



Sample Pages from Stroke Static

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STROKE STATIC

A PLAY BY
Lindsay Price



Stroke Static

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Printed in the USA

Characters

Russ/Man Two

Ruthie/Woman Two

Bill/Man One/Son

Megan/Woman One

Carmel/Woman Three

Setting

A nursing home. The setting should be abstract and not naturalistic.

Author's Note

This play has the past, the present, the fictional past, some dramatization of medical jargon and a couple of bent theatrical traditions all flung together in the same pot. To that end, the play should move like music; as one theme fades another swells beneath it. Actors will pretty much be on the run at times to get from one moment to the next. I'm aiming for a push-forward edge-of-the-seat momentum.

The main character in the play has multi-infarct dementia. This type of dementia is brought on by a series of small strokes. It often looks like Alzheimer's but it isn't: an individual has detailed memories, mixed with hallucinations, mixed with confusion, mixed with the occasional lucid knowledge of where they are and what has happened to them.

Theatrically, I am attempting to examine the disease from the inside out. How does one show a series of multiple strokes leading to brain cell loss? The brain doesn't work right and in that regard, the play shouldn't quite work either: lighting should be sharp and contrasted instead of smooth and soft. I picture the acting to be Brechtian at times.

As far as characters go - even though all do portray the elderly at some point, I see them played by young actors. Even though Russ is supposed to be 83, he sees himself as a young man of 18 during the war working as a mechanic. Time is liquid; Russ moves from 83 to 18 and back again in a heartbeat. This can't be shown through make-up. Ruthie is 18, Megan is 15, Bill is 20 and Carmel is 24.

There is the sound of whispers as figures enter in the near dark. They seem to prowl around the stage. We cannot see faces, only shapes. The figures talk about how they do not want to visit their relatives at an old age home.

MAN ONE: Why do we have to come here?

WOMAN TWO: He doesn't know who I am.

WOMAN THREE: We didn't do anything for Christmas.

WOMAN TWO: He doesn't know it's Christmas.

WOMAN ONE: It doesn't do any good.

WOMAN TWO: I can't come here anymore. I can't take it.

MAN ONE: He doesn't know who I am.

WOMAN ONE: It doesn't do any good.

WOMAN TWO: I can't even carry on a conversation.

WOMAN THREE: He doesn't know it's his birthday.

MAN ONE: What does it matter if I come once a week or once a year?

WOMAN ONE: What does it matter?

WOMAN TWO: It doesn't do any good.

MAN ONE: I hate coming here.

WOMAN THREE: I feel so guilty.

WOMAN ONE: Why do we have to come?

WOMAN TWO: He doesn't know who I am.

WOMAN ONE: It doesn't do any good.

WOMAN TWO: *(as in an echo)* It doesn't do any good.

MAN ONE: *(as in an echo)* It doesn't do any good.

WOMAN THREE: *(as in an echo)* It doesn't do any good.

Four of the figures break off to face MAN TWO. Suddenly we are in the middle of a game of "Red Light, Green Light." MAN TWO calls out and the others respond accordingly.

MAN TWO: Go! Stop! Go! Stop! Go! Stop!

Blackout.

There is the loud sound of “white noise” or TV static. A dim light comes up on a circle of chairs. The chairs are facing outwards. On each chair sits a figure in a bathrobe.

The five figures represent residents of an old age home. They each suffer from a mental or physical ailment: Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, Dementia. They are shaking, screaming, drooling. They are not aware of the world around them. They seem pathetic.

The figures speak underneath the static. It is not important that the words are heard, just the desperate tone and the fight against the sound of static. The figures wail more than shout. Some rock their bodies, some flail. The following should play like music.

FIVE OVERLAPPING VOICES: Get out of my house! Robert! (*indistinguishable loud murmuring*) What are you yelling for! (*a scream*) Don’t touch me! Janet! Dinner! Me! Where’s my! Angela! Don’t! Freddie! (*loud murmuring*) Get out of my! I want my! My room! My house! Who are you!

The sound of static begins to break up. The words of the figures becomes more audible. They begin to speak in the spaces between the static. Their voices become calm, strong and young. Their flailing becomes clear gestures as each character tries to communicate.

WOMAN TWO: (*static*) — education in my —

WOMAN ONE: (*static*) I used to be a —

MAN TWO: (*static*) mechanic (*static*) used to be (*static*)

WOMAN TWO: house I — (*static*)

MAN ONE: I’m not (*static*) — not seventy.

WOMAN THREE: (*static*) — so young.

MAN ONE: I’m — (*static*)

WOMAN THREE: — beautiful girl. (*static*)

MAN ONE: I’m not — (*static*)

MAN TWO: I'm a young — (static)

WOMAN TWO: used to be (static) I am a (static)

WOMAN ONE: I used to be, I am a — (static)

MAN ONE: I used — (static) university (static)

MAN TWO: aircraft (static)

WOMAN THREE: I used to (static) dancer (static)

WOMAN TWO: Little tiny baby.

MAN ONE: I am a — (static)

WOMAN TWO: Little fingers. (static)

WOMAN ONE: Used to be used to — (static)

MAN ONE: Used to be used to — (static)

WOMAN THREE: I am twenty years — (static)

MAN ONE: I am in my — (static)

WOMAN ONE: I am not — (static)

WOMAN THREE: I am — (static)

WOMAN TWO: so young.

During the above the five figures turn from drooling vegetables into people. They sit straighter, they speak clearly, they stand. They become the young people that they speak of. All of the figures reach their arms up as if they are feeling the warmth of the sun. They breathe in and out deeply, enjoying the moment.

MAN TWO moves to the side. He watches the action. His name is RUSS.

RUSS: I will build you a beautiful dollhouse. A castle.

WOMAN ONE: In my house...

WOMAN TWO: I am not old.

WOMAN ONE: I am far from old.

WOMAN THREE: I am so young. I can still dance.

MAN ONE: I am still in my prime.

WOMAN TWO: In my head...

WOMAN ONE: I am fifteen.

RUSS: Beautiful.

WOMAN ONE: A baby.

MAN ONE: I can do anything.

WOMAN TWO: I am invincible.

WOMAN THREE: Look at me. I can still dance.

A waltz plays. WOMAN THREE begins to dance. The others (except for RUSS) gradually join in, revelling in their movement, laughing and carrying on. RUSS watches them with bemusement. As they waltz, the characters move the circle of chairs out of the way. They also set up one of the chairs centre stage for RUSS.

On the last pass, RUSS hands off his bathrobe to one of the dancers. The four waltz away leaving RUSS alone on stage. RUSS addresses the audience.

RUSS: My name is Russell Albert. I have lived in Toronto all my life. They tell me I'm 83 but... (he scratches his head) do I look 83 to you? Me neither. I'm an aircraft mechanic. They tell me I used to be an aircraft mechanic. I'm married. They tell me I've been married a long time. (he shakes his head as if that is unbelievable) I have seen a lot of things but I don't have a lot to say. If you want to know anything else about me you're going to have to figure it out for yourselves. Not many like to do that. If you've got a hammer and a nail and a piece of wood I could build you something. Then you'd know and I wouldn't have to say a damn thing. If you don't, I guess you're out of luck.

RUSS sits. He becomes old. His left hand shakes almost constantly.

The lights change.

Faded, creepy carousel music begins to play. The section represents the repetition and monotony of being in a home, as well as decreasing visits from family members.

Everyone moves in circles up to and away from RUSS. It's like a carousel that no one can get off of, least

of all RUSS. The characters move and speak in a mechanical manner.

All of the circles start out tight, but as the characters visit less and less, their circles become wider and they seem to break down like rusty machines. RUSS does not answer or look at anyone.

CARMEL: Good morning Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad, how are you feeling today?

MEGAN: Happy Birthday Grampy!

CARMEL: Breakfast Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad, how are you feeling today?

MEGAN: Merry Christmas Grampy!

CARMEL: Lunch Mr. Albert. Afternoon Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad, how are you feeling today?

MEGAN: Happy birthday Grampy!

CARMEL: Dinner Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad, how are you feeling today?

MEGAN: Merry Christmas Grampy!

CARMEL: Goodnight Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad, how are you feeling today?

CARMEL: Good morning Mr. Albert.

MEGAN: Happy Birthday Grampy!

CARMEL: Breakfast Mr. Albert. Lunch Mr. Albert. Afternoon Mr. Albert. Dinner Mr. Albert.

SON: Hey dad... (*breaking down*)

CARMEL: Goodnight Mr. Albert. Good morning Mr. Albert.

MEGAN: Happy birthday... (*breaking down*)

CARMEL: Breakfast Mr. Albert. Lunch Mr. Albert. Afternoon Mr. Albert. Dinner Mr. Albert. Goodnight Mr. Albert. Goodnight Mr. Albert. Goodnight.

As CARMEL does her last few goodnights MEGAN comes to stand in front of RUSS, but at a distance.

The lights change. There is the sound of static. MEGAN runs right up to RUSS and tugs on his sleeve. She is 5 years old.

MEGAN: Grampy! Thank you for the dollhouse.

RUSS: (*grumbling a bit*) Huh?

MEGAN: Thank you for the dollhouse.

RUSS: Hmft. You're welcome.

MEGAN: No one else in my class has their own castle. Do you want to play with me?

RUSS: No.

MEGAN stops dead and pouts. She runs offstage. RUTHIE enters. She is from RUSS' past, during WWII. She is 18; young and all smiles.

RUTHIE: Russ. Russ! Over here!

RUSS looks up and sees her. He drops his age.

RUSS: Huh?

RUTHIE: Russ! Come over here!

RUSS: (*he tries to get up but can't*) I can't.

RUTHIE: Why not?

RUSS: I don't know. I can't walk.

RUTHIE: What do you mean you can't walk? I've seen you walk every day. I think you're spending too much time under that jeep.

BILL enters. He is RUSS' brother. He's a rough and tumble good time guy. He is also from the far past. He is 20 years old.

BILL: Russ, Russ! Skip school this afternoon. We're gonna go downtown.

RUSS: (*he tries to get up again and can't*) I can't.

BILL: Why not?

BILL and RUTHIE begin to circle RUSS.

RUTHIE: Pick me up after the dance?

BILL: Hey Russ, wanna wrestle?

RUTHIE: I think you like those tools better than me.

BILL: *(singing)* A glass of whiskey all around, and a bottle full for every man...

RUTHIE: Are you ever going to ask me out?

BILL: Come on, I ain't got all day.

RUTHIE: Russ!

BILL: Russ!

The lights change. The sound of loud static comes up. RUSS is old again. CARMEL, a nurse on the floor, enters. RUSS is very agitated and starts to fight with her. Neither he nor we can completely hear or understand what she's saying.

CARMEL: *(static)* morning *(static)* Albert.

CARMEL leans in and puts a hand on RUSS' shoulder. RUSS tries to push her away.

RUSS: No, no, I don't want it, I don't want it.

RUTHIE: Russ! Russ!

RUSS: No!

BILL: Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!

RUTHIE: Wanna meet me at the ferry?

CARMEL: *(static)* have to *(static)* down Mr. Albert.

BILL: John Killoran found a way to sneak into the CNE – come on!

RUSS: Get away from me! *(he violently pushes CARMEL away)*

CARMEL: Now, what did you *(static)*

BILL: Don't tell Ma where we're goin'. She'll just get herself in a pickle.

BILL pulls RUSS up. As soon as RUSS stands, he falls to the floor. BILL continues on as if RUSS is walking beside him.

RUTHIE: Do you like my hair?

RUSS: I have to catch the ferry. I have to be there at nine o'clock.

CARMEL: Mr. Albert —

The sound of static rises and then fades so that we can now hear everything CARMEL says. RUTHIE and BILL move around in wide circles.

RUSS: You're trying to make me late. You're trying to get me fired!

CARMEL: It's almost breakfast time. Don't you want your breakfast?
Why don't we get you back in your chair.

RUSS: I can't stay here. Ruthie! Want. Need to catch the ferry. I can't stay here.

CARMEL: I'll tell you what. Why don't we get you back in the chair and then you'll have something to eat and then we'll talk about the ferry OK?

RUTHIE flies by, her arms straight out like an airplane. She makes airplane noises as she goes by. RUSS turns over on his back. He speaks to RUTHIE in his youth. He is lying under a jeep.

RUTH: Russ. Russ! Did you see those so and so planes come in?
Norwegian weren't they? Did you see them?

RUSS: I worked on them.

RUTH: You did? Did you meet the pilots? What were they like?

CARMEL: Mr. Albert...

RUSS: (to RUTHIE) I'm busy!

CARMEL: You're not going to be cross with me again are you?

RUSS: (he becomes old) What?

CARMEL: Come on Mr. Albert. Let me help you up.

CARMEL helps RUSS back into his chair.

RUTHIE: Fine. I'll talk to you later.

RUTH flies away.

RUSS: Thank you.

CARMEL: You're welcome.

RUSS: You look very pretty today.

CARMEL: Thank you.

RUSS: Don't tell the others that we're sleeping together. They'd only be jealous.

CARMEL: Your secret's safe with me.

She exits.

The lights change. There is a spot on RUSS.

There are figures in the near dark. We cannot see faces, only shapes. They move as in a game of "Red Light, Green Light" towards RUSS in his chair. This section emulates the blood moving in RUSS' brain.

RUSS: Go! Stop! Go! Blood Stop! Blood Go! Blood Go! Blood Stop!
(*the figures do not stop*) Blood Stop! (*panicking*) Blood Stop!

The lights change. MEGAN stands in front of RUSS. She is extremely wary. She is 15.

MEGAN: Hello.

RUSS: (*looking up and seeing her*) Why hello! Long time no see.

MEGAN: Oh. I guess it's been... so – how are you?

RUSS: (*with humour*) They run me ragged. They run me ragged.

MEGAN: Ah.

RUSS: How are the kids?

MEGAN: I don't have any... fine.

RUSS: And you know... (*mumbles*) the Rocket 88...

MEGAN: What was that?

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: What did you say?

RUSS: Oh... sometimes I forget. It's nice to see you. It's been a long time.

MEGAN: I... I'm just going to get a chair OK? I'll be right back.

MEGAN looks around as if she's deciding to stay or flee. She runs offstage. The lights change.

Everyone enters and joins hands in a circle in front of RUSS. They move around and around. This is RUSS' brain. The people in the circle hum. The hum is strong and healthy.

RUSS: My name is Russell Albert. Albert. I am... Well, I'm in a place.

One person moves across the circle and goes underneath the arms of two others, getting the group tangled. The tangled circle continues moving. The humming starts to break up.

NOTE: The actors are emulating the children's game of "Spaghetti" where people who are holding hands in a circle get all tangled up. RUSS' brain is getting tangled.

RUSS: The month is... Well it's sunny out and there's no snow on the ground. It has to be summertime. Is that right? The date is...

The circle further entangles itself. It tries to keep moving but it is becoming increasingly difficult. The humming is broken up and not everyone is heard at the same time.

RUSS: The date is... I don't know. What's the matter with me? I don't know what the date is.

The circle becomes entangled further. It cannot move. The humming has stopped.

RUSS: I don't know... I don't know... I don't know...

The lights change. CARMEL exits. BILL and RUTHIE watch the scene. The previous scene replays itself.

MEGAN: Hello.

RUSS: *(looking up and seeing her)* Why hello! Long time no see.

MEGAN: Oh. I guess it's been... So, how are you?

RUSS: *(with humour)* They run me ragged. They run me ragged.

MEGAN: Ah.

RUSS: How are the kids?

MEGAN: I don't have any... fine.

RUSS: And you know... *(mumbling)* the Rocket 88...

MEGAN: What was that?

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: What did you say?

RUSS: Oh... sometimes I forget. It's nice to see you. It's been a long time.

MEGAN: I'm just going to get a chair OK? I'll be right back.

MEGAN looks around as if she is deciding whether or not to flee. BILL hands a chair to RUTHIE who hands the chair to MEGAN. There is no escape. MEGAN takes the chair and sits down beside RUSS. RUSS' left hand shakes.

MEGAN: (*uncomfortable*) I think if I sit here I won't be in anybody's way. There are a lot of people around. You look really good. I guess I'm here right before dinner. It looks good, there's carrots, I know you like carrots. Gene was going to come but at the last minute he couldn't. He's going to see you real soon. He's going to come and see you. Dad said he was by last week. Talked to the doctor. You look really good. Someone cut your hair. I like your shoes.

RUSS: Good for a speedy getaway.

MEGAN: Huh?

RUSS: How did you know I was here?

MEGAN: Um, I just knew.

RUSS: I don't really live here, I live across the way. There's another building, that's where I am. What do you think of this chair?

MEGAN: It's nice.

RUSS: I'm just borrowing it. The guy knows I have it. I didn't steal it.

MEGAN: Oh. Good.

CARMEL enters.

CARMEL: Time to get ready for dinner Mr. Albert. Who is this?

RUSS: Hmmm?

CARMEL: Who have you got come to visit you today? Are you going to introduce us?

RUSS: This is my granddaughter Megan.

CARMEL: (*giving her a hug*) You're Megan! Well isn't this nice. (*calling offstage*) Hey Brenda, this is Megan. This is Megan!

MEGAN: You know me?

CARMEL: Honey, we know you. He talks about you all the time.

MEGAN: He does? He does not. Before, he didn't –

CARMEL: See Brenda over there, he calls her Megan. She's you. You really wanted a daughter didn't you Mr. Albert.

MEGAN: He did?

RUSS: My son just had a baby girl.

MEGAN: How is... How is he?

CARMEL: You're pretty good this afternoon aren't you Mr. Albert? But you do like to keep us on our toes.

RUSS: (*to MEGAN*) This is Esther. She's my girlfriend.

CARMEL: (*with a jovial warm laugh*) That's right, that's right. You have a good visit.

She exits.

MEGAN: She seems nice.

RUSS: Hmmm?

MEGAN: The nurse, um, Esther, she seems nice.

RUSS: You changed your hair.

MEGAN: Uh, no, it's been this way for a while now.

RUSS: How did you know I was here?

MEGAN: I – Ruth told me.

RUSS: You know Ruthie?

MEGAN: Yes.

RUTHIE enters. She flies by in airplane mode and perches on the other side of RUSS.

RUSS: Listen, are you going back to the house? Are you going to see her?

MEGAN: I don't know.

RUSS: You probably won't catch her. She's going to the dance tonight.
Tell her I'll call.

RUTHIE: When are you going to ask me out?

RUSS: Huh?

RUTHIE: When are you going to ask me out?

RUSS: Hmmft.

*RUSS mimes working on the underside of an airplane.
He is young.*

RUTHIE: You don't want to?

RUSS: Don't you have work to do?

RUTHIE: I'm on a break.

RUSS: I'm sure it's over by now.

RUTHIE: Do you know what it's like answering phones all day long?

RUSS: No.

RUTHIE: How come you're not in the army?

RUSS grumbles and does not answer.

RUTHIE: How come you're not fighting?

RUSS: I have work to do.

RUTHIE: It's your eyes, isn't it? Your eyesight.

RUSS: Go away.

RUTHIE: It doesn't matter you know. I don't mind.

RUSS: *(he becomes old again)* I said, go away!

MEGAN: *(almost in a panic)* We still have your car.

RUSS: Huh?

MEGAN: The station wagon. We still have it. It's very reliable.

RUSS: I'm driving a pick up.

MEGAN: Are you?

RUSS: I have to be at the docks at nine o'clock.

MEGAN: What for?

*BILL enters and begins prowling around the perimeter.
He holds two shot glasses.*

BILL: (*singing*) A glass of whiskey all around, and a bottle full for every man...

RUTHIE: Hey Russ, guess what. Guess what! I'm flying planes now. Isn't that the greatest? I've always wanted to. That tailwind is something today.

RUSS: (*he is young*) What kind?

RUTHIE: 747.

RUSS: You're kidding.

RUTHIE: Right by the window. Did you see me?

RUSS: That was you?

RUTHIE: Tell her.

RUSS: Huh?

RUTHIE: Go on, tell her. She'll want to know.

RUSS: (*to MEGAN. He is old.*) Ruthie's flying planes now.

MEGAN: Is she?

RUSS: She flies them right by the window.

RUTHIE: Right by the window.

RUSS: 747.

MEGAN: That's a big plane.

RUSS: Well...

RUSS holds on to imaginary controls in front of him and shakes as if RUTHIE barely has control of the plane. MEGAN laughs. RUTHIE swats RUSS.

RUTHIE: Hey! I don't fly like that.

BILL approaches with the two shot glasses. He hands one to RUSS. They both down the shots. BILL takes the shot glass back and circles wide around RUSS.

MEGAN: Well, I have to go.

RUSS: Hm?

RUTHIE: Are you going to quit drinking when we get married?

RUSS: Who says we're getting married?

RUTHIE: I do.

MEGAN: I know it was short but I have... I'm going to go have some dinner myself.

BILL returns with the shot glasses. He hands one to RUSS.

BILL: Down the hatch.

RUSS: Up your arse.

MEGAN: Gene is going to come and see you real soon. I will too.

They down the shots.

RUTHIE: I'm not going to watch this.

BILL: Bet you can't do another.

RUSS: Bet you I can.

BILL takes the shot glasses and circles around.

RUTHIE: I said, I'm not going to watch this.

MEGAN: I'm going to come on a regular basis.

RUTHIE: Aren't you going to say something to me?

RUSS: What do you want me to say?

MEGAN: Nothing.

RUTHIE: If I tell you, it won't do any good. You have to come up with it out of your own fool brain.

BILL returns with the shot glasses. He hands one to RUSS. They down the shots.

BILL: Bet you can't do another.

RUSS: Bet I can.

BILL takes the shot glasses and circles around.

RUTHIE: You can't go out drinking every night. There's a war on you know.

RUSS: You don't think I know that?

RUTHIE: Some people are respectful.

MEGAN: So, I'm just going to put this chair back and then I'll say goodbye.

MEGAN moves the chair away. She is confused by the scene.

BILL hands RUSS a glass. RUSS hands it back.

RUSS: I don't drink anymore. I'm a married man.

BILL: You're giving it up?

RUSS: Cold turkey.

BILL: You're eighteen!

RUSS: Ruthie's pregnant.

BILL: Congratulations!

BILL drains the two glasses.

RUTHIE: I am? How did that happen?

RUSS: Well, you see two people get together —

RUTHIE: (*swatting him*) I know how it happens!

RUSS puts his arm in an arm wrestling pose. MEGAN returns to stand by RUSS.

RUSS: Wrestle.

MEGAN: Grampy?

BILL: You'll lose.

RUSS: I'm not gonna lose.

BILL: You always lose. And you always come back for more.

RUTHIE: It's not nice to sit here, you know, without even a shred of conversation.

BILL: I can't believe you're doing this again.

RUSS: (*to MEGAN*) Hey Maggie, I'm going to win this time, just you watch me.

MEGAN: (*not sure what he's talking about*) OK.

RUTHIE: That's what people do, have conversations.

BILL: Little brother, you'll lose.

RUSS: Big brother, I've been practicing. (to MEGAN) I've been practicing every day.

MEGAN: (*cautiously playing along*) Of course you have. I have to go now...

BILL: How do you arm wrestle with yourself?

RUSS: Shut up!

RUTHIE: I'm not talking for the good of my health here.

BILL and RUSS lock hands and start to arm wrestle.

BILL: You can't win.

RUSS: Who says?

BILL: You never win.

RUSS: Stop flattering yourself.

RUTHIE: Say something! Anything!

BILL: Don't need to. I always win. You're weakening.

RUSS: I am not.

BILL: You had too much to drink.

RUSS: I did not. I don't do that anymore.

BILL: You're only eighteen.

RUSS: You don't know what you're talking about. I'm married. Ruthie's pregnant.

RUTHIE: I am? How did that happen?

BILL: No you're not. You just finished school.

RUSS: When did that happen?

BILL: You know how to pound them back boy.

RUSS: So do you.

BILL: I can hold my liquor.

RUSS: So can I.

RUTHIE: Men.

BILL: Huh. I'm not the one who got so drunk on his wedding night he couldn't see straight.

RUSS: That's dirty pool!

CARMEL enters.

CARMEL: Dinner time, Mr. Albert.

RUSS: (*distracted*) What?

BILL slams RUSS' hand down.

BILL: I won! I won!

RUSS: That's not fair! You didn't win fair. You didn't win fair! (to MEGAN) Maggie, I'm going to...

MEGAN: Megan.

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: I'm Megan.

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: (*with increasing frustration*) I'm Megan.

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: I'm Megan.

RUSS: What?

MEGAN: I'm Megan.

The lights change and there is the sound of loud static.

There are figures in the near dark. We cannot see faces, only shapes. They move as in a game of "Red Light, Green Light" towards RUSS in his chair.

RUSS: Go! Stop! Go! Blood Stop! Blood Go! Blood Go! Blood Stop! Blood Go!

No one moves.

RUSS: Blood Go!

No one moves.

RUSS: Blood Go!

No one moves.

RUSS gives a roar and tries to get up, pushing MEGAN away as he falls.

RUSS: NO! NO! NO!

CARMEL runs forward. RUSS fights and struggles. CARMEL gets her arms around him. MEGAN steps back in horror. This is all overlapping.

CARMEL: What happened?

MEGAN: I don't know, I don't.

RUSS: Don't stop! You can't stop! You can't do this to me! You can't!

MEGAN: What's he talking about?

RUTHIE enters. She is carrying a wooden box.

RUSS: Don't stop! Don't stop!

RUTHIE: Russ!

CARMEL: Mr. Albert you have to calm down.

RUSS: Don't stop! Don't stop!

RUTHIE: Russ come out from under there. I want to talk to you.

RUSS: Don't stop.

RUTHIE: Don't stop what?

RUSS: Huh?

The lights change. The static fades. MEGAN and CARMEL exit. RUSS turns on his back. He is under a jeep. He speaks to RUTHIE in the past.

RUTHIE: *(holding out a box)* What is it?

RUSS: It's a jewellery box.

RUTHIE: I know that, but... you made it?

RUSS: You don't believe me?

RUTHIE: I didn't say that. You made it for me?

RUSS: You were talking to what's her name last week –

RUTHIE: Janet.

RUSS: You were talking to her and you said you needed one.

RUTHIE: And you made it for me?

RUSS: It's just out of scraps, it's nothing special.

RUTHIE: It's beautiful.

RUSS: If you don't want it –

RUTHIE: I didn't say that. I do want it. It's beautiful. No one's ever made anything for me before.

RUSS: You're welcome.

RUTHIE: Thank you. *(she kisses him on the forehead and walks away)*

Lights change. Music begins to play. Perhaps the carousel music – something that would be suitable for “Musical Chairs.”

RUSS sits alone. He waits impatiently for the action. The others come out in bathrobes. They are elderly residents. They put chairs in a line and begin to walk around them.

They shuffle, drool, and murmur loudly and incoherently as they walk around the chairs.

The music stops. No one stops moving. They continue in their shuffle. The music starts up again. The music stops. No one stops moving. The music starts up again.

RUSS: You're supposed to stop. When the music stops you stop. You're not doing it right.

The music stops. Everyone keeps moving. They move off.

RUSS: I see you. I see you. I know who you are. I know who I am. I'm not like you. I'll never be like you.

The lights change.

CARMEL enters singing with the necessary paraphernalia to give RUSS a shave. RUSS does not pay her any attention. She shaves his face.

CARMEL: Mr. Albert? How are you doing this evening. Ready for your shave? I'll bet you are; have to look good for the ladies right? Need a clean smooth face if you want to impress the ladies,

that's what I think. Looks like you're in need of another haircut. I'll make sure that one of the girls takes care of that for you. I saw your son yesterday. He was talking to the doctor. *(she sings some more)* You're so quiet today. Don't you want to give me any trouble? Guess I should make up my mind eh? When you're trouble I want you quiet and when you're quiet I want you to get all riled up. What am I thinking? *(she sings some more)* This is a very handsome shirt. There's a bit of a fray. If it gets any worse we'll sew it right up.

An offstage voice calls out.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Carmel!

CARMEL: Coming. *(the shave is finished)* There we are. Smooth as a baby's bottom. Goodnight Mr. Albert.

The lights change. There is the sound of static. Everyone enters to circle RUSS. They speak in whispers with great hostility.

WOMAN ONE: Why do we have to come here?

WOMAN TWO: He doesn't know who I am.

MAN ONE: It doesn't do any good.

RUSS: Who's there?

WOMAN THREE: He doesn't know how long it's been.

WOMAN ONE: He doesn't know I'm here.

RUSS: Who's there?

MAN ONE: Why do we have to come?

WOMEN THREE: It doesn't do any good.

RUSS: Who's there? Who's there?

WOMAN TWO: Why can't he walk?

WOMAN ONE: Why can't you walk?

RUSS: I don't know.

MAN ONE: He doesn't know.

WOMAN THREE: Why didn't you join the army?

RUSS: I don't know.



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

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