

RAISING CANE

By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose

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RAISING CANE was first presented by Tonylou Productions at Ehrhardt's Waterfront Banquet Center, Tafton, PA, opening on April 30, 2014. It was directed by Tony Schwartz. The cast was as follows:

Amber	Kerry Brazen
Edith	Marylou Ambrose
Vera	Veronica Deisler
Leo	Randy Hennig
Sam	Frank DeSando
Cane	Tony Schwartz

CHARACTERS:

AMBER (late 20s, early 30s)

EDITH (mid 70s)

VERA (mid 70s)

LEO (mid 70s)

SAM (mid 70s)

CANE: (50s)

SETTING:

Act 1, Scene 1: The Sunnyvale Senior Center activity room

Act 1, Scene 2: Same, the next day

Act 2, Scene 1: Same, a few days later

Act 2, Scene 2: Same, a week later

Act 2, Scene 3: Same, 2 weeks later

RAISING CANE

ACT I

Scene 1

The setting is the activity room of the Sunnyvale Senior Center. Furnishings are drab, in neutral colors. They include a desk and chair stage right, four folding chairs and a step stool along the upstage wall, and a longish table stage left, which holds books, board games, a DVD player, and a TV remote control. A sign above the door says "Sunnyvale Senior Center." A bulletin board with activities, menus, etc., is on the wall near the front door. A door stage right leads to a storage room. A door near center of upstage wall leads outside.

Lights up: Amber comes in from storage room, a DVD in her hand. She's perky and dressed in exercise clothes. She seems excited about something. She gets the four folding chairs and sets them in a row, facing the audience. The TV is located downstage and is imagined. Every time Amber sets something, she steps back, looks, and nods to herself in approval. She puts the disk in a player, then picks up the remote control and turns on the TV. We hear a voiceover of an exercise video on the TV. Amber follows the instructions on the DVD.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

(Soft, gentle music, such as birdsong intro to "William Tell Overture" plays throughout workout. Voiceover is in soothing tones, the opposite of a normal exercise video.)

"Okay, folks, it's time to dive right into that exercise program all the seniors are talking about. It's time ... to ... GEEZERCISE! Are you sitting down?"

Amber shakes her head "no."

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Well, you should be. Find a comfortable chair.”

Amber hurries to a chair and sits down.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“There now ... are you comfortable?”

Amber shakes her head “yes.”

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Are you awake?”

Amber shakes her head “yes.”

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Good for you! You're already ahead of the game!”

Amber looks real proud of herself.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“So, let's begin with some warm-up Geezercises! Are you ready?”

Amber nods “yes.”

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Good. Then let's begin. Just follow me. Fingers first. One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four.”

Amber keeps her elbows at her sides; her arms don't move. She makes two fists, and raises just her index fingers alternating from left to right with the count of the voiceover. She does two sets.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Were you able to keep up? Good for you! Now that our fingers are warmed up, let's move further up the arm. Let's work on our wrists. Let's twirl our wrists. Here we go. One, two, three, four, one two, three, four.”

Amber rotates her wrists outward. As she does this, Vera and Edith walk through the front door and stand behind Amber as she Geezercises. Amber doesn't notice them. Vera and Edith look surprised, then increasingly disgusted.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Good! Now, let's rotate them in the other direction.”

Amber looks puzzled. She goes in the same direction as before.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“No, no, I said the other direction.”

Amber looks startled and corrects.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Now you're getting it. Good. One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four. That's enough. You can stop now. We don't want to overdo it. Are you feeling the burn?”

Amber stops and nods “yes.”

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Now, if you feel up to it, let's do a more advanced Geezercise. Let's do the entire arm! Careful now . . . extend your right arm over your head, then bring it down and do the left arm the same way. Here we go. Remember to pace yourself. One, two, three, four. Again, one, two, three, four.”

Amber has been following these instructions.

EXERCISE VOICEOVER:

“Good. You've probably broken out in a sweat! Let's not overdo it. That's enough for today. Tomorrow, we'll do our toes, ankles, and if we're up to it, our entire legs. Good job! Hit the showers and we'll see you tomorrow! And remember, no pain, no gain!” *(turns off TV with remote)*

VERA:

What the hell was that?

EDITH:

I don't want to know.

AMBER:

(spinning around surprised) Oh, yes you do! You're going to love this!

EDITH:

Love what?

AMBER:

Geezercise!

VERA:

What-ercise?

AMBER:

Geezercise! It's the latest fitness craze!

VERA:

For who?

EDITH:

I think she just called us geezers! (*rolling her eyes*) I hope this isn't the new exercise program you were raving about.

AMBER:

(*laughs nervously*) Yes! Geezercise! Now, now, don't take offense. I think it's a catchy name, like "Sweating to the Oldies."

EDITH:

"Oldies" meant the music, not the people exercising.

VERA:

Richard Simmons would *never* have called us geezers.

Sam and Leo enter front door. They're carrying one small dumbbell between them, each holding one end and struggling. Leo has a blood pressure cuff around his upper arm.

EDITH:

(*pointing to the men*) Except maybe those two . . .

The men set the dumbbell down on the floor and act exhausted, wiping their brows.

SAM:

Phew! That was a workout in itself.

LEO:

Yes, I think you gave me the heavy end. I think I may have pulled something.

SAM:

Where?

LEO:

Everywhere.

VERA:

Oh God, what a wimp. Look, you can't leave that dumbbell in the middle of the floor. Someone will trip over it. (*She picks up the dumbbell with ease and heads for Amber.*) What a joke. I got purses heavier than this.

She hands the dumbbell to Amber. Amber holds it like it's a feather. Then she notices the men are embarrassed and pretends it's very heavy.

AMBER:

Whoa . . . (*Her hand drops with the dumbbell, as if it's heavy.*) This is very heavy, guys. Let's just put it over here out of the way, before someone gets hurt. (*She puts away the dumbbell.*)

Okay, everyone. Take a seat and we'll get started with our new exercise program.

The men eagerly rush to get a seat. Edith and Vera hesitate.

LEO:

Will this strengthen my bones? Because I think I have osteoporosis.

EDITH:

What *don't* you have?

VERA:

He's a hypo!

LEO:

No, I don't think I have that . . . yet.

SAM:

Jeez, can we get started?

AMBER:

At least someone is excited.

EDITH:

That's because he didn't hear the name of the new program yet.

SAM:

Which is what?

AMBER:

(perky) Geezercise!

The men look at each other, then at Amber, in disbelief.

SAM:

You're kidding, right?

EDITH:

Nope. She's dead serious.

LEO:

I'm insulted! I'm mortified! *(stands up)* I'm furious! I'm . . . *(begins to sway and look dizzy)*.
lightheaded!

Leo collapses back into the chair, pumping his blood pressure cuff.

VERA:

Careful, Leo, your blood pressure will go up.

LEO:

Oh, that's okay. It was too low this morning.

AMBER:

Are we all feeling up to it then?

The four look at each other and shrug their shoulders. The women finally sit down.

EDITH:

I guess we can give it a try. What do we have to lose?

VERA:

Our dignity, our self-respect, and that's just for starters. All right, what the hell . . .

AMBER:

That's the spirit! Okay, now I'm going to start the video, and you just follow along the best you can. Let me know if it's too much for you.

She's about to restart the video when there's a knock at the door. She opens the door and in comes Cane. He's holding a sheet of paper.

AMBER:

Hi! Are you here to join the group?

The others get a bit excited, thinking there's a new member.

CANE:

Uh, no.

AMBER:

Oh, then why are you here?

CANE:

Because the judge said I had to be.

ALL:

What?

CANE:

Here, this will explain everything.

He hands Amber the paper. As she reads, the four seniors get up and huddle around her to read together.

EDITH:

(reading) Jail?

VERA:

(reading) Prison work release program?

LEO:

(reading) Custodial duties?

SAM:
(reading) Here?

AMBER:
I don't know if I like this.

CANE:
Neither do I, but the judge ordered it. I'm supposed to come here every day from the jail and do whatever needs to be done. So, where would you like me to start?

VERA:
(glares at Amber) We could use a new social director. Why don't you start there?

AMBER:
(pretends it's a joke, to save face in front of Cane) Oh, Vera, you're such a kidder. (to Cane) Okay, well, if the judge said so, I guess we'll have to find something for you to do. How about sweeping up? Can you do that?

CANE:
I think I can handle it. Where's the broom?

AMBER:
I'll go and get it.

Amber exits to storage room, stage right. Everyone else is still in a huddle after reading the letter. Cane slowly walks around the room checking things out. The group watches him nervously.

CANE:
So, let me ask you something . . .

EDITH:
There's no money here!

SAM:
I left my wallet at home!

LEO:
I'm too weak to carry a wallet!

VERA:
You touch my purse and I'll break your fingers!

CANE:
Relax . . . that's not what I'm here for. I just want to put my time in and get this judge off my back.

VERA:

(walks over to Cane, tough-like, looks him up and down, wipes her nose with her finger, like Barney Fife, and speaks in gun moll type voice) So, what are you in the joint for?

The others gasp.

CANE:

(stifling a laugh) You've been reading too many detective novels. But to answer your question ...

They all lean in to hear.

CANE:

None of your business.

They all jump back.

CANE:

(begins to walk around again, as if casing the joint) So, what is it you do around here, anyway?

SAM:

Well, we . . . uh . . .

LEO:

And sometimes, we . . . uh . . .

EDITH:

Actually, we . . .

VERA:

We don't do shit!

EDITH:

(elbows Vera) That's not entirely true. We were just about to start a new exercise program before you interrupted.

CANE:

Oh, "Sweating to the Oldies"?

LEO:

No, Geezercise.

Cane starts laughing. Amber comes in with the broom. She overheard the last part of the conversation, and she's annoyed.

AMBER:

So, Mr. Cane, what's so funny?

CANE:

Uh, nothing, ma'am. *(takes the broom from her)* Where would you like me to start?

AMBER:

(She points.) Over there, in the corner.

Cane goes to corner and lazily sweeps while watching everyone.

AMBER:

(claps hands) Okay, everyone. Let's take our seats!

The four seniors scramble to get their seats.

AMBER:

Now, I'm going to turn on the video. Remember, if it gets too intense, you let me know and we'll take a break. Here we go!

Amber turns on the video. The voiceover starts again and the group does what it says. They do the finger exercise, but on the last count of four, they all flip Amber the bird behind her back. Cane has been leaning on the broom handle watching all this. He chuckles to himself.

SAM:

(stands up) Stop! Stop this nonsense now!

AMBER:

(turns off the TV) What's the matter? Did you get a pain?

SAM:

Yeah, in my ass! This is stupid and degrading!

VERA:

We're not children, and we're not dead yet!

EDITH:

Although a person could die of *boredom* doing these "exercises."

LEO:

Oh, I don't know . . . I was beginning to feel the burn. *(He repeats the finger exercise.)*

ALL:

Shut up, Leo!

AMBER:

(a bit defiant) Now look, I have done my research, and I know what's best for you! Exercise is important at your age. If you don't use it, you lose it.

EDITH:

What exactly are we *gaining* by doing this? *(repeats the finger exercise to Amber)*

SAM:

Actually, my fingers are already in great shape! You wouldn't believe the workout they get channel surfing with the remotes!

LEO:

I pulled something once *lifting* the remote.

EDITH:

For your information, my fingers get a great workout, too, on my computer keyboard. What about you, Vera?

VERA:

Forget the fingers. My entire body is in great shape! I exercise three times a week to my own video.

AMBER:

What video?

VERA:

Here, I'll show you. (*pulls a DVD from her bag and shows it to everyone*)

SAM:

ZUM-bah? (*pronounces Zum to rhyme with "come"*)

LEO:

The Warrior Princess? I love that TV show!

EDITH:

Not, ZUM-bah, ZOOMba! You know, like zoom, zoom, zoom?

AMBER:

(*barges into conversation*) Oooooooh . . . I really don't think . . .

VERA:

Everyone is doing it! I do it three times a week, and look at the shape I'm in! I even have a special outfit. (*pulls a Zumba scarf from her purse, holds it up and jingles it, then ties it around her waist*)

LEO:

Oh my, where on earth did you get something like that?

VERA:

It's left over from my belly dancing days.

EDITH:

There's a Kodak moment.

VERA:

There's a lot about me you don't know. Now, let's put this in the DVD player and give it a try.

AMBER:

Look, I cannot be held responsible . . .

EDITH:

Yeah, yeah, yeah . . . what could happen? Let's give it a try.

Vera removes the old DVD, puts hers in the player, and then uses the remote to turn on the TV. They all act as if they're watching the TV.

VERA:

Okay, get ready to bust a move!

The music starts. Vera faces the audience and leads the group in some simple dance moves, while Amber looks on nervously. It only lasts about 10 seconds before Sam yells out in pain and grabs his back.

VERA:

What's the matter?

EDITH:

Let me turn this off. *(She hurries and turns off the DVD player.)*

AMBER:

(rushes to Sam) What is it, Sam? What's the matter? I'll call 911!

SAM:

No, don't call anyone. I just got a cramp. I get them all the time. I'll be all right in a few minutes.

AMBER:

I'll get the first aid kit and the ice pack. You sit and relax. *(She starts toward the storage room; then spins around to the group and lectures.)*

AMBER:

I told you. I told you and told you and told you, but no one listens to me. I am a trained professional. I know what's best for you. In the future, you will listen to what I have to say, and things like this won't happen around here anymore! *(storms out)*

EDITH:

(goes over to Sam, who's still in pain) Sam, are you sure you're all right?

SAM:

Yeah, I'll be fine in a minute. Hopefully, it will pass before Florence Nightmare gets back with her first aid kit.

EDITH:

(to Vera) You really Zumba three times a week?

VERA:

Well, not exactly. I *watch* it three times a week. I haven't gotten around to actually trying it yet. Except for just now.

LEO:

Oh, who are we fooling? Amber's right. Geezercise is more our speed. (*he does the finger exercise*)

EDITH:

(*sighs*) For once, I'm inclined to agree with you, Leo.

SAM:

I'm certainly in no shape to argue at the moment.

They all look dejected.

CANE:

I *cannot* believe what I'm hearing here. You guys are pathetic.

EDITH:

What?

CANE:

(*walks center stage*) First things first. Sam, get up.

SAM:

I can't.

CANE:

Yes you can. Here, let me help you. (*helps Sam to his feet*)

CANE:

Now relax, this won't hurt a bit.

SAM:

(*panicking, puts his hands up in the air like he's being robbed*) Look, I told you, I left my wallet at home.

CANE:

Will you knock it off! I'm not going to rob you. I'm going to help you. Now, I'm going to stand behind you like this . . . (*gets behind Sam*) Now, I'm going to grab your shoulders like this, and put my knee right here . . . (*places his knee against Sam's hip*) Now, hold still . . . (*Cane applies pressure to Sam's hip, doing a sort of chiropractic adjustment*)

SAM:

Aaaaaaah!!

VERA:

(picks up her purse to swing at Cane) Unhand him or I'll. . . .

SAM:

No! Wait! *(tentatively moves his hips from side to side)* I don't know what you did, mister, but you fixed me!

EDITH:

How did you know how to do that?

CANE:

That's not important. Now, does anyone else need an adjustment before we begin?

EDITH:

Begin what?

CANE:

Look, there's nothing wrong with you people. Okay, so maybe Zumba is a bit too much. But Geezercise is an insult. What you need is something more middle of the road.

LEO:

Like what?

VERA:

Is it something I can watch three times a week?

CANE:

Not watch, *do*. Okay, now look, just follow me. Everyone get in a straight line.

They all sit in chairs in a straight line.

CANE:

No! On your feet!

They all leap up to attention.

CANE:

Now, were any of you in the service?

Leo raises his hand. Cane walks over to him and gives him the once over.

CANE:

Not on our side, I hope.

They all start laughing at Leo. Cane glares at them and they instantly shut up and stand at attention.

LEO:

Were you in the military, Mr. Cane?

CANE:

I'll ask the questions here. And it's just *Cane*. Now, are you ready?

EDITH:

Ready for what?

VERA:

(nudging Edith) Shhhhh! Don't piss him off!

CANE:

Okay, everyone begin to march in place.

They all march in place.

CANE:

Now repeat after me. One mile -- no sweat.

ALL:

One mile -- no sweat.

CANE:

Two miles -- better yet.

ALL:

Two miles -- better yet.

While they're marching in place and repeating, Cane demonstrates how to march while lifting your arms over your head, then bringing them down and stretching them out in front. The four imitate him. .

CANE:

Three miles -- gotta run.

ALL:

Three miles -- gotta run.

CANE:

Four miles -- just for fun.

ALL:

Four miles -- just for fun.

Amber returns but stays upstage, watching and getting visibly annoyed. She's carrying an ice pack and first aid kit.

CANE:

Come on -- let's go.

ALL:
Come on -- let's go.

CANE:
We're out of shape-- so take it slow.

ALL:
We're out of shape -- so take it slow.

CANE:
But keep it up -- and before long.

ALL:
But keep it up -- and before long.

CANE:
All of you will be fit and strong. Here we go follow me!

They fall in behind Cane, and he leads them around the room. They begin the chant over again as they march. When they get close to Amber, she steps in front of Cane, arms crossed, blocking their path.

CANE:
Four miles -- just for . . .uh, oh. (*comes to a halt and stops chanting in mid-sentence, whatever that sentence may be*)

ALL:
(*they repeat*) Four miles -- just for . . . uh oh.

Everyone stops in their tracks. There's a chain reaction of one bumping into the other. Cane and Amber are face to face.

LEO:
(*shouting*) Amber Alert! Amber Alert!

AMBER:
What is going on here?!

CANE:
Uh, just stretching our legs, that's all.

The others gather around Amber to tell her how much fun they were just having.

VERA:
This was fun! Even more fun than Zumba.

EDITH:
And marching is something everyone can do.

LEO:
Brings back memories of boot camp.

AMBER:
You were in the Army?

LEO:
Absolutely!

AMBER:
The Salvation Army?

LEO:
No! The real Army, and yes, on our side!

AMBER:
(notices Sam on his feet and rushes to him) What are you doing up? I thought I told you to rest. I've got an ice pack here and Ben Gay. Sit down, and lift up your shirt -- stat!

SAM:
Relax, I'm fine. Actually, I feel better than before.

AMBER:
You're just in shock. Your brain is blocking the pain. Leo, give me your blood pressure cuff.

LEO:
It's a size small. It won't fit him.

SAM:
Look, I'm telling you, I'm fine! I was in pain, then Cane here did some kind of chiropractic adjustment on me, and it fixed me right up.

AMBER:
(glares at Cane) You touched a client? That is against the rules. Only the director -- that would be me -- has authority to touch a client.

EDITH:
Oh good grief, there's a no-touching clause? Since when?

AMBER:
Page 10, paragraph 5, section 3, of the Senior Center Leadership Handbook clearly states no employee can touch a client, except in an emergency!

SAM:
(to Amber) For the last time, I'm fine. This is not an emergency. I don't think your ice pack and Ben Gay would've done the trick anyway. *(to Cane)* Mr. Cane, thank you.

CANE:

It's just Cane, and you're welcome.

AMBER:

(sarcastically) Yes, Mr. Cane. Thank you for all your help. *(to the group)* Now, that's it for today, everyone. We'll see you tomorrow. And don't forget to check the activities board when you come in. There's lots of fun things to do tomorrow when you get here. Bye bye!

They all file out. Cane is last, trying to follow them out.

AMBER:

Not you, Mr. Cane. You stay.

He stops and turns to her.

AMBER:

Sit! *(She points to a chair next to her desk. He sits. She sits at the desk.)*

CANE:

Is there something you wanted to see me about?

AMBER:

We need to get a few things straight if you're going to continue with your work release program here.

CANE:

I'm all ears . . .

AMBER:

We have rules here. And we have them for a reason. The biggest reason is to protect our clients and keep them safe while on government property. Taking things into your own hands, like you did today, is very dangerous.

CANE:

Oh, come on. All we did was a little marching in place.

AMBER:

And some back adjustment on Sam! You could have seriously hurt him.

CANE:

Okay, okay, sorry about that one. It won't happen again.

AMBER:

I should hope not. I have enough to deal with around here without worrying whether you're injuring a client. You may have noticed there were only four clients here when you arrived. And that's all there ever is anymore. The center is in danger of being shut down. If that happens, those four will have no place else to go.

CANE:

And you'll be out of a job.

AMBER:

Yes, and I'll . . . that's none of your business. My point is, I can't risk anything going wrong right now. There are inspectors who make unannounced spot checks. Suppose one had walked in while the custodian -- the custodian here on work release -- was manhandling one of the clients.

CANE:

Okay, okay . . . I see your point. But I can't help wondering, why are there only four clients here? Where did the rest of them go?

AMBER:

Unfortunately, the rest of the clients don't seem to appreciate the exciting programs and events that I, a trained professional, have planned for them on a daily basis. *(She gestures towards the bulletin board.)*

CANE:

May I? *(He gets up and looks at the list of events on the bulletin board.)* Uh . . . interesting. Let's see here, 10 a.m., Bingo-rama; 11 a.m., daily blood pressure and vital signs check with Nurse Nancy; 12 noon, low-sodium, low-fat lunch.

AMBER:

Don't believe what you hear about the lunches.

CANE:

1 p.m. Recharge Your Batteries. What's that?

AMBER:

Nap time.

CANE:

For God's sake. And then Movie of the Day at 2 p.m.? What kind of movies?

AMBER:

Well, it's just the same movie every day. "Flipper."

Why?

AMBER:

No one has ever stayed awake long enough to see the end.

CANE:

I don't blame them. And then, last but not least, 3 p.m., Hot Health Topics with Nurse Nancy. Today's topic, "Prunes, the Other White Meat." Just who is this Nurse Nancy?

AMBER:

(sheepishly) Actually, there isn't any Nurse Nancy. *(She reaches into her desk drawer, pulls out a nurse's cap and puts it on her head.)* What do you think? Pretty clever, huh? The clients love it!

CANE:

Yeah, all four of them. I see you wear a lot of hats around here. Anything else you do?

AMBER:

I used to sweep, but now that's your job. I have my job, you have your job. I don't interfere with your sweeping, and you don't interfere with my directing, understood?

CANE:

Understood.

AMBER:

(getting up to leave) Good. Just so you know, *I'm* in charge. *(She exits to storage room.)*

Cane checks to make sure she's gone. Then he sits in her chair, puts his feet up on the desk, puts his hands behind his head, and leans back.

CANE:

We'll see about that . . .

Lights out

Scene 2

Lights up. The next day. The four seniors are gathered around a card table, playing bingo. Amber is at her desk calling the numbers. The seniors are obviously bored. They're resting their heads on their right hands. Leo is asleep, snoring occasionally.

AMBER:

(calling the number, perky, excited) B 3!

ALL:

(monotone, bored, searching their cards for the number) B 3 . . .

AMBER:

(still perky and excited) O 64!

ALL:

(monotone, bored, searching their cards, but they all switch resting their heads on their left hands, simultaneously) O 64 . . .

AMBER:

B 9!

ALL:
B 9 . . .

EDITH:
(notices that Leo is asleep; elbows him) Leo! B 9! B 9! *(points to his card)*
You have it! B 9!

LEO:
(wakes up, disoriented) Benign? It's benign? Oh, thank God!!

They all stare at Leo in silence.

SAM:
No, you numbskull, your card. On your card! You have B 9 on your card!

LEO:
Did I win?

SAM:
No, you're still a loser.

AMBER:
(gets up from behind the desk, goes over to the group) Now, now, no fighting! Let's all play nice together.

VERA:
(disgusted; to group) Check the bulletin board. Tomorrow we could be playing in the sandbox!
(She gets up and goes to the bulletin board.)

Cane enters from storage room and picks up his broom.

EDITH:
What's on there?

VERA:
"Flipper?" Again?

AMBER:
What's wrong with "Flipper?"

SAM:
It's a 40-year-old kid's movie about a fish!

LEO:
Well, technically, Flipper is not a fish. He's a . . .

ALL:

Shut up, Leo!

EDITH:

Why do we have to watch a movie? We can watch all the movies we want at home!

VERA:

We can *go* to a movie!

AMBER:

Would you like a bus trip to the movies?

SAM:

No! We want anything *but* a movie. We're sick of movies. We're sick of sitting on our butts. We want some excitement!

AMBER:

What could be more exciting than a rousing game of bingo?

ALL:

Anything!

AMBER:

Like what?

CANE:

(has been listening while sweeping) Well now, how about a bus trip to the casino? Don't a lot of senior groups go to the casino?

ALL:

Yeah! The casino!

AMBER:

Are you crazy? The casino? That's no place for you. There's slot machines, table games, liquor, the buffet . . .

The seniors nod excitedly as Amber lists each attraction. Their eyes get as big as saucers. The following three lines overlap:

SAM:

When do we leave?

EDITH:

I'm in!

VERA:

Sign me up!

LEO:

(excited) It sounds like fun! *(then weakening)* I only hope I have the strength to pull the lever on the slot machine!

CANE:

Don't worry, you just push a button now.

AMBER:

Thank you, Mr. Cane. Now see what you've started? They're all excited over something that's just not possible!

CANE:

Why isn't it possible?

AMBER:

Because you can't get a bus for just four people.

EDITH:

Yes, but I bet if you advertised the trip, all the people who stopped coming here would come back -- at least for the trip!

AMBER:

Advertise it?

CANE:

Yes, you should know how to do that. After all, you're a TRAINED PROFESSIONAL.

AMBER:

(fuming) Now see here, Mr. Cane, I have a good mind to call the judge and tell him . . .

The phone rings.

AMBER:

Excuse me . . . *(She goes behind the desk and answers the phone.)* Senior Center, Amber speaking. How may I help you? *(a one-sided conversation)* Oh, Mr. Ferris! Yes sir.

CANE:

(stagewhisper to others) Who is Mr. Ferris?

VERA:

The big wheel over at Coney Island. *(Vera starts cracking up. No one else laughs.)*

EDITH:

Mr. Ferris is the regional director of all the senior centers. He's Amber's boss.

AMBER:

Yes, sir. I know the numbers are down, but . . .

They all cup their ears and eavesdrop.

AMBER:

Yes sir, I know, but you have to remember, I am a trained pro . . . *(She notices all of them listening.)*

AMBER:

Mr. Ferris, hold for just a moment so I can take this in the other room. *(She carries phone receiver into the storage room.)* People, I have to take this call. Leo, you're in charge of bingo until I get back.

Amber exits. Leo goes behind the desk to call the bingo numbers. Suddenly, he has some courage.

LEO:

All right, people! You heard the woman! I'm in charge!

ALL:

Shut up, Leo.

LEO:

Right . . . *(He rejoins the group at the table.)*

SAM:

I think the casino trip is a great idea! We have to figure out a way to convince her.

VERA:

I think it's a great idea, too. Mr. . . . I mean, *Cane*, thanks for suggesting it.

Cane comes over and joins them.

CANE:

No problem. But I didn't do anything that you shouldn't be doing yourselves.

EDITH:

What do you mean?

CANE:

Why do you wait for Amber to tell you what to do? Why don't you tell her what you'd like to do once in a while?

SAM:

He's right. When I owned the tavern, I was my own boss and made all the decisions. What the hell has happened to me?

LEO:

Yeah, Sam. You used to be the life of the party. What happened to you?

SAM:

Well, too much drinking and too much eating brought on too much blood pressure and too much heart disease. Throw in a couple of failed marriages, and here I am.

CANE:

Yeah, but why "here"? Why the senior center?

SAM:

Because ever since my heart attack . . .

VERA:

You had a heart attack? When?

SAM:

That's not important. But it was a bad one. And ever since then, my kids want me to move in with them so they can "take care of me." Might as well shoot me now. They're always coming by the house unannounced, to check up on me. So I come here to escape.

VERA:

So, move in with the kids. They probably won't make you play bingo.

SAM:

We don't know that.

VERA:

Look, be happy you have kids who care about you. Some of us would love to have your problem.

EDITH:

You don't have any kids, Vera?

VERA:

Well, it's a long story . . .

CANE:

We got time.

VERA:

It's really quite simple. I wanted kids, my husband didn't. The end.

LEO:

There has to be more to the story.

VERA:

(gets up and moves around to tell story) My husband was a very successful lawyer. You know, the kind you see in the TV commercials. We were living the high life. Big house, fancy cars, country clubs, the works. He said kids didn't fit into the equation. Of course, this was all years

before he got sick. After that, I wished we'd had kids to help me take care of him, and to keep me company after he died. And maybe somebody to take care of me a little for a change.

EDITH:

What happened, Vera?

VERA:

I can't believe I'm talking about it. I never do. He got Alzheimer's. One day, I turned my back for just a minute, and he was gone. I looked all over the house. I never realized he went out to the garage. He started the car, backed it out, right through the door, and hit a poor woman walking by on the sidewalk.

SAM:

Did she sue?

VERA:

Her family did. She died. And suddenly I found myself on the other side of one of those lawsuits that made my husband so wealthy. Now I know how the other party feels. I lost everything. The house, the cars, the money. By the time my husband died, I barely had enough money to bury him.

LEO:

Gee, Vera. We didn't know. You seem so confident. So put together.

VERA:

It's an act. I'm living on my social security and barely making ends meet. I come here to try and forget a little bit and for the company. Only bingo, Flipper, and now Geezercise just aren't cutting it.

EDITH:

Wow, do you realize we've all been coming here for a couple of years now and we hardly know anything about each other?

CANE:

So what's your story, Edith?

EDITH:

(gets up) Oh, there's really not much to tell.

SAM:

Right. We said the same thing. Come on, tell us your story.

EDITH:

Well, I'm a widow, for nearly 10 years now. My husband was a banker. We had two children. Both are married and moved away. End of story.

CANE:

Oh, come on. There's more to your life than that. What are you leaving out?

EDITH:
Nothing.

VERA:
So, you got married right out of high school and had a family?

EDITH:
Well . . . not exactly. I went to college.

LEO:
Oh, really? A career woman!

EDITH:
I never got to use my journalism degree. My husband was old-fashioned. You know, the old "women should be barefoot and pregnant" mentality.

VERA:
Did you kill him?

EDITH:
No, he died of natural causes. But by that time, it was way too late for any career. I was a housewife and mother. And for the most part, a very happy one.

VERA:
Well, at least you have children. That's an accomplishment.

EDITH:
It is, and I'm proud of them. But they live all the way across the country, and I hardly ever see my grandchildren.

LEO:
So you come here for company, too, then.

EDITH:
Well, it ain't for the intellectual stimulation. Just kidding. I think we'd all be more interesting if the activities were.

CANE:
And how about you, Leo. What's your story?

LEO:
Story? What story? I'm a very sick person. I'm going to leave my body to science.

SAM:
Science fiction?

LEO:
Very funny. I'm a very sick person, and the doctors can't seem to find out what's wrong with me.

CANE:

Maybe there's nothing wrong with you.

LEO:

Oh, no. There is. I go online every day and discover something else I have. Yesterday I ate a hamburger that tasted funny. I think I may have Mad Cow Disease!

SAM:

Maybe you'd feel better if you got your mind off yourself.

LEO:

You know, my kids say the same thing. But how can I? I'm so depressed. You're lucky. I *wish* my kids would let me come live with them. Instead, they force me to come here. They think socializing is good for me. They want me to maintain my independence.

EDITH:

Sounds right to me. I thought that's what we *all* wanted.

LEO:

That's easy for you to say. You're not all walking time bombs like I am. I could be here today and gone tomorrow. And if that happened, would anyone even notice?

EDITH:

(*goes over to Leo*) Of course we would. Look, we're all terminal. That's life. We're dying the minute we're born. It's what you do with that life in between the beginning and the end that counts. So, why not make the most of it?

LEO:

That's what my wife used to say.

VERA:

How long has she been gone?

LEO:

Twenty years . . .

SAM:

Jeez, has Marion been gone that long?

LEO:

Yeah . . .

EDITH:

Poor, Leo. Widowed for 20 years.

LEO:

Oh, I'm not widowed. She ran off with her line dancing teacher. She was a real party animal. I couldn't keep up.

SAM:

You couldn't *get* up!

CANE:

Have you all taken a good look at yourselves? What we have here are four individuals all feeling sorry for themselves who don't even know each other. Before you can have a successful senior center, you have to communicate, find some common ground, laugh and have fun, but most important, you got to support each other.

The group ponders this; then seems annoyed that Cane not only interfered, but is probably right.

SAM:

So, where does a hardened criminal like yourself get all this insight?

CANE:

My prison psychiatrist.

VERA:

I knew it! A psycho-killer!

CANE:

Hardly. It's just required while you're in "the joint."

EDITH:

(goes up to Cane) I forgot, what did you say you were in for again?

CANE:

I didn't say, and stop asking.

Edith scurries off and sits back down.

SAM:

Maybe that's what we need here. A shrink. Someone to analyze what's wrong with this senior center.

CANE:

You don't need a shrink to figure that out. All you have to do is open your eyes.

LEO:

Right! Open our eyes. It's Amber!

ALL:

Yeah, it's her fault.

CANE:

It is not.

ALL:

It's not?

CANE:

No, it's not. Okay, her methods stink, and her activities are a bit asinine . . .

EDITH:

A bit?

CANE:

All right, they suck. But that's the way she was trained, and her heart's in the right place. What she needs is some input from you. Why don't you tell her what you really want, instead of just complaining all the time? Or maybe, that *is* what you really want, to complain.

VERA:

What are you trying to say?

CANE:

What do you mean, what am I trying to say? It's not rocket science. You just don't want to hear it.

SAM:

Hear what? That we'd rather complain than take action to make our center better? Is that what you're saying?

CANE:

Yes.

VERA:

That makes no sense.

CANE:

It makes perfect sense

LEO:

Why?

CANE:

Because it's easier.

LEO:

What do you mean, easier?

CANE:

It's easier to complain than to do the work to fix the problem.

SAM:

That's not true.

EDITH:

(gets up and walks stage left) Yes, it is. We all know it. Our lives are in a rut. And then, we bring that rut with us to the center. It doesn't have to be this way, but we've chosen to make it this way. Cane is right. It's easier to complain about it, than do something about it.

LEO:

Yeah, but . . .

EDITH:

(goes behind Leo) And that's the other problem. There's always a "yeah, but," which throws a wrench into the works. We need to forget the "yeah, buts." We need to stop looking for excuses and start looking for solutions.

CANE:

Now you're talking.

LEO:

Where do we start?

CANE:

You already started. Yesterday you refused to do those Geezercises and still found a way to get in some good but safe exercises. Today, we've got to dump the bingo, and find something a lot more fun and challenging.

VERA:

Like what? My Zumba video didn't go over too well.

CANE:

Too much, too fast. You have to start small and work your way up. Some simple fun. You know, when I was working in the prison kitchen, we would play a little game called, "Stack 'em Up."

They all raise their hands in fear, as if they're being held up.

CANE:

No! Not *stick* 'em up. *Stack* 'em up. Put your hands down, you all look ridiculous.

They all cautiously lower their hands.

EDITH:

So, what exactly is Stack 'em Up?

CANE:

It's simple. It a fun challenge that actually works on your eye/hand coordination.

LEO:

I have very poor eye/hand coordination. I often poke myself in the eye while attempting to put my pills in my mouth.

EDITH:

Must be interesting to watch you put your *eyedrops* in.

A worried look comes across Leo's face. He starts to pantomime putting his eyedrops in and panics.

SAM:

Okay, so how does this game of yours work?

CANE:

It's easy. All you need is some plastic cups. I saw some around here somewhere. *(He starts looking around.)*

VERA:

Here they are. Is this what you're looking for? *(She gets cups from the table at stage left.)*

CANE:

Perfect. Do you have 10? I need 10.

Vera counts them out. Brings them over to Cane

VERA:

Here you are, Mr. . . . uh, *Cane*. Ten of them.

CANE:

Okay, since you're already holding them, you can go first. What you're going to do is place a cup on the table.

VERA:

I can handle that.

CANE:

It gets harder. Next you take a cup and place it on top of the first cup, upside down. *(He demonstrates.)*

SAM:

And what's the goal?

CANE:

The goal is to get all 10 cups stacked on top of each other in 60 seconds or less. It's not as easy as you think. Are you all up for the challenge?

They all look at each other and nod in agreement.

VERA:

Just a minute! *(She goes into some brief, but ridiculous warm up exercises.)* Okay, I'm ready! Are you ready to time me?

CANE:

(checks his watch) Ready, set, go!

Vera starts stacking the cups. The other three begin to hum the "Jeopardy" theme song. As Vera nears the top, she's too short to get the last cup or two on the stack.

VERA:

No fair! No fair! I'm too short! Get me something to stand on.

LEO:

(looks around, sees a step stool) Here's a step stool. I'm not sure if I should try and lift it.

VERA:

Time is running out! Pick up the damn footstool, Leo!

Leo picks it up. He struggles a bit; then places it down for Vera. Vera stands on it and resumes stacking the cups. Amber enters from storage room and stares in disbelief.

SAM:

(sees Amber) Amber Alert! Amber Alert!

This causes Vera to panic and all the cups fall. She begins to lose her balance. Cane rushes over to catch her. She wraps her arms around him and looks into his eyes lustfully.

VERA:

Oh, Mr. Cane . . .

CANE:

Oh . . . no! *(He lets go of Vera, and she almost falls.)*

AMBER:

What is going on here! As soon as I turn my back all hell breaks loose! Mr. Cane, what have you done now? I warned you . . .

VERA:

He didn't do anything. We were just playing a game.

AMBER:

One of Mr. Cane's games, no doubt!

EDITH:

No! *(making it up as she goes along)* This was . . . my idea.

AMBER:

Your idea?

EDITH:

Yes, it's a game I remembered from my college days. Back then, the cups had beer in them.

AMBER:
No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the premises!

CANE:
They were just having some fun, that's all.

AMBER:
Fun? You call falling off a stool and breaking a hip fun?

VERA:
(looking adoringly at Cane) The only thing that got broken was my fall, thanks to Mr. Cane.
(bats her eyelashes at him)

AMBER:
But you could have been hurt.

VERA:
Look, the only reason I fell was because of another Amber Alert! It seems the only time anyone is in danger is when you enter a room unexpectedly!

AMBER:
That's my job!

VERA:
To scare me off of a step stool?

AMBER:
No! I'm sorry about that. But it's my job to make sure everyone is safe while here at the center. And you're making my job more and more difficult.

CANE:
And maybe you overreact a bit.

AMBER:
How dare you!

LEO:
He's right! You do overreact! *(Leo looks shocked that he said that. So does everyone else.)*

AMBER:
But, Leo . . .

LEO:
I'm sorry, Amber. But it's true. We were having fun marching yesterday and you overreacted. We were improving our hand/eye coordination today, and you overreacted again!

VERA:

And you almost made me fall. Look, no one forced me to stand on a step stool. I was having fun. We all were. And what happened? Another Amber Alert! It happens every time!

AMBER:

(shouting) Stop saying, "Amber Alert." It's not funny!

ALL:

Who's laughing?!

AMBER:

(still shouting) You don't know the pressure I'm under right now! *(She's shocked at herself for reacting this way. She begins to melt down.)* Oh, what's the use of keeping it all to myself! The center is in danger of closing, and I'll be out of a job. All I've ever wanted to do since college is help people. Obviously, I've made the wrong choice. I'm no good at it.

EDITH:

(goes over to her) But you could be. Maybe you just need a fresh start.

VERA:

(mellowing, too) Maybe we all do.

SAM:

Maybe this center needs a fresh start, too.

LEO:

Before it closes . . .

CANE:

(to Amber) Look, Miss, if you don't mind me saying so, have you ever asked the people what *they* want to do, instead of enforcing what you *think* they should do?

AMBER:

But I'm a trained professional.

CANE:

Yeah? And how's that been working out? Maybe the professionals need to take some advice from the clients once in a while. Even the President of the United States has advisors. Ask them what they want.

LEO:

The President's advisors? You'll never get in touch with them.

CANE:

Not the President's advisors! You! When it comes to what you all really want, you're the experts. Tell her what you want. Tell her what the others want, the ones that left.

VERA:

She won't listen.

AMBER:

How do you know? Have you ever really tried to tell me what you want? Or have you just complained about what I've provided? There's a suggestion box right over there. How many have you ever used it? (*points to box on desk*)

LEO:

(*goes to desk and picks up the box*) Is that what this is? I thought we were just out of tissues.

CANE:

What does it matter? She's listening now. Tell her!

There's silence.

CANE:

Well, what the hell are you waiting for?

EDITH:

Well, maybe we're not sure, because no one has ever asked us before. But I do know what we *don't* want. We don't want patronizing programs, like Geezercise!

SAM:

Or boring games like bingo.

VERA:

We asked for music once. You brought in an accordion player.

AMBER:

You don't like accordion players?

VERA:

My *mother* didn't like accordion players. We want to rock! We want something with a beat. Something you can dance to.

AMBER:

Like who?

EDITH:

Now you got it!

AMBER:

I got what?

EDITH:

The Who!

AMBER:

That's what I asked you, what kind of music?

SAM:
The Who! They're a rock band from the sixties.

AMBER:
How about Elvis?

LEO:
We'll take anything over an accordion player.

VERA:
(breaks into a dance routine) Disco! Donna Summer! Now we're talking! *(begins to sing and dance)* "Bad girls, talking 'bout the sad girls . . ."

All four seniors break out in some disco moves. It ends with Leo striking a John Travolta pose from "Saturday Night Fever."

VERA:
Oh, I still have all the outfits in my closet.

SAM:
Can you get into them?

VERA:
I may have to let out a seam or two . . .

AMBER:
Okay, better music. I can do that. What else?

EDITH:
A *real* exercise program. Something safe, but invigorating and beneficial. Fun! It's got to be fun.

SAM:
And that bus trip to the casino. I'd like that. I think we all would.

AMBER:
Yes, but . . .

CANE:
But what? You asked, they told you. And, I have a feeling if you start listening to them, others are going to start showing up around here again. But the only way it's going to work is if you work together, not against each other. What do you say?

AMBER:
(thinking) Okay . . . how about this? I'll make you all a deal. If you help me find a way to get the people coming back to this center, I'll arrange a bus trip to the casino for you and all the others you helped bring back. What do you say?

They look like they don't trust her.

CANE:

(to seniors) Look, this is your chance. Do you want to be complainers, or do you want to fix this place?

The seniors huddle, murmuring together. They break the huddle and look at Amber and Cane.

EDITH:

After much consideration and debate, we have decided we would like to . . .

LEO:

(striking his John Travolta/Saturday Night Fever pose again) Boogie!

Cane leans against wall, arms folded, looking satisfied.

Lights out

ACT 2

Scene 1

Lights up. A few days later at the center. The decor is the same, but the card table is gone, and the chairs are folded upstage. Amber is at her desk, working at her laptop. She's obviously engrossed, excited by what she sees on the screen. Cane enters from the storage room and peers over Amber's shoulder at the computer screen. When she realizes he's there, she quickly closes the laptop.

AMBER:

It is not polite, Mr. Cane, to sneak up behind someone when they're working.

CANE:

Is that what you call that?

AMBER:

What do you mean?

CANE:

I saw the website you were on. "Singles Mingle?"

AMBER:

What? Oh . . . no, no, no! You read it wrong. You saw -- shingles! That's it! Shingles! I'm researching a topic for my next Nurse Nancy session.

CANE:

(chuckling) I may have faults, but poor eyesight isn't one of them. Come on, Singles Mingle? It's an online dating service.

AMBER:
How do you know?

CANE:
Because a lot of the inmates use it.

AMBER:
What? They actually tell people they're in prison?

CANE:
No, of course not.

AMBER:
So, they lie?

CANE:
Not exactly. They just . . . stretch the truth a little. Does this sound familiar? "Homebody, enjoys basketball, weightlifting, doing laundry and yardwork. Good around the kitchen, too!"

Amber panics. She opens the laptop, quickly closes it again, then cautiously opens it again, looking scared.

CANE:
Now might be a good time to hit that delete button.

Amber hits a button quickly and closes the laptop again.

AMBER:
Mr. Cane, can we keep this between the two of us, please?

CANE:
Sure, but let me ask you something. Why does a pretty girl like you need to look for dates online? The guys should be lining up at your door.

AMBER:
That's none of your business!

CANE:
All I know is, people tell me about themselves. Must be my honest face. Sometimes I have some good advice. That's all I'm saying. Maybe you need someone to talk to. Now's your chance.

AMBER:
Talk to you? An inmate?

CANE:

Come on, who am I going to tell? Talk to me. Even if I told someone, who's going to believe me? After all, like you just said, I'm an inmate . . .

AMBER:

You're right. Even if you did tell, who would believe you? Okay, you want the truth? Here's the truth. I haven't had a date in over a year. Every guy I get involved with breaks up with me.

CANE:

But why? Good lookin' kid like yourself? They must be crazy!

AMBER:

That's what I used to think. Then I noticed a pattern. On their way out the door they all said the same thing: "I already have a mother."

CANE:

Which means?

AMBER:

Apparently they felt I was mothering them. I don't know why.

CANE:

Come on . . .

AMBER:

All right, all right -- I've given it a lot of thought. When I was 12, my mother died.

CANE:

Sorry to hear that.

AMBER:

Anyway, we were all devastated, especially my father. He went into a huge depression. I was forced to grow up fast. I had two younger brothers, and someone had to raise them and take care of my father.

CANE:

Where's your father now?

AMBER:

He remarried. Both my brothers are married now, too. I guess I raised them well.

CANE:

And now there's no one left to mother, so you try to mother every guy that comes along.

AMBER:

Yup. I've come to realize that. Anyway, I'm no good at meeting people for the first time, face to face. So, I'm trying to find my soul mate online. I figure by the time I actually meet him, we'll already know each other.

CANE:

Okay, fair enough. But remember, as I just pointed out to you, what you see online isn't necessarily what you get in person. So be real careful and good luck.

AMBER:

Thank you, Mr. Cane. You were right. It did help to talk to someone, even if he *is* a hardened criminal. As for the mothering, I'm actually working on that, too. I'm seeing a counselor.

CANE:

Good, because you do realize, your mothering has spilled over into your job.

AMBER:

What do you mean?

CANE:

I know you mean well, but you mother the clients here, too, and they resent it.

AMBER:

But I'm a trained professional . . .

CANE:

Yeah, yeah, and you say that about as much as they say "Amber alert." Don't you get it?

AMBER:

I'm beginning to . . .

Cane and Amber's conversation is interrupted by Sam, Leo, Edith, and Vera noisily coming in through the front door, talking excitedly. Leo is carrying a book bag. Vera has some kind of a makeup case. Edith has a camera around her neck and a pad and pencil. Sam has a small box with a drink shaker and maybe some other bartender tools, which he puts on the stage left table. Vera can put her makeup case on the table, too, at a convenient time. Vera should hold onto her pad and pencil and jot down notes now and then. During the next part of the scene, the seniors should move around the stage a bit to avoid standing in a line.

AMBER:

What's all the excitement about?

VERA:

We've been busy the last few days, pooling our resources and talents to see how we can use them to bring people back to the Center!

EDITH:

And we came up with a great idea!

SAM:

Wait till you hear this! Tell them, Leo!

LEO:

(Leo drops his book bag upstage, walks downstage, and strikes a John Travolta, "Saturday Night Fever" pose.) A Senior Prom!

AMBER:

A what?

EDITH:

(goes up to Amber) A Senior Prom. You know, a dance!

SAM:

I still have my blue polyester tux from high school. I bet it still fits! *(unpacks his bartender tools onto stage left table)*

EDITH:

Still fits -- who?

SAM:

Okay, maybe not.

LEO:

I didn't go to my prom. I got my date an orchid corsage, and as I was pinning it on her dress, I had a severe allergic reaction to the flower. I broke out in hives and spent the night in the emergency room covered in Benadryl. She ended up going to the prom with my brother. Two years later, I was his best man.

VERA:

Okay -- well, you're getting a second chance! We all are! This is going to be fun.

AMBER:

Oh . . . I don't know. I may have to call Mr. Ferris and discuss this with him first.

EDITH:

Why? You asked us to come up with a plan to bring people back to the center, and we did.

AMBER:

Yes, but there are rules. I'll need to check the Senior Center Leadership Handbook. *(starts looking in her desk drawers.)*

CANE:

(still standing near desk) Oh, forget the handbook just once, will you?

AMBER:

I could get in trouble.

EDITH:

You already are. We all are. If we don't fix this place, you're out of a job and we're out of a center.

VERA:
She's right. What do we have to lose?

LEO:
Nothing.

AMBER:
(Wheels are turning; she comes to a decision.) You all are . . . right!

ALL:
What?

AMBER:
I said you all are right.

LEO:
Can you put that in writing?

AMBER:
(comes out from behind the desk) The dance is a great idea. There's only one problem. I've never had to plan a dance before. There's so much to do! I don't know where to start! *(starts freaking out)* I need to find the handbook. There must be guidelines . . . *(runs to desk and starts rummaging through papers)*

EDITH:
Relax, Amber. The Fab Four have it all under control.

AMBER:
The Fab Four?

EDITH:
The four of us. You know, like they used to call The Beatles?

AMBER:
The Who?

VERA:
Don't start that again! You know, The Beatles? John, Paul, George, and Ringo?

AMBER:
Oh yeah, I've heard of them. You can buy their music on late night infomercials.

They all roll their eyes at Amber.

SAM:
Anyway, we, The Fab Four, aka, the dance committee, have been working night and day. We have a plan.

LEO:

They have been working night and day. I only work in the day. I need my rest.

SAM:

It was just a figure of speech, Leo.

AMBER:

Okay, so what's the plan?

CANE:

(walks from behind the desk) Yeah, and what's all this stuff you brought with you? *(points at the book bag, the bartending tools, the makeup case, and the camera around Edith's neck.)* You having a flea market?

VERA:

(goes to the table) No! This is stuff we need to start getting ready for the dance! For instance, Sam used to own a tavern. He's brought some of his old equipment. He's going to mix drinks!

AMBER:

There's no alcohol permitted on the property!

SAM:

They're called virgin drinks! No alcohol! You can't even tell the difference.

EDITH:

And I have a degree in journalism. It's high time I used it! I'm going to take some photos and write some publicity for the newspaper and website!

AMBER:

(walks center stage) We don't have a website!

CANE:

(goes up to her.) Maybe it's time you did. You know, the rest of the world is now in the 21st century. You might want to at least step into the *20th* around here and catch up a little. Go on, start a website!

AMBER:

I'm afraid I'm not a trained professional in that area of expertise.

EDITH:

Everything is point and click today. If you can work a computer mouse, you can do it. Look, I'll handle it!

CANE:

Leo, what's in the bag?

LEO:

(takes books out) They're self-help books. As you can see, they've done wonders for me. I thought maybe they could be of use to someone else.

EDITH:

Oh yeah, you're a new man . . .

LEO:

I'm a work in progress. Anyway, we might find some useful information in some of these.

Cane looks through the books and reads the titles.

CANE:

Dance Your Pants Off, The Idiot's Guide to Breakdancing, Disco Dancing for Dummies. These are a good idea, Leo.

AMBER:

(goes over to the makeup case) Vera, what's with the case?

VERA:

(proudly; joins Amber at the stage left table) I am now a Larry May Men's Cosmetics Consultant!

LEO:

A what?

VERA:

(picks up case) It's men's cosmetics! No longer are cosmetics for the woman alone! No, no no! Today's man is just as concerned about his appearance as any woman is. And Larry May's products can transform any man into a raging hunk of manhood!

LEO:

I'd like to be a raging hunk of manhood!

EDITH:

You could be Larry May's poster child . . .

VERA:

So, I thought I'd work on Leo and Sam, get them looking good for the dance. They won't have trouble getting dates, not after I'm done with them. How about you, Cane? Would you like a Larry May Manly Facial?

CANE:

(looks panicky) Uhhhh . . . perhaps some other time. But this is great. Instead of sitting around waiting for something to happen, you've decided to try and make something happen yourselves.

EDITH:

But will we succeed?

CANE:

No matter what happens, the important thing is, you tried.

AMBER:

(to seniors) Okay, dance committee, what's our first step?

LEO:

(misunderstands) Well, I would suggest starting slow, maybe a foxtrot.

AMBER:

No, I didn't mean dance step. Although, that's a good idea for later. No, I mean, what's the first step in planning the dance?

EDITH:

I would say, getting out some publicity and building that website for the center.

CANE:

Okay, but let's not put the cart before the horse.

EDITH:

What do you mean?

CANE:

What are you going to put in your publicity right now? There's a dance. That's it. That's all you got. You need more. You need a theme, a DJ, food, a date, a time, etc. Then you can write publicity.

VERA:

Okay, let's set a date. Amber, you're the director, what do you think?

AMBER:

Well, I think it might take at least a month. We need time for the 3 P's.

SAM:

The what?

AMBER:

Plan, Prepare, and Promote!

CANE:

I like that. Okay, here's something to think about. Are we talking a day or night event?

AMBER:

The center is never open at night. It would have to be an afternoon affair.

LEO:

Good, because I don't drive at night anymore.

VERA:

And this way, we can all still get home in time for “Dancing with the Stars.”

CANE:

Okay, how about music? Do we get a band, or a DJ?

VERA:

A DJ would be cheaper.

AMBER:

I'm afraid there's no money in the budget right now for a band or a DJ.

LEO:

No problem. I have a huge record collection. I'll be the DJ!

CANE:

Another problem solved. What about food?

AMBER:

I'll have the kitchen staff prepare something special that day. Hey, you know what we need? A theme!

LEO:

I thought we had a theme. I thought we were calling it the “Senior Prom.”

EDITH:

Yeah, but remember back in high school? All our proms had a theme.

VERA:

Sure, I remember. I was head of the decorating committee.

SAM:

Okay, but we still don't have a theme.

LEO:

Well, if we're talking about dancing, let's give it a dance-type theme.

AMBER:

Okay, how about “Polka Mania!”

They all stare at her.

AMBER:

What? You don't like that idea?

ALL:

No polkas!

LEO:
Hey, remember that movie with John Travolta?

EDITH:
“Saturday Night Fever!” I love that movie.

VERA:
So -- how about we do, “Friday Afternoon Fever?”

LEO:
I had that once.

VERA:
NO! Not a real fever. Disco fever! Let’s have a disco dance!

SAM:
I have a disco ball at home. It’s left over from my tavern days.

LEO:
And I have all the music!

AMBER:
So, are we talking a Friday afternoon?

EDITH:
Why not? What do the rest of you think?

ALL:
(ad lib) Sounds good to me, etc.

CANE:
Then it sounds like it’s settled. You folks are going to have a disco dance right here at the center!

LEO:
Let’s party!

All four seniors strike the John Travolta disco pose.

Lights out

Scene 2

Lights up. A week later. Amber is at the desk, on the phone with Mr. Ferris. She’s trying to explain about the dance, but the conversation isn’t going well.

AMBER:

Yes, I know the numbers are still way down . . . How much is "way down?" Well -- way down is about . . . waaaaaaay down . . . Numbers? You want numbers? Somewhere between three and five . . . No, not dozen. People . . . Yes, sir. Four . . . That's right. Four people. (*holds phone away from her ear and winces as if she's being yelled at.*) But wait, sir. We have a plan. A good one . . . What is it? Well, we're going to have a dance! (*holds phone away from ear and winces again*)

Cane enters from storage room and eavesdrops.

AMBER:

. . . No, sir! Not with just four people! We're going to advertise in the newspapers, hang flyers, and put it on our new website! (*Now she has his attention.*) Yes, a website. One of the Fab Four . . . what? . . . That's what they call themselves. Anyway, one of the Fab Four has a degree in journalism and is a whiz on the computer. She's designing a website for us and is starting a blog online . . . No, sir, not blob. *Blog*. It's kind of like a newsletter. All we need is a bit more time. Can we pleeeeeease have another month? . . . But why not? . . . Look, now you listen to me! (*She holds phone away from her ear for a second, a look of shock on her face at her new-found confidence.*)

. . . (*She forges ahead*) Look, we have this dance. What's more important, we have four people with new-found enthusiasm, enthusiasm that didn't exist at this place before. I think the Fab Four have the spark needed to ignite a fire around here and fill this place up again. We expect to not only bring back lost clients, but attract some new ones, too. We just need more time! Are you listening to me?!?

(She listens but doesn't understand what Mr. Ferris just said.)

. . . Now you listen to me, Mr. Ferris. You cannot agree with me! You have to . . . wait . . . what? Did you say you *agree* with me? . . . I see . . . well, thank you, sir . . . Yes, sir, I'll keep you updated. And thank you again. (*Stunned, Amber slowly hangs up the phone.*)

CANE:

Well done.

AMBER:

(startled) How long have you been standing there?

CANE:

Long enough. So, it sounds like you bought us some time. What exactly did this Mr. Ferris say to you when you let him have it?

AMBER:

Well, he really caught me off guard. He said, "Well done! I've been waiting for you to grow a backbone. You need one to get this job done. I'll give you another month, but that's it. If you don't turn things around by then, I'll have no choice but to shut you down."

Amber delivers the previous lines in a deep voice, imitating Mr. Ferris. As she talks, Cane silently mouths the exact words, as if he already knows what Mr. Ferris said. Amber doesn't notice.

CANE:

(smiles and nods, pretending to be surprised) Oh, is that what he said? Well, that's all you really wanted, right? You just had to get his attention. And you did. Good for you. So, now what?

AMBER:

Now what? Well . . . to tell you the truth, I'm kind of letting the Fab Four handle it. I'm not trying to get out of anything, and I'll be there to help them. But it's their project, and they seem to have everything under control. So, I'm just letting them run with the ball.

CANE:

Sounds like a good plan, Amber. So, how's the rest of your life going? How's the online dating? Are you and Mr. X hitting it off?

AMBER:

Yeah, he's pretty cool! We have so much in . . . wait a minute. How did you know I met someone? And that he calls himself Mr. X?

CANE:

(recovers quickly.) Oh, a good guess. If I was online, I guess I might call myself that. Is that what he really calls himself?

AMBER:

Yes! As I started to say, we have so much in common. We both like animals. I have a cat.

CANE:

He has a cat, too?

AMBER:

A dog. Oh, maybe that's not good. *(worried)* Could be a red flag. *(contemplates this for a second)* Oh well, they're both furry!

CANE:

(obviously enjoying this; he already knows the answers) What else?

AMBER:

We're the same age.

CANE:

How can you be sure? Remember what I told you about this online dating stuff. Did you see his picture?

AMBER:

Uh, no. We decided not to exchange pictures yet.

CANE:
Why not?

AMBER:
We didn't want to judge a book by its cover. Beauty is only skin deep. We decided to discover our inner selves first. When the time comes to actually meet, we'll see each other for the first time!

CANE:
How will you know it's him?

AMBER:
(a look of panic) I don't know!

CANE:
I wouldn't worry about it. You'll figure out some signal. But for safety reasons, be sure to meet for the first time in a public place.

AMBER:
I won't do anything stupid. Don't worry.

CANE:
(almost to self) I'm not.

AMBER:
What time is it?

CANE:
Why?

AMBER:
I'm supposed to go online and talk to Mr. X at . . . *(looks at her watch)* Now!

Amber opens her laptop. Cane goes behind her and watches. Amber begins to type, then turns around and looks at Cane.

CANE:
(chuckling) Okay, I get the hint. I'll leave you two cyber lovebirds alone. *(exits to storage room)*

Amber types a few things, pauses, types some more; then thinks a moment and talks as she types.

AMBER:
So, Mr. X . . . I think it's high time we meet, don't you? *(She pauses, sees his response on the screen, and her face lights up.)* Okay, tomorrow night at seven, at the Cafe Deja Vu. Wait, wait, how will we know each other? *(She pauses; waits for his response.)* Okay, I can do that. And yes, I can't wait either! *(She closes her laptop and sits back with a big smile.)*

Lights Out

Act 2, Scene 3

Lights up. Two weeks later. It's the day of the dance. A large sign is propped on the floor, against the upstage wall, with the lettering facing the wall. Three of the Fab Four enter, dressed in party clothes. Leo is missing. The women carry boxes with decorations and other supplies for the dance. Sam holds the door open for them. Vera also carries a makeup case or tote bag with makeup.

VERA:

(walks in carrying a box, looking exhausted) Phew, that was a workout. Who knew a disco ball and some decorations could be so heavy?

SAM:

I would've carried that, but then, who would've held the door open for you?

VERA:

(sarcastic) You're a real gentleman . . .

EDITH:

(walks in with camera around her neck, carrying a box containing bottles) Shouldn't the bartender carry his own equipment?

SAM:

I would've carried that, but then, who would've held the door open for you?

VERA:

How many times are you going to use that line?

SAM:

Until I don't get away with it anymore.

EDITH:

Enough excuses, get over here and help us set up this bar. *(goes to table at stage left)*

SAM:

What bar?

VERA:

We're going to use this table over here. Get these books and games off it, and start setting up your bar. Don't you remember? We were going to use this table?

SAM:

No.

EDITH:

At the meeting? We planned it!

SAM:
I must've slept through that part.

VERA:
Well, wake the hell up now and get busy!

SAM:
Yes, your majesty . . . (*picks up a stack of books from the table, then hands them to Edith*)

SAM:
Here, put these somewhere.

EDITH:
Bend over . . .

SAM:
What?

VERA:
We have our own work to do. Take care of your own business. And where is Leo?

The door flies open. Leo bursts in wearing a white polyester leisure suit. He strikes the John Travolta/"Saturday Night Fever" pose.

VERA:
Oh brother, it's John Revolva.

EDITH:
Now all you need is some music.

LEO:
Oh, I've got that covered.

Leo runs out and comes back in with a tote bag and a boom box. He sets them down on Amber's desk, looks at them all with a big smile, and hits the play button on the boom box. Disco music plays, and Leo struts around the stage doing the Travolta dance move. Suddenly, he becomes exhausted and sinks into the desk chair. The women run over and fan him,

LEO: Whoa, I may have overdone it.

VERA:
No, that was great!

EDITH:
Yeah, we've never seen you like this before, Leo! Can I have the first dance?

VERA:

No, I want the first dance. Leo, those moves really turned me on.

LEO: *(breathless)* Really?

Not to be outdone, Sam starts doing the disco dance. Unfortunately, he has two left feet. The women stare at him in amusement.

EDITH:

Call Father Vito.

VERA:

Why?

EDITH:

Sam needs an exorcist.

SAM: *(suddenly stops dancing and grabs his back)* No, I think I need Ben Gay.

LEO:

Not to worry, I have some right here. Never leave home without it! *(reaches into his tote bag)*

SAM:

Forget it. I'm okay. Besides, that peppermint smell will drown out my Old Spice and I'll never pick up any babes tonight.

EDITH:

Say, not that we need her, but where's Amber?

LEO:

She's late again.

VERA:

She's been late a lot these past few weeks.

SAM:

And when she *is* here, she's not.

LEO:

Yeah, she seems a hundred miles away. She has something on her mind. But what?

EDITH:

I don't know. She hasn't been herself lately . . . thank God.

VERA:

Yeah . . . she's been very secretive. Much too easy to get along with. She pretty much lets us do whatever we want.

SAM:
Maybe she finally got herself a boyfriend!

They all pause and think about it. Then react at the same time.

ALL:
Yeah, right . . .

LEO:
She's on the computer all the time. What's up with that?

VERA:
You're the computer whiz, Edith. What do you think she's up to?

EDITH:
It could be anything. Maybe she's just playing games.

SAM:
I know, online gambling!

VERA:
How do you know about online gambling?

SAM:
Uhhhhh . . . I read about it in the AARP magazine! Anyway, maybe she's hooked.

LEO:
I doubt it. If that were the case, she would've been more excited about going to the casino. No, she's up to something. Say, you don't think she's having second thoughts, do you?

VERA:
About what?

LEO:
The dance!

EDITH:
At this late date? You don't think she'd pull the plug at this late date, do you?

SAM:
Why not? It's been a long time since we've had an Amber Alert. We're overdue. Maybe this is it!

VERA:
Oh my God, you're right!

LEO:
Wait a minute. No one's right. Maybe we're jumping to conclusions here.

SAM:

Oh, I don't know, I have a bad feeling about it. She could be on that computer going back and forth with Mr. Ferris. He may be forcing her to shut us down!

LEO:

After all our hard work?

EDITH:

I've put way too much time into this new website and all the publicity for this dance to have it shut down now! Besides, it's too late to shut it down.

VERA:

No it's not. All she has to do is keep the door locked and put a sign up saying "Sorry, dance cancelled." And then we'll all be sorry.

LEO:

This is bullshit!

EDITH:

Leo!

VERA:

No, he's right! You know what we need? We need to stage a revolt!

SAM:

I need a drink! I wish we were serving real booze tonight. Say, wait a minute!

EDITH:

What? You have an idea?

SAM:

Maybe what Amber needs is a few stiff drinks.

EDITH:

But we're not allowed to have liquor at the Senior Center. Your drinks are supposed to be virgin drinks.

SAM:

All right, then maybe it's time the drinks lose their virginity! *(He gleefully pulls a pint of liquor from one of the boxes.)* I came prepared to party!

VERA:

(pulling a bottle of booze from her makeup case) Me, too! I was thinking of adding it to the punch bowl, just like I did at my *first* senior prom!

EDITH:

Vera, I'm shocked! *(sheepishly, pulls one of those little airline bottles of booze out of her pocket)* Actually, I brought a little nip myself.

LEO:

(pulling a quart of liquor from his tote bag, the biggest bottle yet) Me, too! *(backpeddling a bit)*
Strictly for medicinal purposes . . .

They all have a good laugh.

SAM:

So, when Amber gets here, I'll mix her a "special" drink, and then another, and then another. And before you know it, she'll either be the life of the party, or sound asleep in the storage room.

EDITH:

Yeah, either way, we have our dance!

Cane walks in front door.

CANE:

(looking around at the four seniors, who quickly hide their liquor bottles behind their backs)
So, I have to be here. Court order, remember? I guess I'm the clean-up committee. Since I'm here, how can I help with the decorations? Vera?

Cane knows they're hiding the bottles and slowly walks around the group as he talks. The seniors keep circling in unison so he can't see the bottles.

VERA:

Nope! We're fine!

EDITH:

Yup! We got it covered! Everything is under control!

CANE:

Fine. I'll go get my broom and start my sweeping. *(walks into storage room)*

LEO:

Phew! That was close!

VERA:

Do you think he saw?

SAM:

Naw, I don't think so. But to be on the safe side, let's hide all the bottles behind the bar.

They hand Sam their bottles and he hides them.

EDITH:

So, how is this going to work?

SAM:

I'll handle it. Every time you see Amber's glass getting empty, just steer her over to me, and I'll take care of the refills.

VERA:
And we'll distract her!

EDITH:
We should all have a drink in our hands when Amber arrives.

LEO:
A real drink?

VERA:
No, we need to be stone cold sober. What can you whip us up, Sam?

SAM:
Well, speaking of stone-cold, when I had my own bar, we were famous for my frozen concoction called "The Polar Vortex"!

VERA:
Did you steal that from the Weather Channel?

SAM:
No! The Weather Channel stole it from me!

LEO:
Does it have one of those little umbrellas in it?

SAM:
For you, Leo, sure. One little umbrella coming right up.

EDITH:
Okay, while Sam is mixing us our Polar Gortex . . .

SAM:
Vortex!

EDITH:
Whatever . . . let's finish decorating.

They proceed with decorating while Sam begins making his drinks. Leo is working on his sound equipment and disco ball.

VERA:
Hey, Edith, we need to hang up the sign! (*points to sign propped against wall*)

EDITH:
Oh yeah, I forgot about the sign.

VERA:

Wait till you see it. You were skeptical when I told you my cousin Vito had a friend who had a friend who knew a guy who had a sign business. I got us a real good price on this. Come on, let's hang it up!

The women get a folding chair or step stool and begin hanging the sign on the wall. Except the sign is wrong. It's supposed to say, "First Annual Friday Afternoon Fever Dance." Unfortunately, it says "First Anal . . ." They don't notice. But the audience should begin to notice. They finally get the sign hung, with lots of huffing and puffing, then step back to admire it.

LEO:

Say, wait a minute. Something's wrong!

VERA:

What?

LEO:

It's a little to high on the left.

EDITH:

(notices mistake and shrieks) Oh my God!

VERA:

Relax, we can lower it.

EDITH:

Your friend of a friend of a friend either failed spelling, or he has a warped sense of humor!

SAM:

(comes out from behind the bar for a closer look) Yeah, she's right. Fever has two "v's" in it!

EDITH:

You must have been in the same classroom! Look at it! It says *anal*, not annual!

VERA:

Oh God, don't let Amber see that!

LEO:

Yeah, she's so anal.

VERA:

Okay, so now what do we do?

EDITH:

I'll fix it. *(She goes to Amber's desk and finds a piece of cardboard and a magic marker. She writes "annual" on the paper.)*

LEO:

Do you think it will work?

EDITH:

We don't have any choice. Who's got some tape?

SAM:

Yeah, right. I always carry a roll of tape in my wallet.

VERA:

This is no time for sarcasm. *(She pulls a roll of duct tape from her makeup case.)* You never know when you might need to fix a hem. *(under her breath)* Or wax your legs . . .

LEO:

Here, give that to me. I'll hang it up for you. I'm taller. *(He fixes the sign, but the repair sticks out like a sore thumb.)*

LEO:

How's it look?

VERA:

Oh, it looks great. No one will notice.

SAM:

Stevie Wonder could notice.

VERA:

Shut up!

EDITH:

There's nothing we can do about it now. I'm sure it will end up being a conversation piece before this dance is over. Now, Sam, where are those Polar Latex drinks?

SAM:

Vortex, Polar Vortex! They're right here. *(He hands them each a drink. Everyone gets an umbrella.)*

ALL:

Mmmmmm . . . good . . . delicious . . .

VERA:

Even without alcohol they're good!

Amber walks in the front door, looking preoccupied. She's dressed for the dance.

EDITH:

There you are! We were getting worried about you.

AMBER:

What? Oh, I've been -- busy.

VERA:

I love your dress, Amber!

AMBER:

Huh? I have to check something on my computer. *(She runs to the laptop on her desk and checks her messages. The others exchange quizzical looks, shrugging their shoulders.)*

SAM:

(giving the others the thumbs-up sign, meaning, "Let's put our plan into action.") So, uh, Amber. We're sampling some cocktails. Would you like to try my famous Polar Vortex? Non-alcoholic version, of course.

AMBER:

(distracted) What? Oh, uh . . . yeah, sure. I'll give it a try.

Amber gets up from the desk and starts to head over to the bar. Sam signals Vera and Edith to distract Amber. Vera and Edith each grab one of Amber's arms at center stage. They ad lib as they spin her around and show her the sign. Sam holds up Amber's glass for the audience to witness him adding the alcohol to her drink.

VERA:

So, Amber, what do you think of our sign? Got a good price on it.

AMBER:

(looking at sign) I hope so.

Edith and Vera look at Sam to see if he's done. He gives the nod or thumbs up.

SAM:

Okay, Amber, here you go. Bottoms up!

Amber goes over to bar and takes the drink.

AMBER:

Oh, Sam. I love the umbrella. Let's give it a taste. *(takes a taste)* This is delicious! What's in it?

SAM:

Secret recipe. Of course, the alcohol is missing.

AMBER:

That's good, because I'm not much of a drinker. I can get drunk just sniffing the cork.

ALL:

Oh . . . really?

AMBER:

Ooooh, let me try another taste. *(chugs the whole thing down)* Wow! That really hit the spot! *(slams cup on bar)* Let me have another, since there's no alcohol in them.

Sam looks at the rest of them with a big grin. They all grin and nod to each other.

SAM:

Yeah, but you should still pace yourself. You could get a sugar high!

They all laugh it up, including Amber, who's already starting to feel the drink. Sam signals the seniors to distract Amber again while he makes her another drink. He makes it very obvious to the audience that he's pouring a lot of alcohol in the drink.

VERA:

(to distract Amber) Amber! As you know, I'm selling Larry May Men's Cosmetics. I was just about to moisturize Leo's face so he'll have that youthful glow for the dance tonight. Do you want to watch? *(puts folding chair center stage)*

LEO:

Oh, right. Can I have some bronzer, too?

VERA:

Let's just start with the moisturizer. *(She takes out a tube from her makeup case and has Leo sit in the chair with his head back. She puts some real moisturizer in her hand and applies it to Leo's cheeks, rubbing it in,)* As you can see, Amber, the years are fading right before our eyes.

LEO:

(sits up straight, looks excited) Really? Let me see!!

VERA:

(pushes him back down) Later! How does this feel, Leo?

LEO:

Tingly . . .

VERA:

See? It's improving your circulation already.

LEO:

And it has a very refreshing citrus scent, too. I'll be the hit of the party!

VERA:

Sam, as soon as I'm done with Leo, you're next.

SAM:

(finishes the new drink) Here you go, Amber, bottoms up!

Amber hurries over to the bar and grabs her second drink.

VERA:
Say, aaaaaah Amber!

AMBER:
(downs her drink in one shot, starting to slur her words) Wow! I almost swallowed the umbrella, ha ha ha. *(slams her glass on the bar)* Sam, forget your moisturizer. Hit me again!

The seniors all look at each other with big grins, knowing their scheme is working.

SAM:
Sure, coming right up.

AMBER:
Good thing there's no alcohol in these things. I'd already be drunk and thluuuuuuring my words. Ha ha ha! Did I say that right?

SAM:
(hands her another drink, but is starting to get worried) You better nurse this one, or I'll have to flag you.

AMBER:
But they're soooooooooooooo good!

SAM:
I know. But let's leave some for the rest of the guests, okay?

AMBER:
Ohhhhhhh . . . right! Oh! I have to check something . . . *(goes over to the desk and sits at the computer, trying to focus)*

LEO:
So, Amber . . . *(gets out of chair and walks to Amber, trying to use some cool, suave moves)* We couldn't help but notice, you spend an awful lot of time on that computer. What the heck are you doing all the time?

VERA:
Yeah. *(swaggers over to the desk like a tough guy)* We've been noticing you spending more time than you should be on that computer. *(grabs the desk lamp and shines it in Amber's face like she's grilling her)* You're not hooked on online gambling, are you?

AMBER:
(chuckling) Online gambling? No! I'm hooked on online *dating*! Oooops! *(claps her hand over her mouth)* Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh. You didn't hear that.

SAM:

Naw . . . I didn't hear anything.

VERA & EDITH:

(ad libing) Nope, not me. Didn't hear a word.

LEO:

You all need your hearing checked. I heard her loud and clear!

AMBER:

(gets up and staggers over to Leo; puts her arm around him and talks into his ear) No, Leo, you don't get it. It's a secret. Get it? A secret!

LEO:

A secret?

AMBER:

Shhhhhhh . . .

LEO:

Shhhhhhhh? *(The light dawns.)* Got it!

VERA:

We won't tell a soul. Our lips are sealed.

LEO:

(nodding, turning imaginary key in his lips) Sealed!

EDITH:

Yeah, yeah, we're sealed. So Amber, how's it working out for you? The online dating, I mean.

SAM:

Yeah, have you met anybody? I thought about trying one of those dating sites once.

AMBER:

Actually, yes, but I can't tell you who it is. I want to keep it a secret for now. I'll tell you why later.

SAM:

Fair enough.

The rest nod in agreement

VERA:

Okay, Sam, it's time for your facial.

AMBER:

No, no! I want a facial now. I want to look be-you-ti-ful for this dance!

SAM:

I thought that junk was just for men.

VERA:

Same stuff as the ladies, just different packaging, slightly different name. *(takes a new tube or jar out of makeup case)* For example, this little number here is an anti-aging cream. The women's version is called *Mistress* of Paris. This is the same stuff, only they call *Master* of Paris. *(holds up the stuff she used on Leo)*

AMBER:

(gets all excited; sits in the chair) Anti-aging, huh? I want me some of that. Sounds exotic.

VERA:

Great! And you'll see, this makes a perfect makeup base, too! *(She spreads what's supposed to be a moisturizer {actually a green face mask} on Amber's cheeks, nose, chin, and forehead. Leo and Sam watch closely.)*

SAM:

Are you sure you know what you're doing?

VERA:

Of course, I'm a trained professional.

AMBER:

(laughing) Oh, you, too? So am I!

EDITH:

Trained professional? Vera, you ordered all this stuff from the Home Shopping Network.

VERA:

Yeah, but I saw the whole infomercial. Well, most of it. "Dancing with the Stars" was coming on. But I saw enough.

LEO:

(looking at Amber's face) Is it supposed to look like that?

AMBER:

What's wrong?

VERA:

Relax, honey, it dries a lovely skin color. There, all done! *(Vera steps back and looks at her hands.)* Oh, oh . . .

AMBER:

(sits up straight) What's wrong?!

LEO:

That's a lovely skin color?

SAM:

(shrugs) It was going to be her skin color anyway, when the hangover kicks in tomorrow morning.

VERA, EDITH & LEO:

Shhhhh . . .

AMBER:

My face feels funny. *(making faces as if it's hard to move her muscles)* I'm starting to have trouble moving my face. I can't feel my face!

SAM:

Let me see that jar. *(looks at the jar)* Master of Paris? This says *Plaster* of Paris!

EDITH:

(grabs the jar from Sam and looks for herself) My God, Vera, what did you do?

VERA:

(grabs jar from Edith and looks at it) Oh my God, I must have got the jars mixed up. This is from my crafting class. We're making ashtrays!

LEO:

You don't smoke.

AMBER:

Oh, no.! My face looks like an ashtray? Give me a mirror!

SAM:

(nervously) Here, have a drink instead. *(hands her another drink.)*

Amber downs the whole drink. Then she tries to look at the reflection of her face in the glass. As she does this, Leo looks through the other side of the glass. When Amber sees Leo's face through the glass, she thinks it's her reflection.

AMBER:

Oh my God, I look like Leo, only worse! *(She moves the glass to the side, and sees Leo is actually there, up close. They both scream.)*

LEO & AMBER:

Ahhhhhhhhh!!!

EDITH:

Relax, relax, Amber, there's nothing to worry about.

VERA:

(reading the ingredients on the jar, a look of panic on her face) Oh yes there is.

AMBER:

(leaps to her feet, gets woozy, falls back in chair but gets up again, swaying) I need a mirror. Somebody give me a mirror! Never mind. I have one in my purse!

Amber staggers to the desk where her purse is, plops in the chair, and rummages through her purse. She pulls out various items and tosses them over her head. Eventually, she pulls out a long scarf, then a hairbrush. A pair of sexy panties is stuck to the hairbrush.

EDITH:

What are they doing in there?

AMBER:

(a look of horror and panic) Uhhhh . . . I'm on my way to the Laundromat! *(Still trying to find a mirror, she reaches into her purse and pulls out a pair of men's boxer shorts with a Superman logo on the front.)*

SAM:

And whose are those?

Cane enters from storage room.

AMBER:

Uhhhhh . . . they're Mr. Cane's!

CANE:

They are?

AMBER:

(attempting to wink) Sure they are. Don't you remember asking me to do your laundry?

CANE:

Nooooo.

AMBER:

(winking desperately) Sure you do! *(staggers over to Cane and tries to force him to take the boxers)* Here! Take them!

CANE:

Superman, huh? I'm flattered, but this isn't exactly prison issue. And what the heck happened to your face?

AMBER:

(panics again) Oh my God, my face. I forgot about my face! I need a mirror! Vera, you brought in all this makeup junk. You must have a mirror. *(staggers over to Vera's makeup case, pulls out a mirror and looks at her face)* Oh my God! Ohhhh myyyyy God! *(rushes back to Cane and rips the boxers out of his hands)* Give me those! *(pulls the boxers over her head and peers out through the fly hole)* Vera! Get this stuff off my face, now! Hurry, before he gets here!

CANE:
Who?

AMBER:
Never mind who? Vera, get it off!

VERA:
Face mask I can get off. Plaster of Paris, I'm not so sure.

CANE:
Who put Plaster of Paris on your face?

VERA:
I did, by accident. How are going to get it off?

SAM:
You're going to need a hammer.

LEO:
And chisel!

CANE:
All right, everybody calm down.

AMBER:
Calm down? You want me to calm down? (*grabs Cane by the collar*) Look at me! I look like Kermit the Frog!

LEO:
(*singing*) It's not easy being green . . .

AMBER:
Shut up, Leo! This is no time for jokes! He'll be here any minute!!

ALL:
Who?

AMBER:
Never mind who. What am I going to do?

CANE:
Calm down. I have shop class at the prison, and we just studied masonry. It's part of the rehabilitation program. When I get out I can lay bricks. So, I'm sure I can get that stuff off your face . . . eventually.

AMBER:

(still slurring speech) This whole dance idea is a disaster. I warned you all about this. Everything has gone wrong.

CANE:

What are you talking about? Nothing has gone wrong. *(looking at Amber's face)* Okay, maybe the face thing is a bit of a problem, but fixable. Otherwise, everything is going great!

ALL:

It is?

CANE:

Sure it is. Look what you've done to this place. You've turned it around from being a boring hangout for a few people clinging to the hope that some day it would fix itself, into a happening place for people like yourselves to come and enjoy, and create even more exciting things to do in the future.

SAM:

You know, I think he's right.

LEO:

He *is* right!

CANE:

That's the spirit, Leo! And what's more important, you didn't just transform this place, you all transformed . . .

EDITH:

. . . ourselves!

VERA:

What do you mean?

CANE:

She means, you're different people now. When I first came here, all you worried about were your aches and pains, and all you did was whine and complain, waiting for this place to fix itself. But look at you now! Look at this place now! With just a little encouragement, look what you've accomplished on your own. Don't you see what you've become?

LEO:

The Fab Four!

EDITH:

Yeah! We used to be the Drab Four.

VERA:

Good one, Edith. You've really got a way with words.

EDITH:

I always did. But I'd forgotten, until Mr. Cane reminded me of my potential.

SAM:

You know, he did it for all of us. He reminded us that just because we're retired, doesn't mean we're dormant.

EDITH:

And he reminded us that just because we're old . . .

VERA:

Speak for yourself, Edith.

SAM:

What, so now you're a teenager again?

VERA:

No, but sometimes, like tonight, I feel like one again.

CANE:

Hey, like I always say, growing old is mandatory. Growing up is optional.

LEO:

(high fives Cane) Good one, Cane! *(winces, shakes his hand in pain)* Ouch!

AMBER:

(still slurring speech) Yoohoo! That's all very inspirational, but remember me? *(pointing to her face)* The one you plastered, remember?

The seniors all exchange looks without speaking. Amber is referring to the plaster on her face. They all think she's referring to who got her drunk. After exchanging guilty looks, the other three stare at Sam.

SAM:

Don't look at me! It wasn't my idea. I just mix 'em! *(pointing at the others)* They made me do it!

CANE:

Do what?

AMBER:

Yeah, I'm confused. Give me another drink!

ALL:

No!

CANE:

All right, what's really going on here?

VERA:

Well, Amber has been acting strange, distant, preoccupied since we came up with this whole dance idea.

EDITH:

We were afraid she was going to call it off at the last minute.

AMBER:

What?

LEO:

Please be quiet while we spill our guts here . . .

EDITH:

This night is very important to us. We weren't ready to let anyone spoil it.

VERA:

So . . . we took matters into our own hands.

CANE:

What do you mean?

SAM:

Amber wanted to sample our virgin drinks.

VERA:

Only they lost their virginity!

CANE:

You mean . . . ?

LEO:

We spiked her drinks!

AMBER:

Which one?

ALL:

All of them!

CANE:

How many did she have?

SAM:

That doesn't matter. She's had way too much!

AMBER:

(still slurring and staggering, takes center stage) Now hold on here a minute! I'm in charge here. I . . . am a trained professional! And I'm here to tell you, that according the Senior Center Leadership Handbook, there is no drinking permitted on the premises! Now, what do you have to say for yourselves?

SAM:

Well, the only one drinking is you!

AMBER:

That's right! *(The lightbulb goes off.)* Oh, no! *(begins to cry)* Now look what I've done. What would Mr. Ferris say?

LEO:

Oh, screw Mr. Ferris!

AMBER:

(crying even louder) I already did!

Big silence. They all stare at her. Cane finally goes over to Amber, not as surprised as the others. He puts his arm around her to comfort her.

AMBER:

You see . . . it was a hot and steamy night . . .

CANE:

(jumps in to stop her from saying too much) Spare us the details, but maybe now is a good time to break the news to them.

LEO:

Oh no, the center is closing?

ALL:

(ad libbing) We knew it. See, we told you.

AMBER:

No, no, no! *(She goes over to two of the seniors, putting her arms around their shoulders, trying to comfort them. But she ends up hanging on them for support. They start to sag under her weight.)* The center is **not** closing! And the dance isn't canceled! Doug thinks it's a great idea, and a great new beginning.

VERA:

Doug? Doug, who?

AMBER:

Oh, uh, Doug. Oh what the hell. Doug is -- Mr. Ferris!

ALL SENIORS:

What?

CANE:

Try your best to explain why you two are on a first-name basis.

AMBER:

Okay, okay, okay . . . You all know about the online dating. And, you all know I met someone. Well, what you don't know, is that "someone" turned to be Mr. Ferris!

EDITH:

The Mr. Ferris?

VERA:

Your boss, Mr. Ferris?

LEO:

The Big Kahuna?

AMBER:

Oh -- his Kahuna isn't that big . . .

CANE:

Too much information! Get to the point!

AMBER:

I'm trying, but people keep interrupting me. Now, as I was saying, Dougie and I met online and have been secretly dating for weeks now. And Dougie thinks the Fab Four are exactly what this center needed to get it back on track. In fact, he's using our center as a model for other struggling centers to follow.

VERA:

So the dance is still on?

AMBER:

Absolutely! In fact the doors open in just a few minutes and . . . and . . . oh no!

CANE:

What's wrong?

AMBER:

Dougie is coming to the dance later on, and I look like a pickled pickle!

VERA:

How much later?

AMBER:

He said he'd be about an hour late.

VERA:

Okay, no problem. I'll call the Larry May Emergency Hotline, reserved only for when something goes wrong. Unfortunately, the line is usually busy, but I'll try and get through.

CANE:

Why don't we look on the back of the plaster can?

SAM:

(picks up can and reads back) Geez, it's right here. "For easy removal and clean up . . ." Oh, we can take you in the bathroom and have this stuff off in a couple of minutes. No problem.

VERA:

(encouragingly) Consider it dermabrasion.

EDITH:

Don't push your luck, Vera.

AMBER:

But I'm still drunk.

CANE:

We'll get some hot coffee in you while they're getting the plaster off. You'll be good as new before "Dougie" gets here.

AMBER:

(slobbering) Oh, thank you, thank you . . . You guys are the best! *(She gives Cane a kiss on the cheek.)* You know, Mr. Cane, for a con, you're okay! I've given you a hard time sometimes, but the truth is, it's been kind of nice having you around here.

CANE:

Yeah, well, I won't be around forever. You're on your own now. You don't need me telling you what to do anymore. Use your heads and apply yourself, and remember what I told you earlier, Growing old is mandatory . . .

ALL SENIORS:

Growing up is optional!

CANE:

(to audience, winking) I think they got it. *(to others)* Well, I guess I better get to work.

Cane heads for the storage room. The others start discussing the dance. They're checking their watches.

EDITH:

Well, it's time. We're about to find out if our hard work has paid off.

LEO:

I'm nervous.

SAM:

We're all nervous. But it's "do or die" now.

EDITH:

The publicity said the doors open at two o'clock. It's five of now. Let's take a peek!

LEO:

I'm nervous.

ALL:

Shut up, Leo.

They all crowd around the door, crack it open, and peek at the same time. They gasp and quickly close the door again.

AMBER:

Oh my God, they're lined up around the block!

ALL:

(ad libbing) We did it! We did it!

LEO:

Mr. Cane, Mr. Cane! Come out here and look!

ALL:

(all join in ad libbing) Yeah, come and check out the crowd!

LEO:

I'll go get him! Cane! Cane!

Leo continues to call Cane's name as he runs into the storage room. Suddenly, he stops shouting. A beat, then he returns, walking slowly, a puzzled look on his face,

VERA:

Well, where is he?

LEO:

I don't know . . .

EDITH:

What do you mean you don't know? What did he say?

LEO:

Nothing.

SAM:

Leo, what the hell are you talking about?

LEO:
He's not there.

AMBER:
What do you mean he's not there? There are no other doors in and out of that room. There isn't even a window to climb out of. It's just a store room -- like a big closet!

LEO:
I'm telling you, he's not there!

SAM:
Oh for God's sake, Leo! He has to be there!

Sam goes and looks for himself. He comes out looking as mystified as Leo. He's holding Cane's baseball cap.

LEO:
Well?

SAM:
Leo is right. He's not in there. But look what I found, hanging off his broom handle.

They all gather around and look at the hat.

VERA:
His hat? All you found was his hat?

EDITH:
His California Angels hat. His California . . . Say, you don't think he was . . . I mean, could he...

They all look at each other, pondering.

ALL:
Naaaaaah . . .

VERA:
(looking at her watch) Hey! It's time! Leo, start your music!

Leo starts disco music. .

EDITH:
Sam, man the bar!

SAM:
Right!

AMBER:

Let's open the doors and let them in!

Vera and Edith head over to the door.

EDITH:

Wait, Amber, what about your face?

AMBER: Who cares!

VERA:

Ready?

AMBER:

(strikes a Travolta pose, still slightly slurring) Let's party!

Disco music plays, crowd sounds. Disco ball rotates.

Lights out

Property List

“Geezercize” DVD, Zumba DVD & DVD player

TV remote control

5-pound dumbbell

Blood pressure cuff

Letter from judge

Broom

Books & board games

Zumba scarf

Ice pack

First-aid kit

Nurse's cap

Bingo cards, chips & metal cage with balls

On desk: phone, suggestion box (tissue box with decorative cover), cup with pencils & black marker, squares of white cardboard (to fix sign), various papers & folders, nurse's cap (in drawer), gooseneck lamp

10 large plastic cups

Hanging sign that says “Sunnyvale Senior Center”

Hanging sign that says “1st Anal Friday Afternoon Fever Dance”

Bulletin board with notices

Books in book bag

Makeup case or tote bag with makeup

Camera

Small pad & pencil

Assorted bartender's tools (must have 5 little umbrellas, 5 transparent glasses, ice cubes, liquor bottle with blue liquid, & stirrer)

3 cardboard boxes (2 for bartender's tools, 1 for decorations)

Boombox & music CDs

Ben Gay

4 bottles of various types of liquor: 1 tiny, 2 medium, 1 big

Hand mirror

Duct tape

Face lotion

Green face mask

Purse with sexy panties stuck to hairbrush, Superman boxers & long scarf

Disco ball (sits on desk or table)

SOUND EFFECTS

Voiceover for "Geezercise" DVD

Music for Zumba CD

Disco music for between scenes

COSTUMES

Amber:

Act 1, Scene 1: Exercise outfit & sneakers

Act 1, Scene 2: Casual work outfit

Act 2, Scene 1: Casual work outfit

Act 2, Scene 2: Casual work outfit

Act 2, Scene 3: Party dress & heels

Cane:

Same outfit throughout play: Denim work shirt, jeans, black shoes, California Angels baseball cap

Edith:

Act 1, Scene 1: Nice jogging suite & sneakers

Act 1, Scene 2: Attractive pants & top

Act 2, Scene 2: Same pants, different top

Act 2, Scene 3: Conservative party dress and low heels

Vera:

Act 1, Scene 1: Flashy exercise clothes & sneakers, large purse

Act 1, Scene 2: Flashy pants & top

Act 2, Scene 2: Same pants, different top

Act 2, Scene 3: Flashy party dress or pants & top, heels

Leo:

Act 1, Scene 1: Sweat pants, shirt, baggy cardigan sweater, sneakers

Act 1, Scene 2: Same as Act 1, Scene 1, with different sweater

Act 2, Scene 2: Same as Act 1, scene 1, except golf shirt

Act 2, Scene 3: Leisure suit from 70s

Sam:

Act 1, Scene 1: Sweat pants, sweatshirt, sneakers

Act 1, Scene 2: Same as Scene 1 with different sweatshirt

Act 2, Scene 2: Jeans & nice shirt

Act 2, Scene 3: Dress pants, shirt, sport jacket