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The Caregiver: A Play Script to Raise Awareness of the Caregivers of Alzheimer's Patients

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The Caregiver

A Play Script to Raise Awareness of the Caregivers of Alzheimer's Patients

By Sarah Stiner

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The Caregiver
A Play Script to Raise Awareness of the Caregivers of Alzheimer's Patients
By Sarah Stiner

Cast of Characters:

The MAN, Mid- 50's, been playing the trumpet since he was 14.

The WOMAN who becomes his WIFE, Middle-aged, accountant.

The YOUNG WOMAN, All ages from 16-21-years-old, artist.

Time

The play takes place at different points over the last five years. The movement throughout the years can be shown by an easel that at the side of stage, where the canvas is turned away from the audience. The easel is to be lit with different colored lighting depending on the timing of the scene. The colors are based on the specific colors that the Alzheimer's Association designates as representations of the lives affected by Alzheimer's. It should be lit as follows:

5 years ago: Blue lighting – The color blue represents those who have Alzheimer's.

3 years ago: Yellow lighting – The color yellow represents those who are caring for someone with Alzheimer's.

1 year ago: Orange lighting – The color orange represents those who support the cause and a vision of a world without Alzheimer's.

Right now: White lighting – the color white represents the hope of the first survivor of Alzheimer's.

Setting:

Each scene takes place in one of the following locations:

A small office

A small apartment

A Jazz Club

A bedroom

A house like the home of the 5.5 million people in America who have Alzheimer's, and their caregivers.

SCENE 1

RIGHT NOW

White light comes up on an easel that is off to the side of the stage. The easel is holding a canvas, but the canvas is facing away so the audience can not see what is on it.

At rise: The WOMAN and the YOUNG WOMAN, her daughter, sit on a couch in the living room of their house. They both have a glass of wine.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sometimes I wish it could happen in the opposite order.

WOMAN

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

When someone you love hurts you, I wish it could happen in the opposite order...I mean, you know that everyone you love is gonna hurt you at some point. You don't know how, and you don't know how bad. But you do know when - it's gonna be *after* you fall in love with them. I wish you could know how and how bad before you fall in love. Then you could make a better choice...

SCENE 2

5 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to blue.

A small office. The WOMAN is sitting at a desk with a receiver to her ear. She hangs up the phone. She sits. After a while, she returns to her work, fighting back tears. The MAN slowly walks in to the office.

WOMAN

Oh, I'm sorry, it's Al, right? I'm still working on the payroll, but I'll have your check in a minute.

MAN

Oh, that's OK. That's not actually why I came in.

WOMAN

Oh...?

MAN

I'm sorry, I just saw you through the window, on the phone.

WOMAN

Oh, yes, my husband... I um... I...

MAN

Are you alright?

WOMAN

... No... I'm a mess.

SCENE 3

1 YEAR AGO

The easel lighting changes to orange.

The lights come up on the kitchen in the house. The MAN walks into the kitchen with a cup in his hand. He looks around and scratches a spot on his chest. He goes to the fridge, opens the door, and looks. He looks for a while, then leaves the door open and puts his cup on the counter. He goes to the sink and looks at it for a while, he turns the water on. He leaves the sink and goes back to the fridge. He closes the door. He opens the door to the freezer and looks inside. He stares. After a minute, he pulls out some ice and puts it in the cup, slowly, one piece at a time. Then, leaving the freezer door open, he looks around the kitchen, confused. He starts to look in cupboards for something. Eventually he stumbles upon the sink that is filling with water, he looks at the water for a minute. He then touches the water and pulls his hand away. He puts his glass under the water and fills it. He walks away from the sink as the water continues to run. The sink is very close to overflowing. He slowly goes to a worn-out chair and sits in it. He picks up a remote that is sitting next to the chair. The sink is nearly about to overflow when the YOUNG WOMAN comes in. She sees the sink full of water and calmly but quickly rushes over and shuts off the water just before it overflows onto the floor. She reaches in and pulls out the stopper and puts it in a drawer. She then closes the open cupboard doors, grabs a handful of ice from the freezer, shuts the door, then goes to the sink and fills her glass with water. She looks at the man who is still staring at the remote.

YOUNG WOMAN

What would you like to watch, Al?

The MAN just looks at her, shrugs, and lets out a small nervous giggle.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Pointing to the buttons).

If you want to watch golf, that's 582, so you take the remote and press 5-8-2.

He looks again at the remote with a puzzled look. He presses a random button. He lets out another nervous giggle and gives the remote to the YOUNG WOMAN.

YOUNG WOMAN

You want a snack?

MAN

...Okay...

The YOUNG WOMAN begins to put peanut butter on a piece of bread. As she does this, the man's eyes wander. Sometimes he is staring at the TV with a confused look on his face, sometimes he is looking off into space like he doesn't know what to look at. All the while, he is scratching the spot on his chest nervously.

Once the snack is ready, the YOUNG WOMAN puts it on a plate and gives it to the MAN. He eats timidly. After a while, his WIFE comes through the door.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hi mom.

WIFE

Hi there.

YOUNG WOMAN

How was work?

WIFE

Oh, we're just crazy busy. I could work for a month's worth of hours and still not be caught up.

She goes over to the MAN and gives him a kiss

I'm glad to be home though. How was class?

YOUNG WOMAN

Eh, not great. I have a lot of work to do, my prof gave me a lot of notes on my piece. He said I don't necessarily need to start over, but I don't really know how I'm gonna –

(Realizes her mother's not listening.)

WIFE

(Smells the man... then jokingly)

- WOoo! Have you showered lately?

(The MAN giggles.)

You better shower, mister, or flies are gonna start swarming!

They both giggle and the MAN gets up and slowly wanders away. Once he is gone, his WIFE sighs.

Well, at least he thought it was funny this time.

The YOUNG WOMAN opens the drawer and pulls out the stopper.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Calmly and matter-of-factly:)

We are going to have to make sure we don't leave these sitting with the drain plugged. I came out here and the sink was almost overflowing.

WIFE

Yeah, he's been leaving the water on a lot... So how did your class go?

His WIFE begins to get herself a glass of water in the same way her daughter did earlier.

YOUNG WOMAN

Um... it was fine... When are you seeing that new doctor?

WIFE

Tomorrow. I'm nervous. Dr. Shawmer was so good with him.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, well, who knows maybe the new doctor will have some magical touch.

There is a sound of something dropping off stage. His WIFE exits in a calm but efficient manner to see what might be wrong. The YOUNG WOMAN puts the stopper back in the drawer.

SCENE 4

5 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to blue.

The kitchen of a small apartment. The YOUNG WOMAN comes through the door and swings her backpack down and lets out a deep sigh. She is about to unload something, but then sees her mother at the other side of the room, putting on high heeled shoes.

YOUNG WOMAN

The club again?

WOMAN

Oh. Hi honey, I didn't think you were gonna be home tonight. I thought you were going to that ...thing.

YOUNG WOMAN

The senior lock-in.

WOMAN

(Looking around for her purse.)

Yeah, that, I thought you were gonna be with your friends tonight.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, well, I was mostly gonna go because they were gonna leave the art room open and I could work on my painting, but Mr. Isler is a jerk, my friends are jerks, the painting sucks, and I don't wanna be in that stupid prison they call "high school" any more than I have to.

WOMAN

I thought you liked Mr. Isler?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well I guess I do, but he said that he would be at the lock-in tonight, then he bailed for some stupid thing with his kid, and they won't leave the room open without him there, and when I expressed that I was a little upset because I have to finish this project soon for my college interviews, he was just like, "Alexa, you know, you would paint better if you would relax once in a while." Like what the hell is that supposed to mean?

WOMAN

Oh honey, I'm sorry.

YOUNG WOMAN

And then I was obviously pissed at him, and my friends were just like, "It's just an art room. There are other things you can do tonight. Chill out..."

WOMAN

(Trying to listen but is distracted by the fact that she is late. Checking her phone.)

I'm really sorry, honey. But hey, maybe they're right, you could take it easy tonight. Watch a movie or something. I could give you some money for a pizza.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, I guess so... or maybe we could watch one together when you get back?

WOMAN

... yeah, sure.

YOUNG WOMAN

Or not, I mean, we don't have to...

WOMAN

No, we can. I just might be back kind of late. I could stay here with you if you really want me to.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, what if I came with you?

WOMAN

Oh... No, I don't have to go. We can just stay here.

YOUNG WOMAN

What? I can't come with you?

WOMAN

Well I don't really think you'd like it.

YOUNG WOMAN

What do you mean?

WOMAN

Honey, we can just stay home. It's fine.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

(Pause)

Mom?

WOMAN

Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN

When you go to the club, you don't go with a group from work, do you?

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN

You're just with that guy, aren't you? What's his name?

WOMAN

Al.

YOUNG WOMAN

Al, right... So, he's like... your boyfriend now?

WOMAN

He's my guy now, Alexa.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok.

(She fights back tears.)

WOMAN

Honey, I'm sorry I didn't tell you. It's just – I'm – I'm just really happy and I just wanted to wait a little longer before things got complicated.

YOUNG WOMAN

Got? Got complicated? Things are already complicated. I'm worrying all the time since everything happened that your sitting here all sad and alone whenever I go out, and now you have a boyfriend, and you don't even tell me?

WOMAN

I know honey, I'm sorry. I just... I don't know... I thought you would be mad.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Through tears.)

I'm not mad... I'm just...

(Can't finish her thought.)

The WOMAN hugs her daughter.

YOUNG WOMAN

He makes you happy, mama?

WOMAN

Yes...I love him very much. He takes care of me.

SCENE 5

1 YEAR AGO

The easel lighting changes to orange.

The kitchen of their house. His WIFE stands washing dishes. The MAN enters the room and begins his normal routine. He is in his underwear. His WIFE turns around and sees him and her eyes become wide.

WIFE

Oooh, my. Well? Are you hot?

MAN

Hmmm?

WIFE

(Laughs)

Well, you don't have any clothes on.

(MAN looks down confused.)

WIFE

Okay, skivvies, let's go.

She leads him out of the room as they go to put clothes on.

As they exit, the YOUNG WOMAN enters and gives a surprised and amused look in their direction. She goes to the medicine cabinet and pulls out two pill boxes. She opens a couple of sections and sees that there they are not refilled. She starts taking pill bottles out of the cabinet and begins to fill the boxes. After a few bottles and pills, she looks for another bottle, but can't find it. She starts rummaging through the cabinet getting more and more frustrated. She eventually finds the bottle she is looking for in the back of the cabinet. She looks and sees that there are only a few pills in it. She sighs and starts to refill the pill boxes.

His WIFE enters the kitchen with the MAN behind her.

WIFE

Do you want something for lunch?

MAN

Sure.

WIFE

Well, what would you like? I could make you some soup, or some salad, or a grilled cheese...

The MAN gives her a puzzled look like he doesn't understand.

WIFE

Do you want soup or grilled cheese?

MAN

That sounds good.

WIFE

Grilled cheese?

MAN

Yeah.

The MAN meanders away to his chair.

YOUNG WOMAN

You know you shouldn't give him options, it just confuses him.

WIFE

I know, but he's still a grown man.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hmm...

WIFE

To be honest, whatever I feel like fixing for him, I say that second, because I know he won't remember the first.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, it confuses him. You should learn to not give him options.

WIFE

I know... Why are you so grumpy?

YOUNG WOMAN

Did you forget to have the doctor refill the blood pressure medicine?

WIFE

No -

YOUNG WOMAN

I know it's hard, but there's gonna come a day when you aren't gonna be able to afford a single slip up. You'll give him an option and it will make him upset, and you won't be able to just run out at the last minute and get more blood pressure medicine.

(Begins to put the pills in the pill box.)

WIFE

I know! Hey, stop putting those in there! The reason I don't have the blood pressure medicine is because Dr. Wilder took him off it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Why?

WIFE

I was gonna tell you, but I got distracted. Dr. Wilder looked at the side effects of the blood pressure medicine that Al has been on since his diagnosis. The rarer side effects of that medication are things like memory loss, confusion, trouble forming words.

YOUNG WOMAN

What? Really!?

WIFE

So, he doesn't know for sure, but he wants to rule out the possibility that Al's problems are because of that medicine. Wilder said that he is skeptical of the diagnosis because it's not in his family history, and he's been on this medication just a little longer than he's been diagnosed.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh my God. So that means...

WIFE

That he might not have it.

SCENE 6

3 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to yellow.

The kitchen of the house. The YOUNG WOMAN enters in a fluster and goes to the kitchen table. She starts rummaging through the piles of papers that are all over the table. Papers are falling on the floor and she is getting more and more frustrated. His WIFE is at the stove.

YOUNG WOMAN

Mom, did you write me that check yet?

WIFE

Oh no, I'm sorry I forgot. Can I give it to you later?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well I kind of need it now, we're supposed to be at the museum at 9.

WIFE

Ok, well just give me a second and I'll write it now.

YOUNG WOMAN

Do you even now where your purse is?

WIFE

No, I'm gonna have to find it, just give me a second.

YOUNG WOMAN

You know what, just forget it. I'll figure it out.

WIFE

Alexa, would you just wait. It won't take me long to write it once I find my purse.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't have time right now to watch you scramble around for your purse. I actually want my art professors to know I exist this year, so I probably shouldn't be late to my first class. Maybe I'll get the check from you when you figure out how not to through everything around all the time.

(She begins to walk out the door.)

WIFE

Now you hold on just a second.

The YOUNG WOMAN turns back around.

Now, there is no reason you need to talk to me that way.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sorry but I'm just very stressed out right now, and I just needed that one thing from you. So, I'm just frustrated, and late, and I need to go.

WIFE

Well you know what, Alexa, I'm a little stressed out too. But it's no wonder that you don't know that because you haven't bothered to ask me about it. Ever since Al has been diagnosed, you've hardly taken a second to ask me if I'm alright, or ask me if I need to talk, or anything. You don't say a single thing to acknowledge it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok, well maybe I don't know what to say. What are you supposed to say after you've gone your whole life watching your mom get walked all over, even though she works so hard and does so many nice things for everyone, and then finally, she finds someone that loves her the way someone should, and then she finds out that she's gonna lose him?... How are you supposed to talk to your mom about that?

His WIFE breaks down as the pain floods her. Then, a long silence.

WIFE

I don't need you to talk... I just need you to listen.

SCENE 7

RIGHT NOW

The living room of their house. The YOUNG WOMAN and his WIFE are having a glass of wine together on the couch. The MAN is standing.

WIFE

You ready to go to bed?

(The MAN nods.)

WIFE

Ok. Go on back and I'll be there in a minute.

Before he leaves, the MAN gives them both hugs and he gives his WIFE a kiss on the mouth. He shuffles off.

YOUNG WOMAN

Mom?

WIFE

Yeah?

YOUNG WOMAN

I know this is weird to ask, but what about sex?

WIFE

Sex?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, like, do you and Al still have sex?

WIFE

(Laughs)

Yes, we do.

YOUNG WOMAN

So, he hasn't... forgotten...

WIFE

Nope.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow... Nature is really something... Take a man's memory, his ability to dress himself, to cook for himself. But God and nature forbid he loses his ability to reproduce.

WIFE

(Laughs)

Well, from the sounds of it we're lucky. We still have a very loving husband and wife relationship. I'm lucky that it's lasted this long.

YOUNG WOMAN

It won't last?

WIFE

No... one day he'll forget how, or he won't be able to anymore. But by that time, I might be weirded out by it anyway. He'll be more like a child of mine. Then, probably not long after that will come *the day*.

YOUNG WOMAN

The day?

WIFE

The day I fear most. More than changing dippers or angry outbursts... When he doesn't know I'm his wife. I talked with a nurse a while ago. He said that the first long term memories that a person loses is anything... and anyone within the five years before they were diagnosed.

YOUNG WOMAN

... That's us.

WIFE

Yeah... I try not to dwell on it too much, because he still knows who I am. But there is gonna be a day when I wake up and he won't remember who I am, and he won't know you. He'll still think that he's married to Mary and that his own kids are little.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh Mom...

WIFE

One day I'll wake up and he'll be scared of me and be asking where Mary is.

YOUNG WOMAN

Maybe... Maybe he'll forget everyone else and remember you. Only you. I know it sounds dumb and I'm not even that religious. But in situations like this, it's nice to think that God wants us all to have at least one true miracle in our life. I'd be surprised to meet someone who's never had something unexplainable happen to them. You're well do for a

miracle. Maybe that'll be it. Al will forget everyone and everything else, but he'll always remember his Valerie.

WIFE

I'm really hoping so.

SCENE 8

3 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to yellow.

The MAN and the WOMAN sit at a table in the jazz club. They are both wearing wedding rings and they are smiling at each other. The MAN stands up and gives her a kiss, then goes offstage. The Woman watches him leave with trouble in her eyes. After a moment, a jazz tune begins to play, but the sound is off. Notes and rhythms are forgotten. The trumpet sound stops, and we see the woman's face slowly drop as she continues to watch.

SCENE 9

1 YEAR AGO

The easel lighting changes to orange.

The kitchen of their house. His WIFE sits the table working with many papers. The sound of the front door opening and then slamming shut. The YOUNG WOMAN stomps in and throws her stuff down.

YOUNG WOMAN

What an asshole.

WIFE

Wow, language.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm 20 years old now, I'm allowed to swear, especially when my professor is being an asshole.

WIFE

What did he say?

YOUNG WOMAN

He's making me completely redo my piece.

WIFE

Making you redo it?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes! Completely. He says that if I wanna pass, I have to come up with a completely new idea.

WIFE

What do you mean?

YOUNG WOMAN

“You’re doing everything you’re ‘supposed’ to do Alexa, but there’s no feeling here. It doesn’t mean anything to you, so it means nothing to me.” That’s seriously what he said. What an asshole.

WIFE

Wow.

YOUNG WOMAN

He said that if I can’t make the painting ‘speak, say something’, whatever the fuck that means, I should plan to take another semester of fundamentals.

WIFE

That’s too bad honey. Will you have time to work on it this weekend?

YOUNG WOMAN

Maybe, but that’s not really the point... Whatever, when did you wanna head to the mall.

WIFE

Well, honey, it’s gonna have be to after this meeting thing that we have.

YOUNG WOMAN

Meeting?

WIFE

Yeah, the ladies from that program -

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, yeah, that’s right. I forgot that they were coming today.

WIFE

Sorry, I didn’t think about that when I said we could go this afternoon.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, no, that’s ok. I just, do you want me to help you clean up for when they get here?

WIFE

Oh, yeah, god I guess the house is kind of a mess. I don't know, if you wanted to clean up, that would be really great. I am just so swamped right now. I feel bad because I told my boss I could work from home, but I get so distracted.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well don't worry about the house, I'll clean up.

WIFE

But what about working on the piece?

YOUNG WOMAN

I know, but it's alright. This is a big meeting.

WIFE

Yeah, it is. I'm excited to hear what they have to say. Hopefully they can help us.

YOUNG WOMAN

When are they coming?

WIFE

1:30.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh gosh, that's soon...

The YOUNG WOMAN begins bustling around the kitchen as his WIFE is shuffling her papers as she works. After a moment, the man points out the front window. The YOUNG WOMAN sees this and goes to see what's outside.

YOUNG WOMAN

Someone is pulling in.

WIFE

Oh, that's them then.

A moment of silence. Then a knock.

Ok Al, they're here.

MAN

What?

WIFE

The ladies are here from the program. We're gonna go in the front room, come on.

The MAN and his WIFE slowly walk out of the room.

Passage of time. the YOUNG WOMAN bustles around the kitchen.

After an uncomfortable amount of time, the MAN walks slowly through the kitchen, he exits to the other side. Then his WIFE comes in slowly. She has a blank distant look on her face and her gaze is hard on a piece of paper in her hands.

Silence.

YOUNG WOMAN

How'd it go?

His WIFE says nothing and continues to look at the paper.

YOUNG WOMAN

So...can Gwen and Portia be his nurses?

WIFE

Yep, if his daughters are nurses' aides, they would have to take courses through their program, but then they could be paid for the time they're here.

YOUNG WOMAN

That's good.

Silence.

And they'd come to the house?

WIFE

Yep. And they have a senior center that they could pick him up and take him to where he could do activities during the day.

YOUNG WOMAN

And they'd cook?

WIFE

Yep.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok. These are good things... right? These are all good things, but you seem upset. What happened? Did they say he's not far along enough yet?

WIFE

No, they said that Al seems like a perfect fit for their program.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok, then what the matter?

His WIFE hands the YOUNG WOMAN the paper she has been holding.

YOUNG WOMAN

What? What is this?

WIFE

Those are the financial aid cutoffs.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok...?

WIFE

Al's social security is fifty-six dollars over the cutoff. So, he doesn't qualify for the financial aid.

YOUNG WOMAN

fifty-six dollars? Your telling me that because Al's monthly social security is fifty-six dollars above the cutoff, he can't use the program?

WIFE

He can still use the program. "The rate that we can give him for being above the cutoff is \$3,950 a month."

YOUNG WOMAN

A fifty-six dollars difference takes him from full coverage, to no help at all?

WIFE

Yep.

YOUNG WOMAN

Well are there other programs?

WIFE

I know about other programs. They don't provide the same care that this program does. And they don't even have financial aid options.

YOUNG WOMAN

I just don't see how the cut off could be this, but then they charge thirty-nine-fifty a month, that's almost 2000 above the cut off.

WIFE

I can hardly afford the medications he's supposed to be taking now... No help at all. I won't get any help...

YOUNG WOMAN

Mom...

His WIFE quietly and quickly leaves the room.

SCENE 10

3 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to yellow.

The MAN and his WIFE are sitting together at the table in the jazz club. The MAN looks undone and defeated. His trumpet sits on the table. The MAN just stares at it.

WIFE

Al?...

MAN

I think I need a drink, Val.

WIFE

OK, what would you like?

MAN

Strong... Something strong.

His WIFE leaves. The man stares at his trumpet. After a moment, he picks it up and handles it awkwardly. His fingers the keys a bit, puts it to his mouth and tries to make a sound. The trumpet lets out a screech. He tries again, another screech. He becomes more and more frustrated as he keeps trying to make music. His trying becomes a flurry of hard breath and screeches. As his WIFE comes back with a whiskey on the rocks, he throws his trumpet and pounds his fists on the table.

WIFE

Al!... Honey it's ok.

The MAN continues to pound on the table.

Stop! Al! Stop it honey, it's ok.

His wife restrains his arms, grabs his hand, and gives him the drink. He takes a long drink.

MAN

That thing has been my life since I was 14, Val... How can I not...

Silence

What's wrong with me, Valerie?

SCENE 11

3 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to yellow.

The YOUNG WOMAN is sitting on a couch in a living room. A clock is ticking as she waits. She is holding an envelope in her hand. The envelope is clearly some sort of notification from a university. She looks at the envelope, then out the window, then at the clock. After an uncomfortable amount of time, and a deep breath, she decides to open the envelope. As she reads the letter inside, her look shows that she has been accepted. After a short self-celebration, she hears the front door open. She hurriedly works to position the letter on the table so that her mother might discover it when she comes in. The MAN and WOMAN come into the room. The MAN slowly crosses the room and without a word, leaves. His WIFE watches him go and then looks to the YOUNG WOMAN, she doesn't notice the letter.

YOUNG WOMAN

What did the doctor say?

WIFE

Al has early-onset Alzheimer's.

SCENE 12

1 YEAR AGO

The easel lighting changes to orange.

The YOUNG WOMAN finds his WIFE in the bedroom of their house, sitting on the bed, writing an email.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Holding the financial cut off paper.)

It just doesn't make sense.

WIFE

Don't try to make sense out of it. You'll drive yourself crazy. It doesn't make any sense. It's not fair. That's just the way it is.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't understand what this means now.

WIFE

It means if I ever want Al on a program, I'm gonna have to pay for it myself.

YOUNG WOMAN

It doesn't make sense. There's gotta be some way to... a special circumstance. What if we talk to that elder law attorney?

WIFE

Lawyers cost money. Money I don't have. I still owe that lady for the work she did on our wills.

YOUNG WOMAN

So... that's it? There's gotta be something. We've got to do *something*.

WIFE

THERE IS NOTHING, ALEXA! There is nothing we can do!

Silence.

WIFE

The one thing that was keeping me hopeful was the idea that someday, when he was sick enough to need it, there would be someone here for him when I couldn't be. We did everything we were supposed to do to make him seem as poor as possible so that he would get the help... so that I wo-... Now... If we want the help, I'm gonna lose everything. Sell everything I can, remortgage this house, sell this house...

YOUNG WOMAN

Mama...

WIFE

Shows me for having high hopes. You think I would have learned when nothing changed when he was taken of the blood pressure medicine, and when nothing got better when that crazy holistic doctor pumped him full of supplements, and all the times that his friends said that they would visit but never did, and all the times that people said they would help and never did.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow, feeling very much appreciated. Thanks.

WIFE

Alexa, I can't do this right now. I don't have it in me to comfort you about it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes, I'm aware. It's pretty damn clear that I'm often just another emotional burden. And I really am sorry that I get so emotional. I want so badly to be one of those people that doesn't care enough for these things to bother them, but I'm not. It makes me sad, too. I've lost a lot, too. I've lost just as much hope, time and sleep worrying about my mom. Missing my *mom*. Knowing that even though she wants to, she can't put me first, because I can take care of myself. I'm just as pissed about this as you are, because all my hope was riding on the idea that I was gonna get my mom back.

WIFE

I know, I know. On top of everything else I'm apparently doing wrong, I'm managing to be a shitty mother at the same time.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm...

(Breaking down.)

I'm sorry, mama, I didn't want to make you cry. I just... I just miss you. There's nothing I can do and I miss you.

WIFE

I miss you too, honey. I miss you too.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sorry.

WIFE

I'm sorry too.

They embrace and cry together.

WIFE

(After reaching a more collected state.)

This is all just too much for anyone. I don't know what to do, Alexa. There are times when I feel like my only option is to stop paying my bills and the worst thing is that I *have* a husband. I'm supposed to have someone to talk to about this stuff. But I don't. I have no one to talk to. I have no support here. I just really want a hug... but he doesn't understand anymore. And you... well, you're gonna have your own life someday.

YOUNG WOMAN

You've got me mama. You'll always have me.

SCENE 12

5 YEARS AGO

The easel lighting changes to blue.

The kitchen of a small apartment.

YOUNG WOMAN

A jazz club?

WOMAN

Yeah, the new guy at work is playing tonight. A group from work is going.

YOUNG WOMAN

A group from work?

WOMAN

Yes, a group from work.

YOUNG WOMAN

Like Bill? And Jesse? They are going to a jazz club?

WOMAN

Yes.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ok. It's just, I didn't really know you were in to Jazz.

WOMAN

Well, Heather says that I need to try new things.

YOUNG WOMAN

Right. Well yeah, cool. It's just... a lot of new.

WOMAN

I know. We were married for a long time. I've been working with Heather on finding my new self, my post-divorce self. I might end up really liking it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah...yeah, you might.

WOMAN

You'll be alright on your own for dinner, right?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, yeah, I'll figure something out. Have fun!

SCENE 13

RIGHT NOW

The easel lighting changes to white.

The MAN and his WIFE come in from a windy walk. His Wife is shivering and walking like she is in pain.

WIFE

It's so cold out there. I hate how cold I get now, I remember when I was young how well I held heat. I was always so hot because I was always moving around. Now I'm just cold all the time.

(She fights back tears.)

My body is breaking down, and I'm always so tired and so cold. All that hard work all those years and now I'm just old, tired, and cold.

The MAN meanders off with a puzzled look on his face. His wife watches him go. After he is gone, she silently weeps.

I just want someone warm to hold me.

He slowly comes back into the room holding something in his hands. She swallows her tears. He holds the thing out to her. It is a pair of his long johns.

MAN

So you won't be cold...Ne...Next time.

SCENE 14

5 YEARS AGO AND RIGHT NOW

The two scenes happen alongside each other

5 YEAR AGO

The easel lighting changes to blue.

The Jazz club. The WOMAN walks in and stands at the door. She after a moment, she notices a small table in the corner where a small name card that says "Valerie." The WOMAN sits down, and a waiter brings her a glass of wine.

RIGHT NOW

The YOUNG WOMAN walks to the easel, and the over her and easel changes to white.

The YOUNG WOMAN sits in a chair staring at a blank canvas. The canvas is still unseen by the audience. She stares at it for a long time as the gears in her head turn.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Ladies and gentlemen, Albert Edmund.

The song we heard before begins to play. This time, however, it is a slow and sweet

Jazz song, and the sound of a trumpet echoes through the jazz club. The song should be familiar to the ear.

Then, she stares to paint. She paints like mad, straight through until she is finished. We see time pass as she paints with ultimate focus. Then she stops. She takes a step back and looks at the painting. After a moment, she slams down her brush and palette and leaves.

Within the time of the song, the WOMAN is taken out of the world of the club. In this moment, the only things that exist are her, Al, and the music.

Lights go down on the easel.

SCENE 15

RIGHT NOW

His WIFE and the YOUNG WOMAN are sitting on the couch with glasses of wine. The MAN walks over to the couch and gives them both a hug. He slowly shuffles off, they both watch him go.

WIFE

Well, cheers to my wonderful girl. Gonna have a special feature in the college museum.

YOUNG WOMAN

I finally did it.

WIFE

So, what was it like when he told you? What did he say?

YOUNG WOMAN

He just looked at it for a while and I was totally ready for him to tear it apart like he's done with everything else I've done. But then the craziest thing happened... He started to cry. Just a little bit, but tears started to come from his eyes. Then he just said, "Yes, Alexa. That's what I what I was talking about, this is the kind of art that says something. Well done. *Very well done.*"

WIFE

Wow.

YOUNG WOMAN

It was amazing. I've heard a million times that someone was "moved" by art, but I had no idea what it would feel to watch someone be moved by art that you made.

WIFE

I am so proud of you, Alexa.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Almost in tears)

Thanks mama.

They cheer again and sip.

So, he gave you his long johns?

WIFE

Because I said I was cold. I know it's silly, but that's pretty good for him to make a connection like that.

YOUNG WOMAN

He's still taking care of you, mama.

WIFE

Yep. I hang on to the little moments like that. They get me through the moments of pain...

Silence, the YOUNG WOMAN ponders.

YOUNG WOMAN

...Sometimes I wish it could happen in the opposite order.

WIFE

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

When someone you love hurts you, I wish it could happen in the opposite order...I mean, you know that everyone you love is gonna hurt you at some point. You don't know how, and you don't know how bad. But you do know when - it's gonna be *after* you fall in love with them. I wish you could know how and how bad before you fall in love. Then you could make a better choice.

The Jazz song we heard before begins to play. The MAN appears, but only his WIFE can see him, like a memory.

WIFE

No one ever would though. People will always choose to take their chances.

The song swells with a beautiful trumpet sound. The couch and the YOUNG WOMAN slowly fade away, the lighting around them changes to a combination of blue, yellow, and orange. The MAN and his WIFE slowly dance to the music. Meanwhile, a white light comes up on the easel, but now it is turned around so that the YOUNG WOMAN'S painting is shown. It is entitled "The Caregiver" and it is a painting that shows the strength, joy, and struggle of a caregiver, whatever that may look like to you.

END