

Well and Weller

a farce

by
C.P. Stancich

Great Stage Publishing

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by C.P. Stancich

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Characters:

- ALICE: Late 50s, earnest but nervous, taking the first tentative steps out from under a sheltered life.
- PAT: 30-50, either gender. A nice person.
- SARAH: Mid-40s, an over-burdened mother/wife/sister-in-law.
- MARY JUNE: Early 20-ish, soon-to-be pre-occupied.
- STEVE: 18-ish. Awkwardly outgoing.
- KENT: A youngish wheeler-dealer.
- VIOLET: 60s, an ill-suited matriarch and dictatorial martyr.

The Set:

Whatever becomes a modern suburban living room. Minimally: a sofa roughly center; a front-door exit, left; and rest-of-the-house exits, right and up-right. Chairs, tables as needed; a mirror on the wall by the left exit

Act I, Scene 1

SCENE: The living room of the Weller Family.

TIME: The present, morning, a Saturday.

AT CURTAIN: *Lights up on MARY JUNE semi-recumbent on the sofa, wearily holding a cordless phone to her ear.*

MARY JUNE

(On phone.)

Yes...*(Sighs and pauses)* Yes grandmother. *(Pause.)* Not a clue. *(Pause.)* Asia, I think. I wasn't paying attention when... *(Pause.)* I know he's my father, but he goes everywhere, and...*(Cut off, she covers the mouthpiece. Aside:)* Don't say what you really think, Mary June, it's more trouble than it's worth!

(Enter STEVE up stage right, sleepy and half dressed. He pauses and blinks, regarding MARY JUNE.)

MARY JUNE

(On phone.)

Well I've got my own troubles to worry about. *(Pause.)* Such as breaking up with my boyfriend *(Recoils at her indiscretion, covers the mouthpiece, wincing. Aside:)* I didn't just say that, did I?

STEVE

I didn't hear anything.

(MARY JUNE turns to STEVE, then, inspired, turns back to the phone).

MARY JUNE

Hang on, grandmother, got another call coming in.

(She puts the call on hold and springs to her feet. She will move around the sofa, offering the phone to STEVE.)

MARY JUNE

It's your grandmother.

STEVE

Which one?

MARY JUNE

Maternal...the evil one. *(Stops to roll her eyes.)* What do you mean which one? The other one's dead. Remember? Last fall? That big gathering with all the relatives and flowers? Jeeze, what do you mean "which one?"

(MARY JUNE holds out the phone and STEVE refuses, stepping back.)

STEVE

Considering the alternative, I was hoping for a call from beyond the grave. What does she want?

MARY JUNE

What does she ever want? To point out our mistakes and spread her misery.

(She offers the phone again, and again he refuses).

STEVE

Pass.

MARY JUNE

(Pleading.)

Steve! Come on! We're a family. I'm your sister. In a few seconds devil grandma is going to be reminding me she knows the difference between call waiting and being dumped on hold and somehow tying it in to her terrible orphaned childhood...and probably suggesting through an improbable chain of events involving time travel...that it's all my fault.

(STEVE, caught by the remark, stops his retreat for a chuckle. But when MARY JUNE again offers the phone he again refuses.)

STEVE

She could, yeah. Not a chance.

MARY JUNE

Steve!

STEVE

Mary June! You answered the phone. Where's mom, anyway? It's her mother.

MARY JUNE

She can't. She's in the dining room with the person.

(The pursuit escalates into a race once around the sofa.)

STEVE

The who?

MARY JUNE

The church person.

STEVE

(Laughing.)

What the hell is a church person?

(The chase ends more or less where it began.)

MARY JUNE

(Irritated.)

A person from our church. Our church? You know, the big building on Fergus Street that we never go to.

STEVE

Well, what's a church person doing here?

MARY JUNE

I don't know. I wasn't interested. That's why I jumped on the phone without looking at the caller ID!

(She offers the phone with exaggerated pathos. Steve shakes his head gently and retreats.)

STEVE

Well, I'd like to help you, sis. But if there's a church person loose in the house, I'd better put some clothes on. You know...family pride.

(STEVE retreats off, up. MARY JUNE holds out the phone toward him one last time.)

MARY JUNE

But...

(She turns downstage, defeated, and after a heavy sigh, takes the phone off hold.)

MARY JUNE

Okay grandmother, I'm back. *(Pause.)* Yes, I'm sure you can tell the difference between call waiting and being sidetracked for...*(Pause.)* Yes, I'm sure you must be used to it by now. *(Pause.)* No. I know you never let that stop you when...*(Pause.)* What?

(MARY JUNE claps a hand to her head. Enter PAT and SARAH, up.)

MARY JUNE

No, grandmother, I would never...

(MARY JUNE and SARAH exchange faces of torment.)

SARAH

And here's Mary June again, who is in fact stuck on the phone with my mother.

PAT

As you predicted.

MARY JUNE

Now that's just silly, grandmother.

(MARY JUNE and SARAH both recoil at her ill-chosen words. MARY JUNE looks to SARAH for help; she shrugs and shakes her head.)

SARAH

(To Pat.)

And now she's made the mistake of calling her grandmother silly, which we will hear more of hereafter.

(MARY JUNE rolls her eyes and begins a slow retreat off, right.)

MARY JUNE

Of course I didn't mean that! *(Pause.)* I know you do. We all know you do.

SARAH

As a church social worker, you must run into what used to be called "problem children?"

MARY JUNE

No grandmother, never.

(Exit, MARY JUNE.)

PAT

Sometimes.

SARAH

What about problem matriarchs?

(PAT smiles and shrugs.)

PAT

Well, every family...

SARAH

No. I didn't mean an "every family" problem matriarch. We are not talking your standard generational thing here...Pat? My mother is a pain.

PAT

Now, Mrs. Weller...

SARAH

Stop! I wasn't seriously asking for help. Someday, we might. For the moment we have what my husband would call an established equilibrium...based on the sad truth that my mother has always been a pain. And you came here asking for our help. I did tell you I was flattered, didn't I?

PAT

You mentioned that, yes. And you were worried that I was on an attendance mission.

SARAH

And your not--are you--which is nice.

PAT

Only so far as contact outside the church can boost service attendance...so studies tell us anyway. But no. Actually, I was looking for members who aren't quite so...so...

SARAH

Active.

PAT

Active, yes. This particular person needs to meet new people. I mean she needs the experience of meeting people. Regular people, but strangers.

SARAH

(Drifting on the term.)

Regular people...regular people. Funny...some days we seem the opposite of regular...whatever that is. Other times we are strikingly regular. *(Smiles.)* I'm not even sure I know how I feel about "regular." Sometimes its an aspiration. Others it's a depressing sameness.

PAT

I think in this case I was looking for reassuring sameness.

SARAH

(Considers.)

I think we can manage that. The Wellers are a pair of soon-to-be empty nesters; daughter finishing college, son finishing high school; husband very much into the global business world, but still likes model trains; wife not much on regular church attendance, but does practice the old-fashioned virtue of

baking; one cantankerous grandmother; one rascalion of an uncle; peripheral family...uh...on the periphery. I'd guess that qualifies as regular. Well, regular, before scrutiny. Will that do?

PAT

(Smiling, mildly embarrassed.)

Very much.

SARAH

Mind you, it's just three Wellers today; the husband is in Kuala Lumpur. The grandmother is across town, thank God, uh...goodness. And I think the uncle is down at the marina trying to sell a boat he bought as an investment. Don't need a boat do you?

PAT

Not at the moment.

SARAH

Well if you ever do, stay away from my brother-in-law. So...it's down to me and Mary June...with probably no help at all from Steve. That all right?

PAT

Should be.

SARAH

What's wrong with her, anyway?

PAT

Wrong with her?

SARAH

You're a social worker. You're vetting households for her to visit. You're handling her with care, right?

PAT

Yes.

SARAH

So what's wrong with her

PAT

Nothing.

(SARAH fixes PAT in a knowing gaze, smirking.)

PAT

She's a kindly widow.

(SARAH cocks her head, intensifying the scrutiny. PAT succumbs, smiling.)

PAT

She's been out of circulation.

SARAH

How... "out of circulation?" You're not sending us a recently freed axe murderer.

PAT

Of course not. She's recently widowed, and, without going into detail, I gather she and her husband lived for each other. She simply needs contact with the world. This work for the church is a big first step, and I'm nervous on her behalf...and so, where normally I wouldn't fuss...

SARAH

You have taken the extraordinary step of visiting the Wellers.

PAT

Well, as I said, mainly to make sure you were at home today.

SARAH

What's her pitch?

PAT

I'd rather let her make it.

SARAH

(Rolling her eyes)

Pat. If you're going to all this trouble, give me some clue what you want. If she's selling, do you want me to buy?

PAT

No. Well, I'm sure the parrish... Uh, no. I just want you to listen. I want this to be a social exercise for her...and I think the reason I'm fussing is because I'm afraid she sees it as a test.

SARAH

Listen? Listening I can do. And we are at home... for the moment.

(They share a moment of understanding.)

PAT

Good...thanks.

(They start toward the door.)

SARAH

But if she turns out to be an axe murderess, after all, then I will have something to say to the parish board.

(Enter MARY JUNE, up. SARAH opens the front door.)

PAT

That would be fair.

(Pat moves to the doorway.)

SARAH

Will we need to debrief?

PAT

Shouldn't think so. Unless you find it necessary.

(PAT hands SARAH a business card.)

PAT

Cell number's on the back. Thanks.

SARAH

No problem.

(Exit PAT. SARAH shuts the door.)

MARY JUNE

Who was that?

SARAH

(Rolling her eyes.)

Someone from the church. Weren't you listening earlier.

MARY JUNE

Not much. I was being self-absorbed and anti-social. Last dregs of my great break-up, I guess. I'm going to clean out any signs of "the ex-boyfriend" and dispose of them in cold and stoical manner.

SARAH

I thought you did that the other day.

MARY JUNE

That was my angry and dramatic stage. I saved a couple of mementos for the cold and stoical phase.

SARAH

So you're around today?

MARY JUNE

Why? More church people?

SARAH

(Considers, uncertain.)

I think so.

MARY JUNE

(Clucks out a laugh.)

Is this a new policy?

SARAH

What?

MARY JUNE

We don't go on Sundays, so the congregation comes by one at a time instead.

SARAH

(Considers.)

Well, it is a progressive parish. No, this is someone trying their hand at...uh, something. We've been selected as an easy contact for a person who hasn't done this sort of thing before.

MARY JUNE

And this person is coming today?

SARAH

(Starts to speak, then stops in

confusion.)

Actually, I'm not sure. I got the idea it was today, but now that I think of it, I don't recall Pat saying anything definite.

MARY JUNE

What about the picture lady?

(MARY JUNE waits for SARAH to catch up, then sighs.)

MARY JUNE

The picture of the train set? That old biddy with the Weekly Whatsit who heard about the toys in the garage.

SARAH

Model railroad, MJ, please. No derision. You know how your father feels.

MARY JUNE

All right. What about that old lady who wants to shoot the model railroad. Did you put her off?

SARAH

(Hesitates.)

I hope so. I called and left a message that your father had to go on to Malaysia. She said they like people in their pictures.

MARY JUNE

Well, there's Steve. He's worked on it.

SARAH

Yes, but it's your father who's vice president of the toy...model railroad association. And you know Steve. He'd be embarrassed.

MARY JUNE

Well if our junior senator is so interested in a career in politics, remind him how important publicity is.

SARAH

He is just an intern. An obsessed intern, but an intern. (*Considers.*) She probably will turn up. Well, we'll just have to cope. Your dad always keeps that display in perfect shape...but I'll have Steve make sure. Anyway, you're around?

MARY JUNE

Guess so. (*Turns up to leave, hesitates.*) Speaking of Saturday business, there was a voicemail.

SARAH

From your father? He's always forgetting the time difference.

MARY JUNE

No, from Uncle Mickey. From the marina, must have been early.

SARAH

Mickey and that blessed boat. What did he want?

MARY JUNE

I'm not sure. He started out all excited about that buyer he had "in play." Then there was an interlude when he broke off to swear at a seagull who was threatening to soil his paintwork. Then he sort of panicked about the time and said he'd call back.

SARAH

We are not getting involved.

MARY JUNE

You always say that. But somehow we always do.

SARAH

Well, Mickey's clever that way.

MARY JUNE

And charming.

SARAH

He can get around your father easily enough.

(They trade faces, Sarah concedes, then starts fussing with the sofa cushions.)

SARAH

And me...and you, and of course Steve.

MARY JUNE

What are you doing?

SARAH

Fussing. We may...or may not have company. So I'm fussing.
(Sighs.) And I was going to bake today. *(Stops, comes to a decision.)* No, darn it. I am going to bake today.

MARY JUNE

(Turning to leave again.)

Suppose you don't want to know what grandmother wanted?

SARAH

Darling, we'll never know that until she finally knows it herself.

(Exit MARY JUNE)

SARAH

(Softly.)

Let's hope she's going to brood at home, at least today.

(Lights down.)

Scene 2

SCENE: A suburban sidewalk and the living room of the Weller Family.

TIME: same day, midday, a Saturday.

AT CURTAIN: *The living room set remains dark. Sunlight comes up far-down stage. Birds chirp occasionally; a lawn mower whines in the distance and recedes; a dog barks far off.*

PAT
(Off, right.)

Turned out to be a fine day.

(Enter PAT with clip board in hand, far-down right, followed by ALICE, clutching her purse and a binder for security.)

ALICE

Yes, a fine day. Sun shining...(gazes across audience.) Mowers mowing...children playing. (*Winces.*) Children running out into the street without watching.

PAT

Now, Alice.

ALICE

No parents to be seen.

PAT

(Warning.)

Steady. Remember what we said about judging?

(ALICE considers and gives a hasty nod.)

PAT

Life's rich pageant? Right?

PAT and ALICE

(Together, chanting dogma.)

Dismissing is a way of missing.

ALICE

I know. *(Sighs.)* I know. But it's hard. I've been so sheltered.

PAT

Are you sure your ready? We could go together. There's no timetable; you don't have to go solo, not yet.

ALICE

(Forcing resolve.)

Yes I do, Pat. For 24 years Hector protected me from the world and indulged my insecurities. Now he's gone, I don't know what I need protecting from. It's been six months since he passed, and I'm going to break this isolation, or it's going to break me. It's not as if I'm

selling vacuum cleaners or repossessing cars.

PAT

Absolutely.

ALICE

It's a simple, straight-forward appeal for the new hospital in Guatemala. (*Clutches the binder.*) I have the church's prospectus...and the brochures. They can listen, or not. The important thing is the experience.

PAT

Good. The trick is, can you remember that, and not get all nervous and discouraged? Remember: it's a national appeal. You can't possibly let the church down. The idea is to do right by yourself...meet some real people.

PAT and ALICE

(*As one.*)

Move forward.

ALICE

Yes. It certainly is time I was moving forward. (*Smiles at PAT.*) I want to...get well.

(*She looks to Pat. They exchange smiles.*)

PAT

Get well. A phrase you've used before.

ALICE

I haven't felt well, not since Hector...not since he went. I wish we'd

had children. I wish there had been a family. Of course I always wished that.

PAT

It's a natural wish, considering your childhood.

ALICE

Yes. That was why I settled.

PAT

Settled?

ALICE

For Hector. I don't mean I settled for him. He was wonderful...in his way. But I was so happy to have him, I settled for just him. And I let him spoil me.

PAT

Alice, we've talked about that word.

ALICE

I know. But I let him do so much, and I learned to do so little. I made a point of doing it well, but it wasn't much. Everything was him. I didn't have friends that he didn't introduce me to. I didn't have interests that weren't his. I didn't have opinions that I didn't pick up from him. I didn't learn to do anything.

PAT

Alice. Moving forward, remember?

ALICE

(Shrugs.)

Yes, moving forward. You say moving forward. I say I want to get well. I feel so out of balance. I take pills for it. I can't make decisions, and when I do I make myself sick worrying that I made the right ones.

PAT

Well, just because my catch phrase is 'moving forward'... That doesn't mean it isn't a recovery process.

ALICE

(Looking about, wondering.)

It is a lovely day, isn't it?

PAT

And you're going to make it even better.

ALICE

I want to thank you, Pat, for helping me get so far. I wouldn't have dreamt, a month ago--

PAT

I know--

ALICE

Me? Joining the discussion circle...and now...meeting strangers...walking up to a strange house...

PAT

You made the decision. I'm just glad I was here. What's a parish

infrastructure for, anyway? *(Pauses and smiles.)* You sure?

ALICE

(Draws a deep breath.)

Yes. It's time to get out and meet some normal people.

PAT

Ah. Well, you want to be careful about that...expectations I mean. Someone once said that normal people are simply the ones you don't know very well yet.

PAT and ALICE

Don't judge.

PAT

(Consulting clip board.)

Now, I've given you the Wellers...they're up there at 1426. Parish members 16 years...casual attendees at services...steady contributors to local campaigns but a bit more selective in supporting our overseas efforts. And if they aren't at home—which they should be--then there are the Jeffersons at 1507.

(PAT pulls the top sheet off the clip board and hands it to ALICE.)

PAT

I'll make my stop, and meet you at the benches in the park in say...a half-hour.

ALICE

I wish...

PAT

What?

ALICE

I...well, it's embarrassing. I wish I could remember if I took my nerve medicine. *(Takes a breath.)* I think I did, but I was so scatter-brained this morning. Well, I've got them in my bag if I need them.

PAT

You know, I'd like to see you off those things. Or at least onto something more mild.

ALICE

I know. Me too. But I don't think you'd want me to today. *(Checks the paper.)* Or the Wellers. I don't think the Wellers deserve to meet me when I'm going... frozen chicken.

PAT

(Momentarily flummoxed, then catching.)

Uh, cold turkey.

ALICE

Cold turkey? *(Snaps into a sudden, nervous laugh..)* Frozen chicken! Oh dear! Maybe I'm not ready for regular society.

PAT

(Pointing.)

Uh! None of that!

ALICE

Right...right. *(Sighs.)* I'm just so nervous I'll get flustered.

PAT

So get flustered. It's life. We get flustered, we move forward. We laugh it off, and later, when we meet someone else with the same misgivings, we have a story to tell. It's called experience. Go get some.

(ALICE takes a deep breath, steeling herself, then nods.)

PAT

Okay then...move forward...into the world.

(PAT places a hand on her arm, then exits, left. ALICE moves slowly right.)

ALICE

(Softly but with gusto.)

Move forward...don't judge...move forward, don't judge...move forward, don't judge.

(She pauses, then opens her pocket book. Pauses again to recollect, then with decision pulls out a pill bottle and take a pill.)

ALICE

Move forward. Get well. *(Checks the paper, fumbles with the pill bottle.)* See the Wellers up the street.

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(She looks at the pills and then the paper in momentary confusion, then with a nod of false memory, opens the bottle and takes another pill.)

ALICE

See the Wellers, get well.

(ALICE, giggles nervously and exits, right. Lights out,)

**Perusal
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Scene 3

SCENE: The same moment in the living room of the Weller Family.

AT CURTAIN: Enter SARAH up, on a cordless phone.

SARAH

(On phone.)

Why do you always say that? As if naming the thing after your niece means we'll come running whenever there's a problem. *(Pause.)* I'm all in favor of your selling that so-called yacht--charitable nomenclature, in my way of thinking--I just don't want us mixed up in one of your "deals." *(Pause.)* No, you can't talk to your brother. He's unavailable for you to wind him round your little finger, Mickey. *(Pause.)* Out of town.

(Enter STEVE, munching on an apple, right. He pauses at the sofa, looking among the cushions for something, then proceeds left.)

SARAH

(On phone.)

Yes, on business. *(Pause.)* I'm sure he would help you. You can talk him into anything. *(Sees STEVE, covers receiver.)* Where are you going?

STEVE

Out.

SARAH

You can't. The person about the thing, remember?

(STEVE gives a soft, resigned sigh and circles back.)

SARAH

(On phone.)

Yes, I know it was supposedly owned by some Hollywood producer.

(Enter MARY JUNE, right, carrying a halloween mask; she nearly bumps into STEVE.)

MARY JUNE

Where are you going?

STEVEN

In.

(STEVEN exits, right.)

SARAH

(On phone.)

Mickey! *(Sighs.)* Yes, Mickey, I do know what a cash flow problem is. Try sending two kids to college.

MARY JUNE

I got a scholarship.

SARAH

(Covering receiver.)

Don't help your uncle. *(On phone.)* Look, I'll find that little "history" you wrote up, and I'll give the guy directions, but I'm not going to schmooze him about Colonel Klink or My Favorite Martian cruising to Catalina on her. *(Pause.)* Because I'm not. Now, when can you be ready at the marina? *(Pause.)* All right. 3:30. I'll let him know. *(Hangs up.)* What a pair!

MARY JUNE

What's Uncle Mickey up to now?

SARAH

He thinks the buyer for that boat is going to come through.

MARY JUNE

(With dramatic sentiment.)

My namesake. The S.S. Mary June. Ya-chet of the stars. Farewell!

SARAH

He gives the buyer our address. Wants your father to give him that so-called ship's log he wrote up, and play up the celebrity angle. Apparently the old tub qualifies as memorabilia.

MARY JUNE

Did he explain his voicemail at the crack of dawn? I'd like to know why Mickey can't schmooze for himself? That's his specialty. I mean, he can get around us all the time, and we know him. The general public ought to be putty in his hands.

SARAH

Apparently the memorabilia needs a gasket.

MARY JUNE

So his voicemail indicated. What's the hold up?

SARAH

Well, gaskets, apparently, aren't as susceptible to charm the way his family or even the general public are.

MARY JUNE

He should be worrying about the real Mary June blowing a gasket. After all the fuss he made about re-christening that boat in my name.

SARAH

Mickey always makes a fuss. As does your father. All the Weller men make a fuss...except your brother. Maybe he'll break the mold.

MARY JUNE

Steve? I wouldn't count on it. He's interning at a state legislator's office. That's heavy on the fuss. Any word from Dad?

SARAH

Mmm. Checked my email. Stuck another day in Kuala Lumpur. Flying home tomorrow...if the negotiations go well. He actually remembered our impending visitor... regarding the Weller Railroad Empire.

MARY JUNE

(Rolling her eyes.)

I hope she doesn't show. I don't like having to show enthusiasm about that strange little hobby of his.

SARAH

Neither do I. But we will.

MARY JUNE

I was afraid you'd say that. Toy trains!

SARAH

Model railroad! He spent years getting that display the way it is. It's important to him. And he somehow managed to keep his teenage son interested in helping him; that's the real accomplishment. So if somebody from the local weekly wants to run a picture and a caption, we support it. Anyway, I've briefed Steve he'd been drafted to stand in.

MARY JUNE

Better than me.

SARAH

Yes, and don't mock. Your father's glad they have that in common with Steve growing up. And so am I. And it could be worse. Better your dad's little trains than your uncle's big boats, eh?

MARY JUNE

Poor mom. Your children are pretty much grown. Don't worry; we'll always have one thing in common. We'll always share a deep exasperation toward the men in this family. Like Mister Fledgling Politician.

SARAH

Steven? What's he done?

MARY JUNE

He's picked up an unfortunate habit from his internship at the legislature. It seems all the legislative aids refer to their representatives as "their member." Steve's doing it now.

SARAH

(Smirking.)

Yes, I've heard him. Short for "Member of the House," isn't it? He's so cute.

MARY JUNE

Yes, but they do it without hesitation...unselfconsciously, and he's completely unaware that "member" has a double meaning, and he's not cool enough to leave the jargon at the capitol.

STEVE

(Off, right.)

Mom! You off the phone? I wanna call Cliff.

SARAH

(Calling off.)

For the moment! *(To MARY JUNE.)* Well you could give your little brother a heads up.

MARY JUNE

And miss the embarrassment? Who's Cliff?

SARAH

Another intern. *(Notices the mask.)* Whatever are you doing with that?

MARY JUNE

Preparing to get rid of it. It is--or was--Bryan's. It's not the sort of memento I want to keep of my ex-boyfriend...it's too flattering.

SARAH

(Snorts a laugh.)

Mary June Weller! You're terrible!

(A buzzer sounds off, right.)

SARAH

Oh! Time to knead the dough.

(SARAH and MARY JUNE start off, right.)

MARY JUNE

Dough? Baking?

SARAH

I told you that was the plan.

MARY JUNE

(Pulls a face.)

But the house is going to smell all yummy.

SARAH

What's wrong with that?

MARY JUNE

(Cocks her head.)

You know what's wrong with that.

SARAH

I do?

MARY JUNE

(Sighs.)

When you bake...on a weekend...especially when you start with bread, the house smells all yummy, I get hungry, and then dinner's always late because you never feel like getting it started at the usual time.

(Enter Steve, up.)

SARAH

I do not.

STEVE

Where's the...oh...

(STEVEN motions for the phone. SARAH hands it over, speaking to MARY JUNE.)

SARAH

Well I know a way out of that predicament. You can cook dinner.

MARY JUNE

Me?

STEVE

(Laughs.)

We're doomed!

(MARY JUNE takes a swipe at STEVE, but he dodges away and

exits, up right.)

MARY JUNE
(Calling after.)

Just for that, I will cook!

SARAH

Thank you.

MARY JUNE
I'll do pasta...with a special sauce for Steve. Where do we keep the rat poison?

STEVE
(Off)

I told you we were doomed.

SARAH
It's all right, honey. We don't keep rat poison.

MARY JUNE
Weed killer then. It's better with pasta anyway.

(They exit, up. There is a two count, and the doorbell rings. There is another pause, and MARY JUNE re-enters still carrying the mask. She crosses hastily.)

SARAH
(Off.)

Mary June!

MARY JUNE

I've got it!

(MARY JUNE exits, left. There is a pause. ALICE screams, off left. There are muffled exclamations of apology from both sides, then MARY JUNE re-enters, embarrassed, leading ALICE.)

MARY JUNE

I'm so very sorry.

ALICE

(Breathless, embarrassed.)

No...no. It was just a shock.

MARY JUNE

Well I'm not surprised. I don't know what I was thinking, carrying Bryan to the door like that.

ALICE

Yes, well...*(Distracted.)* Bryan?

MARY JUNE

The mask. Are you all right? You look a bit...

ALICE

Yes, well...

MARY JUNE

Why don't you sit down.

(ALICE takes a seat on the sofa.)

ALICE

I just stopped by to...*(draws a deep breath and coughs.)* to...

MARY JUNE

Yes, we were forewarned. Would you like something to drink?

ALICE

(Still coughing.)

Oh, don't...I mean...

MARY JUNE

It's no trouble.

(MARY JUNE drops the mask behind the sofa and starts off. She hesitates.)

MARY JUNE

Uh...you're here about the boat, right?

ALICE

The boat? Oh, no.

MARY JUNE

Oh, it's the other. Well let me get you fixed up with some water and then I'll get Steve.

(Exit MARY JUNE. ALICE catches her breath.)

ALICE

(Softly, looking about.)

Don't judge, move forward, don't panic. Don't judge, move forward, don't panic.

(ALICE drops her binder and leans forward to pick it up. Enter STEVE on a cordless phone. ALICE listens in increasing alarm to STEVE's conversation.)

STEVE

That's not what I said! *(Pause.)* Get real, dude, I am not obsessed with my member. *(Pauses, laughs.)* Well, better than yours, that's for sure. *(Pause.)* No, Cliff, dude, your member is fine, when you look at him alone. But you'll have to admit, mine has a better record, is more popular and looks better on camera than your does. *(Pause.)* Are you telling me that when they're side by side, you can't tell the difference!

(STEVE, still unaware of ALICE, drifts far-down left. ALICE, horror deepening, stands and begins mouthing her "don't judge" mantra.)

STEVE

What about the other day...in the chamber? *(Pause.)* I know they both stood up together, but when it came to crunch time, mine performed and yours was all over the place.

(ALICE tries and fails to suppress a squeal of terrified embarrassment. STEVE turns, startled.)

STEVE

Woah! *(To ALICE.)* Sorry, I didn't see you there.

ALICE

(Trying to compose herself.)

No...I gathered.

STEVE

(On phone.)

Hey, Cliff, I gotta go, I got company. *(Pause.)* Yeah, well you just take care of yours, 'cause you know I'll be takin' care of mine, I don't care how long the session lasts. *(Pause.)* See you Monday, dude. *(Hangs up, speaks to ALICE.)* Sorry about that. Just talking about--

ALICE

(In quick.)

I heard.

STEVE

Friend of mine.

ALICE

Yes...uh, I would hope so.

STEVE

I'm Steve. Steve Weller.

ALICE

Uh...Alice...Alice Carlisle. I came by...

STEVE

Oh, yeah, I know. You're here for the display.

ALICE

I'm visiting...*(Catching up, alarmed.)* Display!

STEVE

Yeah. I'm not an expert or anything, but it's pretty impressive. Just let me go back to the room and get things ready.

ALICE

(Horried, but curious.)

Uh...room? You have a room for it?

STEVE

Oh yeah, sure. You need it for the special lighting...plus you gotta have room for all the equipment. I'll ask mom to bring you back.

ALICE

Uh...your mother?

STEVE

Yeah, if you don't mind waiting?

ALICE

Waiting?

STEVE

Yeah, everyone says it's better when you walk in after I've got it all turned on and going.

(Exit STEVE, right. ALICE wilts to the sofa, then looks to the left, contemplating escape. She pulls a prescription bottle from her purse and takes a pill, then thinks better of it and takes two, which she swallows. As she closes her eyes and begins her mantra, SARAH and

MARY JUNE appear, right, and observe her.)

ALICE

Don't judge. Don't panic...Don't judge...

(ALICE opens her eyes to see the others staring at her. There is a brief, awkward pause, then SARAH moves into the room, followed by MARY JUNE carrying a glass of water.)

SARAH

Oh, you poor thing. *(To MARY JUNE.)* Oh, you were right. She does look startled.

MARY JUNE

This is my mother.

SARAH

Sarah Weller. I heard about your little surprise at the door. *(To MARY JUNE.)* Give her the water, dear.

ALICE

(Forcing resolve.)

Mrs. Weller, I'm afraid your son...

(ALICE is cut off by the insistent offer of water by MARY JUNE, who attempts to put the glass to her lips.)

SARAH

Yes, I know. We saw him hurrying back to get ready. You know, most teenage boys are reluctant, even secretive. But Steven really

loves this.

(SARAH looks to MARY JUNE who nods with loyal enthusiasm.)

ALICE

Do I take it you encourage him to...

SARAH

Oh, of course! Well, tolerate, more like. It's more of a "guy thing," isn't it?

ALICE

I...uh...

MARY JUNE

Of course it's really dad.

SARAH

Oh yes, it's been a passion of his for years.

ALICE

It has?

SARAH

I think he did it, you know, just to unwind, but then he really got into it, and before I knew what was happening, he had Steven involved.

ALICE

And you...you let him?

SARAH

(Bubbles up a giggle.)

Well it's better than the alternative! Don't you think?

ALICE

Alternative! I...I shudder to think.

SARAH

Exactly!

(SUSAN puts an arm on ALICE's shoulder.)

SARAH

You should see them together! *(Confiding.)* Sometimes I just step in the doorway and watch them at it. And Mary June does too, don't you?

(ALICE looks to MARY JUNE with the last vestiges of hope. MARY JUNE offers a reluctant smile and nods.)

ALICE

(Softly.)

Oh my God... *(Shaking herself.)* I...I...uh...have to take a pill...uh...have to be somewhere else.

SARAH

Oh, well then you'd better go right in.

ALICE

No! I--

SARAH

(Cutting her off, shouting off stage.)

Ste-eve! Are you ready?

STEVE

(Well off.)

Yeah. Goin' real good.

ALICE

I really have to--

SARAH

Oh, this is going to be quite a treat. Have you ever seen this sort of display? Really elaborate, I mean?

ALICE

Me! No, I... And I really don't want--

SARAH

(Cuts her off with a tremendous gasp.)

Have you got your camera?

ALICE

(Explosively.)

Camera!

SARAH

We've got one somewhere, if you need it.

MARY JUNE

Mother! I think Alice is just here for a preliminary look. Isn't that what you told me?

(MARY JUNE begins to tug ALICE right.)

ALICE

I really don't think...

(SARAH joins in moving ALICE.)

MARY JUNE

Just a quick look, then she'll know what she wants to take pictures of next time and she can get to her next appointment.

ALICE

I...next time?

SARAH

I'll just take you to the door. I'm sure you don't need me to tell you what you want. You must do this every day.

(Exit all three, right.)

ALICE

(Off.)

I...what!

(The doorbell rings. MARY JUNE reappears and crosses left, exiting.)

KENT

(Off.)

Yes, I'm here about the "Star Bright," the cabin cruiser?

MARY JUNE

(Off.)

Yeah, we got my Uncle's call. Come on in.

(Enter MARY JUNE and KENT. MARY JUNE quickly becomes taken with him.)

KENT

I suppose that's not the name it goes by here, though. What is it called? the "Mary June?"

MARY JUNE

That's right: the Mary June. Uncle Mickey's been restoring it. I don't want to discourage you, but he sure loves that boat.

KENT

I don't blame him. It's got a heck of a history. And if you put a lot of yourself into something, well... Don't worry; I know how to tempt a reluctant seller.

MARY JUNE

I bet you do. And Mickey must be tempted. He sent you here for the boat's C.V. to give him a little more time to make things ship-shape. Come on, it's in the study.

(They start off, right. The doorbell rings.)

MARY JUNE

Busy place today.

KENT

Not another buyer, I hope.

MARY JUNE

(Smiling.)

Me too. *(Bellows off.)* Mom: front door!

(Exit KENT and MARY JUNE, right. There is a two count, then enter SARAH, looking back. She hesitates, then the doorbell sounds again and she moves off, left. ALICE giggles, off. She appears at the edge of the stage, up right, clearly confused and feeling the effects of her pills, giggles again and exits right.)

SARAH

(Off, surprised.)

Oh! Pat?

(Enter SARAH and PAT.)

PAT

I couldn't help myself. Alice was so nervous that it made me nervous. You know, I actually turned around and followed her. I felt like an agent tailing a spy or something. Then I felt guilty...and then I felt silly. So I decided just to come on up. She stood at your door for a full minute before ringing. *(Looks about the living room.)*

Oh, isn't she here?

SARAH

Who?

PAT

Alice? Alice Carlisle.

(SARAH has an inward moment, turning slowly up right.)

SARAH

So she was yours?...she was here about a hospital campaign?

PAT

Yes, well, like I said, therapy really. She's led a very sheltered life, and this was a way to help her open up. *(Confiding.)* I told her I was making a call of my own, but really I've been walking back and forth up the street. I probably have the neighborhood watch concerned.

(STEVE appears at the edge of stage, up right, looking concerned. He is not immediately observed.)

SARAH

You know she seemed a bit nervous. We thought she was here for something else, but she didn't...*(See's STEVE.)* Steven, what is it?

STEVE

It's that lady, mom. She's, like, gone weird or something.

SARAH

Gone weird?

STEVE

At first she kept looking at the floor, and she kept muttering something.

PAT

Muttering? What?

STEVE

I don't know...don't jump or don't be manic or something like that. Then she took a deep breath and opened her eyes...and then she like...she just like...switched off.

SARAH and PAT

Switched off?

STEVE

Yeah.

(STEVE approximates a look of stunned apoplexy.)

PAT

Oh dear.

STEVE

And then she sort of...came back...a little...and she looked around at the display. And then she bent down and put her face right next to the Northern Pacific diesel on the siding, and she started to giggle.

SARAH

Giggle?

PAT

Oh dear.

STEVE

(Nods.)

It was like wicked-X-Files-twisted-possessed-woman kind of giggles. And then she ran out. I think she's in the bathroom.

(PAT and SARAH look to one another, then move right. STEVE steps aside to let them pass, then follows them off. A phone rings. There is a pause and it rings again. After a two count, enter MARY JUNE on the phone.)

MARY JUNE

Yeah, he's here. *(Pause.)* Mom hasn't said anything to him, she's busy. I've got him in the study looking at the pedigree. How's the gasket? *(Pause. Laughs.)* No, Mickey, he can't hear me, I'm in the living room. Give me some credit, will you. I don't know if he knows how to get to the marina. If he doesn't, I'll tell him. *(Pause.)* You're darned right you owe me, especially since you named that thing after me. *(Pause.)* Business, huh? I'm majoring in business, Mickey, and this ain't it. You're so-o lucky you're cute, Uncle Mickey. *(Pause.)* Don't try and work me. There are plenty of guys out there cuter than you, and you are really lucky this guy's one of them.

(MARY JUNE hangs up and exits, right. There is a two count, then enter ALICE, stunned and bewildered. She shuffles forward a few of steps.)

ALICE

Trains. Little, tiny trains.

(A broad grin spreads on her face. Enter SARAH and PAT, right.)

PAT

Alice, I said don't go wandering off.

SARAH

Poor thing. After all the effort it took to come out here.

ALICE

I tried not to judge, Pat. You told me not to judge, and you were right, because I judged wrong. I don't know how, because you know, I thought he said...

(ALICE teeters and the others rush to her side.)

PAT

Easy!

(They guide her to the arm of the sofa and sit her down.)

PAT

You've been at your nerve medicine again, haven't you?

Well and Weller

ALICE
(Stifling a laugh.)

Trains. Who knew?

PAT
I better get you home.

ALICE
(Frowning.)

I lost my pills.

SARAH
She's right about that. They're all over the bathroom floor.

PAT
I'd better get them. *(To ALICE.)* But no more today. Now you just sit right there.

(ALICE nods dutifully, then snorts and approximates a train's whistle; "woo! wooo!" PAT sighs and heads off.)

SARAH
I'll help you.

(Exit PAT and SARAH. ALICE looks after them, then turns her gaze to the audience and bursts into giggles.)

ALICE
Little tiny trains!

(ALICE falls silent. Slowly her center of gravity shifts and she falls off the arm onto the sofa, where she remains, her legs dangling over the arm. Enter MARY JUNE and KENT. He carries a thin binder. They are mutually attracted and don't see ALICE.)

MARY JUNE

Kent? Pretty high-tone name, but it suits you.

KENT

It's my middle name. It goes better with the work I do than "Lionel."

MARY JUNE

Lionel? My father will like that.

KENT

Excuse me?

MARY JUNE

Nothing.

KENT

And your name is...?

MARY JUNE

(Hastily.)

Mary, just Mary. Now, just let me change my shoes and I'll ride with you down to the marina.

(They share a lingering gaze and MARY JUNE exits. KENT looks after, then puffs out an impressed breath and shrugs. He begins leafing through the binder, Then pulls out a cell phone and hit the speed dial. As he speaks, ALICE will open her eyes—facing the audience--and attempt to focus on what he is saying.)

KENT

Ah,uh, Mr. Basakian...I hope your trip is going well and that you get this message today. I've been going over Mary June's history and it seems as juicy as you've heard. As I promised, I'm going to give her a really thorough going over this afternoon.

(ALICE is momentarily horrified, then decides she hasn't heard correctly, and shakes her head. Turning toward the sofa, Kent gradually becomes aware of ALICE's feet and slowly looks up. He moves toward the sofa, then slowly looks back off, right. ALICE moans, and he turns back to her. He opens his mouth to speak, then remembers the phone.)

KENT

Uh, I'll report in again tonight.

(KENT hangs up, then turns his attention to ALICE.)

ALICE

Whoa!

KENT

Uh...everything...all right?

ALICE

I can't tell.

(ALICE gives a grunt and swings her legs around to the floor, sitting up at the same time. She looks out over the audience, then focuses on KENT.)

ALICE

Do I know you?

KENT

Don't think so.

(There is a long pause.)

ALICE

Good.

(There is another pause.)

KENT

Are you waiting for someone?

ALICE

(Suspiciously.)

Possibly.

(KENT waits for her to continue, then smiles nervously and goes

back to his skimming of the notebook.)

ALICE

It was trains, you see.

KENT

(Carefully.)

Uh huh.

(The awkward silence prompts KENT to go back to his reading.)

ALICE

Not genitals.

(Another pause ensues, and KENT looks off, right, for help.)

KENT

Uh--

ALICE

I thought he was going to display his genitals, because he told the person on the phone that his were so much better. You see?

(KENT false-starts a response and discovers he has nothing to add; he hastily goes back to the binder. ALICE struggles to stand.)

ALICE

And his mother said he enjoyed displaying and said I should have brought my camera, and then Mary June agreed.

KENT

Oh! You know about the Mary June?

(KENT helps ALICE to her feet.)

ALICE

Well yes, a little. *(Double-take.)* The Mary June. That's an interesting way of saying it. The Mary June? Makes her sound quite famous.

KENT

Oh, she is. Of course that's not her only name.

ALICE

It isn't?

KENT

Oh no. And she is quite famous. *(Leans close.)* Only don't let on I know it, not here. I'm trying for a little action.

ALICE

(Frowning.)

Action.

Well and Weller

KENT

Yeah. She's quite a vessel.

ALICE

(Beginning to panic.)

She is?

KENT

Heck, yeah. Half of Hollywood's been on her.

ALICE

What?

KENT

Alone or in groups.

ALICE

(Softly.)

Oh my God!

KENT

The parties she's seen. There was this one time--

(ALICE holds up a hand, stopping KENT.)

ALICE

I can't stay here. I've got to panic. I've got to go to the park and panic. *(Turns left.)* I'm moving forward to the park. *(Moves left.)* Got to judge something. *(Stops and looks back.)* Not genitals.

(Exit ALICE, left. KENT looks after, puffing out a breath.)

KENT

Hope that's not family. *(Turns, starts off, right. Inwardly)* Just my luck; great girl...must have a crazy family. *(Calls softly.)* Hey Mary?

(Exit KENT, right. There is a two count, then enter STEVE up right, followed by SARAH with ALICE's binder and purse and PAT with her pill bottle.)

PAT

Personally, I think she should be on a milder tranquilizer...

(They discover no Alice.)

PAT

Uh oh. Now where's she gone?

SARAH

Steve, check the street.

(STEVEN streaks off, left.)

PAT

Could she have gone back to the train room?

(Enter KENT, right, and MARY JUNE carrying the phone.)

MARY JUNE

What's wrong?

STEVE

(Off.)

It's all right; she's out front.

(STEVE re-enters.)

STEVE

She's talking to the Geringers' garden gnomes.

SARAH

I'll take her her things.

(SARAH hurries off left. PAT follows her upstage of the sofa, but stumbles. He bends down and comes up with the halloween mask.)

PAT

What the devil?

MARY JUNE

Oh, sorry. Forgot about that.

PAT

No, it's all right, I love these things. I've got quite a collection.

MARY JUNE

Do you? Well I was about to throw that away. Would you...?

PAT

Oh really? (*Delighted.*) Oh that is nice. If you're sure?

(*MARY JUNE nods.*)

PAT

I don't have this one. (*Puts on the mask.*) Thanks. How do I look?

MARY JUNE

Oh...really...nightmarish.

(*PAT salutes with two thumbs up and turns, left, pausing to straighten the mask. MARY JUNE and KENT look to each other.*)

SARAH

(*Off, left.*)

No, I promise it will be all right. Come on back in.

ALICE

(*Off.*)

I have to get well you know.

SARAH

(*Off.*)

I know the feeling.

ALICE

(Off.)

Unfortunate childhood.

(Enter SARAH and ALICE. ALICE regards SARAH and misses PAT momentarily.)

SARAH

I'm so sorry.

ALICE

Too many shocks.

(ALICE turns, coming face to face with PAT. PAT, seeing her panic and realizing it's the mask, holds up a hand in protest. It comes too late. ALICE lets out a mighty scream, turns and exits past SARAH. PAT removes the mask as SARAH rolls her eyes.)

PAT

Oh.

(SARAH holds PAT in a gaze on consternation for a one count.

SARAH

Therapy?

STEVE

(Far off.)

Hey! Watch it!

(PAT and SARAH glance to each other, then bolt off. MARY JUNE and KENT share an awkward pause.)

Well and Weller

MARY JUNE

Well...

KENT

Uh...

MARY JUNE

If you don't mind, I'll skip introducing the rest of my family right now.

KENT

(Gesturing complete acquiescence.)

Sure.

(Enter STEVE, limping and frowning. He stops to rub his shin and sees the others.)

STEVE

She pushed me over a gnome!

(The phone rings. MARY JUNE reads the display and recoils furtively.)

MARY JUNE

Steve, can you take it please?

STEVE

But!—

Well and Weller

MARY JUNE

(Whispering with deadly intensity.)

We have to leave. If you value your life, take the phone!

(Jolted, STEVE takes the phone.)

MARY JUNE

(To Kent, sweetly.)

The marina.

KENT

(Reciprocating her interest.)

Lead on.

(Exit MARY JUNE and KENT left. STEVE looks after, until another ring brings him back and he turns to cross, right. As he is about to answer, he looks at the display and recoils.)

STEVE

Grandmother! Screw that!

(Steven tosses the phone onto the sofa and exits, up right. Lights out as the phone continues to ring.)

MARY JUNE

Well, the marina?

(They start left, passing STEVE, when all are arrested by ALICE's shout, off.)

ALICE

It's starting all over again! *(She trails off in a terrified scream.)*

(STEVE, KENT and MARY JUNE look to one another. Lights down, curtain.)

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