

DIGITAL DILEMMAS

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Book & Lyrics for a New Musical

By Tom Attea

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEVE JOBS, STEVE WOZNIAK, AND BILL GATES, eternal spirits of cyberspace

MIKE ALLWIN, a philosophy professor, now in distance learning

PAT, his wife, the host of a morning show

JOHN, their son, a digitally obsessed teen

LISA, their daughter, also digitally obsessed

ALICE ALLWIN, Mike's mother

CHARLIE, Mike's father

SAM, single friend of Mike and fellow philosophy professor

SUE, Pat's sister, now divorced

ED, Sue's date, a lawyer

MAX, a dog who only sleeps

Chorus: Mike's students, appearing from cyberspace, and waitstaff

## SCENES

Prelude

Act I

Prelude

Act II

Reprise

## SETTINGS

Cyberspace

Mike's Living Room, with work area for Mike

Four bedrooms, indicated by beds and end tables; can be two bedrooms with quick change of occupants.

Sue's apartment, Sam's apartment, and Ed's location, all indicated only by them being on cell phones at an assumed place.

Restaurants, indicated by a table or tables

Street scene with a park bench

Hospital room

Time: The Present

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The scenes are structured to reflect the way digital technology virtually puts all of us in convenient communication. Locations change by lights coming up and going down.

The three eternal fates of high-tech -- Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Bill Gates -- can also be represented by projected images of them.

If time is a constraint, the preludes can be omitted.

SONGS

PRELUDE TO ACT I

THREE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF HIGH-TECH ARE WE

ACT I

WE JUST LOVE HIGH-TECH  
HOW DO YOU RESTART A BROKEN HEART?  
THE MAESTRO OF MATCH  
STUDENT POWER!  
MY MIND IS MY DOMAIN  
WHAT WILL WE EVER DO?  
ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE  
IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY  
DIGITAL DILEMMAS

PRELUDE TO ACT II

THREE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF HIGH-TECH ARE WE, VARIATION

ACT II

IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE  
POOR LITTLE PLANET  
THE COUNTRY I ONCE KNEW  
THE WAVE  
I CAN'T POSSIBLY BE IN LOVE  
WE COULD BE AN ITEM  
IT'S STILL LOVE  
A LUCKY GUY  
SHE'LL WEAR IT!  
REPRISE

## PRELUDE

At rise, cyberspace. Trio, composed of eternal spirits  
of the tech era - Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Bill  
Gates - along with chorus.

## TRIO

(sing

THREE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF HIGH-TECH ARE WE,  
EVER-PRESENT MODERN FATES,  
NAMED JOBS, WOZNIAK, AND GATES,  
WHO BY THE GRACE  
OF CYBERSPACE  
ARE WHEREVER YOU MAY BE.  
HE, HE, HE!

## CHORUS

THEY'RE HERE, THERE,  
AND EVERYWHERE  
YOU MAY BE!  
HE, HE, HE!

## TRIO

WE WERE FUTURISTIC THINKERS,  
THREE DARING, YOUTHFUL TINKERS  
WITH COMPUTER GADGETRY.  
BUT WHOEVER THOUGHT THAT WE  
WOULD CHANGE EVERYBODY'S LIVES

TILL HARDLY A TRACE SURVIVES  
OF THE WAY LIFE USED TO BE?

CHORUS

AND PLEASE RECALL  
THAT, BEST OF ALL,  
THEY DID IT PEACEFULLY,  
AND ACTUALLY  
KIND OF GLEEFULLY.

TRIO

WE ENHANCE YOUR LIVES SO MUCH,  
WE EASE EVERY CHORE,  
LET YOU DO MUCH MORE,  
AND ALWAYS STAY IN TOUCH.  
WE INHABIT MACS AND PC'S  
ON LAND, AIR, AND THE SEAS.  
WE'RE IN IPODS, IPADS AND IPHONES --  
EVEN IN MUSICAL RING TONES!  
SO WHO WOULD EVEN DARE TO TRY  
TO TELL US ALL GOODBYE?  
HO, HO,  
YOU CAN'T TELL US GOODBYE!

CHORUS

NO, NO,  
YOU'LL NEVER TELL THEM GOODBYE!

## TRIO

THREE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF HIGH-TECH ARE WE,  
EVER-PRESENT MODERN FATES,  
NAMED JOBS, WOZNIAK, AND GATES,  
WHO BY THE GRACE  
OF CYBERSPACE  
ARE WHEREVER YOU MAY BE.  
HE, HE, HE!

## TRIO &amp; CHORUS

HERE, THERE,  
AND EVERYWHERE  
YOU MAY BE!  
HE, HE, HE!

## TRIO

HE, HE, HE!

Lights fade down.

END OF PRELUDE

## ACT I

## SCENE 1

Living room. Small desk with computer to one side. As the following action proceeds, nobody pays much, if any, attention to anybody else. Even the dog, Max, remains motionless. Mike enters, goes to computer, sits, stretches, and begins to type. Soon, Pat enters, with her iPad, reading and tapping. Also sits. A bit later John enters, tapping on his Android, playing a game. Sits. Now, Lisa enters with her iPhone, texting, while she listens to music on her iPod with earphones. Sits. Various separate actions continue, such as excitement, keener interest in a process, as well as sighs, stretches, and yawns. In due time, the silence is broken.

LISA

(to Lisa, without looking up from her iPhone)

Well?

JOHN

(without looking at her)

What?

LISA

I texted you over five minutes ago.

JOHN

Can't you see I'm in the middle of a game with my friends?

LISA

Answer me as soon as you lose.

JOHN

Thanks. Don't hold your breath.

PAT

I can't believe it! New Visa restrictions are making it harder for international artists to get into the country.

(to Mike)

Might make a good topic for my show.

(he keeps working)

Did you hear me, Mike?

(looks at kids)

Does anybody hear me?

MIKE

Did you say something, dear?

PAT

A number of times.

MIKE

Sorry, Pat. I'm prepping for a distance-learning class I'm giving on Bertrand Russell. Be with you momentarily. Talk with the kids.

PAT

How?

(calls)

Children.

(no response)

Oh, children.

(still no response; to Mike)

I remember when parents had some influence on home life.

(back to children)

Lisa! John! Do you hear me? It's your mother! Remember me?

LISA

What?

(elbows John)

JOHN

Hunh?

PAT

I thought we might talk if you can free yourselves for a moment from your high-tech toys.

LISA

You're always on your iPad, too.

PAT

I have to keep up. It's part of my job. Actually, I don't know what I'd do without it.  
(sings "High Tech")

HIGH TECH!

JOHN

HIGH TECH!

PAT, MIKE, JOHN & LISA

WE JUST LOVE HIGH TECH!

DESPITE ANY DRAWBACKS WE DETECT

OR NEGATIVES OTHERS MAY SUSPECT

WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT.

WE JUST LOVE IT, LOVE IT, LOVE IT!

PAT

I'VE NEVER HAD

ANOTHER DEVICE

THAT'S QUITE AS NICE

AS MY IPAD.

BUT I OFTEN APOLOGIZE,

AS ANY GOOD MOTHER MIGHT,

BECAUSE IT CAN MESMERIZE

ME ALL DAY AND HALF THE NIGHT.

MIKE

(sings)

THESE DAYS I CAN TEACH

VIA MY PC

AND THE STUDENTS I REACH  
CAN EVEN WATCH ME.  
BUT I ALSO DO A LOT  
OF OTHER THINGS, LIKE EMAIL  
AND SURF SO MUCH I CAN FAIL  
TO HAVE EVEN ONE DEEP THOUGHT.

JOHN  
(sings)

WHEN I TAKE AIM  
IN A VIDEO GAME  
ON MY X-BOX OR DROID,  
WHOLE WORLD'S ARE DESTROYED.  
IT'S SUCH GREAT FUN I CAN'T WAIT  
TO FIRE MY LASER OR GUN,  
BUT SOMETIMES I PLAY SO LATE  
I DON'T GET MY HOMEWORK DONE.

LISA

WITH MY IPHONE,  
I'M NEVER ALONE.  
MY FRIENDS AND I ALL  
LOVE TO TEXT AND CALL.  
BUT I HAVE AN IPOD, TOO,  
AND WHAT I JUST LOVE TO DO

IS BLAST RAP MUSIC ALL DAY,  
SO I CAN'T ALWAYS HEAR WHAT THEY SAY.

PAT, MIKE, JOHN, & LISA

HIGH TECH! HIGH TECH!  
WE JUST LOVE HIGH TECH!  
DESPITE ANY DRAWBACKS WE DETECT  
OR NEGATIVES OTHERS MAY SUSPECT  
WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT.  
WE JUST LOVE IT, LOVE IT, LOVE IT!

Lights fade down. Come up on another part of the stage. Bedroom. Alice is sitting up in bed at home, with a bandage on her head. Charlie is standing by her bed with a trash can. She holds up a smart phone.

ALICE

See this "smart phone"? Dumbest thing I ever owned.

(drops it in trash)

I don't know how I could ever have been persuaded to use it. It's a liability to my every inclination to private thought.

CHARLIE

(holds his up)

I kind of like mine.

ALICE

Yours didn't cause you to fall down the stairs.

CHARLIE

Alice, as the supremely logical woman you are, you should realize that the phone couldn't help it that you decided to go down the stairs when you were in the middle of a conversation.

ALICE

Of course, it couldn't. I told you it was stupid. The fact remains that, if I hadn't agreed to make use of it, I wouldn't have fallen down them. As a result, I'm finished with every manner of technological wonder the youthful wizards of our society can dream up and plan to return to the peacefulness of the life I once knew. I miss it. Don't you?

CHARLIE

(referring to phone)

I don't know.

(starts to dial)

These gizmos are kind of a mixed blessing.

ALICE

You mean a mixed curse.

CHARLIE

(on phone)

Hi, Mike. I have some good news and some bad news.

Light go up on Mike on the phone. Pat and kids nearby.

MIKE

Give me the good news first. I could use it.

(points to computer screen)

I've been reading the news, and the human race seems to be underachieving today in particularly egregious ways.

CHARLIE

Your mother is going to be all right.

MIKE

What happened, Dad?

(to PAT)

Something happened to my mother.

(she doesn't hear him)

CHARLIE

She fell down the stairs and had to go to the emergency room. But now she's back home.

MIKE

That's terrible. Any broken bones?

CHARLIE

No. Just a few bumps and bruises.

ALICE

That's easy for you to say. Tell him how long I was lying there.

CHARLIE  
(holds out phone)

You tell him.

ALICE  
I will never touch such a bothersome device again. Now, go ahead and tell him.

CHARLIE  
Do I have to?

ALICE  
Of course. Taking responsibility is an unappreciated privilege.

CHARLIE  
The worst thing is, I was in my home office when it happened. So she was lying there for almost an hour.

MIKE  
That's a disaster.

CHARLIE  
I feel terrible about it.

ALICE  
Not nearly as terrible as I do.

CHARLIE  
Please, Alice. You know I love you.  
(breaks down; to Mike)  
I don't know what I'd do without her. After 45 years of marriage, it's hard to see yourself alone.

ALICE  
I'm not going anywhere, thankfully.

MIKE  
Can I speak with her?

CHARLIE  
(to Alice)  
He wants to speak with you.

ALICE  
Tell him to call me on the land line. Better yet, tell him to write me a letter.

CHARLIE

(holds out phone; to Alice)

You tell him.

(realizes she won't oblige; back on phone)

She's just not up to it yet.

MIKE

OK. Tell her I love her.

CHARLIE

Somehow, we all do.

Charlie hangs up. Looks at Alice, as lights fade down on them but stay up on Mike, Pat, John & Lisa. Mike turns to say something to Pat, just as her smart phone rings. She takes her hands off her iPad and answers it.

PAT

Hi, Sue. What's up?

Lights go up on another part of the stage. We see Sue with her cell phone. She seems distressed. Starts to cry.

SUE

I'm sorry, Pat.

PAT

What's wrong?

SUE

I just need to talk. I'm so lonely.

PAT

I told you, go on Match.

(wanders to side of stage)

SUE

I'm not sure I'm ready to meet another man.

PAT

What do you mean? You've been divorced for over three years.

SUE

What if I meet the wrong kind of person?

PAT

You can do that anywhere. I told you, today over 40% of people who get married meet online. I've interviewed couples on my show who met online and they're every bit as likely to be happy as people who met offline.

SUE

I tell other people the same thing. It's part of being in HR.

PAT

Then why can't you tell yourself the same thing?

SUE

I don't know. I've never been as good at giving myself advice as I am at giving it to other people. Crazy, right?

PAT

Not at all. I'm better at giving other people advice, too. So, please, just go online. You might meet somebody wonderful.

SUE

(sobs, as lights fade down on Pat)

I'll think about it. Goodbye.

(hangs up; sings "Restarting")

WHAT CAN YOU DO

WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE

AND THINK HIGHLY OF

SAYS, "I FOUND SOMEONE NEW?"

WHEN A LOVE YOU THOUGHT WOULD LAST

HAS TO BE LEFT IN THE PAST,

LIKE A HAND BEYOND YOUR REACH

AFTER A SUDDEN BREACH,

HOW DO YOU RESTART

A BROKEN HEART?

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN SO HURT THERE'S A HOLE  
WHERE YOU USED TO FEEL YOUR SOUL,  
HOW DO YOU LOWER A ROPE  
AND COME UP WITH A BUCKET OF HOPE?  
HOW DO YOU RESTART  
A BROKEN HEART?

I HEAR PEOPLE SAY  
IT'S TIME TO GO ON,  
THE PAST IS LONG GONE  
AND IT'S A NEW DAY.  
HOW CAN THEY KNOW  
THEIR WORDS DON'T GO  
BEYOND MY EARS?  
HOW CAN I EXPLAIN  
THE PATH TO MY HEART  
IS BLOCKED WITH PAIN?

WHEN YOU'RE STUCK WITH HOW YOU FEEL,  
HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO HEAL,  
LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND LIKE A TRUNK  
OVERFILLED WITH LEFTOVER JUNK.  
HOW DO YOU RESTART

A BROKEN HEART?

TELL ME, IF YOU CAN,

PLEASE, PROVIDE A PLAN.

HOW DO YOU RESTART

A BROKEN HEART?

Lights fade down on Sue. Pat walks toward Mike.

PAT

What am I going to do about my sister?

MIKE

What?

PAT

My sister. She's all alone in that big house.

MIKE

Oh. Tell her to go on Match.

PAT

I just did. Didn't you hear me?

MIKE

No. Sorry.

PAT

Do you know anyone she can date?

MIKE

Not really.

PAT

What about Sam?

MIKE

He's just into dating.

PAT

He's deeper than that, isn't he?

MIKE

I haven't detected any ongoing remorse.

PAT

Where does he meet them all?

MIKE

Match, Chemistry, eHarmony, OK Cupid. You name the dating site, chances are he's on it.

PAT

Maybe there's something wrong with him. What's he looking for?

Doorbell rings.

MIKE

Ask him. That's him now. We have to go over the new paper we're writing.

PAT

I'll get it.

(crosses to door and opens it; all smiles)

Hi, Sam.

SAM

Hi, Pat.

(enters)

Hi, Mike.

PAT

(as she closes door)

Can I ask you something?

SAM

Sure.

PAT

It's about my sister, Sue.

SAM

How's she doing?

PAT

Great. Loves being divorced but starting to think about meeting men.

SAM

Oh, nice. I know she was going through a tough time. Did she put up a profile online?

PAT

She's thinking about it.

SAM

If she needs any help, tell her to give me a call.

PAT

Maybe you two should date.

SAM

Thanks. She's a beautiful and intelligent woman. But it's against my principles.

PAT

What do you mean?

SAM

I never date anybody I know in person.

PAT

Really? I thought that might be a plus. At least, it used to be.

SAM

Look at it this way. When I meet a woman online, if things don't work out, I'll probably never see her again. On the other hand, if I know her beforehand, she'll haunt my life forever.

PAT

Isn't that a little crazy?

SAM

I'll tell you this much. It's a lot better than dating my students and getting canned.

PAT

Have you met anyone you like?

SAM

Sure. Just not "the one." But I'm having a certain amount of pleasure trying to find her. I'm looking for a certain combination of attributes.

PAT

Mind if I ask what it is?

SAM

Sure. Beauty, brains, and heart. Sometimes you find one without the other or two together. But all in one woman? Haven't met her yet.

PAT

I'm sure there are a lot of women like that.

SAM

Really? Mind pointing me in their direction?

PAT

Sue has all those attributes. I think I do, too. Can you at least think about dating her? You've got your PhD now, and it's time to think about settling down. Let me give you her number.

SAM

OK.

(holds up smart phone)

Go ahead.

PAT

203-626-4872.

SAM

(taps number into phone)

Got it. Thanks. Happy to help.

(sings)

WHEN IT COMES TO ONLINE DATING

I WOULDN'T BE OVERSTATING

MY EXPERTISE,

TO PROVIDE GUARANTEES.

IF YOU NEED TO CHOOSE A SITE

THAT THE WONDERFUL SINGULAR SOUL

WHO'S EXACTLY RIGHT FOR YOU

IS LIKELY TO PATROL,

JUST PICK UP THE PHONE AND CALL.

BECAUSE I'M ON THEM ALL.

I'M NONE OTHER THAN THE MAESTRO OF MATCH,

THE CASANOVA OF CHEMISTRY,  
THE VERY CUPID OF OK CUPID  
AND THE DON JUAN OF E-HARMONY

IF YOU NEED A PROFILE TO ATTRACT  
WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HIGH AND LOW,  
I CAN EASILY HELP YOU HOOK UP  
FAST AS JULIET NABBED ROMEO.  
I'M NONE OTHER THAN THE MAESTRO OF MATCH,  
THE CASANOVA OF CHEMISTRY,  
THE VERY CUPID OF OK CUPID,  
AND THE DON JUAN OF E-HARMONY.

OF COURSE, I ASK NOT A THING  
IN RETURN BUT DO IT OUT OF  
THE GOODNESS OF MY HEART --  
ALL TO HELP YOU FIND TRUE LOVE.

IF YOU WANT A CRASH COURSE ON HOW  
YOU CAN QUICKLY NAVIGATE  
THIS SITE OR THAT AND FIND,  
AS THEY SAY, YOUR LAST FIRST DATE,  
WHY SUFFER ANOTHER DAY  
WHEN I CAN MAP OUT THE WAY?

I'M NONE OTHER THAN THE MAESTRO OF MATCH,  
 THE CASANOVA OF CHEMISTRY,  
 THE VERY CUPID OF OK CUPID!  
 AND THE JON JUAN OF E-HARMONY.  
 YES! YES! THE DON JUAN OF E-HARMONY!

PAT

And modest, too. Then why haven't you met your last first date?

SAM

I'm working on it.

MIKE

(holds up manuscript; to Sam)

Can we go over the paper now? I made a few notes.

SAM

Sure.

(to Pat)

Excuse me.

(crosses to him)

Where were you last night?

MIKE

Why?

SAM

You missed the board meeting. We could have used you there.

MIKE

Sorry. I don't keep up with doings at the brick-and-mortar campus as much as I used to.

SAM

Yeah. But when the board of directors threatens to eliminate the philosophy department, you might want to make an exception.

MIKE

If I had know that was in the works, I would have. I thought the university was above such nonsense.

SAM

You had to be there. When I heard them talking about how much more important it is to allocate all available resources for technology and business, I thought I was inhabiting a new kind of dark ages. Techno-barbarism! That's what it is. The complete absence of a civilized sense of proportion.

MIKE

I'll be there for the follow-up meeting.

SAM

Excellent. You're one of the most respected members of the department, while I'm just desperately seeking tenure. On the other hand, what's tenure if there's no department?

MIKE

Not to worry. I may even advise my students to express their dismay by email or any other way they see fit.

MIKE

Aren't you concerned that involving them will be seen as inappropriate?

MIKE

I think that depends on who's defining "inappropriate."

Lights come up on students at computers.

STUDENTS

(spoken)

What, no philosophy department?

WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL

WOULD THINK THAT'S COOL?

WE CAN'T LET THEM GET AWAY

WITH SUCH A DUMB POWER PLAY.

STUDENT POWER! STUDENT POWER!

WHEN WE THINK SOMETHING'S WRONG

YOU CAN BE SURE WE WON'T COWER

AND MEEKLY GO ALONG.

STUDENT POWER! STUDENT POWER!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING.

WE'LL BE THERE IN YOUR HOUR

OF NEED TO SHOUT AND SING!

YES! YES! WE'LL TAKE TO THE STREET

UNTIL WE CAN DEFEAT

THE MISGUIDED POWERS THAT BE.

WE'LL SURGE AHEAD LIKE A SEA

IN OPPOSITION TO

WHAT ANY MALEFACTOR MAY DO.

STUDENT POWER! STUDENT POWER!

WE'LL BE THERE TO DEFEND

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH FIST AND FLOWER

UNTIL WE ACHIEVE OUR END.

YES, YES, WITH FIST AND FLOWER

UNTIL WE ACHIEVE OUR END!

MIKE

Thank you! We're counting on your support.

SAM

Great! What spirit, especially among students whose affiliation with the department is only through online learning.

MIKE

What can I say? A good student is a good student, wherever he or she may be.

Students cheer, as lights go down on them.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Better move on now, though, or we won't have the peace of mind to concentrate on the new paper. I'm already rattled. I just found out my mother fell down the stairs.

SAM

Ouch. Sorry to hear that.

MIKE

Worse yet, she was on the floor for hours before my father discovered what happened. I just wish my parents lived closer. They're getting up there.

SAM

Why don't you buy them medical alert bracelets?

MIKE

Smart idea, Sam.

(to Pat)

Pat, did you hear that?

PAT

(on iPad again)

No. What?

MIKE

Sam suggested that we get my parents medical alert bracelets.

PAT

Oh, great idea! I've interviewed seniors about them on my show. Some of them say it saved their lives. Do you think they would wear them?

MIKE

I don't know.

(to Sam)

My dad is kind of cool. Even learned to trade stocks on the computer. It's part of how he enjoys his retirement. But my mother? We had a hard time even getting her to use a cell phone.

PAT

Why don't you Google the bracelets?

MIKE

Good idea.

(to Sam)

I had a thought the other day. Google has all of the information but none of the answers.

(turns to computer and types)

The question is, who's going to convince my dear mother to wear it?

PAT

Why don't we invite your parents for a visit? We can give them the bracelets as presents.

MIKE

Ah, the genius of women.

(to Sam)

Men can only play catch-up. They actually run the world, but they're so clever they've convinced us that we're in charge.

Lights fade down. Stay down briefly. Come back up.

Living room. Mike, John, and Lisa are digitally engaged. Pat is to the side, on the phone.

PAT

(on phone)

Guess what? I gave Sam your number.

SUE

Really? Now, he'll think I'm a loser.

PAT

No, no, he thinks you're beautiful and intelligent.

SUE

Then why hasn't he ever shown any interest?

PAT

Well, let's just see if he calls. On the other hand, he said you could call him.

SUE

That's so arrogant. I'd never do that.

PAT

Why not? You've known him for years. Anyway, he said he'd be happy to help you create an online profile.

SUE

Then how much can he care?

PAT

Sue, how can he care about you when you haven't even dated? If he calls, let me know. Gotta go now.

SUE

Bye.

They hang up. She heads for living room.

PAT

(to Mike, as she enters)

I just spoke with Sue. Sam hasn't called her yet.

(he doesn't hear her; she goes to him and taps him on the shoulder)

MIKE

What?

PAT

Sam hasn't called my sister yet.

MIKE

Oh. Figures. After all, he's the maestro of Match.

PAT

Remind him next time you see him, OK?

MIKE

Will do.

PAT

(looks at clock on smartphone)

It's almost 3. Your parents should be here soon.

MIKE

(back on computer)

What?

PAT

Never mind.

(holds up iPad)

I have to finish reading a book.

Lights fade down and come up on Sue, who is sitting beside her smart phone. She looks at it. Picks it up. Puts it down. Picks it back up. Puts it down again.

SUE

Remember, you're in HR. You help people achieve their potential. For once in your life, help yourself.

(picks up phone and taps keypad)

Lights come up in another part of the stage. Sam is reading. Puts down book and picks up phone.

SAM

Hello.

Sue tries to speak. She has lost her voice. She hangs up. Sam looks at phone quizzically. Taps phone. Her phone rings. She looks at it. Moments of indecision. Then suddenly picks it up.

SUE

Hello.

SAM

Hi, Sue. Did you just call me?

SUE

Sorry. I must have dialed you by mistake.

SAM

Oh. How's it going?

SUE

All right.

SAM

Your sister said you might need a little help getting your profile up on the dating sites?

SUE

Really?

SAM

Glad to help out, if you like. I know the drill.

SUE

Thanks. I'm not sure I'm ready to date yet. I haven't been divorced for that long.

SAM

Been about three years, hasn't it? Seems long enough to me. I'll meet you at Ziggy's at 6 and bring my laptop. They have free Wi-Fi there. We can do it over coffee.

SUE

Oh. That's so nice.

SAM

Good. I can only stay about an hour, though. I have a date later.

SUE

No problem.

SAM

See you then.

They hang up. Lights fade down. Come back up on living room. Mike, Pat, John, and Lisa are all digitally occupied. Doorbell rings.

PAT

That must be your mom and dad.

MIKE

(leans forward to look at clock on computer)

Yep. 4 PM. And right on time.

Mike stands and heads for door. Pat follows. Alice and Charlie are there. Charlie has one bag over his shoulder and a large suitcase on rollers.

MIKE

Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad.

(hugs them)

Glad you could make it.

ALICE

Thank you. Hi, Pat.

PAT

Hi, Mom and Dad. Welcome.

(hugs them)

CHARLIE

Good to see you.

(they enter; Charlie points to bag over shoulder)

My stuff for the weekend.

(points to large rolling suitcase)

And your mother's stuff.

ALICE

I've never been careless enough to travel lightly.

PAT

(to Alice)

I was so upset when I heard you fell.

MIKE

We all were.

(closes door)

ALICE

It never would've happened if I hadn't been talking on that silly iPhone you bought for me. I know you had the best of intentions. But I shall never use it again. As for your father, imagine what he was doing while I was lying there in an unconscious rumple. He was on the computer, trading stocks. Tell them.

CHARLIE

I'll never live it down.

(to Mike and Pat)

What can I say? I'm just another jackass investor, trying to outsmart the high-speed computers on Wall Street.

MIKE

Why bother, Dad? Pull out and let the sharks eat each other.

CHARLIE

Just having a little fun. She only lets me buy or sell ten shares a day. So I have something the sharks and Warren Buffet will never have. No big money worries. Why? No big money.

All enter living room. Children see them enter and get up.



PAT

We want you both to be safe.

ALICE

I am safe, now that I've liberated myself from that nettlesome cellphone.

MIKE

Oh, come on, Mom, modern technology enables a lot of wonderful things.

PAT

It even saves lives, like in hospitals.

ALICE

I'm all for that. Life is far too precious to let even a moment of it slip away unnecessarily. After all, the entire universe has worked away for some 13 billion years to produce it on this vibrant, under-appreciated planet. And, if it's good enough for the universe, I suppose it ought to be good enough for us.

MIKE

I'm glad you feel that way, Mom. Because we want you to live a long time. So we --

PAT

-- bought you a present.

MIKE

For you and Dad.

ALICE

Oh. What sort of present?

MIKE

Let me get them.

(gets up and goes to desk; on the way)

A couple of things I think you'll both really appreciate.

(opens desk drawer; takes out the medical alert bracelets and crosses to them)

MIKE

Look. Medical alert bracelets.

ALICE

Oh, I know all about them. My friend, Amy, wears one.

MIKE

Really?

ALICE

Yes.

MIKE

So you'll wear it, right?

ALICE

Of course, not.

MIKE

But, Mom, the risk --

ALICE

What risk, now that I've liberated myself from that confounded electronic distraction? Walking around the house? Remember, the pilgrims crossed the plains without even life insurance.

PAT

But the bracelets are a great invention.

ALICE

I'm surrounded by great inventions. So many great inventions their principal merit is to bring into relief the self-destructive ignorance and ineptitude of far too much of the human race. And to think, now I have to hear about their behavior with unprecedented efficiency. The only possible excuse for the asinine behavior is that we're very early human beings. Imagine -- the dinosaurs lived for 150-million years and the human race is only about a hundred-thousand years old. So I assume we have plenty of time to improve.

(to Pat)

I don't want to sound elitist. But before all of these marvels of modern communication came along, educated people, few as there were, lived in castles, while the multitude subsisted in mud huts, no doubt strangling their spouses and children with the same alarming regularity they do such things today. The difference is, there wasn't "high technology" to send the news of their regrettable behavior over the castle walls. Today the only sanctuary is to live in a castle of the mind. I do once again, and I'm quite content to remain that way.

(sings)

MY MIND IS MY DOMAIN,

A SACRED PLACE,

I LOVINGLY MAINTAIN

AND NEVER DEBASE.

ITS WINDOWED WALLS  
RECEIVE THE LIGHT  
THAT WARMLY FALLS  
THERE DAY AND NIGHT --

THE BRILLIANCE OF  
HOW NATURE THRIVES,  
EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE  
THAT SUPPORT OUR LIVES.  
MEANWHILE, LIGHT STREAMS  
FROM EACH TREASURED ROW  
OF MY BOOKS WITH BEAMS  
THAT ENHANCE THE GLOW --  
THE SAVING LIGHT OF  
WHAT HUMANS HAVE LEARNED  
WHEREVER THE LOVE  
OF TRUTH HAS BURNED.  
AND THERE AM I,  
MID THE KILOWATTS,  
ALL INFORMING MY  
OWN LIVELY THOUGHTS.

MY MIND IS MY DOMAIN,  
A SACRED PLACE,

I LOVINGLY MAINTAIN

AND NEVER DEBASE --

A SACRED PLACE

I'LL NEVER DEBASE!

MIKE

Lovely, Mother, but --

ALICE

-- what?

(to children, who are busy with their  
gadgets)

Just look at them. So absorbed by those silly little gadgets they aren't developing even the most rudimentary social skills. And what happens? Dysfunctional behavior that can precipitate the most tragic events.

MIKE

(raises voice)

John! Lisa! Snap out of it! Remember, your grandparents are only here for the weekend.

ALICE

(goes to them)

What nonsense has captivated your emerging minds?

JOHN

It's just a video game. Wanna play?

ALICE

Not just now. Still drawing monsters in your spare time?

JOHN

(picks up drawing pad)

Yeah. I want to be a video game designer.

ALICE

(looks at drawings)

How inventively gruesome. I'm sure you'll be extraordinarily successful. When I was growing up, young artists would paint things like faces. Look at me. See how well-balanced my features are? It's an expression of nature's design sense -- and an indication that we're born to be well-balanced inside, too, and enjoy our lives.

(to Lisa)

And you, my precious darling, what do you hope to be?

LISA

A robot.

ALICE

May I ask why?

LISA

So I won't have to worry about date rape, being kidnapped, or any of the other awful things that can happen to a woman.

(to John)

Tell her what you want when you're ready to get married.

JOHN

A virtual woman -- the hologram of my dreams.

ALICE

Oh, and why is that?

JOHN

So she won't cheat on me.

ALICE

(to Mike)

My, my, how we have taken the precious innocents trusted to us at their birth and put them in a world that so utterly besmirches their potential. Tell me, children, what should you aim at all of your lives?

LISA

I don't know.

JOHN

Winning every video game I play.

ALICE

Well, that would be part of it for you. It's happiness -- intelligent, considerate ways to be happy. Did anybody every tell you it's the most challenging goal?

LISA

No.

ALICE

Well, quite surprisingly, it is. The most rewarding one, too. And in exceptional individuals, it demands the pursuit of greatness.

(to Lisa, referring to her earphones)

Now, what has so transfixed you?

LISA

Just listening to music.

ALICE

What kind of music?

LISA

Rap.

ALICE

Rap? What can a bright young girl like you possibly see in such low-minded, misogynistic bravado. You know what I call rap music? A contradiction in terms. You should listen to classical music. It's the refined musical voice of the human soul. Sympathetic vibrations at a level that will refine your own nascent soul.

MIKE

They're still young, Mom. I didn't like classical music when I was a kid, either.

ALICE

Come to think of it, neither did I. I grew up with Rock 'n' Roll and folk music. As you know, I was a hippie. So was your father.

MIKE

I'm still adjusting to that, Mom. It's rather odd to have a mother who was indisputably hipper than her children will ever be.

ALICE

Thank you. We were quite a generation. Never was the fear of participating in an ineptly conceived war elaborated with such colorful obfuscation.

(to Charlie, referring to the children)

Look how much they've grown.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

(to children)

Listen to your grandmother. She knows what's good for you. Very smart. She's the only person I ever knew who could flip through a 600-page book in twenty minutes and then discuss it expertly.

ALICE

Thank you, Charles.

(to children)

The years have taught him prudence. No wonder I adore him.

(to Lisa)

Talk to me, my dear. I want you to discover life without earphones.

(to John)

And you, dear boy. Tell me, have they invented any video games yet that don't require you to blow up people with innovative ferocity?

JOHN

Angry Birds.

ALICE

I don't believe I've ever seen an angry bird. My, what a perversion of nature's feathered troubadours.

CHARLIE

The kids are just having fun, Alice.

ALICE

I know. I'm quite aware of the manias of the age. The only one who has resisted them is the dog. Max is in perfect touch with his atavistic past. He eats, he sleeps, and gets excited when he sees another dog, especially a female. He has no gadgets beyond his leash and bowls. Yet he has no psychological problems. There's a lot to be learned from him. In fact, there's a lot to be learned from ants, who work away, or trees, which grow with inspiring patience. I realize I'm ascribing wisdom to them, when their behavior is due to their simpler capabilities. But appropriate behavior can be learned from even the most basic of creatures.

(sits with children)

Now, tell me, children, when you're occupied with your technical trifles, what are your bodies doing? When I was your age, I went to playgrounds. I ran, I jumped, I climbed sliding boards, and pushed myself to startling heights on swings. How can you expect to live as long as your grandmother if you sit around all day simply wiggling your fingers?

LISA

I exercise.

ALICE

When you get on and off of the school bus?

JOHN

I take gym.

ALICE

Good. It may save your life.

(gets up and crosses to Mike)

And what about you?

(taps his belly)

Such a handsome man. But look at your waistline. That's what comes from sitting at your computer all day.

(to children)

Once he was as thin as a kite string. How could you let this happen?

MIKE

I have an entire gym upstairs. I walk by it every day.

ALICE

How often do you walk into it?

MIKE

I do the best I can.

ALICE

(to Pat)

And how about you? You must take care of your figure. It's far too lovely to neglect.

PAT

Thanks. I know I need to workout. But I'm always too tired. Remember, I have to be up at six five days a week.

ALICE

I know, dear. So after your morning show, come home. Take a nap. Then set aside some time to workout, instead of sitting around, staring at that ever-present i-whatever-you-call-it in your hands.

PAT

It's an iPad. I have to keep up with the news.

ALICE

Every minute? How much can you contribute by just talking about what everybody else already knows? You need time for your own thoughts.

(to children)

And for talking to other people face to face. It teaches you social grace, a rare attribute in this obsessively self-interested and rapacious age.

MIKE

(wistfully)

I remember when I used to teach in a real classroom.

ALICE

Why not ask to go back to it?

MIKE

Distance learning has become my speciality. It's not easy to find a philosophy professor who's photogenic.

ALICE

As long as they shoot you from the waist up.

MIKE

Thanks, Mom. I use the webcam that's built into my computer.

ALICE

Oh, how mercifully convenient. Well, it's a new world. What can I tell you? Somewhere along the way, tradition jumped the tracks. I remember when entire days passed without phone calls or news bulletins. I was happy. I was healthy. And I still am, for the most part. So is your father. As you remember, he used to be a basketball star.

CHARLIE

It was a long time ago. I now put playing basketball in the same category as pole vaulting. It's something I will never do again.

ALICE

You could play if you wanted to.

CHARLIE

My shoulders are too stiff.

ALICE

I told you. Go for walks with me. Swing your arms as you go.

(demonstrates)

Roll your shoulders. Stop watching your computer screen and do sit-ups. Someday you won't be able to keep up with me. Is that what you want?

CHARLIE

I do OK.

ALICE

How long can it last? We may feel that we're still young, but, hard as it is to admit, when I look in the mirror, I realize I'm definitely passed my teenage years.

MIKE

(to Pat)

She admits it. That's a step.

(holds up bracelets)

Which brings us back to these.

PAT

You can wear them on your wrist, around your neck, or on your belt.

ALICE

Thank you. I appreciate your concern. I really do. But there is no way I can submit to the indignity. How intrusive! To be baby sat by an electronic device.

MIKE

Come on, Mom. It could save your life.

(demonstrates)

If something untoward happens, it can alert Dad, too, or a neighbor.

ALICE

Thank you. But I prefer to “go into that good night” with a minimum of inconvenience to others. It’s the thoughtful thing to do. I’ve had enough joy in my life to be glad I was born and can depart at nature’s convenience, moderated by the usual medical ministrations. It’s a question of acreage. If it weren’t for life spans, the earth would have been filled up a long time ago. So, inconvenient as it may be to acknowledge, we all owe our opportunity to live to the brilliant idea that each life has an eventful beginning, an extensive and hopefully delightful middle, and a mercifully unconscious end.

CHARLIE

The bracelet might be a good thing, Alice. At our age, you never know what could happen

MIKE

Thanks, Dad. He’s right, Mom. Come on. After a while, you won’t even know you’re wearing it.

ALICE

Don’t be absurd. I’d feel like Max with his collar.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should give them a try, Alice.

ALICE

OK. Two dogs with collars.

(looks them over)

You’d think they could design something that’s a bit more attractive.

PAT

They’re not that bad looking.

ALICE

Faint praise but still grossly excessive.

MIKE

But they’re great, Mom. Just think. If you or Dad fall or something, it will notify the service and they’ll send an ambulance.

ALICE

When? In today's traffic? I'll be long gone before it arrives.

MIKE

Come on, Mom. Let me put it on.

PAT

We just want you both to be safe.

ALICE

I know you both have good intentions. But why should I listen if you won't listen to me about the extent to which you've all left behind the lives you once knew to inhabit this distracting age of electronic infatuations?

MIKE

What do you mean?

ALICE

I'll make you an extraordinarily generous offer -- and only because I want the best for all of you, too. And here it is. If the four of you can spend one day while I'm here without all of your wizardly distractions, I promise to wear it.

MIKE

Thanks, Mom. But I make my living online. I can't suddenly tune out.

ALICE

For one day? It's the weekend. Maybe you'll rediscover who you once were.

PAT

I'd love to take you up on your offer, Mom, but I have to keep up with the news.

ALICE

How about you, children?

JOHN

A whole day?

LISA

That's truly crazy, Grandma.

ALICE

Ah, ha! Now, we see what it's like when somebody attempts to get you to do something for your own good. Better take me up on it. This offer is for a limited time only. I will wear this ill-designed monstrosity if you all agree to abstain from your colorful encumbrances for one day.

MIKE

What happens when the day is over? Will you continue to wear it?

ALICE

Of course. You go one whole day without them, and I'll wear it -- I can't believe I'm saying this -- for the rest of my life.

MIKE

All right, then. We'll find a way.

PAT

But --

MIKE

-- Come on, sweetheart. If I can do it, you can do it.

PAT

Fine. Reckless as it may be, I'll participate.

ALICE

What about you, children?

.

JOHN

No way. I have online games scheduled with my friends.

MIKE

They'll still be there tomorrow.

LISA

But I just downloaded a great new album and --

MIKE

-- It can wait. Come on, kids. We're doing it for Mom and Dad. What do you say?

LISA

Oh, OK.

MIKE

(to John)

What about you? You're the last holdout.

JOHN

Oh, all right.

MIKE

Great.

(to Alice)

So that's it, Mom. You're stuck. We're off the digits until tomorrow.

ALICE

(looks at watch)

You mean, until this time tomorrow. Five PM -- and not a moment earlier.

LISA

Grandma! That's most of tomorrow, too!

JOHN

I have a question. What are we supposed to do between now and then?

(sings)

IF I CAN'T USE MY X-BOX OR DROID,

HOW WILL I FILL THE BORING VOID?

LISA

AND WITHOUT MY STUFF, WHAT WILL I DO?

I DON'T HAVE AN ITTY-BITTY CLUE.

JOHN & LISA

YES, WHAT WILL WE EVER DO?

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT THROUGH?

WITHOUT ALL OF OUR DIGITAL

DEVICES, WE'LL CLIMB

THE WALLS AND FIDGET ALL

OF THE CREEPY-CRAWLY TIME.

THE DEAL WE'RE MAKING IS SO CHANCY

OUR FINGERS ARE ALREADY GETTING ANTSY.

WHERE WILL WE GET THE WILLPOWER  
WHEN EVERY SECOND WILL SEEM LIKE AN HOUR,  
AND EVERY MINUTE WILL LAST AS LONG  
AS AN EXAM WE'RE GETTING TOTALLY WRONG,  
AND EVERY HOUR WILL MOVE AS FAST  
AS A TURTLE WHOSE LEG IS IN A CAST.

JOHN

MY FRIENDS WILL WONDER WHERE I AM.  
DID AN ALIEN TURN MY EMAILS TO SPAM?

LISA

AND WHAT WILL ALL MY FRIENDS THINK WHEN I  
DON'T CALL OR TEXT OR EVEN REPLY?

JOHN & LISA

OH, WHAT WILL WE EVER DO?  
HOW WILL WE MAKE IT THROUGH?  
WITHOUT ALL OF OUR DIGITAL  
DEVICES WE'LL CLIMB  
THE WALLS AND FIDGET ALL  
OF THE CREEPY-CRAWLY TIME,  
EVERY SECOND, MINUTE, AND HOUR  
OF THE CREEPY-CRAWLY TIME!

All look at each other as if they're lost. Lights go down and come up on a table at a coffee shop. Sam has his laptop. Sue enters. Sees Sam and waves. He waves back.

SUE  
Hi.

SAM  
Hi. Glad you could make it.

SUE  
Thanks for saying you'd help.

SAM  
My pleasure. I ordered a bottle of wine. I figured you could use a glass.

SUE  
You are so right.

SAM  
I believe you prefer white?

SUE  
You remembered?

SAM  
How could I forget when we've dined together at your sister's place?  
(pours her a glass)

Cheers.

SUE  
Cheers.

They toast.

SAM  
I can't believe you've been divorced all this time and haven't looked into online dating.

SUE  
I can't believe a lot of things about my life. I thought I was going to have a perfect marriage.

SAM  
Want to know how to make peace with the past? Appreciate the present. It's a new beginning.

SUE  
I guess. I just never thought I'd get a divorce -- and after only three years of marriage. But it was his idea. Not mine.

SAM

Look at it this way. If you meet Mr. Right this time around, you'll owe it to the divorce. The present is the crest of a wave, and every molecule in it is what will bring it to the moment when it will meet the crest of his.

SUE

OK. But, tell me, what's it like to have a date with someone you never met? You're the expert.

SAM

You get used to it. I've met some really nice women, and I think you'll meet some great guys. You just have to be careful how you meet them. The first date is only for coffee or a drink. Never a meal until the second date. Think of it as a job interview for your soulmate.

SUE

Oh, that takes some of the pressure off.

SAM

Trust me. I learned the hard way. People don't always turn out to be who they present themselves as. For instance, you can take it for granted that almost everybody is lying about his or her age. Now, let me show you how to put up a profile. You should start with Match.

SUE

That's what my sister said. Do you think I'll actually meet someone.

SAM

Sure. There are millions of members. It's like walking into the world's largest single's bar. And you're a beautiful, intelligent woman. A lot of guys would be thrilled to meet you.

SUE

Thanks. You're pretty cool yourself.

SAM

I know. I work on compensating for my bookish nature. Now, the first thing we need to do is get you signed up.

SUE

OK. Let's do it.

(kisses him on the cheek)

Thank you. Won't you be jealous if I meet someone?

SAM

(hesitates a moment)

Of course, not. I'll be really happy for you.

Lights fade down. Come up on bedroom. Night. Alice and Charlie are sitting up, reading. They're wearing the bracelets.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should go to sleep.

ALICE

How?

(holds up bracelet)

I can't believe they were able to abstain from their compulsive behavior all evening. The only consolation is, they might actually learn something from the exercise.

CHARLIE

You're such a dear, Alice. You still think you can change the world. Me? I've never even been able to change myself.

(holds up bracelet)

Meanwhile, we're stuck with these.

ALICE

Just don't accidentally set yours off in the middle of the night. Then I will have a heart attack.

CHARLIE

I won't.

ALICE

Good. I love you, Charles. We have a wonderful relationship. The only reason most love stories are about the very young is that, when most of them were written, people didn't usually live as long. They didn't have the benefits of modern medicine.

CHARLIE

Or the bills. You can't have a heart attack and neither can I. We can't afford to.

ALICE

Don't be silly. We have Medicare, at least, until the unfeeling reactionaries who've taken over the Republican party get their hands on it.

CHARLIE

True. It's one of the consolations of growing old, along with having you, sweetheart.

ALICE

Thank you, Charles. I don't believe I've ever been praised in the same breath as Medicare.

They go back to reading, as we see telltale lights from digital items come on. Mike is in bed with his laptop. Pat has her iPad on. The kids are in their beds, absorbed with their gadgets. Pat's cell phone begins to ring. Mike makes a face and holds up his hands to indicate he wants her to silence it. She quickly picks it up off the night table.

PAT

I forgot to put it on vibrate.

(answers; almost a whisper)

Hi, Sue. What's up.

(lights come up on Susan, standing with phone)

SUE

(giggly)

I did it.

PAT

What?

SUE

Put a profile up on Match.

PAT

Congratulations. About time.

SUE

Thank you. Guess who helped me?

PAT

Sam?

SUE

Yes. It was so nice of you to ask him.

PAT

Glad it worked out.

(to Mike)

You won't believe this.

MIKE

What? But please talk softly. We don't want Mom and Dad to hear. Remember, tonight it's digits out.

PAT

Sorry. Sue put up a profile, and Sam helped her.

MIKE

Good. Now, shh!

PAT

(back on phone, softly)

That's great, Sue. Let me know how you do.

SUE

I will.

PAT

Gotta go now. It's late.

SUE

OK. Talk soon.

They hang up. Pat makes an adjustment to her iPhone and puts it back on the night table.

PAT

I sure hope she meets someone.

MIKE

We all do. Now, please, turn off the ringer.

PAT

I just did. I do feel kind of guilty, though. I mean, we did give your mother and father our word.

Lights go down on them and the children; come back up on Alice and Charlie.

ALICE

(holds up bracelet)

I simply cannot sleep with this annoyance on my wrist.

CHARLIE

(holds up his wrist)

Neither can I, Alice.

ALICE

I just realized something that may excuse a bit of opportune misbehavior. We're not really obliged to wear these until they live up to their pledge.

CHARLIE

We said we would, Alice.

ALICE

If they live up to their agreement until 5 PM tomorrow. I realize my argument hangs by the thread of a technicality, but let me ask you. Who's going to see us at night?

CHARLIE

You have a point there.

ALICE

(reaches to take hers off)

We can put them back on first thing in the morning.

CHARLIE

Good idea.

(reaches for his)

ALICE

Now, we might actually be able to go to sleep.

Lights fade down. Come up on Sue, sitting at a computer. Types a bit.

SUE

(to self)

I can't believe I'm actually emailing a perfect stranger!

(sings)

I'M GIVING MYSELF, GIVING MYSELF

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE --

ROMANCE AND LOVE.

I'M SLIPPING OUT

FROM UNDER THE BLAME

FOR WHY THINGS WENT WRONG.

I'M OUT TO RECLAIM,

FINALLY OUT TO RECLAIM,  
ALL I'VE MISSED FOR SO LONG.

I'VE GIVING MYSELF, GIVING MYSELF  
ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE,  
ROMANCE AND LOVE.

I'M PUTTING ASIDE  
ALL OF THE FEARS,  
AND THE SENSELESS GUILT  
I'VE KNOWN FOR YEARS,  
THE WHOLE CRAZY QUILT.

AND GIVING MYSELF, GIVING MYSELF  
ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE,  
ROMANCE AND LOVE.

I CAN FINALLY SEE  
THE MAN I ONCE LOVED  
ONLY EXISTS FOR ME  
INSIDE MY HEAD,  
JUST A MEMORY.  
SO I CAN CONTROL  
THE WAYS THAT HE  
CAN INFLUENCE WHAT  
MY FUTURE WILL BE.

YEAH, FROM HERE ON OUT,

I'M FINALLY FREE!

I'M GIVING MYSELF, GIVING MYSELF

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE.

ROMANCE AND LOVE.

PUTTING MYSELF OUT THERE

AND DOING MY BEST,

STARTING TO DATE,

AND LEAVING THE REST

TO LUCK OR FATE!

I'M GIVING MYSELF, GIVING MYSELF

ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE,

ROMANCE AND LOVE.

GIVING MYSELF ANOTHER CHANCE FOR LOVE!

Lights fade down. Come up on living room. Mike is pacing in front of his computer. He is tempted to turn it on. Bites his finger nails and resists the temptation. Pat enters.

PAT

Having a nervous breakdown, dear?

MIKE

I'll be fine. Just fine.

PAT

I have to go food shopping.

MIKE

I thought you went yesterday.

PAT

You're right.

(lowers voice; takes iPad out of purse)

I have to see what's going on in the world, and I can't do it here.

MIKE

Oh, the old iPad-in-the-purse trick, huh?

(holds out hand)

Come on, dear. We want them to wear their bracelets, don't we?

PAT

(hands it to him)

All right.

MIKE

(holds out other hand)

iPhone, too, please.

PAT

OK, OK.

(takes it out of purse and hands it to him)

There.

MIKE

I know it's tough, sweetheart. But it's only until 5.

PAT

What if I go out and buy the newspaper?

MIKE

Great idea! I haven't read the printed version in years.

PAT

What about the magazines we used to subscribe to? I wish we hadn't let the subscriptions lapse. I remember how much we missed them during the last blackout. And with Connecticut Light and Power, you never know when the next one is coming.

MIKE

You're right. Amazing that all the latest technology still depends on good old-fashioned electricity.

PAT

Do you need anything else from the store?

MIKE

Pick me up a copy of The Atlantic, if they have it.

PAT

(gives him small kiss)

OK. Don't suffer too much.

She exits. He paces back and forth for a moment. Then he goes to the bookcase and takes down a book. Blows off the dust. Returns to his desk and sits. Opens book and begins to read. A smile of pleasure appears on his face. Momentarily, Alice enters.

ALICE

Good morning, son.

MIKE

'Morning, Mom.

ALICE

Did you have good night's sleep?

MIKE

Yes. How about you?

ALICE

Of course. I assume you, Pat, and the children have been able to abstain from your obsessions.

MIKE

A deal is a deal. What about you?

ALICE

(holds up arm with bracelet)

I'm prepared for a health emergency at any moment.

(looks around)

Where's Pat?

MIKE

She went out to get the newspaper.

ALICE

Wonderful. The return of printed matter. And a book in your hand. I see we're making progress already.

MIKE

(points)

Her iPad and iPhone are right here. And my computer is not on.

ALICE

My, you are being good.

MIKE

Thanks.

(holds up book)

Actually, I'm enjoying the break.

ALICE

You, of all people! Stuck on the computer all day.

MIKE

I do read when I'm on it.

ALICE

What? The day-to-day tempest in a teapot. You know as well as I do that there is an enormous difference between information and knowledge.

MIKE

I still do read books.

(holds up e-reader)

But usually on my Kindle. You know what that is?

ALICE

Of course, the most regrettable intrusion into tradition that I can imagine. Thankfully, nothing will ever replace the cozy, distinguished feeling of holding a printed book in your hands. It's the great and privileged tradition of the wise.

MIKE

I agree, Mom. Yet there are certain things about digital books that I prefer. For instance, I can access every classic instantly. The e-reader is the easily manageable volume I always wished the complete works of Plato, Aristotle and Shakespeare were available in.

ALICE

If Plato were alive today, do you think he would have an e-reader? Or a website? I can see it right now: Plato.edu.

MIKE

I wonder if it's taken. If so, he'd have to think up a variation, like Plato1.edu. But back to my Kindle. One of the best things is, nobody can borrow a book without returning it.

In fact, the only thing I can't get on it is The Philosopher's Magazine, along with my other professional journals.

ALICE

But, with all of your gadgets, you can't possibly have as much time to read and think as you used to?

MIKE

Regrettably, no. In fact, it's a good thing I have an excellent memory. Seek pleasure and avoid pain. You become what you do. Moderation in all things. Life according to reason, which is virtue and leads to happiness. To determine the relative value of the brain and the genitals, which one would you rather have cut off?

ALICE

When I read that argument in Aristotle, I was quite alarmed that he had lost his own sense of moderation. It would hardly take a genius to think of a more delicate argument.

MIKE

Mother, is there anything you haven't read?

ALICE

Yes. The millions of books that get printed that have nothing whatever to do with the progress of the human race. Otherwise, I've read everything, in fact, twice. But about these confounded computers, etcetera. I remember when they took over the library. There was I was, happily stamping books in and out for over 40 years, and suddenly I had to learn how to "enter data."

MIKE

But didn't it make your life easier?

ALICE

Ease is not always a satisfactory recompense for the loss of something one has been doing his or her entire life. For a while, I even feared for the Dewey Decimal System, but, thankfully, it has survived! And, somehow, so have I. No doubt because I was able to retire.

(holds wrist up)

Are you sure I can't persuade you to transgress? I can't imagine wearing this electronic baby sitter for the rest of my life.

MIKE

One day you may be glad you are.

ALICE

I should only live so long.

(gives him a hug)

Actually, I'm glad you're all taking a brief sabbatical from your inane preoccupations.

MIKE

So am I. But I do gain a lot from them. Imagine! I'm now aware of every event that's happening of any significance anywhere in the world. We've gone beyond the global village. On the Internet, it's as if the whole world is one room.

ALICE

What a frightening concept! No, thank you! I've already taken my random sample of the human race and have come to understand that exceptional people are, by definition, rare. Now, listen to your mother. It's all well and good for the people who must deal with everyday perturbations to be aware of them and I hope for the sake of suffering, and often brutally self-punishing, humanity that we eventually arrive at workable solutions to at least our most debilitating problems. But you have to think about your own remarkable promise and how to realize it.

MIKE

I do have to get back to who I am. Maybe it all comes down to balance -- a new kind of balance we have to learn between the capabilities of high-tech and preserving our individuality.

(Kids come moping in.)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look who's here.

ALICE

Hi, children. Why so glum?

JOHN

I have absolutely nothing to do. Nothing!

ALICE

I'm sorry to hear that. Why don't you try conversing with each other?

LISA

We already did that.

ALICE

Don't tell me you've exhausted the possibilities of convivial interaction already.

JOHN

What are we supposed to talk about? I know everything about her, and she knows everything about me.

LISA

I've known him since I was born.

ALICE

But the more you know each other, the more you should have interesting subjects to talk about. I've know your grandfather for over 40 years, and we converse all the time. Tell me, what do you talk about when you email and text each other?

LISA

That's different.

ALICE

How so?

LISA

I don't have to look him in the face.

JOHN

Ditto.

ALICE

Dear me. Come to Grandma, children. Let's review how communication usually works. When you're away from each other, you send mail. When you're in the same room, you speak with each other in a cordial, if not affable, way.

JOHN

We know those things.

LISA

We just like to text.

MIKE

She's obsessed with it. My little darling was called out in school for texting in class just last week, wasn't she?

ALICE

(to Mike)

We're dealing with a serious problem, Michael. How can children be friends when they don't even know how to converse?

MIKE

Come on, children. Show grandma you know how to carry on a conversation.

(to Alice)

They do sometimes. It's how you can tell they're upset with each other. They shout.

Pat enters with a newspaper, preferably The New York Times, and magazines, including The Atlantic Monthly.

PAT  
Hi, all.

ALICE  
Good morning,

PAT  
Look. Actual hard copies of the news.

ALICE  
Good for you! What wonders are yet to unfold?

MIKE  
Want to read the newspaper, kids?

JOHN  
No, thanks.

LISA  
You read it. I just know I have notifications pending on Facebook. Can't I check?

MIKE  
Immediately after 5 o'clock.

ALICE  
(to children)  
Poor things. Didn't you ever learn how to read a newspaper?

JOHN  
What for? All the news is on the Internet.

ALICE  
Oh, my! Let me show you how much grander a printed paper can be. Sometimes there are even articles about other matters than the persistent underachievement of the human race.  
(to Mike)  
I had no idea how valuable this experiment would be. I'm almost happy I agreed to it. Come here, children. Let grandma show you how engaged you can become with the actual printed edition of a newspaper.

JOHN  
On one condition.

ALICE  
What is that?

JOHN

You let me teach you how to play a video game.

ALICE

Me? A video game? You must be kidding?

JOHN

Come on, grandma. It's at least as much fun as reading a newspaper.

LISA

And I can show you how to text.

ALICE

(to Mike)

Imagine me, playing a video game or texting. I can already feel the lovingly constructed foundation of my dignity shifting.

MIKE

Oh, I don't know, Mom. You might enjoy it. A video game can really challenge your reflexes and make you sharper than ever.

ALICE

I don't need to be any sharper. The world as it's conducted today, or at least as it's reported, is generally stupid and insensitive. So it's bound to upset the most intelligent and sensitive people. There's only one escape. You have to distinguish between your personal life and your mass media life. To sit on the bank and watch the latest barge go by, with all the people who populate the mass media on it, behaving in their often hysterical and inconsequential ways. Once in a while, you can stick your toe in the water, but you should always remain on the bank, protect your privacy, and be happy. That's where all the palm trees are.

(sings)

IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY,

AND I ASSUME YOU DO,

YOU MUST BE CAREFUL

TO PROTECT LITTLE YOU

AND HAVE THE WISDOM

TO DIVIDE THINGS IN TWO

AND DISTINGUISH BETWEEN

YOUR MEDIA LIFE,

ON THIS OR THAT SCREEN,  
AND YOUR PERSONAL LIFE,  
WITH A WALL THAT'S UNSEEN.

IF YOU WANT TO HAPPY,  
YOU'LL CREATE A SPACE  
IN WHICH YOU LIVE  
AT YOUR OWN SPECIAL PACE,  
AND HAVE YOUR OWN THOUGHTS  
ABOUT THE LIFE YOU FACE.  
NOT JUST GO WITH THE FLOW,  
BUT TAKE THE TIME  
TO GET TO KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE AND HOW  
YOU WANT TO GROW.

AND WHY SHOULD YOU DO IT?  
IMAGINE HOW UNIQUE YOU ARE  
AND THE KNOWLEDGE WILL INSPIRE  
YOU AND TAKE YOU VERY FAR.  
YOU'RE A ONE-OF-A-KIND EVENT,  
WITH A GENETIC DESCENT  
FROM THE FIRST SPARK OF LIFE  
IN THE UNIVERSE AND ON EARTH

ALL THE WAY TO THE HAPPY DAY  
YOU GRACED US WITH YOUR BIRTH.  
NOW COUNT YOUR EXPERIENCES, TOO,  
AND YOU'LL SEE IT'S REALLY TRUE:  
THERE'S NEVER BEEN NOR WILL  
THERE EVER BE ANOTHER  
PERSON WHO'S QUITE LIKE YOU.  
SO DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE  
EVERYTHING YOU MIGHT BE?

IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY,  
TAKE THE TIME TO BE  
WITH THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE  
YOU AND LET THEM SEE  
YOU LOVE THEM, TOO,  
NOT JUST LITTLE ME,  
AS YOU BECOME  
OR, IF OLDER, REMAIN  
THE FINEST PERSON,  
THE TOTAL SUM,  
OF WHO YOU CAN BE  
AND YOUR OWN BEST CHUM --  
YES, IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY  
LISTEN TO ME,

NO ONE CAN FORESEE  
 ALL THAT YOU MIGHT BE,  
 IF YOU ONLY LISTEN,  
 LISTEN TO ME.

PAT

That's great advice, Alice.

(to children)

I hope you learned something.

(to Alice)

Unfortunately, I don't have that luxury. I'm right there on the barge. And guess what? I enjoy it.

ALICE

Well, in your field, I guess you have to be. I'm speaking about the usual people, who lose themselves to the hurly-burly of everyday events. As the philosopher of the moment in the 60's, Herbert Marcuse said, they only reflect incoming information. They don't make up their own minds about it. So, in his words, they're "one dimensional."

JOHN

Then why do you want us to read the newspaper, Grandma?

ALICE

Excellent question, John. Didn't I say you could put your toe in from time to time? You children don't even know where the river is.

MIKE

She's right, kids. You have to keep up with current events at least somewhat, I mean, if you're going to be part of your time.

JOHN

I'll care about things like that when I'm older.

LISA

I'd rather text my friends. I'm sure they're all wondering what happened to me.

(to Alice)

Come on, Grandma. What if I show you how to text?

ALICE

No, thank you, dear. I prefer to speak with you.

LISA

Please. It's fun. Or how about this? I'll show you how to go on Facebook?

ALICE

Considering how that site takes your personal information and sells it, it might be more accurate to call it “Facecrook.”

LISA

Grandma, that’s not nice!

ALICE

I’m sorry, Lisa. But the truth always has value. It’s its own excuse, even though it’s not always pretty.

MIKE

If you want, I can show you how to write and send emails, too, Mom.

ALICE

(to Pat)

And what can you do for me?

PAT

Oh, I don’t know. Show you how to play Words with Friends on my iPad? You can sign up and play with other people. It’s like Scrabble.

ALICE

That’s all I need to occupy my mind with.

LISA

Come on, Grandma. Lighten up.

Land line rings.

PAT

It’s the land line. Can I at least get that?

ALICE

Of course. Even I answer the regular phone.

Pat crosses to phone and picks it up. Lights go up on Sue on her cell phone.

PAT

Hello.

SUE

Hi, Pat. Sue. Guess what? I already met somebody on Match.

PAT

Really?

SUE

Yes. We're meeting for a drink tonight. He's a lawyer. Very handsome, too, at least, he looks that way in his photo.

PAT

I'm so excited for you.

SUE

I'm so excited, too. Imagine. It's my first date in over six years! I hope I know how to behave.

PAT

I'm sure you'll be fine. Let me know how it goes.

SUE

Will do. And thanks for being there for me.

Lights fade down on Sue. Pat hangs up.

PAT

(to Mike)

Sue met someone on Match. She has a date with him tonight.

MIKE

That's great.

ALICE

I'm happy to hear it, even if she met him online. The poor dear has been alone far too long.

Charlie enters.

MIKE

Hi, Dad. How's it going?

CHARLIE

Tough day.

JOHN

You can say that again.

MIKE

What's wrong?

CHARLIE

The market is closed. Not much to do.

ALICE

I cannot believe it. My own husband, an Internet junkie. May I never hear the word Internet again! You couldn't play the market today if it was open. Remember our agreement. No computers or other gadgets. Please, just sit down and join the conversation.

CHARLIE

OK.

ALICE

You and I are going to converse.

CHARLIE

Sure.

(sits down)

What do you want to talk about?

ALICE

Anything you like. Come on. I want to show the children a good example.

CHARLIE

About what?

ALICE

That two people can talk with each other face to face.

CHARLIE

They don't know that?

ALICE

Apparently not. They text, even when they're sitting right next to each other.

CHARLIE

Oh.

(to children)

Why do you do that?

JOHN

Because we like to.

LISA

It's more fun, too.

CHARLIE

Well, at least, they get to practice typing.

ALICE

Thank you for your invaluable assistance. Since example is the best teacher, you and I can demonstrate the art of conversation.

(to children)

Kindly observe us and imagine that you're strolling on a tree-shaded walkway in Aristotle's Lyceum, under the tutelage of two happy exemplars of life according to reason.

JOHN

What?

ALICE

Your grandfather and I are going to converse.

CHARLIE

I thought that's what we're already doing.

LISA

Grandma, if you're so against everything that's high-tech, why don't you move to a country that isn't advanced?

ALICE

Thank you for the suggestion, Lisa. But I don't have to do that. I already live in one. Now, come on, Charles. Let's give them an example of a usual conversation.

CHARLIE

OK. How's this? How are you feeling today, Alice?

ALICE

I'm fine. And how about you, Charles?

CHARLIE

OK, I guess. And what about you, children?

JOHN

Don't ask.

LISA

Truly miserable. I have an idea.

JOHN

What?

LISA

Since today we're all doing what grandma wants us to do, what if tomorrow grandma does what we all want her to do?

JOHN

Great idea, Lisa! What do you say, Grandma?

LISA

Come on. Saturday you get your way. Sunday we get ours. It's only fair.

ALICE

Oh, no. I don't mind banter about such idiotic pursuits. But a formal agreement to abandon civilization as I know it? No, I must be a rock in the current. Immovable, despite the swift tide of the age! My part of the bargain is that I'll wear this bracelet. It's quite enough.

CHARLIE

Oh, Alice, why not give the kids a break? It might be fun.

MIKE

I'd be happy to show you how to send emails, Mom.

ALICE

I prefer to write letters. They have a personableness and permanence that emails never will. Besides, I've already made a profound concession. Certainly, I need do no more.

CHARLIE

It would give us something to do with the kids.

ALICE

What I want to do with the kids is read together, maybe even talk together.

(to Charlie)

For instance, the way we got to know each other and love each other.

CHARLIE

I remember.

(to kids)

We had fun. You can have fun like that, too.

ALICE

I'll tell you what, children. Today, you'll read with me. We'll converse the way humans have done for centuries. Then, if you do, tomorrow I'll let you all teach me about the whiz-bang trifles that captivate you. Be quick. This overly generous and no doubt ill-considered offer expires in five seconds.

CHARLIE

(to children)

You want to have some real fun with her? Grin and bear it for the rest of the day. Then have fun tomorrow.

MIKE

Come on, kids. You'll never get an offer like that again. What do you say?

JOHN

All right. I'll do it.

(to Lisa)

Come on, say it.

LISA

Why?

JOHN

Because I did.

LISA

Oh, all right.

ALICE

Very good, children. Now, come and sit with grandma, while we read the newspaper. Maybe later we can even read a book.

(to Mike)

Where are the children's books I bought them?

(to children)

Have you ever read them?

JOHN

You mean Jack and the Beanstalk -- that kind of stuff?

PAT

I read them to them ages ago.

ALICE

Good for you. But, if I remember correctly, I bought them quite a few books since then.

(to children)

We can always pick a more adult book. Maybe something by Mark Twain.

(to Pat)

My favorite quote from him these days is, "Suppose you were an idiot and suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself."

JOHN

We already know about him. He's the Tom Sawyer guy.

LISA

And Huckleberry Finn.

ALICE

Actually, he wrote many other delightful books, some of them quite insightful and funny. If you're good, one day I might introduce you to such raucous and incisive gems as "Letters from the Earth." He wouldn't allow it to be published during his lifetime, and I can understand his hesitation.

JOHN

Can we just start with the newspaper?

ALICE

All right. Come and sit beside grandma.

(to Pat)

May I have the paper, please.

(Pat gives it to her)

Thank you.

Children sit beside her. She takes main section of paper.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(to children)

Maybe when we're done with the paper, I'll introduce you to poetry.

(recites)

"Much have I traveled in the realms of gold, / And many goodly states and kingdoms seen; / Round many western islands have I been / Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold."

MIKE

You should appreciate that, children. That's John Keats, writing about the great books he's read: "the realms of gold."

ALICE

At least, you remember something from your pre-Internet life.

(to children)

Now, let us read.

JOHN

Can I just ask one thing?

ALICE

What?

JOHN

What time is it?

ALICE

(looks at watch)

The day of your tribulation will be over in just 7 hours.

(reaction)

My hope is that in the meantime you will at least learn how to establish some intelligent balance between your digital life and your private life.

MIKE

It's quite a dilemma, Mom.

(sings)

I ADMIT THAT WE'RE ADDICTED TO

OUR COMPUTERS AND MOBILE DEVICES.

MIKE, PAT, JOHN & LISA

BUT THE AMAZING THINGS THEY LET US DO

MAKE THEM THE COOLEST OF VICES:

DIGITAL DILEMMAS,

WE'VE GOT DIGITAL DILEMMAS

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO

WHEN WE'RE STUCK TO OUR

DEVICES HOUR AFTER HOUR

WITH WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE POWER

OF GORILLA GLUE!

THEY'RE THE LATEST RAGE,

THE CHOCOLATE CAKE,

THE SIZZLING STEAK,  
THE BANANA SPLIT,  
THE BARBECUE PIT  
OF THE HIGH-TECH AGE!

ALICE  
(sings)

BUT DON'T YOU SEE YOU'RE EACH LOSING  
SOMETHING PRECIOUS BY CHOOSING  
TO SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS YOU DO  
ENTRANCED BY THESE THINGS INSTEAD  
OF SETTING ASIDE AMPLE TIME  
TO EXPLORE WHAT'S IN YOUR OWN HEAD?

MIKE, PAT, JOHN, & LISA

YES, DIGITAL DILEMMAS,  
WE'VE GOT DIGITAL DILEMMAS  
BUT WHAT CAN WE DO  
WHEN WE'RE STUCK TO OUR  
DEVICES HOUR AFTER HOUR  
WITH WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE POWER  
OF GORILLA GLUE!

THEY'RE THE LATEST CRAZE,  
THE PRINTING PRESS,  
THE LATEST DRESS,

THE HULA HOOP,  
THE NEWSPAPER SCOOP  
OF THESE TECH-CRAZY DAYS!

ALICE

I'M NOT SAYING YOU SHOULD BE CLOSING  
THEM DOWN FOR GOOD BUT PROPOSING  
THAT YOU MIGHT FIND IT QUITE COOL  
TO GO FROM YOUR PRESENT EXCESS  
TO ADOPTING THE GOLDEN RULE  
AND SIMPLY USING THEM LESS.

MIKE, PAT, JOHN, & LISA

OH, DIGITAL DILEMMAS,  
WE'VE GOT DIGITAL DILEMMAS  
BUT WHAT CAN WE DO  
WHEN WE'RE STUCK TO OUR  
DEVICES HOUR AFTER HOUR  
WITH WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE POWER  
OF GORILLA GLUE!

THEY'RE THE LATEST THING,  
THE WRIGHT BROTHERS PLANE,  
THE BULLET TRAIN,  
THE BLOCKBUSTER HIT,

THE HOLY WRIT,

THE BAUBLES WITH BLING!

MIKE, PAT, JOHN, & LISA  
(together with Alice and Charlie, as below)

DIGITAL DILEMMAS,

NO WONDER WE'VE GOT DIGITAL DILEMMAS,

DIGITAL DILEMMAS!

ALICE & CHARLIE  
(with the others, as above)

DIGITAL DILEMMAS,

NO WONDER THEY'VE GOT DIGITAL DILEMMAS,

DIGITAL DILEMMAS!

ALICE

Well, I'm delighted that you've all at least progressed to the epiphany that you have a dilemma. I'll take it as a sign of hope.

LISA

Don't get carried away, Grandma.

MIKE

Come on, kids. Just think. Until recently, this is how people lived all the time.

END OF ACT I

## PRELUDE TO ACT II

(sing)

THREE ETERNAL SPIRITS OF HIGH-TECH ARE WE,  
EVER-LIVING MODERN FATES,  
NAMED JOBS, WOZNIAK, AND GATES,  
WHO BY THE GRACE  
OF CYBERSPACE  
ARE WHEREVER YOU MAY BE.  
HE, HE, HE!

## CHORUS

HERE, THERE,  
AND EVERYWHERE  
YOU MAY BE!  
HE, HE, HE!

## TRIO

OUR DIGITAL DELIGHTS  
DEFINE THE WAYS  
YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS  
AND LOTS OF YOUR NIGHTS --  
COMMUNICATING, CALCULATING,  
DATING, MATING,  
WE'RE WHEREVER YOU MAY BE!  
HE, HE, HE!

CHORUS

HERE, THERE,

AND EVERYWHERE

YOU MAY BE!

TRIO & CHORUS

HE, HE, HE!

Lights fade down.

## ACT II

Lights come up on Sue, trying to sleep. She tosses and imagines seeing Ed. Fantasy. They walk toward each other.

SUE

(sings)

I SEE YOUR PHOTO ONLINE  
AND THE WORDS YOU USE TO DEFINE  
YOURSELF AND WONDER FROM AFAR,  
WONDER WHO YOU REALLY ARE  
AND IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE.  
BUT HOW DO YOU SEE THROUGH THE INTERNET?  
CAN YOU LOVE A ROSE THAT'S YET TO BLOOM?  
OR HEAR A LARK BEFORE IT HATCHES?  
OR ENJOY THE FRAGRANCE OF SEALED PERFUME?

ED

(sings)

I ASK YOU OUT TO DINE  
AND YOU SAY A GLASS OF WINE  
ON THE FIRST DATE IS ALL YOU DO,  
AND I WONDER IF IT MIGHT BE TRUE,  
YES, IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE.  
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW BEFORE YOU MEET?  
CAN YOU SING A SONG YOU NEVER KNEW,  
OR READ A BOOK WHILE IT'S STILL CLOSED,  
OR SEE A MEADOW BEYOND YOUR VIEW?

SUE

THOUGH OTHERS OFTEN SAY  
IT'S THE NEW WAY  
THAT PEOPLE DATE,  
AND FIND, AS THE SAYING GOES,  
THEIR TRUE SOULMATE,  
I WONDER, WISH I COULD FORESEE,  
IF SOMETHING SO GREAT  
COULD HAPPEN FOR ME,  
COULD IT HAPPEN FOR ME?

SUE & ED

WHEN WE SHARE A GLASS OF WINE  
I'LL LOOK FOR ANY SIGN,  
I'LL DO MY BEST TO SEE --  
HOW SURPRISING IT WOULD BE! --  
IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE.  
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT?  
CAN YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEHIND A STRANGER'S DOOR?  
OR SEE FROM THE GROUND WHAT'S ON TOP OF A CLOUD,  
OR GUESS WHAT'S UNDER THE OCEAN FLOOR?  
YES, HOW SURPRISING IT WOULD BE,  
IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE,  
IF YOU MIGHT BE MINE!

Lights fade down on them, walking off together.  
Come up on Mike, who is back at his computer,  
talking to it with earphones. Alice is staring out the  
window.

MIKE

OK, Sam, so the last sentence of the article reads:

(reads from screen)

Therefore, we conclude, as others before us have, that there is no universal moral standard. Everything that claims to be so is based merely on tradition or individual preference, and is, therefore, ultimately, relative.... Great! Article done! I'll submit it... Yep, don't worry. I'll be at the meeting tomorrow. Philosophy has not, as the board claims, made itself irrelevant. It remains the only way to discuss the great general questions intelligently.

(turns to Alice)

You'll love this one, Mom. The board of directors of the university is considering eliminating the philosophy department.

ALICE

Nothing is more dangerous than ignorance in high places. But I did hear the conclusion of your paper. I thought you had far more insight, Michael.

MIKE

What do you mean, Mother?

ALICE

(looks back out the window)

Look out the window. What a beautiful morning on the life-blessed earth! The difficulty you're having is that you want to establish a moral standard for life when you don't appreciate the value of life.

MIKE

Isn't "the value of life" a subjective decision?

ALICE

I'm not speaking of it as the "mere mortal clay" it was often seen as in the past, but as the evolutionary and cosmological wonder we've discovered life is. What a wondrous and rare achievement -- a natural miracle among us. Why, it makes walking on water seem like child's play! Once you understand life as, if you will, the revelations of science have demonstrated it is, you have all the answers you need. Take good care of life, and you'll do justice to its wonderful potential, as well as display a perfectly natural reverence to whatever its ultimate source may. So it will likely take good care of you, as if it need do more than having initiated the universe that has evolved and supports us here. And, of course, we must understand that life comes with a modicum of choice. You'd have more than a moral standard. You'd have a credible modern religion.

MIKE

That's pretty simplistic, Mom.

ALICE

You mean, in Shakespeare's words, "Simple truth, miscalled simplicity."

MIKE

Albert Schweitzer tried it. Remember "Reverence for Life"? Professional philosophy didn't buy in.

ALICE

I assume that's because he could only assert the concept. You have the rhetorical skill to argue it, especially since I've just provided the key element.

(looks out the window again and sings)

POOR LITTLE PLANET,  
 ROBED IN WHITE AND BLUE,  
 I SEE HOW YOU SUFFER,  
 BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

POOR LITTLE PLANET  
 WITH YOUR SUNLIT DOME,  
 WILL THERE EVER BE A TIME  
 WHEN PEOPLE CALL YOU HOME?

I WONDER IF HUMANS  
 WILL EVER APPRECIATE  
 HOW SPECIAL YOU ARE,  
 WITH YOUR OWN SPECIAL STAR,  
 AND STOP TREATING YOU  
 LIKE A FALL FROM GRACE

AND A STOPOVER ON  
 THE WAY TO A BETTER PLACE.  
 I DO KNOW IF I LIVED  
 ON THE MOON AND SAW  
 THE LOVELY EARTH  
 RISE EVERY DAY  
 I'D KNOW WHERE HEAVEN IS  
 AND WISH IT WAS  
 THE PLACE OF MY BIRTH.

POOR LITTLE PLANET,  
 WOULDN'T IT BE NICE  
 IF PEOPLE FINALLY KNEW  
 THEY LIVE IN PARADISE,  
 IF AMID ALL THE STRIFE  
 THEY FINALLY KNEW  
 THEY LIVE IN PARADISE --  
 A PARADISE OF LIFE?

MIKE

That's quite lovely, Mother. I'll think about what you said.

ALICE

I hope you will. I would like nothing better than for you to become the long-overdue philosopher I've been waiting for. I'm deeply ashamed of contemporary philosophy and art for their failure to address intelligently and sensitively how science has favorably impacted our lives, a pivotal event that should revolutionize our vision of life, not as an eternal curse, but as an improvable blessing. As a result, I believe what passes for philosophy and art today is likely to be hardly more than a footnote to history, nothing more than persistent and largely irrelevant dabbling around the corners of being.

John and Lisa enter.

MIKE

I like you thinking, Mother, and always have. As I said, I'll reconsider my own position. Meanwhile, let me address the immediate matter before us. It is now ten seconds after five ...

JOHN

Yea! Back in action.

LISA

Time to reconnect!

MIKE

That's right.

(turns on his computer)

We've done our part, Mom.

LISA

Let me show you how to text. You'll love it.

JOHN

I want to go first. It's game time!

ALICE

I see I have quite a few hours of mind-boggling torment ahead of me. Let the agony begin.

MIKE

Come on, kids. Let her learn something really basic first.

(gets out of chair; to Alice)

Come over here, Mom, and sit down at the computer. I'll show you how to email.

JOHN

Oh, all right, Dad. But I go next.

LISA

You mean I do.

ALICE

I suppose there's no escape.

(sighs and crosses to Mike; sits)

OK, what do I do?

Children take seats and observe. They try to contain their response to her tutorial.

MIKE

(leaning over; points)

Let's start with the fundamentals. This is, of course, the monitor.

ALICE

How is it different than a screen?

MIKE

That's totally immaterial, Mother. Call it whatever you want.

ALICE

Thank you.

MIKE

(holds up mouse)

Now, do you know what this is?

ALICE

Yes. But don't make me say the word. I know they have a right to live. But not in my hand.

MIKE

I can see this is going to be a piece of cake. The first thing you need is a user ID.

ALICE

A user ID? I don't like that phrase at all. I've never used anyone in my life. To me people are ends in themselves, not mere means. Why don't they just call it an email name?

MIKE

Apparently, the techies who named it aren't as sensitive to the social graces as you are.

ALICE

Thank you. I think one of the pervasive shortcomings of science is the creation of nomenclature that is generally oblivious to the greatness of what it's naming. My favorite example is calling the majestic birth of the universe "The Big Bang." How distressingly insensitive is that?

MIKE

I hadn't thought of it, Mother. But actually you're right. Now, may I suggest a screen name?

ALICE

Please, do.

MIKE

AAllwin101.

ALICE

Why 101?

MIKE

Because a lot of people have already opened a gmail account with the same name. Bright as you are, I wouldn't call you an early adapter.

ALICE

I said I'd learn how. But I will never adapt.

MIKE

OK. Anyway, I thought, since you're just beginning, 101 would be good. Best of all, it's available.

ALICE

Good. What's next?

MIKE

I'm going to create a gmail account for you.

ALICE

What's Gmail?

MIKE

It's the name of the email program from Google. It's a good one. In addition to my dot edu email account at the university, I have a gmail account, too. So it will be easy for us to email each other.

ALICE

We'll see about that.

MIKE

Next, you need a password. It protects your account from use by others. It has to be a combination of eight characters, including letters and numbers. So it's easy to remember, I suggest Alice202, which is only slightly different than your user name.

ALICE

Excellent. I'll take it.

MIKE

(taps keys)

Done! You now have an email address. Aallwin101@gmail.com. And, as expected, you already have mail.

ALICE

Somebody wrote to me already?

MIKE

It's just Google, welcoming you.

ALICE

That's so nice of them.

MIKE

Well, they didn't actually write to you, Mom. It's all automatic. It was sent to you by an autoresponder.

ALICE

So I don't have to worry about answering them?

MIKE

No, you don't. In fact, you can't. Now, let's say you want to write me an email. First, you click on compose?

ALICE

I thought we were writing an email, not a piece of music? Just kidding. I know one can compose a letter, too. Still, one wonders why it doesn't just say "write."

MIKE

It's just a convention, Mom. So click on it.

ALICE

Click what?

MIKE

Take the whatever-you-want-to-call-it in your hand.

(she takes the mouse)

Good. Now, move it around on the desk. See. That makes the cursor move.

ALICE

"Cursor?" I don't like that word, either. You mean the arrow or pointer. Both would be much more seemly.

MIKE

Be that as it may, please, move the arrow over the word “compose” and press the button on the left side of the unnameable object.

ALICE

All right. But what does the other button do?

MIKE

(points)

Nothing you need be concerned about, now. Great! See, you have a blank form you can fill out.

ALICE

Why am I writing a form letter? If I’m writing to my own son, I want it to be personal.

MIKE

The form is just a setup that makes it easy, a framework called a template.

(points)

See. You fill it in.

ALICE

I understand. They call it a template. May I consider it a page?

MIKE

Of course. Now, in this box, or space on the page, you’re going to enter my email address.

ALICE

Enter it? How?

MIKE

Click in it.

ALICE

Like this?

MIKE

Right! Now, type my gmail address in it. mallwin21 at gmail dot com.

ALICE

There are 20 more of you?

MIKE

I’m sure there are even more by now.

ALICE

Why didn't you just add your middle initial? Then you certainly wouldn't have had to settle for being number twenty.

MIKE

Because I don't use my middle name, except when I pay my taxes or apply for a passport.

ALICE

Why not? Alexander is a beautiful name. It belonged to my grandfather.

MIKE

I just like to be informal. That's why I generally call myself Mike, instead of Michael or Dr. Allwin. Now, please, type it in.

ALICE

OK. There's your name. I suppose the dot you're referring to is a period. But where is the "at."

MIKE

There. It's a symbol.

ALICE

Oh, thank you.

(types)

How's that?

MIKE

Excellent. Now, click here.

ALICE

Why?

MIKE

That's where you enter the subject of the email.

ALICE

You mean the topic I've chosen to write about?

MIKE

Yes. Think of a topic.

ALICE

What if I ask you how you're doing?

MIKE

Perfect. Why not enter “Just checking in.”

ALICE

I’d never say that. It’s not my style. How about, “Hi, Michael”?

MIKE

Excellent! Please, enter it.

(she types)

Outstanding! Now click here.

ALICE

Is that where my message goes?

MIKE

Yes. So type it in.

Pat enters with her iPad.

PAT

How’s she doing?

MIKE

Great! She’s ready to write her first email.

PAT

(to Alice)

Congratulations! When you’re done, I’ll show you how to use my iPad.

ALICE

Thank you. I can’t wait.

JOHN

Mom, we’re next.

LISA

You have to get in line.

PAT

Well, let’s see how grandma feels.

(continues to work with her iPad)

MIKE

Go ahead and type your message, Mom.

ALICE

I thought it was an email.

MIKE

The message refers to what you actually say in an email.

ALICE

Oh. Let me think. I have it.

(clicks and types, as she quotes herself)

“Just wondering how you are. Your dad and I are fine.” Is that enough to qualify as a message?

MIKE

Yes.

ALICE

Wait a minute. I have to add something.

(types a bit more)

I would never write without asking how Pat and the kids are, too.

(types a bit more)

There!

MIKE

Perfect. Now, it's time for the signature. Sometimes, I sign my emails and sometimes I don't.

ALICE

Why not always? It seems a little discourteous to send somebody a message without signing it.

MIKE

Because people know who it's from by your email address.

ALICE

Can they always see that?

MIKE

Yes, it's like a return address on an envelope.

ALICE

Oh. But, even though there's a return address on an envelope, it's still a very basic courtesy to sign every letter.

MIKE

OK, Mom. Go ahead and sign it.

(types)

There. I signed it. "Love, Mom." Am I done now?

MIKE

Almost. You just have to send it.

ALICE

I suppose I don't need a stamp? I don't even see a place to put one.

MIKE

No, it's free. That's one of the great things about email. You can send as many as you want, and it doesn't cost anything.

ALICE

I like that. No wonder the post office is in experiencing difficulties.

MIKE

They're making plenty of money delivering things people buy online. They just have to get better at it.

ALICE

What about all the nice people who work in the post office. They're thinking about closing the one near us.

MIKE

It's a new world, Mom. We all have to adjust.

PAT

(looks up)

It's called creative destruction.

ALICE

What two utterly incompatible words. A regrettable neologism, if I ever heard one.

MIKE

Agreed. Now, just move your arrow up here and click on "Send."

ALICE

All right.

(moves cursor; clicks)

Where did it go?

MIKE

It's on its way to me.

ALICE

How? Through the air?

MIKE

No, Mom. Through cyberspace, via wires, routers, servers, etc.

ALICE

I confess complete ignorance. Just tell me when it arrives.

MIKE

It probably already did.

ALICE

So fast?

MIKE

Let me check my mailbox.

ALICE

What mailbox?

MIKE

For my email address. Mind if we change places?

ALICE

Mind? I'm delighted.

She gets up and he sits down.

MIKE

Now, watch this. I'm going to sign out as you. Then I'm going to sign back in as myself.

(types)

And there you have it. See. That's your email right there in my mailbox.

ALICE

Already? So much for the postman and "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." I feel sorry for him.

MIKE

He can also still deliver bills and junk mail.

ALICE

And checks. I get my social security check every month like clockwork.

MIKE

Why don't you have it automatically deposited in your checking account?

ALICE

I don't trust that method. I like to hold the check in my hand and take it to the bank. Your father does, too.

MIKE

OK, but it's perfectly safe. I have my paycheck deposited automatically.

PAT

So do I.

ALICE

Well, when you get to be my age, we'll see how you feel. Unless the self-interested Republicans get control of the White House again. Then you won't have any social security to worry about. You can just fall in a ditch and die the way some old people used to. Many of today's Republicans would take the food off your plate, the ravenous wolves. And to think, once it was the party of Lincoln. He freed the slaves. Now they want to turn the middle class into slaves. The amazing thing is they're able to persuade an enormous number of unsuspecting simpletons to vote for their prejudices, even at the expense of their own self-interest. I have to admit it's quite an oratorical feat. I hardly recognize the country these days. So many people who think they're great Americans don't believe in the freedom of other people to disagree with them. I would vote for a Democrat, even if I thought he was a moron.

(sings)

WHERE IS THE LAND THAT I ONCE KNEW,  
 TRUE HOME OF THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE?  
 WHERE LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT  
 OF HAPPINESS WERE VALUES TO SALUTE,  
 AND THE FREEDOM TO CHART  
 YOUR OWN LIFE AND DO  
 WHAT YOU WANT TO  
 WAS WRITTEN IN EVERY HEART?

YES, WHERE IS THE COUNTRY I ONCE KNEW,  
TRUE HOME OF THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE,  
WHERE WE HELD IT SELF-EVIDENT  
THAT ALL OF US ARE MEANT  
TO ENJOY THE RIGHTS OF MAN,  
SO WE CAN BELIEVE  
WHAT WE WANT AND ACHIEVE  
ALL THE TREASURED DREAMS WE CAN.

(tempo increase)

SO, TELL ME, WHEN  
ALL THE GREAT LINGO  
THAT DEFINED A GRINGO  
WENT IN THE DUST BIN?  
SINCE WHEN HAS IT BEEN  
RED, WHITE, AND BLUE  
TO INSIST THAT WE ALL  
BELIEVE AS YOU DO?  
SINCE WHEN WAS FREEDOM  
THE RIGHT TO SET RULES  
SO THE IDEA OF FAIRNESS  
IS ONLY FOR FOOLS?  
SINCE WHEN HAS BICKERING,  
WITH FREQUENT SNICKERING

BECOME THE SOLE DEVOTION  
 OF THE LOYAL OPPOSITION,  
 WHOSE TRANSPARENT POSITION  
 IS TO BLOCK EVERY MOTION  
 THE PRESIDENT'S SIDE  
 HAS THE GALL TO PROVIDE?  
 WHY, IT'S SO PERVASIVE  
 IT'S A VERY PERSUASIVE  
 ARGUMENT THAT HALF  
 THE U. S. GOVERNMENT  
 DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN  
 ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS  
 TO BE AN AMERICAN.

(a tempo)

YES, WHERE IS THE COUNTRY I ONCE KNEW,  
 TRUE HOME OF THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE,  
 WHERE STATESMEN WOULD DISCUSS  
 ISSUES AS ONE,  
 WITH THE GOAL TO GET DONE  
 WHATEVER SEEMS BEST FOR US  
 AND THE COUNTRY I ONCE KNEW,  
 TRUE HOME OF THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE?

PAT

Maybe you should have your own talk show, Alice.

(to Mike)

She'd could be the devastatingly acerbic mouthpiece liberals have been looking for.

ALICE

No, thanks. I'll leave the contentious ephemera of the day to others.

MIKE

So tell me, Mom, can I expect to start getting emails from you?

ALICE

How would I write them?

MIKE

Just use Dad's computer. Call me when you're ready, and I'll walk you through how to email from home.

ALICE

Won't you miss the letter I send you every week?

MIKE

Well, I hadn't thought of that. I've been saving them since I went away to college.

ALICE

Why? To read them after I've put my last stitch in the eternal but bloody tapestry of human life?

MIKE

I'm just sentimental about them. Ask Pat.

PAT

We have boxes of them.

(to Alice)

Now, come sit beside me and I'll show you how to use my iPad.

LISA

Mom!

JOHN

We get to go first.

PAT

I only need a few minutes.

ALICE

I don't know if I can stand another lesson.

PAT

It's easy. Come on, you promised.

ALICE

All right.

Charlie enters.

CHARLIE

(to Alice)

Having fun?

ALICE

I just learned how to do email.

CHARLIE

Oh, good. Maybe someday you can teach me.

ALICE

I wouldn't count on it.

(to all)

Before you know it, all we'll be doing is sending emails to each other.

(to Charlie)

I'd miss the sound of your voice.

CHARLIE

Thank you, dear. I'd miss the sound of yours, too. But we could send an occasional email to other people.

Power goes out.

MIKE

What happened? My computer just went down.

(flips a light switch)

Dammit! The power went out again. I cannot abide Connecticut Light and Power.

ALICE

Ah, saved by the incompetence of the electric company! I never thought I'd be so delighted by a blackout. You don't want to waste your precious battery power on me, do you?

LISA

It's not fair.

JOHN

I can't believe it!

PAT

Why don't you call the power company and see what's going on?

MIKE

The phone lines are probably jammed. But I'll give it a shot.  
 (dials on cell phone; pushes buttons)  
 I can't stand responding to computers.

ALICE

Then maybe there's hope.

MIKE

112 East Green Street. Our power went out. Can you please explain what's going on? Oh. Sorry about that. How long? Can you do it any sooner? All right. Use the credit card that's on file. Yes. Thank you.

(hangs up)

PAT

What happened?

MIKE

I forgot to pay the electric bill.

LISA

Dad!

JOHN

How could you do that?

MIKE

I just have too many things on my mind.

ALICE

He's always been absent-minded. I realized when he was still in grade school that it's an indication that he has an unusually fervid imagination. Now it also means he's distracted by his digital manias.

PAT

How long before they turn it back on?

MIKE

Only 24 to 48 hours.

PAT

One or two days? I wonder if my battery power will last that long.

JOHN

I know mine won't.

LISA

Neither will mine.

ALICE

Dear me. And I thought my luck had run out. Just think. Maybe you'll get to spend more days without all your delightful distractions.

Lights go down and come up on table at restaurant.  
Sue and her date, Ed, are having a drink.

ED

I can't believe you're still single. You've got so much going for you.

SUE

Thank you. You're not half-bad yourself.

ED

I know you only wanted to have a drink. But we're getting along so well I thought I'd at least invite you to have dinner.

SUE

That's so nice. I just might take you up on it. Lovely to meet you.

ED

(takes her hand)

Lovely to meet you.

SUE

(looks at her hand in his; sings)

I FEEL THE WAVE RISING.

ED

FEEL THE WAVE RISING.

WAIT STAFF

THEY FEEL THE WAVE RISING!

SUE & ED

DON'T YOU FEEL THE WAVE RISING,  
RISING LIKE A TIDE  
ON A GORGEOUS SEA,  
RISING INSIDE  
OF YOU AND ME.

WAITSTAFF

IT'S A SURPRISING ATTRACTION,  
A CHEMICAL REACTION.

SUE

I FEEL MY SPIRIT RISING.

ED

FEEL MY SPIRIT RISING.

SUE & ED

DON'T YOU FEEL YOUR SPIRIT RISING,  
RISING UP WITH JOY,  
CAUGHT UP IN A SWIRL,  
RISING IN THIS BOY  
AND IN THIS GIRL.

WAITSTAFF

IT'S THE WAVE OF ATTRACTION,  
A CHEMICAL REACTION.

SUE & ED

HMM, HMM, WE'RE ON THE CREST

OF THE WAVE.

IT'S THE BEST

OF THE WAVE ,

MOVING ME TOWARD YOU,

DON'T YOU FEEL IT TOO?

WONDER, WILL IT TAKE US,

WILL IT TAKE US

TO THE ISLAND OF LOVE?

PALM TREES AND SUNSHINE,

BEACHES AND BLUE SKY,

WILL BE YOURS AND MINE.

WAITSTAFF

NO WAY YOU CAN FAKE IT.

NATURE HAS TO MAKE IT.

CAN YOU PUT UP A RAINBOW

OR SPREAD A BLUE SKY?

ASSEMBLE A SUN,

OR CREATE A BUTTERFLY?

NO, NO, YOU CAN ONLY GO,

GO TO ISLAND, THE ISLAND OF LOVE

WHEN YOU FEEL THE FLOW.

SUE & ED

I FEEL THE WAVE RISING,  
 DON'T YOU FEEL THE WAVE RISING,  
 MOVING US ALONG,  
 FEELING IT SO STRONG.

SUE, ED, & WAITSTAFF

OOH, WHAT A THRILL,  
 CAN'T GET IT FROM A PILL.  
 IT'S THE WAVE OF ATTRACTION,  
 THE CHEMICAL REACTION ...

SUE & ED

... I FEEL BETWEEN YOU AND ME.  
 I WONDER, COULD IT BE,  
 WILL IT TAKE US,  
 HOPING IT WILL TAKE US  
 TO THE ISLAND OF LOVE.  
 COULD IT BE,  
 TAKING YOU AND ME  
 TO THE ISLAND OF LOVE?

SUE, ED & WAITSTAFF

THE ISLAND OF LOVE!

They clink glasses, as lights go down. Come back up on living room, near the doorway. Mike, Pat, John, Lisa, Alice, and Charlie, who has the luggage near him.

PAT

It's good you're leaving now, before we're at the mercy of candlelight.

ALICE

I'm sorry to leave you without electricity. As I said, you're welcome to come to our place until the power is restored.

MIKE

We'll be fine, Mom. Just get home safely. I still can't believe I forgot to pay the electric bill.

ALICE

Love who you are, dear. It's the readiest way to peace of mind.

(to children)

Come, give grandma a hug.

They hug.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Be good while I'm away. And, whatever you do, don't treat your mother and father the way parents are usually treated in television shows. Remember genetics. They're the only parents you could've had in the whole history of the human race. And you wouldn't even be able to play video games or listen to music if you weren't born.

CHARLIE

Bye, kids. Have fun.

MIKE

Please, remember to wear your bracelets.

PAT

We'll be more relaxed knowing you'll be safe.

ALICE

We'll do our best. But I can't guarantee full-time compliance.

CHARLIE

The best we can do? That we can manage.

Lights go down and come back up. The electricity is back on. Mike and Sam at the computer.

SAM

Thanks for getting out the paper.

MIKE

No problem.

Pat enters.

PAT

Hi, Sam.

SAM

Hi, there.

PAT

Thank you so much for helping Sue get online. She already met someone.

SAM

Already?

PAT

Yes, and she seems to think he's quite a guy.

SAM

Really?

PAT

Yep. So, if you're ever going to decide she's interesting, you better move your butt.

SAM

I've got enough women to keep me busy.

PAT

But where is "the one," Sam? It could be Sue.

SAM

Tell her I said I'm very happy for her.

PAT

Maybe you should tell her.

SAM

I'll think about it. Thanks for letting me know.

(to Mike)

PAT

My pleasure.

(she exits, tapping on her iPad)

SAM

Let's make a plan for the board meeting.

MIKE

I already did. If things fall through, my students are raring to go.

SAM

I don't know how well that will go over.

MIKE

At that point, what would we have to lose?

Lights go down. Come up on Sam at Ziggy's. He's working on his computer, but doesn't seem too happy. Cell phone rings. He answers it.

SAM

Sam here.

Lights come up and reveal Sue on cell phone.

SUE

Hi, Sam. Sue.

SAM

Oh, hi. I was just thinking about you.

SUE

You were?

SAM

Yes. Your sister tells me you already met a great guy.

SUE

I did! That's why I'm calling. I want to thank you so much for helping me go online. He's truly wonderful.

SAM

(a bit upset)

Great. I'm really happy for you.

SUE

Thanks. Now, all we have to do is find a great gal for you.

SAM

Oh, don't worry. I know she's out there somewhere.

SUE

So do I. So just keep looking.

SAM

Right.

SUE

Bye now.

SAM

Bye.

(folds up his computer and walks away,  
seeming upset; stops, sings)

WAIT A MINUTE.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

LET ME SEE.

I HELP HER MEET A GUY

AND SUDDENLY I

AM NOT AS DELIGHTED

AS I MIGHT BE?

DON'T TELL ME I ACTUALLY LIKE HER!

EVEN WORSE, COULD I POSSIBLY LOVE HER?

WHAT I DO KNOW IS

FROM THE MOMENT I GOT HER CALL

I HAVEN'T BEEN HAPPY AT ALL.

NO, NO, NOT HAPPY AT ALL!

CAN SUCH A THING BE RIGHT

AND COULD I HAVE BEEN SO WRONG

WHEN I'M SUPPOSED TO BE

A MAN OF UNCANNY INSIGHT?

NO, NO, WHAT AM I THINKING OF?

I CAN'T POSSIBLY BE IN LOVE?

(spoken)

Can I?

COULD I HAVE MISSED SUCH A THING ?

WHEN I HAD THE BIRD IN MY HAND,

WAS I RIGHT TO OPEN IT UP

AND ENCOURAGE HER TO TAKE WING?

OH, MY, WHAT AM I THINKING OF

I CAN'T POSSIBLY BE IN LOVE.

(spoken)

Or could I?

COULD I BE IN LOVE,

WITH SOMEONE I KNEW

MUCH OF MY LIFE?

COULD IT BE TRUE

THAT SUCH A THING

HAS COME DOWN THE PIKE

WHEN I DIDN'T EVEN THINK

I WAS IN "LIKE"?

(spoken)

Oh, my. It's exceedingly difficult to consider yourself brilliant when you're capable of such an egregious error in judgment. Have I really been so doggone dumb?

THE PROVERBIAL GIRL NEXT DOOR --

COULD SHE BE THE WOMAN I LOVE?  
 WAS I SAILING WAY OUT ON THE SEA  
 WHEN THE TREASURE WAS RIGHT ON THE SHORE?  
 OH, MY, WHAT AM I THINKING OF  
 I CAN'T POSSIBLY BE IN LOVE.  
 BUT THEN WHY HAVEN'T I BEEN  
 HAPPY AT ALL  
 FROM THE MOMENT I GOT HER CALL?  
 IT'S A NAGGING FACT  
 THAT MAKES ME SUSPECT  
 I MAY, I JUST MAY BE IN LOVE AFTER ALL.  
 YES, I MAY BE IN LOVE AFTER ALL!

(spoken)

The irritating questions is, what can I do about it?

Lights fade down. Come up on living room. Pat is reading a magazine. Mike enters from front door.

PAT

How did you do at the meeting?

MIKE

It's hard to say. We did what we could to defend the department. But there's regrettable news on many fronts. Imagine this. The American Philosophical Association may even close. And it's been around for over 100 years.

PAT

That's not good. Why?

MIKE

According to a recent report, and I quote, it "no longer serves a useful purpose, and is in an untenable position financially." So who knows what will go down anywhere?

PAT

Maybe you should set aside all the academic jargon and start to discuss issues in plain English, so more people would appreciate what you do. I mean, it is a bit illogical to claim how important what you do is to the wide world when you carry on your discussions in language only specialists can understand. Isn't it a far greater challenge to say something complex in an invitingly simple way, rather than something relatively simple in a needlessly complex way?

MIKE

That's easy for you to say. You're in television. I'm in academia. I can hear the peals of laughter already. Mike Allwin sold out! No, thanks!

PAT

Nobody ever got anywhere by playing it safe.

MIKE

You can't be referring to the life I've grown accustomed to.

PAT

What does Sam think?

MIKE

Well, as we all are, he's greatly concerned. But for some reason he was being especially moody. I'm sure he'll find one of his lady friends to comfort him. That's his way.

Lights fade down and come up on bed. Sue and Ed are sitting up in it.

ED

You're a delight to make love with, Sue. Hot, hot, hot!

SUE

Thank you. So are you. I haven't made love since before my divorce. I can't believe how long it's been. I also can't believe I said yes on the second date.

ED

I'm glad you did. I'm crazy about you.

SUE

I'm kind of crazy about you, too. You're so nice -- and handsome, too.

ED

You're a sweetheart -- and very beautiful.

SUE

“A sweetheart?” I like that. I haven’t been called that in ages.

(kisses him)

I think I could love you.

ED

You do?

SUE

Yes. A lot.

ED

I just might fall in love with you, too. How about another kiss?

SUE

I never thought you’d ask.

Her cell phone rings.

ED

Is that yours or mine?

SUE

I think it’s mine. Let me just see who it is. Excuse me.

(looks at phone; answers)

Hello.

Lights come up on Sam, with cell phone.

SAM

Hi, Sue.

SUE

What’s up?

SAM

I thought maybe we could have a bite sometime.

SUE

Can I call you tomorrow. I kind of busy right now.

SAM

OK. I’ll look forward it.

SUE

Thanks. Bye.

(hangs up; to Ed)

Just a friend. You owe him big time.

ED

I do. Why?

SUE

I wouldn't have gone on Match if it wasn't for him. He helped me put up my profile. Don't worry. He's just a good friend.

ED

I'll have to remember to thank him. Now, how about that kiss?

SUE

Yes, how about it?

They kiss again Lights go down. Come up on another bedroom. Alice and Charlie are in their bed, reading.

CHARLIE

Maybe we should wear the bracelets, Alice.

ALICE

They're really not my cup of tea. You can wear yours if you wish.

CHARLIE

How can you say that? What would I do without you?

ALICE

You'd be lost. After all, I'm irreplaceable, just as you are, Charles.

CHARLIE

Thank you, dear.

(holds out bracelet)

I think we should reconsider. They don't look so bad, especially when the lights are out.

ALICE

You're the only person in the whole world I could never say no, too.

CHARLIE

(puts it on her)

Thank you, sweetheart.

ALICE

Here, put yours on, too.

(she helps him)

Now, do me a favor and turn out the light, so we don't have to look at them.

CHARLIE

Yes, dear.

(gives her a kiss)

Maybe it is good to adapt a little to these kinds of gizmos. I love you, Alice.

ALICE

I love you, too, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Good night.

ALICE

Good night, Charlie.

(she turns out the light)

Lights come up on a table at a restaurant. Sam and Sue are seated there, with food and wine.

SUE

I can't believe you actually invited me for dinner. I thought it was against your principles, I mean, on first date.

SAM

It's not exactly our first date.

SUE

It isn't?

SAM

Oh, come one. We've know each other for years.

SUE

Yes, we have. It's kind of sad. If we met on the Internet, we might have been lovers.

SAM

Don't rub it in.

SUE

What do you mean?

SAM

I don't know what to make of it myself. I had a certain way of thinking till Pat told me you found somebody you kind of like. I didn't quite react the way I thought I would. And then you called and told me. And suddenly, inexplicably, I was unsettled. No, downright upset.

SUE

I thought you'd be happy.

SAM

One would imagine. Then I realized what's going on. I'm upset because I'm losing you to another guy.

SUE

That would matter?

SAM

Well, I didn't think it would. Look, I'm as surprised as you are. To make a long story short, I think we should date.

(sings)

WE COULD BE AN ITEM.

A PERFECT MATCH,

THE MUTUAL CATCH ...

SAM & WAITSTAFF

... OTHER PEOPLE LOVE TO SEE

AND HOPE ONE DAY TO BE,

THE VISION OF LOVE

THAT SINGLES DREAM OF.

SAM

WE COULD BE AN ITEM

A DUO WHO KNOW

THAT SOMEHOW THEY GO ...

## SAM &amp; WAITSTAFF

... TOGETHER LIKE NIGHT  
WITH LOVE AND MOONLIGHT,  
A PAIR AS ONE  
AS THE EARTH AND SUN.

## SAM

I ADMIT I WAS WRONG  
TO TAKE SO LONG  
TO SEE WHAT'S SO OBVIOUS TO ME NOW.  
CAN'T YOU FORGIVE ME AND ALLOW  
US TO MOVE ON FROM HERE AND SEE  
WHAT LOVELY LOVERS WE CAN BE?

WE COULD BE AN ITEM,  
SO LET'S NOT WAIT.  
LET'S BEGIN TO DATE.  
AND CREATE THE PLACE ...

## SAM &amp; WAITSTAFF

... THE MAGICAL SPACE,  
BEYOND COMPARE  
ONLY LOVERS CAN SHARE.

## SAM

YES, LET'S BE AN ITEM  
AND CREATE THE PLACE ...

## SAM &amp; WAITSTAFF

... THE MAGICAL SPACE,  
 BEYOND COMPARE  
 ONLY LOVERS CAN SHARE!  
 THE MAGICAL SPACE  
 ONLY LOVERS CAN SHARE!

SUE

That's so sweet, Sam. I adore you. But I actually think I may love Ed.

SAM

How can you love him? You just met the guy?

SUE

What can I say? When love's a rocket, it takes off. I'd love to date you. But I have to see where this goes. Do you understand?

SAM

Of course, I understand. That doesn't mean I like it. Maybe you should date us both. Just to have a little comparison.

SUE

Maybe you could do that. But I never could. I'm a one-man woman. I know it's old-fashioned. But I don't know how you can have something deep and authentic when you don't behave that way. It's as if there's an inverse proportion. You can have a deep relationship or a series of shallow ones. When you mix another relationship with a deep one, it's bound to take away from it.

SAM

But I already lent you to the guy you married for three years.

SUE

You mean you cared for me before I got married?

SAM

I mean, there are things I didn't realize at the time.

SUE

That's very sweet, Sam. Then you can wait a little longer, can't you?

SAM

Ah, self-inflicted pain. Life knows nothing worse.

Lights fade down. Come up in bedroom. Pat and Mike are sitting up.

MIKE

(holds cell phone up)

See this, Pat? I'm going to do something unprecedented with it.

PAT

(on her iPad)

What, dear?

MIKE

I'm going to plug it in to charge and put it on my night table.

PAT

You do that every night.

MIKE

Ah, ha, but tonight is different, because I don't plan to touch it again until I'm ready to get out of bed in the morning.

PAT

Really?

MIKE

Yeah. The one thing I learned from my mother is that I need to reclaim my intellectual privacy. Just think! With that one simple rule, I can have 8 hours a day -- one-third of my existence -- away from all the high-tech cacophony.

PAT

But you'll be asleep.

MIKE

No, no. I mean from the moment I get in bed until the time I actually get out of bed. You know what happens when I check it before I go to sleep? All I think about is what I just read. Same thing happens when I look at it in the middle of the night. My mind is like an empty space, waiting for a thought to happen, and whatever I read fills it up and reverberates in it. Same thing when I check it first thing in the morning. And you know I like to think in the morning. It was something I learned from Rene' Descartes. Every morning when he woke up, he would lie in bed without moving for one hour, thinking. I used to do that. Before your body starts to move, you can be almost like pure mind. I want to do that again, too -- just lie in the comforting pool of my own imagination and see where it takes me.

And guess what else I'll have time for again?

(takes up book off night table)

Reading good old-fashioned, hefty books at bedtime. I miss them. Now, I'm going to have them back in my life, at least, until I chance to sleep.

PAT

I'm glad for you, Mike. You need your intellectual space. But me? I still have a few things to do to prepare for tomorrow morning's show.

MIKE

I love that you have a great career, and I'm very proud of you. I look at it this way. Nature delights in diversity. Behold the colorful fish on a reef.

(starts to read)

Ah, back in the analog world I love. Thank you, Mom!

Lights fade down. Come up on Sue and Ed, walking  
along a street together.

ED

You're so beautiful and sweet. I really could love you. That's why I have to tell you something.

SUE

What, dear?

ED

The truth.

SUE

What do you mean?

ED

I mean, I wouldn't tell you unless I really cared.

SUE

What are you saying?

ED

I'm not divorced.

SUE

What do you mean, Ed? Are you only separated?

ED

No. I have an open marriage.

SUE

You're still married?

ED

Obviously, I'm not that happy. So if we could continue to date, maybe at some point --

SUE

-- I can't believe this. You mean you lied?

ED

I didn't think I'd care about you then.

SUE

How many women have you done this to?

ED

The point is, you're different. I really would like to continue seeing you.

SUE

I'm afraid that impossible! I'm not good at being dragged over broken glass and then left there to bleed. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll say goodbye.

(heads away)

ED

But wait, Sue!

SUE

(waves, in tears)

Taxi!

She exits, as lights fade down and then come up on  
Mike and Sam near the computer.

SAM

I don't understand. We just did a paper on moral standards. It hasn't even been published. Why would we do another one?

MIKE

I have a new thought, which is actually based on a viewpoint I got from my mother.

SAM

She's a wonderfully bright lady. What is it?

MIKE

A way to put everything together in a new way -- biochemistry, cosmology, you name it. A new grand synthesis based on a truth that's been apparent since, let's say, the antibiotic revolution, when life became more secure and we knew beyond a doubt that it's improvable.

SAM

What does that have to do with a moral standard?

MIKE

We can infer a moral standard based on the value of human life and, in fact, all other life as we've come to understand it. Simplistically, as Albert Schweitzer said a long time ago, "What is good for life is good, and what is bad for life is bad." But now we have the knowledge to argue the position cogently.

SAM

I'm waiting.

MIKE

Biologically, we point to the complexity of the processes it takes to evolve and sustain life. They're really still beyond much of our understanding.

SAM

Ah, the appeal to wonder.

MIKE

The complexity is demonstrable. But I'm just getting started. Then we combine that with cosmology. That we now know the universe is over 13 billion years old and its highest achievement seems to be evolving and sustaining animate life, especially highly intelligent animate life. We also point out that we also know how rare animate life is, at least in the solar system. For all we know, the entire universe is teeming with it. Out of all of our new knowledge, we establish life, as the universe apparently has, as our highest value. Our *summum bonum*. So, for instance, we can easily construct a syllogism along the lines of: We revere what we value. We value life. Therefore, we revere life. Since it's our highest value, it can be our moral standard.

SAM

What about the traditional objection to the popular concept of Epicureanism? The good life as the life of a wastrel? People want more, in fact, many would be happiest with greatness.

MIKE

I talking about the intelligent appreciation of life, which would exclude such insensitive nonsense. The goal of the good life would be the well-balanced intellectual, physical, and spiritual fulfillment of one's unique potential, with consideration for the unique potential of others, and, in fact, for the unique potential of all life.

SAM

Sounds a bit interesting, if ambitious. What happens to sacrificing your life for somebody else?

MIKE

If you do it to save another life, then it's morally good, brave, and correct.

SAM

OK.

MIKE

But there's more, Sam. It's as if a new door opened for me, and I've walked into a new room, where I keep seeing new ways of thinking. Mind if I go on?

SAM

No, babe. You're on a roll.

MIKE

So what if the ancient Greeks were right about Pantheism? But, instead of saying the universe is an animal, we approach the concept from modern science. We see that even meteorites and asteroids contain water and complex proteins. They had to come from somewhere? Ancient planets that have already fragmented? Who knows, yet? But we know we're alive. We might infer a community of planets with life on them? What if what science has called matter and energy is really the life and substance of the universe. I know it's farfetched but think about it. We're alive. If a part is alive, then the whole that evolves and supports it must be alive. So we infer that we're all part of the life and substance of what you might call -- ready for this piece newly minted piece of nomenclature? -- the grand molecular structure of our natural Supreme Being.

SAM

Far out, buddy. You weren't planning on putting that in the same paper, were you?

MIKE

No, it would be way too much.

SAM

Maybe you can shoehorn it in as a piece about the philosophy of religion. Or put it in your drawer.

MIKE

Ah, academic propriety!

SAM

No. Courage within the bounds of pure tenure.

MIKE

You're going to be extraordinarily successful.

SAM

I hope so. But, Mike, people will never be satisfied with Pantheism. They want a father figure, perched on a proximate cloud.

MIKE

Well, we fly above those all the time now and we know what's there. Air. But I'm with William James on that. It take as much knowledge to say there is a Creator beyond our experience as it takes to say there isn't. So how about this. We leave the question open. And we don't to have to answer it. We create a concept known as Open Pantheism. We're willing to say that, if the universe is logical, and we can describe its behavior with mathematical precision, then we can know enough, within our experience, to guide our lives. So maybe the big question of religion is not, is there a God or isn't there, but do we have life and don't we -- and what should we do with it? To paraphrase Schweitzer, we could have, not only Reverence for Life, but Reverence through Life to whatever its ultimate source may be. Can you punch any holes in what I'm saying? Is any of it illogical?

SAM

Tell you what, Mike, if you want to write a draft, go ahead. But for now I'd limit it to a new look at moral standards. If you do, I'll see what I can contribute. No reason we can't present a rethinking of our previous position.

MIKE

Great. But here's a warning flag. I plan to write the paper as simple and straightforwardly as I can, because I think it can appeal to a lot of people. So it could be too important to obfuscate with professional lingo. Still game?

SAM

Let me see the draft, Mike.

MIKE

You've got it.

Pat enters.

PAT

I just heard something terrible.

MIKE

What?

PAT

You know the guy Sue met online that she was crazy about?

SAM

What about him?

PAT

He just told her that he's married.

MIKE

Damn! Tough break.

SAM

Are you kidding? That's the best news I've had all day. Thank you, Pat!

PAT

I don't get it.

SAM

I decided I'm crazy about her.

PAT

You are?

SAM

No doubt about it, especially now that she's online. I have come to the startling realization that she's "the one" I've been looking for.

PAT

Really? Oh, Sam, I love it!

(hugs him)

SAM

Thanks, Pat. I can't believe it took me so long to see what's been right in front of me. It incriminates my estimation of myself as one of the most insightful people on the planet. But then who said the obvious can't be illusive?

(picks up cell phone; taps numbers)

Oh, hi, Sue.

Lights come up on Sue on her cell phone.

SUE

Hello, Sam.

SAM

How would you like me to take you out of your misery?

SUE

You heard?

SAM

Pat just told me. Remember what I said, the way to make peace with the past is to appreciate the present. So how about dinner?

SUE

Already? I just broke up.

SAM

It'll do you good. Come on. I'll head over now and pick you up.

SUE

OK. But I warn you. I don't look great. I've been crying.

SAM

You would be. That's one of the things I like about you. Heart. You're not only beautiful and intelligent; you've got a soul as big as a mountain. See you in twenty minutes, OK?

SUE

OK.

They hang up.

MIKE

I thought you didn't date women you already know.

SAM

You changed your mind about moral standards. I can't change mine about dating?

PAT

It's wonderful, Sam. Go to her. She needs a friend right now.

SAM

I have much bigger hopes than that. See you both later.

(heads for door; to Mike)

Maybe life is good after all. So write that paper!

(as he exits)

May I never experience existential loneliness again!

Exits. Lights go down. Come up on Sue and Sam, sitting on a park bench in the evening.

SAM

I think we both still have the capacity to love, I mean, love deeply. I found that a lot of people who have a certain amount of experience say they love you. But they're willing to say goodbye when the slightest thing displeases them.

SUSAN

Really?

SAM

Yeah. I decided the human capacity for love is kind of like a NiCad battery. The first time it takes a charge is really deep. After that, it can only take so much of a charge. And the charges keep getting shallower, until it can hardly take any charge at all.

SUSAN

Well, you've been dating longer than I have. I didn't think you were interested in a relationship either.

SAM

Ask Mike. All I've ever been looking for is a woman who has three things: beauty, brains, and heart. And you've got all three. Sounds simple, but try to find it. And imagine! I wouldn't have found it if you hadn't gone online.

SUE

I'm glad I did.

SAM

Just think how happy we can be and even your divorce is good news. Where would we be without it?

SUE

I adore you, Sam.

SAM

As it turns out, I adore you, too. And guess what?  
(sings)

AFTER A GREAT DEAL OF THOUGHT,

I REALIZE IT DOESN'T MATTER

WHETHER YOU MEET EACH OTHER

ON THE INTERNET OR NOT.

YOU CAN MEET ONLINE  
OR WHERE YOU DINE,  
OVER SOME WINE,  
OR UNDER A PINE,  
SAILING DOWN THE RHINE  
OR SWINGING FROM A VINE.

SAM & WAITSTAFF

IT COULD BE ONE OF THE ABOVE  
OR NONE OF THE ABOVE,  
THE FORMER OR THE LATTER.  
BUT IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER:  
IT'S STILL LOVE,  
YES, IT'S STILL LOVE.

SUE  
(sings)

IT CAN BE THROUGH A TWEET  
OR RIGHT ON THE STREET,  
IN A THEATER SEAT  
OR A FIELD OF WHEAT,  
AT A "SINGLES MEET"  
OR A BUDDHIST RETREAT.

SUE, SAM & WAITSTAFF

IT COULD BE ONE OF THE ABOVE  
OR NONE OF THE ABOVE,

IT'S THE SAME BREATHY CHATTER,  
 SO IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER:

SAM & SUE

IT'S STILL LOVE,  
 YES, IT'S STILL LOVE.

WAITSTAFF

THE SAME OLD LOVE,  
 THE "CAN'T BE BOUGHT OR SOLD" LOVE,  
 THE SAME NEW LOVE,  
 THE "CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S TRUE" LOVE ...

SUE & SAM

... THE SAME SUDDEN SPARK,  
 AND LIFE'S A LARK,  
 THE SAME SWEET TALK,  
 THE HAND-IN-HAND WALK,  
 THE SAME "I LOVE YOU"  
 AND "I LOVE YOU, TOO."

WAITSTAFF

IT'S THE HUMAN SPIRIT,  
 AWAKENING TO JOY,  
 OVERCOMING THE FEAR IT  
 WILL NEVER BE "GIRL MEETS BOY."  
 AND BOY MEETS GIRL,  
 YOUR INSIDES IN A SWIRL,

AVERAGE, POOR, OR RICH,  
AND HERE'S THE HAPPY HITCH:

SAM

YOU CAN MEET ON A TRAIN  
OR IN A PLANE,  
A PLACE THAT'S URBANE  
OR A COUNTRY LANE,  
OVER BEER OR CHAMPAGNE  
FROM SPAIN TO MAINE.  
AND WHAT'S MORE ...

SAM & SUE

ON A DANCE FLOOR,  
IN BROAD DAYLIGHT  
OR THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT,  
IN A BUS OR A CAR,  
A HIP CLUB OR A BAR,  
ON A DATE A FRIEND  
MAY RECOMMEND,  
VERY LATE ONE NIGHT  
OR IN BROAD DAYLIGHT  
AT A HORSE OR DOG RACE  
OR EVEN IN OUTER SPACE.

## SUE, SAM &amp; WAITSTAFF

IT COULD BE ONE OF THE ABOVE

OR NONE OF THE ABOVE.

YOUR HEART'S ON A PLATTER,

SO IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER:

IT'S STILL LOVE,

YES, IT'S STILL LOVE!

IT'S STILL LOVE!

Lights go down and come up on Alice in the bedroom.  
She's in her robe. Grabs her chest. Collapses.

ALICE

(calls)

Charlie! Charlie! I think I'm having a heart attack.

She crawls to the night table. Reaches up and grabs her  
bracelet. Pushes button. Collapses back onto the floor.  
Gasping. Charlie enters.

CHARLIE

Alice, what's wrong. Your bracelet went off.

ALICE

I don't know. Suddenly, I'm short of breath.

CHARLIE

Maybe you're having a heart attack.

ALICE

I think maybe I am. I thought nature loved me more than this. But I don't expect favoritism.

CHARLIE

I'll call the emergency service.

ALICE

(holds up bracelet)

It already did.

CHARLIE

Oh, Alice, it's a good thing you're wearing that bracelet.

ALICE

I wasn't wearing it. It was on the night table. I had to crawl across the floor to get to it.

CHARLIE

(grabs chest; doubles over)

Ah!

ALICE

What's wrong?

CHARLIE

Pain, in my chest?

ALICE

Not you, too?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

(crumples down beside her; gasps)

ALICE

You can't have a heart attack, too. One is already too many.

CHARLIE

Maybe it's just angina from the tension. I couldn't stand losing you.

ALICE

(gasps)

I'm not dead yet.

CHARLIE

(points to bracelet)

Maybe I should push the button on mine, too.

Siren.

ALICE

I'm sure one ambulance will do.

CHARLIE

That must be it. I'll get the door if I can make it.

(staggers to his feet)

I know it's hard to admit, Alice. But the bracelet may have saved your life. Not to mention mine.

ALICE

I'll admit it, providing I live.

CHARLIE

I'll be back. I hope.

Lights fade down, as he staggers off. Beat. Lights come up on Alice, now in bed. Charlie, Mike, Pat, John, and Lisa are at her beside. Charlie is holding her hand.

CHARLIE

How are you feeling, sweetheart?

ALICE

What can I say? Apparently, I'm alive.

MIKE

You have to admit it, Mom. The bracelet saved the day.

ALICE

I suppose it did.

CHARLIE

Alice, it saved your life. I always want you to wear it

(holds his up)

See. I'm wearing mine full-time now. And all I had was a pain in the chest. Please, tell me you'll always wear it. You want me to stay lucky, don't you?

(sings)

I'M SUCH A LUCKY GUY,

A LUCKY GUY AM I,

TO HAVE A WOMAN LIKE YOU

SO BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL,

WITH A HEART AS BIG

AS A MOUNTAIN, TOO.

I'M SUCH A LUCKY GUY,  
A LUCKY GUY AM I,  
TO NEED YOU EVEN MORE  
THAN I DID THE FIRST DAY  
I KNEW YOU'RE ALL  
I COULD ASK FOR.

BUT, YOU SEE,  
I USED UP HALF MY LUCK  
THE DAY I MET YOU  
AND THE OTHER HALF  
THE DAY YOU MARRIED ME.  
SO I'D BE OUT OF LUCK  
WITHOUT YOU HERE.  
AND ALL ALONE, MY DEAR.

I'M SUCH A LUCK GUY,  
A LUCKY GUY AM I  
TO HAVE YOU ALL THESE YEARS,  
SUCH A LUCKY GUY,  
AND I WANT TO BE THAT WAY  
UNTIL MY DYING DAY,  
I WANT TO BE  
THE LUCKY GUY YOU MADE ME.

ALICE

(reconsiders)

Oh, Charlie, that was lovely. All right! I'll wear it!

MIKE

Great, Mom!

(to Pat)

She'll wear it!

PAT

Well, what do you know?

MIKE

(sings)

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

DESPITE HER GREAT MISGIVINGS

ABOUT ALL THINGS DIGITAL

AND HER FEAR THAT

THEY'LL TAKEOVER

AND MAKE OVER

OUR LIVES, SHE'LL WEAR IT.

YES, SHE'LL GRIN AND BEAR IT

AND SHE'LL WEAR IT.

OTHERS

SHE'LL WEAR IT! YES, SHE'LL WEAR IT!

DESPITE HER GREAT MISGIVINGS

ABOUT ALL THINGS DIGITAL

AND HER FEAR THAT

THEY'LL TAKEOVER

AND MAKE OVER

OUR LIVES, SHE'LL WEAR IT.

YES, SHE'LL GRIN AND BEAR IT.

AND SHE'LL WEAR IT.

SHE'LL WEAR IT!

SHE'LL WEAR IT!

ALICE

YES, I'LL WEAR IT!

Lights come up on cyberspace trio.

TRIO

(sing)

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

DESPITE HER FEAR THAT

WE'LL TAKE OVER

AND MAKEOVER

THEIR LIVES, SHE'LL WEAR IT!

TRIO & CHORUS

SHE'LL GRIN AND BEAR IT

AND SHE'LL WEAR IT!

TRIO

AH, TRIUMPH AT LAST

OVER THE PAST!

THE ANALOG PAST,

TRIUMPH AT LAST!

ALICE

(spoken)

Of course, I'll wear it. It may well have saved my life. But I assure you, every dilemma you face is a mere ephemera. What matters is that you're all happily alive on this gorgeous, life-graced planet...

(takes Charlie's hand)

... and, of course, love.

REPRISE

CAST

YOU CAN MEET ONLINE

OR WHERE YOU DINE,

OVER SOME WINE,

OR UNDER A PINE,

SAILING DOWN THE RHINE

OR SWINGING FROM A VINE.

IT COULD BE ONE OF THE ABOVE

OR NONE OF THE ABOVE,

THE FORMER OR THE LATTER.

BUT IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER:

IT'S STILL LOVE,

YES, IT'S STILL LOVE.

THE SAME OLD LOVE,

THE "CAN'T BE BOUGHT OR SOLD" LOVE,

THE SAME NEW LOVE,

THE "CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S TRUE" LOVE,

THE SAME SUDDEN SPARK,  
AND LIFE'S A LARK,  
THE SAME SWEET TALK,  
THE HAND-IN-HAND WALK,  
THE SAME "I LOVE YOU"  
AND "I LOVE YOU, TOO."  
IT'S THE HUMAN SPIRIT,  
AWAKENING TO JOY,  
OVERCOMING THE FEAR IT  
WILL NEVER BE "GIRL MEETS BOY."  
AND BOY MEETS GIRL,  
YOUR INSIDES IN A SWIRL,  
AVERAGE, POOR, OR RICH,  
AND HERE'S THE HAPPY HITCH:  
IT'S STILL LOVE,  
YES, IT'S STILL LOVE!  
IT'S STILL LOVE!

END OF ACT II

CURTAIN