

PERUSAL SCRIPT

Mirrors and Memories

An Evening of Five Short Plays
Inspired by Norman Rockwell Paintings

by

Linda Britt



Newport, Maine

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MIRRORS AND MEMORIES

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Cast

MIRRORS AND MEMORIES

1 youngteengirl, 5 women, 3 men

Comprised of five short plays:

GIRL AT THE MIRROR

Mother -- 30s

Katie -- 13-15

THANKSGIVING

Mom -- late 50s

Pete -- early 20s

PLAYBILL

Ruth -- middle-aged

Sally -- Middle-aged

THE INTERLOPER

Henry -- late 40s

George -- early 50s

ATTIC MEMORIES

Doris -- late 60s to late 70s

MIRRORS AND MEMORIES a play by Linda Britt 1youngteengirl, 5W, 3M A somewhat contemporary take on Americans and American life, inspired by five classic Norman Rockwell paintings: “Girl At The Mirror”, “Thanksgiving”, “Playbill”, “The Interloper”, and “Attic Memories”. The playwright has an uncanny knack for seeing inside the people in the paintings and pulling out contemporary issues, struggles, and observations, that could very well have been in the mind of the painting’s subjects, and which most certainly live today in our minds, as well as being from the mind, brush and heart of one of America’s greatest artists. These five short plays are alternately funny, touching and truthful [in an emotional sense], and serve to remind us of the good things that make us the most human. About 90 minutes. **ORDER #3045 [Premiered by the Out of the Box Theatre, Lewiston, Maine.]**

LINDA BRITT is a Maine playwright who has had plays produced on both coasts. Recent works include “What If...”, “I Smile, Of Course, and Go On Drinking Tea,” and “Chosen: Stories On Adoption,” along with her ten-minute play “If Only in My Dreams”. Her current project is a series of monologs focusing on immigration.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

When I look at almost any Norman Rockwell painting, I see a story. Some years ago, I saw a call for plays based on paintings for a festival. For me, there wasn't a question as to which painting I would start with. "The Girl at the Mirror" is an iconic Rockwell painting, with the wistfulness of the young girl contemplating her own image as well as the photo of the movie star in the magazine on her lap. As the mother of a daughter about that age at the time, it was easy for me to transport myself into that scene and imagine a conversation between mother and daughter. But I was also the mother of a young adult son, and "Thanksgiving" also called to me. What would the conversation between these two, the mother and the soldier-son, be like? Then there's "Playbill," based on "Charwomen in The Majestic Theater." Just look at these women. What must their lives be like? The play almost wrote itself. By that time, I knew I had to write enough of these short plays for an entire evening's entertainment. "The Interloper" and "Attic Memories" also have characters that jump out of the paintings and onto the page. Each painting is a little bit of America; the hard part was stopping at five paintings, five plays.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

There are many ways to stage this play. There could be small representations of all the plays onstage at the same time and the action shifts fluidly between them. OR each scene could be set up behind a curtain, or in darkness. OR something you come up with.

NOTE:

These plays are designed to be performed as an evening's entertainment. If solo performance of any playlet within this theatrical is desired, whether for competition, or public performance, we ask you to contact the publisher for permission and pay a small royalty fee.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

Each of the short plays presented in MIRRORS & MEMORIES has been included in this PERUSAL SCRIPT, but only ½ of each short play is printed here.

Mirrors & Memories

The Girl At the Mirror

Setting: A bedroom. MOM in a slip, getting ready to go out for the evening. KATIE in a white tank top and shorts on the bed, watching MOM get ready. Mom stands at a dressing table with a large mirror comparing two dresses.

MOM: I don't know which one to wear! I can't decide between the blue one and the black one.

KATIE: What difference does it make?

MOM: I want to look nice, of course.

KATIE: Why? Do you think he's worrying about what he's going to wear?

MOM: Maybe.

(KATIE catches her eye)

Probably not. But I still want to look nice. I think maybe the blue's a better color.

KATIE: Who is this guy, anyway?

MOM: Katie, I'm not going into details with you. He's someone I met and we're going to have dinner. Period.
So do you like the blue?

KATIE: It's not my favorite color.

MOM: I know blue's not your favorite color. But you don't have to wear it. I just thought you might tell me if you think I look nice in it.

KATIE: Yeah, yeah, you look nice in the blue dress.

MOM: I haven't put it on yet, so how do you know?

KATIE: I don't. But maybe if I answer the question, you'll stop asking.

MOM: What's that supposed to mean?

KATIE: It means, you keep asking. You want to know what I think about the blue dress that you're going to wear on a date with a guy I never met and probably don't like. I figured you would keep asking until I answered, so I answered.

MOM: Katie!

KATIE: So you don't like the answer. That's not my problem.

MOM: What is your problem, then?

KATIE: I don't have a problem. You do.

MOM: Yeah... at the moment, you're my problem.

KATIE: And I'm good at it.

MOM: Look, Katie, we talked about this. I have a date. I'm going to have dinner. It's not with your dad. You need to get over it.

KATIE: I need to get over my mom going on a date with a guy who's not my dad. I need to get over that.

MOM: Let's see... we've been divorced for three years. Yeah, I think you need to get over that.

(Pause)

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KATIE: I want to go live with Dad.

MOM: I think I misheard you.

KATIE: I want to live with Dad.

MOM: You want to live with your Dad. You want to live with a man who's dating someone young enough to be your sister. You want to live with Dad?

KATIE: Yes. Do you think he could pick me up this afternoon?

MOM: I do not.

KATIE: I'm going to call him!

MOM: Be my guest. He will say no.

KATIE: You don't know that. You don't know he'll say no. He always says yes to me.

MOM: So call him.

(KATIE pulls out her cell phone and dials. She waits. She hangs up. MOM waits.)

KATIE: No answer.

MOM: Guess you're stuck here. So sad for you.

KATIE: Thanks for the sympathy.

MOM: Hard for me to be terribly sympathetic when you freak out if I have one date. Meanwhile, your dad's practically living with that girl, and you want to go live with him. I don't see the logic.

KATIE: I'm a teenager. I don't have to be logical.

MOM: You're a smart-alec.

(Beat)

It's a good thing I love you.

KATIE: I still want to live with Dad.

MOM: No you don't. You just say that because you know I'll get aggravated and we'll have another fight. You would rather push my buttons than look at me in my blue dress and have to deal with me dating.

(KATIE sits silently. She would rather sulk than engage. MOM puts on the blue dress, checks herself out in the mirror, turning around to try to see all angles.)

MOM: I don't know... maybe it's too.... blue.

KATIE: Too blue?

MOM: Too blue, too short, too something!

KATIE: Mom, why are you so hung up about this? It's a dress. You look fine. No big deal, right? That's what you said... it's just dinner.

MOM: It's just dinner? Did I say that? Well, I guess it is, but it's my first date in about twenty years. What if it's terrible? What if he sits across the table from me and doesn't say anything, or maybe goes on and on about his recent hernia surgery?

KATIE: He just had hernia surgery?

MOM: No! Well, I don't know. Maybe. Maybe he did. Maybe he'll sit across the table from me with an IV thingie attached to his arm.

KATIE: Mom! Chill! What's the worst thing that could happen? Seriously. You don't like him, and don't ever go out with him again? Big deal. You still get to go out to a restaurant and you should order what you like and eat it. So you get a good dinner. That's not so bad.

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MOM: *(Pauses for a moment. Looks at Katie.)* You are wise beyond your years, young grasshopper.

KATIE: Mom? Did you just call me a grasshopper?

MOM: *(Sitting to address her face in the mirror.)* Oh. Yeah, I guess I did. It's from an old TV show.

KATIE: Figures.

MOM: Yeah. There was this guy who went around all over the place, mostly out west I guess, and he kept running into trouble of some sort or other. Someone always needed his help so he'd come in with his kung fu stuff and help out. But then in every episode there would always be this flashback, well, a different one every time, back to when he was this little boy in China.

(KATIE has ceased to listen. She has picked up a fashion magazine and is leafing through pictures of celebrities.)

MOM: And back in China he was just a kid and he was learning all that zen stuff from this old guy who was always calling him "Grasshopper" or "Young Grasshopper". And so we'd see these flashbacks where basically what he was learning was how to "chill", as you'd call it.

(Turns to Katie, who doesn't look up from her magazine.)

Katie!

KATIE: Yeah?

MOM: Did you hear anything I just told you?

KATIE: Yeah. You told me about the kung fu guy.

(Continuing to look at the magazine.)

MOM: I thought you'd find it interesting.

(Turns back to mirror.)

KATIE: I did, for the first ten seconds. I didn't figure you were going to give me the whole boxed DVD series verbatim.

MOM: Oh. Sorry. I guess that was a bit much.

(Gets up, takes off blue dress.)

I'm just thinking the blue is wrong. Too much color. I'm going to wear the black one.

(Gets the black dress and pulls it partly on.)

So what do you think?

KATIE: Looks great. You might want to adjust it a little, though.

MOM: *(Flustered)* Oh, yeah, right.

(Smooths dress.)

I don't know.... I mean, it's a nice dress, classic, you know, and black looks good on everyone.

KATIE: Except Marly Simmons.

MOM: Who?

KATIE: Marly Simmons. You know, Marly? Marly who was in my dance class when we were about five? That Marly?

MOM: Okay, yeah, I think.

KATIE: Well, a couple of weeks ago she decided to dye her hair black. Really black, like, scary black, like it looks when it's dark and you have to go into the basement to get something only then the power goes out and it's just pitch black. That black.

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MOM: And you don't like her hair?

KATIE: No, it's not that, I think her hair looks fine. In fact, I think maybe I'd like to dye my hair too, only I think I'd look better in green.

(Pause for MOM's reaction; MOM obliges.)

Anyway, no, it's not her hair, it's that she started wearing black lipstick too, and that just looks stupid.

MOM: So you think the black dress looks stupid?

KATIE:

I don't think I said anything about the black dress. I was talking about black lips! Are you planning to wear black lipstick too?

MOM: Don't be absurd.

(Looking in the mirror again, frowning.)

It's just... it's so basic. Basic black. Do I really want to be basic black tonight?

KATIE: I'm groaning now, Mom. Groan. Hear that? That's me groaning.

MOM: And this is me studiously ignoring you.

KATIE: But you're acting like a.... a teenager!

MOM: You can be very cruel, Katie. A teenager.

(Goes over and sits next to Katie.)

I guess it does sound silly. I just ... I just want to go out with a nice man and have a nice dinner and a nice conversation. And I guess I want him to think I'm pretty.

KATIE: Well, he did ask you out, didn't he? That has to say something.

MOM: Yeah. Yes. he did. But that's not the same thing as sitting across the table from each other for two hours... where he can get a close look at me.

KATIE: Don't worry. There'll probably be candlelight.

MOM: Gee, thanks.

KATIE: I didn't mean it that way. I just meant you should chill about it. I'm sure he likes you, Mom.

MOM: We'll see.

(Stands up again.)

So... the black dress? The basic black?

KATIE: As long as you stay away from the black lipstick, sure.

MOM: I think I can manage that.

KATIE: So, Mom... what time's he picking you up?

MOM: He's not. I'm meeting him at the restaurant.

KATIE: What? I don't even get to meet him before you go out with him?

MOM: No, Katie. You don't need to meet him yet.

KATIE: Oh, yes I do. I need to meet him and see if I like him.

MOM: You're going about it backwards, dear. I need to decide if I like him first.

KATIE: Oh, I get it. So... IF you decide you like him, then I get to meet him?

MOM: Eventually. If I like him enough to see him again... if we decide we want to pursue some kind of relationship.

KATIE: So... then what happens if I don't like him at all? What if I hate him? What if I think he's the root of all

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evil? Then what would you do? Would you stop seeing him?

MOM: Katie, really, you're getting ahead of yourself.

KATIE: I am not. If you let me meet him first, and give my approval, then you can like him all you want.

MOM: And then what? What if you like him a lot and then it doesn't work out for us?

KATIE: Well...

MOM: And then I meet someone else and you get attached to him and then I decide I don't like him either?

KATIE: That's not the point! What I want to know is what you'll do if you like him and I don't!

MOM: Can't we cross that bridge when we come to it? I mean, Katie, maybe you should try having a little more faith in my judgment.

KATIE: You married Dad.

MOM: Katie! What's that supposed to mean?

KATIE: Nothing. Except then you divorced him. So... who's to say it won't happen again?

FOUR additional pages to this Playlet

Thanksgiving

(At lights up, PETE and his MOM are sitting in kitchen chairs. PETE wears his military uniform. He is peeling a potato. She is holding a bowl of unpeeled potatoes with peels, and is also peeling a potato. On the floor is a large bowl filled with water and peeled potatoes. Nearby on a kitchen table and the floor are other bowls or pots, a bushel of apples, a pumpkin.)

PETE: Gee, Mom, it's my first day home, and you've already got me on KP.

MOM: Now, you don't have to be doing this, Pete. You should be relaxing in there with your dad, watching TV, or sleeping in.

PETE: Mom, I haven't been able to sleep in since ... well, since I left home. And I think maybe I've outgrown the parade with the big balloons. I'll watch the game with Dad later.

MOM: I just hate to put you to work, though. Why don't you just sit there and keep me company while I peel?

PETE: Now that's just silly. I'm sitting here, I might as well be useful. Trust me, peeling a potato or two isn't gonna wear me out.

MOM: Okay, but if you get tired, you just go on and take a nap. Don't you worry about me needing help. I can do this by myself.

PETE: I have no doubt about that. I tell you what, I would put you in charge of the Army if I could. You'd have the whole operation running like clockwork.

MOM: Oh, now, don't exaggerate.

PETE: I'm not! Listen, you know how to get things done. I know I've been gone for a while, but I've watched you, and you know how to take command and run an operation. And you make it look easy!

MOM: Looks easy, maybe. But it isn't, no sir. And all I have to take care of is a house and a family. Your captains and majors and such, they have to look out for a lot more people and territory than I do!

PETE: *(Laughing)* Maybe. I still think you'd be a great C.O. I think I may have to start calling you "General".

MOM: You do and I'll send you to your room.

(PETE laughs again, and MOM joins in.)

MOM: I guess that sounded pretty silly. When's the last time I sent you to your room?

PETE: A lifetime ago, Mom.

(They both get serious, and a moment passes.)

MOM: So what do they do to you now if they don't like what you do?

PETE: *(With a wink)* They put me on KP.

MOM: What??

(Realizing he's pulling her leg.)

You are terrible.

PETE: I know.

(Again serious.)

Mom, I think they're going to send me back over there.

MOM: Well, they can't do that! You just got back. Let them send someone else.

PETE: Yeah. I know. But I think it's going to happen.

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MOM: Well, I won't let it. You were over there fifteen months. I'd say that's more than enough. And you were lucky. *We* were lucky. You came back whole, in one piece. There's no telling what would happen if you went back.

PETE: I know.

MOM: I think I should call the president and give him a piece of my mind. This is just wrong thinking, is what it is. You've done your part.

PETE: I'm sorry I brought it up now, Mom... I should have waited until tomorrow, or at least until after dinner. I don't want to ruin your Thanksgiving.

MOM: No, no, that's okay. I'm glad you told me. Now we have to figure out what to do. And besides, you're here, and so nothing could possibly ruin my Thanksgiving. But we have to figure out what to do.

(Peels potatoes and scowls.)

PETE: *(Gently)* Mom, there's nothing to be done. I signed up... I volunteered for the Guard, remember? I have to go where they send me.

MOM: Not to my way of thinking, you don't. You signed up for the National Guard. National. Not International. You've already done way more than you volunteered for. You should be here, helping tornado victims, and keeping the country safe while the army guys go over and fight. That's what you should be doing.

(She is worked up now.)

PETE: That's not how it works. The Guard has always served during war. I guess I didn't think of it that way when I joined, but I learned fast.

MOM: You signed up to serve, but who woulda thought when you signed up we'd be in this perpetual war forever, it seems like? It's just wrong, I tell you.

PETE: Mom. I volunteered. You need to calm down. It would not do for you to have a stroke on Thanksgiving.

MOM: *(Taking a long, deep breath)* Okay. I'm breathing now.

PETE: Good. Otherwise, who'd finish making Thanksgiving dinner?

MOM: Peter!

PETE: Just kidding! You know it's not the food I come home for.

MOM: I should hope not.

PETE: Not entirely, anyway. Hey, do we have enough potatoes yet?

MOM: Depends on how much you like mashed potatoes!

PETE: I like them a lot.

MOM: Then we have more potatoes to peel.

PETE: You got it.

(They peel in silence for a bit.)

So... I've been meaning to ask. How's Dad, really?

MOM: Oh, he's fine.

PETE: *(Peering closely at Mom.)* He's fine.

MOM: Yes, yes he is.

PETE: Mom, this is me you're talking to.

MOM: Well, his blood pressure is a little high, but he's taking his medication, and he's fine.

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PETE: And have you had your blood pressure checked?

MOM: What on earth for?

PETE: Gosh, let me think. To see if you're okay, of course!

MOM: Oh, you don't need to worry about me. I'm in great health. Don't you think I look healthy?

PETE: Mom, you are a sight for sore eyes. I think you look terrific. I just want to make sure you take time to take care of yourself while you're taking care of everyone else.

MOM: Since when did it become your job to keep track of my health?

PETE: Since I grew up, Mom. Since I figured out that the people who are important to me are *really* important to me. Since I learned that life is precious, a gift that you just can't take for granted.

MOM: *(A bit overcome)* Ask a stupid question...

PETE: Yeah, Mom, just try and laugh that off. You know I'm right.

MOM: *(Suddenly unable to laugh it off. Wiping a tear)* When did you get to be so smart?

PETE: Hey. I am your son, you know.

MOM: You are. And I am the luckiest mom in the world.

PETE: And so... you'll get a check-up? You'll call the doctor?

MOM: Can we not wait until after the holiday? Let's enjoy the day, the moment. I'm so happy you're home... let's just enjoy that.

PETE: Well, okay. It's a holiday, after all. Everything's closed.

MOM: That's right. Everything's closed.

PETE: Except the subject. Don't think I'll forget about this by tomorrow.

MOM: Could you just peel? We need more potatoes!

PETE: I'm peeling, I'm peeling! See, I told you you'd be a good C.O. But maybe I was wrong. Maybe you'd be a better drill sergeant.

MOM: You are trying my patience, young man.

PETE: Yeah, and you love it. You've missed me...and my wisecracks.

MOM: I have indeed missed you. And I don't want you to leave again.

PETE: We said we would let it go today.

MOM: Yes, we did. But...

PETE: Nice day today.

MOM: You can change the subject as often as you want, but don't think for a second that I'm going to forget.

PETE: Have you ever forgotten anything?

MOM: No, no I haven't. I remember everything. Everything. Including when you lied to me when you were five and you promised me you would clean your room the next day and you didn't.

PETE: Mom, I was five!

MOM: And I remember it well.

PETE: You're a little scary.

MOM: Just a little? I've got to try harder. How are those potatoes coming?

3 pages additional pages to this playlet

Playbill

(At LIGHTS up, two middle-aged women, RUTH and SALLY, dressed in aprons, are sitting in theatre seats, looking together at a Playbill they are both holding. To each side of them are their mops and buckets. There are indications that patrons have been there; other playbills on the floor, candy wrappers, etc).

RUTH: Now, which one was here for the last play? That one?

(Indicating.)

What's her name, Elizabeth Garret?

SALLY: No, I don't think so. I think it was ... oh, what's the name?

(Indicating.)

Her. Yeah, she's the one, Beverly Austin. I'll never forget her.

RUTH: No, ma'am, me either. Never. You don't forget a dressing room that looks like that.

SALLY: That's for sure. It took both of us a whole day to clean up her mess.

RUTH: They should pay us extra. Have you been in her dressing room this time?

SALLY: Not me. I don't want to think about what it looks like in there. Remember the candy wrappers from last time? They were piled up yea high

(Indicating.)

I don't know where she put all that candy. She's a skinny little thing.

RUTH: What about the tissues she just threw on the floor? She had a waste can in there. Too much trouble for her to use it, I guess.

SALLY: Ain't it the truth? Probably just way too inconvenient. Probably she would have had to move a muscle to drop the tissues into the can.

(Both laugh.)

RUTH: She's not the worst, though. Remember that guy, what was his name, the guy who always wore the letter jacket like he thought he was still in college or something, the guy who ordered take-out every meal and left all the containers stacked on the chairs and the floor. You can get a lot of take-out over a twelve-week run.

SALLY: I wouldn't care so much if they let us in to clean every now and again while they're here. But they just don't want us in there. You'd think they think we want to steal all their stuff.

RUTH: Yeah. I've been wanting those candy wrappers since the first time I saw them.

(They crack up.)

SALLY: You think that's it, really? You think they're afraid we'll steal their stuff?

RUTH: I can't think of any other reason they don't let us clean until they leave. Unless they're worried we'll bust in on them doing something with someone they're not supposed to be with. I guess we *could* spread some nasty rumors.

SALLY: They ain't rumors if they're true. Don't you know that that Cameron Whitman was sleeping with both of those redhead chorus girls when he was here last spring? His dressing room might as well have had a revolving door on it.

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(They crack up again.)

RUTH: Well, I tell you what. I wouldn't have minded going through that door at least once myself. But he probably couldn't have handled me. I'm too hot for him.

(This strikes SALLY as hysterically funny. She laughs until she almost falls down.)

RUTH: What? You think I'm not a hot mama? Shows what you know.

SALLY: *(Getting herself under control)* Oh, yeah, you're a hot mama all right. A mama having hot flashes, maybe.

RUTH: *(Also laughing)* Yeah, well, you should know about that. Still, that Cameron Whitman doesn't know what he's missing.

SALLY: You can say that again.

(RUTH starts to speak.)

But don't!

RUTH: *(Sticking out her tongue, then looking back at the program)* So you know what I want to know? How come they don't put us in these programs? I mean they couldn't put on these shows without us.

SALLY: Well, they just put the stars in there, right?

RUTH: No! They put the stars, and the stagehand people, and the lights people, and what else... oh, here's the guy who did the set, and the gal who sells the tickets... seems like everyone is here but us.

SALLY: Huh. I guess they don't think we're important.

RUTH: Well, the truth is, we don't have lives like they do.

SALLY: Lives?

RUTH: Absolutely. Look at this. These folks, there's all this stuff in here about what they've done and where they've been. What have we done, where have we been?

SALLY: I don't know about you, but I've been lots of places.

RUTH: Like where?

SALLY: Uptown. Downtown. Just last week I went to the grocery store.

(They crack up again.)

RUTH: Well, if you put it that way, I've done lots of things too.

SALLY: Yeah?

RUTH: You bet. All kinds of things. I used to go out to Coney Island every summer.

SALLY: Coney Island?

RUTH: Yep. And I used to work for a real rich family, cleaning their house. They weren't just rich, they were famous. So I know about famous people. And what they do. So that's just about as good as doing that stuff myself.

SALLY: You know, you're right about that. The fact that we ain't up on that stage doing stuff doesn't mean we couldn't.

RUTH: You mean like singing and dancing?

SALLY: Absolutely. Singing and dancing. Can't you just see me, a chorus girl?

(They laugh and laugh.)

RUTH: Well, I tell you what. If you can do it, so can I. I can cut a rug.

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SALLY: Let's see it then.

RUTH: What?

SALLY: Your singing and dancing. Come on, what's stopping you?

RUTH: Nothing. Nothing's stopping me. Watch this.

(She stands up, steps downstage, and warms up, like she's heard the stars.)

Mi mi mi mi!

(SALLY watches with amusement. When RUTH starts to vocalize, SALLY laughs.)

SALLY: You think that's how it's done?

RUTH: You got a better notion?

SALLY: Maybe. Maybe I do.

RUTH: So what's stopping you, then? Get up here and show me.

SALLY: Maybe I will. Maybe I'll just do that.

RUTH: I'm waiting...

SALLY: I'm coming!

(SALLY gets up, moves downstage to join Ruth.)

Now watch, I'll show you how it's done.

RUTH: You talk a good game.

SALLY: *(Ignoring this comment, and singing, going up and down the scale)* La La La La La La La La

(Turning to Ruth.)

Can you do that, smarty pants?

RUTH: You just listen. La La La La La La La!

(RUTH is not a good singer. And they crack up again.)

SALLY: So what should we sing? Now that we're in top voice.

RUTH: Hmm. How about... "No business like show business"? I think I can sing as good as Ethel Merman.

SALLY: I don't know any words but the first ones. What else you got?

RUTH: I don't know. What do you know?

SALLY: Let me think.

RUTH: Well, get on with the thinking, will you? We have to get back to work soon.

SALLY: Okay, okay. How about... Oklahoma?

RUTH: That's a good one. Okay, ready? One, two, three!

RUTH and SALLY: "Oklahoma! Where the wind comes sweeping down the plain! Where the..."

(The song breaks down as they confuse the words and break out into laughter again.)

SALLY: Yeah, that was good. We're ready for Broadway!

RUTH: Wait a second. Don't we have to dance first?

SALLY: Oh yeah. You did say you could cut a rug, didn't you?

RUTH: And I can too.

(RUTH starts to do some combination of tap and soft shoe, badly, humming as she does it. SALLY watches, then tries to join in.)

THREE additional pages to this playlet

The Interloper

At lights up, HENRY enters, looks around, and sits on a bench at a bus stop. He is dapperly dressed, complete with bowler and spats, and holding a folded umbrella. He has his lunchbag with him, and sets it on the bench next to him. He puts on his horn-rimmed glasses, pulls out a book and begins to read. Shortly, GEORGE walks up. He is larger, working class, dressed in a rumpled jacket over a horizontally striped shirt with smudged pants, scuffed shoes, and an old beret cocked sideways on his head. HENRY glances up but quickly returns to his book.

GEORGE: Mind if I sit here?

(Indicating the bench, and sitting before HENRY answers)

HENRY: *(Minding very much)* Not at all.

(Continuing to read.)

GEORGE: Been here long?

HENRY: *(not engaging)* Just a few minutes.

GEORGE: I was thinking maybe I was late for the bus, but I wasn't sure. You got the time?

HENRY: *(Pulling out a pocket watch)* It's 4:25.

GEORGE: 4:25! I thought I was later than that. Great!

HENRY: *(Back to his book)* Mmmhmm.

GEORGE: So, 4:25, right?

HENRY: *(Too polite to ignore this)* Yes, 4:25.

GEORGE: Yeah, I thought it was later than that. I gotta catch the 4:45 bus.

HENRY: *(Trying to lose himself in his book again)* I see.

GEORGE: Yes, sir. Gotta catch that bus since the next one don't come until 5:15.

HENRY: *(not looking up)* Right.

GEORGE: Yes, indeed. So what you got there, a book?

HENRY: *(still not looking up)* Yes, it's a book.

GEORGE: You reading, then?

HENRY: I'm trying to.

GEORGE: Well, don't let me stop you. You just keep reading there.

HENRY: Thank you.

GEORGE: *(Now leaning over and peering closely at the book)* So what book is it?

HENRY: "The Traveler's Guide to Paris."

GEORGE: Oh, yeah?

(Looking even more closely, to the point of blocking Henry's view of the book.)

Whatcha reading that for?

HENRY: Not that it's any of your business, but I enjoy travel books.

GEORGE: So you catching a bus to Paris?

(He finds this hilarious.)

HENRY: Of course not.

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GEORGE: You ever been there?

HENRY: Paris? Why, no, no I have not. But I do plan to go there someday, yes I do.
(Again trying to bury himself in the book.)

GEORGE: I was there once.

HENRY: Where?

GEORGE: Paris.

HENRY: Paris, France?

GEORGE: *(highly amused by his joke)* No, Paris, England.

HENRY: So you haven't been to Paris.

GEORGE: Yeah, I have.

HENRY: You've been to Paris, France.

GEORGE: I gotta spell it out for you? I've been to Paris, France. P-A-R.... How do you spell Paris?
(Cracks himself up again.)

HENRY: Were you... traveling for pleasure?

GEORGE: *(Laughing)* That's a good one. "Traveling for pleasure". Tell me something, you think I look like a guy who "travels for pleasure"?

HENRY: Oh, I wouldn't presume to make that judgment.

GEORGE: You wouldn't presume? Hey, you always talk like that?

HENRY: I apologize if I offended you.

GEORGE: Nah, nothing like that. I just think you talk funny.

HENRY: I see. Well, did you enjoy Paris?

GEORGE: I wouldn't say that exactly. No, that's not what I'd say.

HENRY: What would you say, then?

(Looking at George a little differently.)

GEORGE: I'd say... I'd say I did not enjoy Paris.

HENRY: But how could you not love Paris?

GEORGE: I did not find it difficult not to love Paris.

HENRY: But...

(Perhaps with an exaggerated French accent.)

... But the Champs-Elysee, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre with the Mona Lisa!

GEORGE: The what with the who?

HENRY: The Louvre with the Mona Lisa!

GEORGE: I'm pretty sure I didn't meet a girl named Mona anything in Paris. Besides, you said you hadn't been in Paris. So how come you know a girl there?

HENRY: No, no, no, the Mona Lisa is a painting. It's very famous.

GEORGE: Well, I didn't go to Paris to see any painting.

HENRY: So, if you don't mind me asking, what business took you to Paris?

GEORGE: It wasn't a business, it was a train. And don't ask me if I remember the name of that train.

HENRY: No, no, I meant why did you go to Paris? And where were you traveling from?

GEORGE: Ah, I took the train from Germany. And I went because I had a furlough, and I heard the girls were

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good-looking in Paris. Like your Mona what's-her-name.

HENRY: She's not a girl, she's a painting. It's a painting.

GEORGE: Yeah, sure.

(Silence for a moment, then Henry's curiosity gets the better of him.)

HENRY: So.... did you find lots of pretty girls in Paris?

GEORGE: Maybe.

(He seems to have lost his interest in talking about it.)

HENRY: *(Struggling to keep the conversation going... dying to know more about George's visit to Paris)* Well, did you see the Eiffel Tower, anyway?

GEORGE: See it! I climbed it. Went right up to the top.

HENRY: *(Holding his breath)* And... what could you see from there? Was it the most beautiful sight in the world?

GEORGE: Nah. I couldn't see a lot. It was kinda foggy and I could see some buildings but I didn't know what they were.

HENRY: *(Disappointed)* Oh. Oh. It was foggy. That is a shame, truly.

GEORGE: *(Recovering his joviality)* It was sure too foggy to see that little Mona Lisa gal of yours.

HENRY: Yes, that's a good joke.

(Pause)

But you must have seen more of Paris while you were there.

GEORGE: You could say that.

HENRY: Did you visit any of the museums?

(Looks at George, who shrugs.)

The Opera House?

(Another shrug. HENRY opens his travel book again.)

Notre Dame!

GEORGE: *(Standing)* Are you cursing at me?

HENRY: No, no, no. The Cathedral, the famous cathedral, Notre Dame!

GEORGE: Look, buddy, I wasn't in Paris that long, and much of the time, to tell you the truth, I was what you might call "indisposed."

HENRY: "Indisposed?"

GEORGE: That's right.

HENRY: So, you didn't take in all the beautiful sights of Patee. I should say that would explain your aversion to the city.

GEORGE: My virgin to the city?

HENRY: No... No! I mean your reasons for not enjoying the city. If you missed all the wonders, that is.

GEORGE: I wouldn't say I missed all the wonders, no, I wouldn't say that.

HENRY: Then you must tell me! Please, I wish to know what wonders you beheld.

GEORGE: Well, the wonder I held said her name was Marie.

THREE pages remaining to this playlet

Attic Memories

DORIS enters, slowly, and sits on a chair in her attic, next to an open trunk. Some things have been taken out of the trunk: a bed warmer, a candlestick, books, letters. She looks up and realizes she isn't alone; she addresses the audience.

DORIS: I wasn't born old. Oh, my knees may say otherwise, and I may act it from time to time, but time was, I wasn't old. I've got proof!

(Picks up photo album, opens to the first pages.)

Now see here? This is me. This young thing with her fancy hat and Sunday dress. I was all dressed up for church. Pretty, right?

(Looks again. Peers closely.)

Now wait a minute. Is that me? If that's me, then who's that next to the porch?

(Turns the page.)

All right, now here, this is my sister, Julia, and this is me, at our brother's birthday party. He was turning... now let me think, twenty years old? No, eighteen, he was turning eighteen. Or nineteen, now that I think about it. And over here, here I am again, with my first beau. Charlie, his name was. Charlie... Charlie Brown. No, that's not right. Charlie... Benton. Charlie Benton! No, wait, it wasn't Charlie, it was... Luther. Luther Benton. Luther *Benson*.

Things didn't work out with Luther, though. No, he went off to the war and didn't come back. That was a sad time. Wasn't as bad for me as it was for some folks, though. Luther and I weren't even engaged or anything. My sister Julia... she lost her husband. He never came back, just like Luther. Just broke her heart, that did. This picture here, she looks real happy. That was before the war. I hate wars. They are evil, terrible things. And I know some folks say they're necessary, and maybe some are, but I still hate them.

(After a pause, she flips another couple of pages in the photo album. Stops. Smiles.)

And here I am in my wedding dress. Oh, my, that was a pretty dress.

(Puts album down, reaches into the trunk.)

Now where is that? I know I saw it the last time I was up here.

(Pulls out an item or two: a red cape, a carved wooden box, a doll. She then pulls a mirror out of the trunk, glances briefly into it, shakes her head, and puts it back in the trunk.)

Here we go.

(She pulls out her wedding dress, admires it, stands up, shows it to the audience.)

Now don't you know I looked fine in this dress? When Fred saw me in it, walking down the aisle, he looked so proud and happy, I thought he would bust.

Fred's my husband.

(Putting dress back in the trunk.)

Or I guess I should say he's my late husband, to be correct. He passed on...

(thinking)

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...it'll be twelve years ago this November. It's hard to get out of the habit of calling him my husband. I mean, we were married for almost my whole adult life. I knew him in high school but I never dated him. I think he liked my sister Julia, but her heart belonged to Tom. But Fred got back from the war and he came over to my house the next day, and when I answered the door he just stood there and looked at me. Just stared. Yeah, I was a looker back then. Everyone said so. And him just back from the war probably thought so even more. Course, I have to say, he certainly was something to look at there in his uniform. And so I said to him "you gonna come in or just stand there with your mouth open?" So he came in. And we hit it off real good, right from the start. It wasn't a week before he asked me to marry him. And you know, I'd lost Luther, and I'd been sad for a while, but I figured it was time to move on. And so I said yes, I would marry him, and we got married in six months, and stayed married, too. Yes, sir, for a whole lotta years, until he passed.

Not that it was easy all the time, I'll give you that. Nope. It got rough at times. He got a job at the plant down the road, and once in a while times were tough, and he got laid off, and things got real tight, especially when our oldest was about twelve or fourteen years old. We had four kids, pretty quick, and I stayed home and took care of them, and kept house, you know, the way things used to be. Nobody much does that any more... Sometimes I think about that, about what I would do now, if I was starting over, if I was twenty-four again. I think I might like to have a job, too, a career, they call it now. I'd be a career girl. Well, maybe. Times sure are different now.

But so Fred got laid off his job, and he'd try to find work, and he'd do what he could, but he'd just get so discouraged, you know, and feel that bad, and one day he just said to me "I just can't do this. I have to leave. I'm not doing you any good, and I'm not doing me any good, or the kids, and I'm leaving. I'll see if I can find work and I'll write you." And he up and left.

So there I was, with four kids, and no job of my own, and no husband. I'll tell you it was not an easy time. But we got through it, and he came back, and we don't need to talk about that any more.

(Busies herself with the trunk... pulls out another stack of letters, tied together. Shows them to the audience).

Now, you see these? This whole stack of letters, is what he sent me while he was gone that time. He sure could write a letter.

(Thumbs through them.)

I saved 'em all. Mad as I was at him for leaving, I sure did like the letters he sent me. You'd never have known it to look at him, but he could do some sweet talking in a letter. He wasn't much for saying stuff like that in person or out loud, but there was something about putting the pen to the paper that just turned him into a poet or something. I swear. Like I said... didn't much look like one, but he just wrote the sweetest words ever.

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You probably want me to read something from one of these letters. I don't think I can do that. I don't think I can.

(Turning back to the trunk... but holding on to the letters. She pulls out a round silver tray.)

Now this is something that might interest you. I won this. Won it. I was right proud of myself, too. About twenty years ago... I made a pie, and won a prize at the county fair. First prize! I'm proud of my pies... especially my peach pies. Fresh peaches... just the best thing. So I made a pie and took it to the fair and I won first prize!

(She puts the tray in her lap and then puts the letters on the tray. She fingers them...)

Yeah... I like making pies. I still bake some, though not nearly as much as I used to. Sometimes when the kids come to visit, with the grandkids.

Have I told you yet about my grandchildren?

(Puts the letters down again.)

Oh, my. I must have pictures somewhere... Let me think.

(Looks around briefly.)

No... they would be downstairs... the living room looks like a regular art gallery. Up here is just the stuff I don't keep out for everyone to see, and let me tell you, I have pictures of all my grandchildren downstairs. I have seven, you know? Seven grandchildren. They're all practically grown themselves now. It goes so fast...

Fred, he liked to spoil the grandchildren when they were little. Yep... used to give them piggy-back rides down to the Dairy Queen, and buy them ice cream cones, and they'd sit on his shoulders and eat that ice cream, and drip it all over his shirt. But he never got mad at 'em, not once that I know of.

Not that I'm proud of it, but I'm the one in the family with the temper. Yep. When the children were young, and Fred would be gone all day at work, and I was trying to get dinner on the table for him and they'd be yelling at each other and getting in my way and I'd be tired after chasing them around all day and trying to get the housework done, sometimes I would just holler at them to get in their rooms and stay there until I said they could come out. They'd go, too. That was the only way I could get dinner done sometimes. No sir, I was not known for my gentle nature. Just like I told my children, you cannot judge a book by its cover.

But those times went by so fast. Sometimes now I think about that, about how it seems they weren't children for long. You know, how you turn around and look at your son one day and he's taller than you are and you just can't remember how that happened.

THREE pages remaining to this playlet