his arm out of the sling and raises it easily, then slips it back in.*) I can take the sling off, Saturday.

SLOCUM. . . . and then it's back to the open road!

FINEBERG. Well, maybe . . . maybe not.

PETER. What do you mean?

Scene  
 # 2

FINEBERG. I don't know . . . I'm almost seventy. What am I kidding myself about?

PETER. C'mon. Don't give up, now, Fineberg. Remember Grandma Moses started when she was eighty-two!

FINEBERG. Yes, but she wasn't trying to ride a bicycle. (*FINEBERG turns and walks out. PETER continues to work.*)

SLOCUM. (*Entering and watching PETER for a moment.*) It's a pleasure to watch you handle tools. You make it look so easy.

PETER. Why are you watching? Make something!

SLOCUM. Me? The last thing I made was in Junior High School. A belt rack. It fell apart when I tried to hang a belt on it. (*Singing.*)

IT ISN'T EVERYONE  
 WHO CAN BE A CARPENTER,  
 A CLUMSY MAN LIKE ME  
 CAN'T BE A CARPENTER.

PETER.  
 I'LL BET YOU IF YOU TRY  
 YOU COULD BUILD A BENCH.

SLOCUM. (*Spoken.*) I could built bench?

PETER.  
 YOU COULD START IT NOW.

SLOCUM. (*Singing.*)  
 I WOULD BUILD A BENCH  
 IF YOU SHOW ME HOW!

(*SLOCUM rolls up his sleeves. PETER gives him a ruler, and under PETER's direction SLOCUM begins to scribe the wood. The music continues, time passes. CATLAN walks into the light.*)

CATLAN. Hey, Pete! Can I see you a minute? (*Sniffing the air.*) Whew! What died in here? Smells like a horse I used to bet on! Peter, Gettlinger asked if you could build a platform for the Christmas Party?

PETER. Sure. How big?

CATLAN. What do I know?! A platform! (*As he goes Off.*) And Peter, I think you ought to change your perfume! (*SLOCUM's small bench has taken shape.*)

PETER. So you never got married, huh, Wally?

SLOCUM. No, I never did, I was always on the road, you know, another gross of neckties, a little more wine, another woman, another hotel room . . . There were a couple of times I almost did, I guess. But what woman is going to be happy with a man who

start

