

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Coming of Age

**A play by
Shirlee Hurst Shields**



Salt Lake City

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COMING OF AGE

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The first and last scenes take place on stage in a New York theatre with the stage set in the background. The remaining action takes place in a middle-class house in a city in America.

Act I Scene I -- 1988, 1p.m.

Act I Scene II -- Same day 7 p.m; and June, 1948, 9 p.m.

Act I Scene III -- June, 1950, 2 a.m.

INTERMISSION

Act II Scene I -- June, 1972, 8 a.m.

Act II Scene II -- June, 1973, 11:30 p.m.

Act II Scene III -- June, 1988, early evening.

Act II Scene IV -- Later, the same evening.

Synopsis

No matter who you are, where you are, or what you are doing, there are two things ever present in your life that you cannot control-aging and the passage of time. These two intangibles are a fact of living.

This is a symbolic play within a play. Time and age are represented by a large grandfather clock and a young actress who plays a dual role as herself JULIE and MOTHER AGE. The grandfather clock symbolizes FATHER TIME and remains in the same place doing the same thing throughout the forty year time span of the play. JULIE/MOTHER AGE is the protagonist. As JULIE she is resisting growing older and frequently does not follow directions from the unseen but heard DIRECTOR. As the character MOTHER AGE she is always present aging people whether they like it or not, assisted, by FATHER TIME.

MOTHER AGE sets the stage for each scene. The theme focuses on the happenings, reactions, and feelings of each "age" or "time" in the lives of the two central characters, JOAN and JERRY, from marriage to retirement. Mother-in-laws, pregnancy, mid-life crisis, empty nest syndrome, life, love, and sex after sixty and retirement, are addressed with humor and thoughtfulness.

JULIE/MOTHER AGE is on stage most of the time, always present (as aging is), along with the passage of time. She is seen by the audience (in fact she converses with them from time to time), the DIRECTOR and STAGE CREW, but she is not seen by the other characters. JULIE learns from MOTHER AGE, and by observing JOAN and JERRY, and through directions by the DIRECTOR, that everyone must go through transitions and problems before one can understand the "script" for living. Also as JULIE she thought that when she auditioned for the role in the play that it was about teenagers "coming of age," but as the play progresses she realizes that we are all "coming of age" for something or the other all our lives. In the last scene JULIE tells the DIRECTOR that she can no longer be in the cast because she cannot play the scene where JERRY and JOAN become old and die because she just lost her parents in an automobile accident a few months ago and she can't handle any more death right now. The DIRECTOR consoles her and tells her death is a part of living, along with aging and the passage of time. JULIE expresses appreciation for all she has learned about life from the play as the clock strikes twelve. She tells the clock, "You old rascal, I love you even though you go too fast." As the clock finishes his midnight chime she realizes, "this is the beginning of a new day---for me." She exits as the lights fade, leaving only a dim pool on the grandfather clock.

SET DESIGN

Interior of a middle-class American house, with kitchen and living room fully visible. An open doorway to the bedroom gives the audience a partial view of a bed and dresser. The main door to the living room from the outside, has a small porch which is visible when the door is open. The living room furniture consists of a sofa, two inexpensive chairs, an end table, a table lamp, a coffee table, and a grandfather clock. The clock is an expensive family heirloom and has a base that opens with a space large enough for a small adult to fit into. The kitchen has a sink with a window just above it that raises and lowers, cabinets, stove, fridge, table and chairs. A phone is near the window. All furniture and decor should be circa 1948, changing with time as described in the script.

CAST

JULIE/MOTHER AGE -- Twenty-five. A budding actress who is impish, sensitive, and mimes well. She performs a dual role, herself and MOTHER AGE throughout the play. She is seen by the audience, the DIRECTOR and the stage crew. She is not seen by JOAN, JERRY, TED, the painter, or the delivery man.

DIRECTOR: -- Professional , hard driving, perfectionist. Only his voice is heard from the balcony.

JEREMY JOHNSON -- Twenty-five. CPA by profession. Outgoing, imaginative personality, loving and athletic. Ages to sixty-five in the play.

JOAN JOHNSON -- Twenty-two. Wife of JEREMY. College graduate, attractive, loving, devoted wife and mother. Ages to sixty-two in the play.

FOUR MEN -- Who play various roles as stage crew; HARRY, the stage manager; TED, the painter; and the delivery man.

Act I

Scene I - Time: 1988, 1p.m. -- As the scene opens the stage is lit with stage work lights. JULIE, dressed in a blouse, skirt, mid-heel pumps and carrying a large bag on her shoulder, enters through the front door with her glasses perched on her nose and a note pad in her hand. She is eager, yet uncomfortable being there and is trying unsuccessfully to conceal her nervousness.

JULIE: (Reading from the note pad) "Report to the stage at 204 42nd Street at 1 p.m."

(She glances at her watch then looks about the stage as very bright stage lights come up, dim, then come up again.)

This is 204 42nd Street; it is 1 p.m. and

(She removes glasses and squints into the stage lights.)

this is definitely a stage.

DIRECTOR: (In a loud, commanding voice) Miss Anderson?

JULIE: (Startled but trying to remain composed, looks in the direction of the voice as she shields her eyes from glaring lights) Yes...yes, sir.

DIRECTOR: Are you from the Dixon Agency?

JULIE: Yes, sir.

DIRECTOR: We are designing a lighting plan. Just stand where you are.

JULIE: Yes, sir.

(She stands as the lights dim, go from pink to blue with a brighter pool of light on the grandfather clock.)

DIRECTOR: Now, would you please move to the clock?

JULIE: (to herself) Move to the clock. What kind of an audition is this?

(To the voice of the director.)

Quickly? Slowly? Happily? Sad....

DIRECTOR: (Interrupts her) Just move to the clock. We are setting lights, not testing your acting, Miss Anderson.

JULIE: Yes, sir!

(She turns, secures her bag on her shoulder, moves to the clock, then faces the "voice" of the director. The light on the clock goes from pink to blue to yellow. She drapes herself in various positions in front of and on the clock, using exaggerated facial expressions, clowning around, trying to appear relaxed.)

DIRECTOR: (Sarcastically) You're quite funny, Miss Anderson, but we don't need clowns for this show.

JULIE: (She stiffens to an upright position.) Sorry.

DIRECTOR: Now would you open the door of the clock and climb in?

JULIE: (To herself) Open the door of the clock and climb in? This is really a weird audition.

(She looks at, then feels around the clock base for a way to open it.)

DIRECTOR: (Impatiently) Open the door of the face. The face is where the hands are...then push the knob in the center...

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(She follows his directions and the bottom of the clock opens and reveals an opening large enough for a small person to fit into. She starts to enter and when doing so, she tips her bag and many of the contents spill onto the stage. She is flustered and attempts to pick them up without removing her bag from her shoulder.)

DIRECTOR: *(Loudly)* It's okay, Miss Anderson. Just leave the stuff where it is, take the bag off your shoulder, climb into the clock and shut the door. We are in a hurry to finish this lighting design.

JULIE: *(Near tears, drops the bag to the floor with a nervous glance at the contents strewn about. She looks wide-eyed toward the voice of the DIRECTOR)* Just a minute. Is there a way to out once I get in? I do belong to Actor's Equity, you know. It... it looks a little like a standing coffin in there.

DIRECTOR: *(Somewhat softened by her charm)* Of course. There is a white florescent button to open up the front and an orange one to open up the back when there is a long scene without you. Now get in...please.

JULIE: *(She climbs in, shuts the door, then very quickly opens it and jumps out looking desperately as if she wanted out of there)* Okay, yes sir.

DIRECTOR: Your hardly gave us time for a blackout.

JULIE: Well you see, sir, I have a little claustrophobia, but I can definitely get over it if I get the part *(to herself.)*

whatever it is.

(She steps over some of her belongings, trying to act calm, smiles brightly and tips her face to the voice in the balcony without squinting.)

Yes sir, I can definitely get over my claustrophobia.

DIRECTOR: *(Very businesslike)* You'll be fine, Miss Anderson. I like the way you move, and express yourself. You have the part of Mother Age. Report to the stage manager's office for a script The play opens in two weeks.

JULIE: *(She swallows hard)* Did you say two weeks?

DIRECTOR: I did. There are a few lines to learn, mostly movement...you are a replacement. You do want the job, don't you?

JULIE: *(Anxiously)* I do...yes I do...I certain...

DIRECTOR: *(Interrupting)* Fine. You are dismissed until 7 p.m. rehearsal, tonight!

JULIE: I'll be there...here...yes, sir.

DIRECTOR: Good day, Miss Anderson.

(JULIE falls to her knees and hurriedly stuffs her things in the bag as the lights dim and flicker and come up bright as if a lighting plan is being designed.)

JULIE: *(To herself)* The things I go through to get a break in this business. But a job is a job. Let's face it. I do this or I don't eat...or I go back to work in George's yukky Deli.

(She stands.)

DIRECTOR: Miss Anderson, did you say something?

JULIE: A...no...a...yes I do...I mean yes I did... Mother Age. What kind of a character is she?

DIRECTOR: You've heard of Father time, Miss Anderson?

(She nods "yes.")

The grandfather clock will represent Father Time and the passage of time. You will age the characters in the

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play. Set the stage, so to speak.

JULIE: *(Bewildered)* Oh...and when do I get in the clock?

DIRECTOR: *(Irritated by her questions.)* During the passage of time when the characters are growing older.
Good day, Miss Anderson.

(The lights fade to out as she nods to the balcony and the voice of the director. The work lights remain as she moves to the door, then turns and again talks to herself.)

JULIE: I go to acting school, join Actor's Equity, get my nose fixed, lose weight and what part do I land?

Mother Age. Oh well, keep saying to yourself, "It's a job, it's a job, it's a job."

(She nervously glances backwards making sure she has retrieved all her belongings as she exits. Lights fade.)

Scene II -- Same day, 7 p.m. and June, 1948, 9 p.m. -- Stage work lights come up as two STAGE- HANDS enter carrying kitchen chairs which they place at the table. They adjust the cushions on the couch, move the coffee table slightly then exit just as MOTHER AGE enters through the front door, wearing a long black skirt, a white blouse, her hair done in a knot at the top of her head. She is carrying several wrapped wedding gifts trying to balance them so they don't slip to the floor. She has the script tucked under her arm. She closes the door with her foot and moves toward the coffee table. She almost drops a gift as it begins to slip off the stack she is carrying.

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(To herself.)* Whoops! Don't want to start this scene by dropping the props.

(She places the gifts on the coffee table as the script held under her arm slips to the floor. She picks it up, takes her glasses from a pocket in her skirt, perches them on her nose and reads from the script.)

"Mother Age enters carrying wedding gifts, places them on coffee table, closes front door."

(She glances back at the door.)

I've done that. "She then opens the bedroom door wide."

(She opens the bedroom door, it starts to close again. She removes one shoe and uses it to prop the door open.)

It says w..i..d..e. "She then moves to the grandfather clock, starts the pendulum swinging, and sets the hands to 9 p.m. As she does so the clock chimes the time."

(She stands back and admires the clock.)

You have a beautiful sound, you old rascal you. Mother Age then enters the clock.

(To herself.)

Up to now this is not much of a part, but it is going to be played with great flourish.

(She pushes the center of the hands as the base of the clock opens, then dramatically closes the cover of the face, then bows to the clock.)

Your grace, time honored majesty,

(She straightens up, and with exaggerated movements begins to enter the clock.)

Let's get on with the play.

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(As MOTHER AGE enters the clock, the sound of a man and woman laughing is heard outside the door. The man loudly hums a few strains of "Here Comes the Bride," then speaks.)

JERRY: I know I have the key right here in my pocket. Would you please hold still? Do you want me to drop you?

(The door bursts open and JERRY carrying JOAN, giggling and gently kicking her legs, enter. He puts her down and then lifts her off her feet in an enthusiastic embrace and kiss.)

Welcome to our first home Mrs. Jeremy Jackson Johnson.

(He kisses her neck.)

JOAN: Stop that. You know I get goose bumps ever....

JERRY: *(Stands back and lovingly looks at her as he gently takes her by the shoulders.)* Don't move a muscle. *(Becoming very gallant.)*

I'll get the bags and re-enter our castle. I want you standing radiant in the glow of the evening awaiting the return of your prince charming who has been out fighting battles to preserve his kingdom.

JOAN: *(Playing along with his fantasy.)* Goodbye, sweet Prince. Have a safe journey. I shall eagerly await your return.

(Changing to reality.)

You're crazy and I love it. I love you.

(She blows him a kiss as he exits through door. As soon as he is out of sight, she moves quickly to the kitchen window and opens it wide. She is on her way back to where JERRY left her when he re-enters carrying two bags.)

JERRY: *(Half seriously.)* I saw you move. You cheated in our game.

JOAN: *(Playfully, but seriously.)* But I'll never cheat in our marriage.

JERRY: *(Proclaiming in a princely manner.)* You will not be penalized by the king if you give the prince a big kiss. Ready yourself, fair maiden.

(She closes her eyes and puckers her lips as he quickly drops the bags in the bedroom. He moves to her and kisses her passionately. She responds, then slowly pushes him away, turns and moves to the sofa, sits and starts to cry lightly. JERRY does not know how to interpret this and tries to remain playful. He moves to in front of her, kneels and takes her hand in his.)

Do I see my damsel in distress? I shall summon the court jesters to cheer her.

JOAN: *(Bursting into tears.)* Oh Jerry, I'm scared.

JERRY: *(Dumbfounded.)* What?

JOAN: Scared. Frightened. Afraid. Afraid I will be a lousy wife...that I'm really not the right age.

(MOTHER AGE slips out of the clock and moves to behind the sofa and softly looks at the couple.)

...not old enough to face the responsibilities of marriage.

JERRY: *(Gently interrupts her.)* C'mon, you're just tired. Maybe a little hungry. I'll get you....

JOAN: *(Continues crying.)* No, that's not it. It's just that now that we are here in our first home I suddenly realize the honeymoon is over and I must go to the market, do the laundry, plan a budget, run a house, entertain your clients and maybe someday be a mother and go to PTA.

(JOAN buries her head in her hands and sobs as JERRY, bewildered by her actions, stands and turns away from her. MOTHER AGE removes a white lace handkerchief from her pocket, lays it on the

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sofa beside JOAN, then gently pats her on the shoulder.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(As JOAN continues to sob.)* There, there. Everything is okay. You are just suffering from those after-the-honeymoon jitters. Happens all the time. You're old enough to handle this.

JOAN: *(Picks up the handkerchief, unaware of how it got there and dabs her eyes.)* It's just that already I can see differences of opinion creeping into our relationship, things I didn't know about you 'til we... you snore a lot, you know, loud. Keeps me awake...and you want the windows closed...

(She blows her nose loudly.)

JERRY: *(Interrupting)* I may snore, but I don't sound like a fog horn rounding the Cape when I blow my nose. In the summer I have allergies and in the winter I don't want to get pneumonia...

(MOTHER AGE mimes some of the dialogue.)

JOAN: *(Interrupting)* You brush your teeth sideways instead of up and down, and you don't butter your toast all the way to the corners...

JERRY: *(Interrupting)* And you take off your shoes and leave them just any old place. A person could trip and fall and break a leg. And my dentist says sideways is just as good as up and down... and big deal about toast and butter...

JOAN: *(Interrupting and bursting into tears again.)* I wish I were still a little girl playing with dolls roller skates, hair in pigtails...

(MOTHER AGE puts her hand on her shoulder and suddenly JOAN realizes that she is acting very childish and that she is hurting JERRY. She stops crying and speaks coyly.)

Prince Charming? Could you close the drawbridge for tonight and lock out the dragons?

JERRY: *(Smiles at her, relieved that she has stopped crying, turns, and bows gallantly.)* As you wish, your highness. No more dragons shall enter our kingdom.

(He moves toward the door. as she lovingly watches him. As he glances toward the kitchen, he notices the window open. He mimes pulling a rolled scroll from his shirt, unrolling it, he reads.)

"The King's council, after great deliberation and taking all the facts into consideration, has decreed that to keep all parties present in this kingdom healthy and happy, the window shall remain in a compromise position. That being, half open or half closed, depending on your point of view.

(He mimes 'rolling up the document, tucks it into his shirt, closes the window half way, moves to the front door and with great flourish and ceremony, shuts it and turns the lock.)

Out, out, damned dragons!

(JOAN stands, lays the handkerchief on the sofa, laughs, moves to JERRY, curtsies and looks lovingly into his eyes.)

JOAN: Kind sir. May I spend the night here? My carriage does not run this late.

JERRY: But alas, need you ask? This is your proper place. The vows decree so.

(He gently kisses her and they move toward the bedroom door arms about each other. He looks behind him as they pass through the door. As he starts to shut the door with his foot, he notices the shoe left there by MOTHER AGE. He speaks to himself.)

We'll discuss that in the morning.

JOAN: *(Dreamily.)* Did you say something, darling?

JERRY: *(Hugging her, not wanting to spoil her mood.)* A...no...a I just said, "I'll oil the door in the morning."

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(He closes the door, and the shoe is pushed into the living room. MOTHER AGE, who has been observing, smiles and sighs contentedly. She picks up the handkerchief holding the damp, gooey object in her finger-tips.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: It's all in a day's work.

(She pulls a small plastic bag out of her pocket and drops the handkerchief in it and glances at the shoe near the bedroom door.)

I just about blew it, leaving this shoe around. How was I to know about her bad habit?

(She tiptoes, one shoe on, one off, toward the door and slips her foot into the shoe on the floor. She looks at the audience.)

Shhh. We don't want to disturb.

(She winks and moves to the clock and opens the door and starts to climb in and notices the lamp on. She tiptoes over and turns it off. The only light on the stage is a pool over the clock.)

We're doing okay for our first scene.

(The phone in the kitchen starts to ring.)

Rats! We were doing okay.

(The phone continues to ring.)

I guess it won't do me any good to answer it, it won't be for anyone in the audience, and I'm just as good as not here to the people in the play.

(As she speaks, JERRY enters from bedroom, shirt and belt undone and barefoot. He turns on the lamp and moves to the phone. As he answers, MOTHER AGE quickly shuts the clock door, stands and observes the action.)

JERRY: *(Abruptly.)* Hello.

(Changes tone to polite sweetness.)

Oh hello! Yes we had a wonderful time.

(Pause)

A..just walked in.

(JERRY places his hand over the phone and looks toward bedroom as he speaks using a slightly sarcastic tone.)

Joan, it is your mother.

(He removes his hand covering the phone and continues his conversation with JOAN'S mother as JOAN enters through the bedroom door wearing a terry cloth bathrobe.)

It's so nice of you to call.

(Pause)

Here's Joan.

(He hands JOAN the phone, turns and speaks to himself.)

We'll have to have a talk with her about calling after 9 p.m. The best way to start a marriage is with rules.

(He moves back into the bedroom.)

JOAN: Hi, mom

(Pause)

...super, everything is fine.

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(Pause)

Oh yes, there are some gifts here.

(She glances at the gifts on the coffee table, then turns and faces the kitchen again.)

Four to be exact.

(MOTHER AGE shakes her head and moves to the coffee table and places a small gift she left to the side, to the top of the stack, then mimes JOAN to look again.)

Well just a minute, I'll look again.

(She faces coffee table.)

I guess I didn't count right. There are five.

(She continues chatting with her mother as she moves to the kitchen window and opens it a little just as JERRY enters carrying a bright pink negligee. She quickly turns toward him as though she has done nothing. He mimes hugging her in the negligee and dances about with it as he moves to the window and closes it as much as she has opened it.)

I'll call you in the morning and let you know who sent the gifts and then we can start sending out the thank you notes.

(JERRY drapes the negligee over her and kisses her neck.)

You know you have a nut for a son-in-law?

(Pause)

Thanks for everything, mom. Bye.

(She hangs up the phone.)

You're giving me goosebumps again. Want to open wedding gifts?

(MOTHER AGE shakes her head in disgust, indicating she thinks that remark is pretty stupid at this time.)

JERRY: *(Trying to keep the romantic mood.)* 'Tis against the order of the kingdom to do such chores on a night like this. Up we go one more time. Our love nest is awaiting.

(He carries her through the bedroom door casting a backward glance at where the shoe was, looks a bit puzzled for a brief moment, then shuts the door with his foot. MOTHER AGE moves to the clock and opens the door and starts to climb in when she notices the lamp is on.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE Just about forgot one of my duties.

(She turns off the lamp and moves back to the clock which is lit by a small pool of light.)

Hey ol' buddy, like I said before, we finally got through that scene.

(She moves to enter the clock again and the phone rings.)

Oh no, not again.

(JOAN, dressed in the pink negligee, comes out of the bedroom, turns on the lamp, moves to the kitchen and answers the phone. MOTHER AGE quickly closes the clock door, stands beside it, folds her arms and taps her foot.)

Good grief, they will never get any-- I hope it is his mother this time.

JOAN: Hello.

(Sweetly)

Oh Mother Johnson, how nice of you to call.

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(Pause)

We just barely put our suitcases down.

(Pause)

Wonderful. Great weather. We appreciate the suggestion you and Dad Johnson gave us.

(Pause)

You mean there are more wedding gifts at your house?

(Pause)

Well...a...no, it's a little too late tonight. Tomorrow we can.

(JERRY appears in the doorway of the bedroom wearing a bathrobe, barefoot.)

JERRY: (Clearing his throat loudly.) Any more of this night without you will be a K-n-i-g-h-t without you.

JOAN: *(Turns toward JERRY and puts her hand over the phone.)* It's your mother this time.

(Takes her hand off phone and continues talking sweetly to his mother.)

No his allergies were not bothered by the weeds at the lake, maybe he has outgrown the problem.

(Pause)

I think he has enough pills. Just a minute and I'll let you talk to him. We'll be in touch, Mother Johnson.

(JOAN smiles smugly at JERRY as she hands the phone to him. MOTHER AGE looks at the time ticking away on the clock, refolds her arms and leans against the clock. JOAN moves to the coffee table, picks up a gift and starts undoing a ribbon as JERRY talks on the phone.)

JERRY: Hi.

(Pause.)

Everything was just as you said it would be at the resort.

(Pause.)

All allergies are under control.

(Pause.)

I guess I did leave the prescription at home...I mean your house. I'll be by on my way to the office in the morning to pick it up.

(He turns away from JOAN and while she isn't looking, he closes the window a little.)

Oh yes, we love Grandfather's grandfather clock. Thanks for having it delivered. It's the best piece of furniture in the house.

(Pause.)

Take care. I'll be by tomorrow.

(He hangs up the phone and quickly moves to JOAN and takes the gift she is unwrapping out of her hands.)

We'll just have to figure out a way to turn off the phone when we don't want to be disturbed.

(He pulls her to her feet and embraces her.)

JOAN: But don't you want to see what is in just one little package?

JERRY: Not now, fair maiden. There are more important matters before the court this moment.

(He places the gift on the coffee table and gently takes her arm and gallantly escorts her to in front of the clock. MOTHER AGE quickly steps aside and looks at the young couple.)

And now as we stand before this honored time piece, this was my grandfather's and his father's before him,

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we must carefully look at the minutes of our lives ticking away and be ever mindful not to waste a second not loving each other.

JOAN: Oh Jerry, it is a beautiful clock and you, my sweet, are so serious you are frightening me.

JERRY: Not to fear, beautiful flower of the kingdom. You must need answer just one question. Are you -- happy you married me?

JOAN: Of course.

(She looks at the clock.)

Let it be recorded that at this moment in time, 9:15 p.m., June 5, 1948, at this age in my life, I am happy to be your wife.

JERRY: *(Her embraces her.)* Also let it be recorded, that minute hand is not going around one more time until your prince charming sweeps you off your feet and carries you up to his castle to live happily ever after.

(He starts to pick her up, then puts her down.)

Do you mind if I don't carry you this time? I'd rather use my energy for other things.

JOAN: Mmmm...good idea! *(She places his arm inside her negligee and quickly kisses his neck.)*

JERRY: Hey! Now you are giving me goose bumps.

JOAN: Let's go put our goose bumps together.

(They move through the bedroom door, closing it behind them.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: Mmm. The honeymoon is not over.

(She sighs, then remembers her job.)

Okay, one more time we will try to end this scene.

(She looks about the room and at the kitchen window.)

Jerry won the window contest tonight

(She looks at shoes and feels her pocket.)

Shoes are back on my feet and handkerchief is in pocket.

(To audience.)

Now in case the phone rings, would one of you mind answering it on the first ring please, so the newlyweds will not be disturbed? I've got to get in the clock and coordinate with Father Time.

(To herself.)

This is not going to be a bad part at all.

(She climbs in, and closes the base of the clock as lights fade.)

Scene III -- Two years later -- June, 1950, 2:00 a.m. Set design remains the same except a rocking chair, two upholstered side chairs, new drapes and pillows have been added to the living room. In the kitchen, bottles and other items needed for preparing baby formula, are on the counter. The bedroom door is open and a bassinet on wheels is visible. As the scene opens, the stage is lit only with a pool of light over the grandfather clock. MOTHER AGE enters through the base of the clock, carrying a book with the title "You And Your Infant", in large letters on the cover, and a sewing basket with knitting needles and yarn

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protruding from it. She moves to the coffee table and places the items there, then moves to face the clock closing her entry door. She speaks to the clock. The clock chimes two times.

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: You are wonderful, Father Time. You just keep ticking away no matter whether it is night or day.

DIRECTOR: Miss Anderson!

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(Looking up into the lights.)* Yes, sir!

DIRECTOR: Please don't say lines that are not in the script. I ignored that in the first scene, but no more. Now, as Mother Age would you please set the stage for Scene Two?

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(To herself, looking up.)* Of course...sir.

(She faces clock.)

Father Time, you just keep ticking away.

(To audience.)

Just no way to stop it. We are now two years older and, as you just heard Father Time announce, it is 2 o'clock, 2 a.m. to be exact. Mother Age and Father Time work whether it is day or night. Joan usually raids the refrigerator at this hour. Here she comes now.

(JOAN enters through bedroom door, very pregnant, wearing a long bathrobe and slippers. She moves to the refrigerator, opens the door, and pours herself a large glass of milk. She notices the kitchen window closed. She opens it, breathes deeply, and slowly sips the milk.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: I had better turn on the lamp. In her condition, I don't want her to stumble.

(She turns on the lamp and fondly looks at JOAN.)

Sometimes she sits and reads a bit before going back to bed. Mercy, I can hardly wait for the blessed event. I wonder if we are going to have a boy or girl around here.

(She fluffs the pillows on the couch and picks up the book on the coffee table.)

Only two more chapters and she has finished this. And it is about time she did.

JOAN: *(Moves to the sofa carrying the glass of milk. She sits, puts the glass on the coffee table, and opens the book.)* I move like an over-sized hippopotamus. Sitting, lying down, standing; nothing is comfortable.

(She starts to read.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(Smiling at JOAN, moves the glass of milk a little closer for easier reach. JOAN is reading and does not see the glass of milk move.)* Soon you will be back to normal. One sure thing about pregnancy, it does get cured with delivery. Well, guess my work is done for now.

(She moves toward the clock, then pauses as a moan is heard from the bedroom.)

JERRY: *(Sleepily, offstage from the bedroom, is having a nightmare.)* I'll get you there...oh....oh....

JOAN: *(Looks up from the book.)* Jerry, are you okay?

(Stumbling is heard, then JERRY emerges from the bedroom dressed in his pajamas, three-fourths asleep.)

JOAN: I know you snored, but this is the first time you have walked in your sleep. You had better sit before you fall off the world.

JERRY: Oh, oh...

(Holding his tummy, he sleepily moves to a chair and plops down.)

I have such a headache.

JOAN: Then why are you holding your stomach?

JERRY: *(Awakening a bit more.)* Sometimes a headache makes your stomach hurt.

JOAN: Should I get you a hot towel for your head or your stomach?

JERRY: I'll tell you in a minute as soon as I wake up. Oh, oh,
(He holds his head, then his stomach.)

I ... I just had a terrible nightmare... I think it hurts more here.

JOAN: *(Amused by his sleepiness.)* Poor dear. You are having labor pains. Have you timed them yet?

JERRY: *(Not amused.)* Funny. I'm an adult, educated, professional male. I told you I don't believe in the myths of pregnancy..the male experiencing sympathetic labor pains or a baby conceived during a full moon born during a full moon.

(He holds his stomach again and groans.)

Help, there is a full moon tonight!

JOAN: *(Still amused by him.)* And if Dr. Clyde's calculations are correct, conception took place during a full moon.

(Dreamily.)

I remember it well. We were at the beach...beautiful night and...

JERRY: *(Interrupting)* This is no time to be romantic. I hurt.

JOAN: Poor baby.

JERRY: *(Interrupting)* Don't say the word "baby"--yet.

JOAN: You climb back into bed, and I will bring you some Alka-Seltzer. Speedy Alka-Seltzer will fix you right up.

(She clumsily rises, glances at the clock, takes a deep breath, as she moves to the kitchen and gets the Alka-Seltzer and a glass.)

Hop into bed. I'll be right there.

JERRY: *(To himself.)* No, I'm staying right here and timing these pains.

JOAN: *(From the kitchen.)* What did you say?

JERRY: I...a...I'll be fine. Just need to sit up for a time.

(He sneezes, then groans.)

Oh, shut the window while you are up...please. Sneezing and stomach pains don't go together.

JOAN: *(Gently shuts the window, then brings JERRY his Alka-Seltzer.)* Drink before the fizz-fizz becomes fizzled.

JERRY: *(Sipping.)* You've got to quit listening to those ads.

(He looks at her.)

I'm scared.

JOAN: Oh, I'm sure that it's just the onions we had for dinner.

JERRY: No, that's not it.

(Groaning.)

Oh, oh, oh.

(He glances at the clock and holds his stomach and says to himself.)

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Only three minutes apart...oh dear.

(To JOAN.)

No, I'm scared. Scared I'm losing you.

JOAN: You're what? I have never felt closer to you.

JERRY: *(Standing, but hunched over.)* You, you've changed a lot.

JOAN: *(Looking at her protruding stomach.)* It's impossible to hatch a baby without changing a bit. But...

JERRY: *(Interrupting.)* No, that's not what I mean. I mean since you became a mother...

JOAN: But I'm not a mother yet.

JERRY: Preparing to become a mother. Your feelings for me have changed. I wish I were cuddled in your arms and you were knitting me a sweater instead of a baby shawl.

(He stands, becoming more awake.)

Last week I read an article entitled "Until Children Do We Part." I'm afraid our love affair will never be the same. Before that baby takes over this house and pushes me out of your arms, I want you to know I love you just as you are; cold feet, hiccups, and eating in the middle of the night.

(JULIE/MOTHER AGE emotionally observes the action.)

JOAN: *(Smiles at his accounting.)* I told you before we were married that I had cold feet, and the hiccups, and middle-of-the-night snacks are part of my present-soon-to-pass infirmity.

(She grimaces slightly, takes a deep breath, and looks at the clock again. JERRY sits and is so involved in how he feels, he doesn't notice JOAN.)

Poor darling, you have had your sleep disturbed by all this.

JERRY: I can't think of anything I would rather do.

JOAN: What a nice thing to say. You are the sweetest man in the whole world. Without you I would have been frightened to death for eight and three-quarter months. I love...

(She grimaces, takes a deep breath and looks at the clock.)

...you. Having a baby isn't going to change that, or put you in any place but number one in my life.

JERRY: *(Becoming more awake.)* Do you really mean that?

JOAN: *(Grimaces more, takes a very deep breath, and looks at the clock.)* At this hour and at this time I couldn't be more serious. Feeling better?

JERRY: Ah yes. Speedy Alka-Seltzer did the job.

(Puts the glass down.)

Care to join me in the sack for some sleep?

JOAN: I'm glad you're better because my pains are regular now and I think we had better call the doctor soon.

JERRY: *(Jumps up, completely out of his sleepy stupor and really looks at her, excitedly.)* You're what?

They're what? How often? Are you all right? I'll be right back!

(He walks around the sofa.)

Stay right where you are!

JOAN: *(Calmly.)* I'm okay. Just call Dr.Clyde and tell him the pains are regular.

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(Follows JERRY around and motions toward the phone.)* Move it, Jerry. It's time!

JERRY: *(Very nervous, he circles the sofa again with MOTHER AGE following.)* Here you are having a baby, and I'm telling you about my nightmare and..don't move! You might lose something! I'm on my way.

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(JERRY rushes toward the bedroom. MOTHER AGE blocks the doorway. JERRY remembers where the phone is and moves to the kitchen.)

Would you like some fresh air? I'll gladly open the windows.

JOAN: *(Trying to remain calm.)* I'm okay. Just dial the doctor.

JERRY: *(He gropes around.)* The number is....

JOAN: On the refrigerator door.

(She has another contraction, takes a deep breath and begins whistling the tune "Whistle While You Work.")

JERRY: What are you doing?

JOAN: Whistling. Can't you tell whistling when you hear it?

JERRY: Strange time to whistle if you ask me.

JOAN: No one asked you. The doctor said when the contractions get strong, take a deep breath, then whistle.

(She starts to whistle again.)

JERRY: Do you have to whistle that tune?

JOAN: I could do a Sousa march, but I like this better. Dial the doctor.

(She whistles louder.)

JERRY: Let's see now. I want to do this right. Hate to wake anyone but Dr. Clyde at this hour.

(He slowly reads number of the fridge door as he dials.)

7-1-4-6-0-4-2

(Pause.)

Please answer. Dr. Clyde...well...I think it is time. Her pains are regular. Yes...that's her whistling. I'll get her there as fast as I can.

(He drops the phone as he rushes to JOAN.)

Are you okay? What can I get you?

JOAN: Nothing 'cept a doctor in a hospital. Get dressed!

(She continues whistling.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(Picks up the phone and speaks to the doctor.)* Dr. Clyde, in his excitement the expectant father forgot to tell you his name. Jerry Johnson.

(Pause.)

No, I'm not the grandmother-to-be. I...a...just sort of work around here. Please take good care of her.

(She hangs up the phone.)

JERRY: *(He rushes off to the bedroom.)* Let's see, the car keys are in my grey pants.

JOAN: *(Calling to him.)* Your grey pants are at the cleaners. There is a set of car keys in my purse on the dresser next to my packed bag.

(To herself.)

Hustle, JERRY.

(She breaths deeply and whistles again.)

JERRY: *(Rushes in from the bedroom with pants and sport coat pulled over his pajamas, barefoot.)* I love you and it's okay that you are going to have a baby. We're going to have a baby! I'll be all right through the whole thing.

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(He rushes back to the bedroom.)

JOAN: I'm sure you will. Please bring me a sweater with the purse and bag.

(Whistles a Sousa march.)

JERRY: *(Rushes out of the bedroom with shoes on without socks.)* Now just relax.

(Trying to be humorous.)

Why I once heard of a tale of Indian women having babies in an open field with just a piece of string.

JOAN: Not funny!

(Whistles with great effort.)

JERRY: *(Goes back to the bedroom and gets her purse and bag, and places them at the doorway.)* Thank God there isn't much traffic at this hour and the hospital is just a few minutes away.

(Trying to comfort her, but saying it more for his piece of mind.)

Not to worry, this type of thing has been going on for years and years.

(He helps her to her feet and to the doorway.)

I forgot the sweater.

(To himself as he moves toward the bedroom.)

I just read in the paper last week of a baby being born in the hospital parking lot. Got to get out of here.

Don't want that to happen to me!

JOAN: What did you say, dear?

JERRY: I said I love you so much it hurts.

JOAN: *(Takes a deep breath, then groans but remains good natured.)* Yes, sometimes love does hurt.

JERRY: *(Wheeling the bassinet out to the living room, he takes the white shawl draped over it and lovingly puts it around JOAN'S shoulders.)* No time to look for a sweater. Besides, this makes you look like a Madonna.

(He speaks to the bassinet.)

Now you stay right there until we return with your new tenant.

(He picks up the bag and helps JOAN through the door, and the sound of a car driving away is heard.)

JULIE/MOTHER AGE: *(Moves to shut the door, closes it and leans against it.)* I hope JERRY doesn't have apoplexy before he gets her to the hospital.

(She moves to the bassinet and straightens some of the trim.)

Mmm, what a beautiful thing is about to happen.

(She turns out the lamp and the stage is lit only with the pool of light over the clock. She moves to the clock. She is about to enter, then pauses and talks to the clock.)

Hey I'm too nervous and excited to leave this scene.

(She closes the base.)

If you don't mind, I think I'll just pace the floor until JERRY comes home. You just go on ticking.

(She starts to move around the sofa as the clock strikes a louder than usual one, two, three. She turns and glances at the clock.)

You're excited too, aren't you?

(Blackout.)

20 ADDITIONAL PAGES MAKE UP THE SECOND ACT.