

FOREVER

A Short play

By Alan S Austin

Arizona Performing Arts Theatre
2641 E Beekman Place,
Phoenix,
AZ 85016

SCENE 1

Intro Music. Randy Travis singing "I'm going to love you forever".

Table and three chairs SR. A potted plant. Sofa with a pleasant cover SL. Di is at the table smoking, drinking a cup of coffee and reading the newspaper. It's morning. The doorbell rings. Di ignores it. It rings again. She glances up but is in the middle of a good article. It rings again.

DI

She shouts

It's open.

She stubs out the cigarette and waves away the smoke

Enter Peter. He's dressed as if to go somewhere.

**Why are you ringing the doorbell?
You've got a key !**

PETER

I forgot it. Sorry.

Looks around

Is mom ready?

DI

Ready?

PETER

Yes. Ready to go.

DI
(Annoyed)

Where?

PETER
Come on. We agreed... last week. We're visiting the
Citadel. Saturday morning.
(Annoyed)

Today's Saturday.

DI
Citadel?

PETER
Senior Living Campus.

DI
I guess I forgot.

PETER
You didn't tell her?

DI
No. I didn't think she was... ready for it.

PETER
You took her to the doctor's though didn't you?

DI
Yes... She tested her memory... The doctor said she
just forgets stuff. It's normal at her age. She
also said the anti-depressant she's been taking
since Dad's death could have had the same effect.
She's not ...ill.

PETER
Where is she now?

DI
She was in the garden planting stuff.

PETER

Looks at his watch

They're expecting us at the...Campus for lunch and I've got to get the kids...

DI

All right.

She rises

I'll get her.

Enter Clarene. She is a sprightly 76 year old. She wears a sun hat, a bright, colorful house dress, has gardening gloves on, is holding a trowel in one hand and a bunch of weeds in the other.

CLARENE

Damn weeds. Look at them. Dandelions are taking over the world. They are ruining my roses.

PETER

Mom?

CLARENE

Peter. What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be at school?

PETER

It's Saturday mom and I work. I'm a chartered accountant. Remember?

CLARENE

Don't shout at me.

PETER

I wasn't shouting.

DI

Mom... we're supposed to be visiting a Senior Living Campus..something like that ... I'm sorry forgot to tell you.

CLARENE

Senior what?

PETER

The Citadel. It's really nice. It's like a Hotel.

CLARENE

Hotel? Oh, I like hotels. Are we going to stay for a while?

PETER

It's a visit. To see if you like it.

CLARENE

Well, why didn't you tell me? Diana, are you coming? It'll do you good. You spend far too much time in the house smoking those cigarettes. It stinks up the house. And look at you! You can't go dressed like that for heavens sake. You'll have to change. No wonder you can't find a husband.

DI

Mom... please...

PETER

We're just going to have a look. Mom. See if you like it.

CLARENE

Well if we like it we can stay. A little family holiday. That'll be lovely. Pity your father's not here. Then again, he never liked hotels. I'm not sure when he's due back. I'll go and get changed. Diana, get your brother some coffee and then go and get something decent on.

She exits.

PETER

Does she know where she is?

DI

She's Okay. Better than usual.

PETER

She talks about Dad as if he's still alive.

DI

It's seems to comfort her. Perhaps she doesn't want to know. She chats about him to me for hours. You'd think after nine years...

PETER

Should we take her to see a different doctor?

DI

No.

PETER

Well, you can't spend your life looking after her. We're doing the right thing you know. For her sake.

DI

Maybe. I mean..anyway I'm here now. And I'm not going anywhere soon.

PETER

You look miserable. Anything wrong?

DI

Yes, I'm a bit wretched. Brenda won't even speak to me now. Moving out of course didn't help . I just ... I don't know.. we weren't getting on.. Now she won't even return my phone calls

PETER

I'm sorry to hear that. You were together a long time.

DI

I think she wants somebody younger. Anyway, it just wasn't working. Actually staying here has been quite convenient. I can think more clearly.

PETER

As long as you can put up with mom.

DI

You wouldn't believe it. It's as if I never left home. This parent child thing is... well, you know

PETER

All the more reason to get her settled in a nice place. Anyway, I've looked at a number of these Senior Living places and for the money The Citadel is easily one of the best.

DI

I know but....

PETER

But what?

DI

I feel so bad about it all. This is where she and dad have always lived. And now if we sell it... All their stuff is here. This was their first house. We grew up here Peter. The garden's beautiful. She puts so much work into it. It won't be easy for her.

PETER

I know. But look, if we sell the house your half could easily pay for a new condo or something. Prices in this area have gone up tremendously. With that sort of money you'll be independent. You always said you wanted to travel .

DI

But the place still belongs to Mom doesn't it?
....

PETER

I explained all this to you after the funeral. Don't you ever listen? Dad had mortgage insurance so when he died the house was paid off. He left the house to you and me with the proviso that Mum could live in it.. That's what he wanted.

He left her more than enough money to afford somewhere like The Citadel.

DI

But she's still mourns him. She talks to him as if he's still here. Last week she made dinner for him and then went on and on about him not turning up.

PETER

I told you. Her mind's going. The sooner we get her in a decent place, well looked after, the better off she will be.

From upstairs

CLARENE

Di. I'm finished. You can use the bathroom now. Don't forget to clean the sink when you've finished.

DI

In a minute. Look. We have to tell her what the place is. She can't think we're just going to a hotel. That's not fair. I'm sorry I haven't talked to her about it.

PETER

Go and get ready. I'll talk to her when she comes down.

DI

Pete, she's fragile.

PETER

Don't tell me what to do. I know what's best for her.

Di exits.

Peter gets his cell phone out.

Phones a number.

Hi. It's Peter. We're running late. Well, I'm sorry. Unlike you I actually care about my mother.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry... that was unkind. No. I can't pick the kids up before three. I warned you last week it could take longer. Perhaps you better tell HIM that he has responsibilities as well. Surely...a couple of hours won't ...well ... what time's your flight? Well kindly tell him from me

(angrily)

that you can't just steal a man's wife and then just wash your hands...

(Pause)

I'm sorry. Look. I've been more than generous to you which you seem to forget. I'm picking mom up now. This is important. Yes.. Hopefully, I'll be there to pick them up before five. Okay?

Hangs up.

Bitch

Puts the phone down on the table.

Enter Clarene

CLARENE

Something wrong? Where are the children? I haven't seen them for weeks. Jill must be five now. Where's what's her name... your wife?

PETER

Patricia and I are divorced mom. Two years ago. Jill's fourteen now. She's at High school.

CLARENE

Fourteen? You didn't you tell me you were divorced? Those poor children. Dear me! Your father and I we never divorced. He was away in the Navy and then on the ships... we were in it forever. I do miss the children... now where's my purse and my hat? I used to miss him terribly when he was at sea. It was always so nice when he came home... he always brought presents... you both loved the presents. It was like Christmas every time he came home. Where are we ...? Oh yes...the hotel.

I'm sure I'll like it. Where's my hat? I must have put it down. Oh, Peter, I need to talk to you about your sister. I'm worried about her. She seems depressed. I wish she would find herself a husband, you introduce her to somebody...somebody nice.. You know one of your school friends. She's getting on you know... and she should stop smoking. It stinks and it is bad for her breath. The sofa smells. I'll get some spray from the kitchen ...she left her cup... I don't know... I'm still clearing up after her.

PETER

Mom... Don't worry about Di, you know she's not.. not... well... never mind. This place we're going to called The Citadel... it's not quite a hotel but it's very similar. It's called a Senior Living Campus.

CLARENE

What?

She drops the cup and it smashes

Senior Living....oh dear.I thought you said it was a hotel. Look at that. I'll have to get the vacuum.

She stops

Why are we going to a Senior Living Hotel.

PETER

Peter busies himself picking up the pieces.

Diana and I thought that... well you know you're getting on a bit .

CLARENE

But I thought we were going to ... have lunch. I'll pay, if that's the problem.

PETER

They're giving us lunch. At The Citadel.

CLARENE

Giving us lunch. My goodness me things have changed. Giving away lunches.

PETER

We thought since you enjoy hotels and it's like a hotel you might want to stay there....only if you like it. You know ... permanently.

CLARENE

I don't think I'd like to stay there permanently. I live here. This is my home.

PETER

But it's getting very difficult to look after... we had to put a new roof on last year. Property taxes are high. And then there's the worry.

CLARENE

Worry?

PETER

You're seventy six years old. What if you fell down and couldn't get up? Who would look after you?

CLARENE

Look after me? Diana's here. And I am perfectly capable of looking after myself. I've always looked after myself ever since you were little.

PETER

But you're forgetting things.

CLARENE

What things? No I'm not. The Doctor said I was fine. She said I was doing well for my age. She gave me these tests... asked me to remember words...kinda silly. I was always good with words..

(pause. Peter searches for
the next thing to say)

(suspiciously)

. . .Are you..? You're not. It's not an Old People's Home is it? Your dad used to call them death farms. We don't want to go to a death farm.

PETER

Mom, it's not a death farm. It's not an old people's home. It's a Senior Living Campus. Quite different. If you were to make the move now, while you're still reasonably fit... the adjustment would be easier.

CLARENE

No, Peter your dad and I don't want any adjustments.

PETER

Mum. Dad died ten years ago.

CLARENE

He died? Did he? .

PETER

Mom we had a funeral service for him.

CLARENE

She sits

The dandelions have been terrible this year. I've got to get the dandelions out... once they seed ... they get everywhere. Do you remember, when you were a little boy you used to blow them and the little seeds would go everywhere.

Re-enter Diana dressed to go out.
She is putting on her make-up

DI

Nearly ready.

CLARENE

Do you remember the dandelions Diana ... one o'clock, two o'clock, three ...huff and puff... You used to blow them. The little seeds.

DI

Why is she talk talking about dandelions.

CLARENE

We don't want to live in an old people's home.

DI

Mom, it's a Senior Living Campus.

PETER

I've told her.

CLARENE

I don't want to go to a Senior Living Campus.

PETER

It's just for you to have a look. You'll see. It's like a hotel.

CLARENE

But your dad's not here. He promised me. He said once he retired, we'd be together forever. He wouldn't have to go to sea. This is where we want to be. Our home!

DI

Mom... Dad died at sea. He had a stroke. Don't you remember? We had a funeral for him.

CLARENE

Remember? No, I don't remember. He always comes home. There was one time his ship was stranded and I didn't see him for a whole year. But he always came home.

PETER

Di. She doesn't get it. Let's just pretend it's a Hotel. I don't think she'll know the difference.

DI

Mom. We'll just go to a Hotel then.

CLARENE

I'd like that. We could stay if it's nice. I'll pay.

PETER

Okay mom. We need to hurry to be in time for lunch.

CLARENE

Dad used to call old people's homes, death farms. He said once you go there you may as well be dead.

PETER

This is a Hotel Mom. They have a nice restaurant.

CLARENE

I'm not old enough to go to a death farm.

DI

Have you got your hat?

PETER

Better get your hat mom. It's sunny outside.

CLARENE

The dandelions always come out when it's sunny. Did you know that? You used to blow the seeds... just sitting there huffing and puffing. Little seeds on little parachutes sailing away everywhere...

DI

Do you want me to get your hat for you?

CLARENE

No...no. I'll get it. I know where it is. It's on the top shelf in the closet. Those dandelion seeds would blow off into the wind... sail away...they're a problem. I'm not going to an old people's home.

Exits

PETER

She'll like it when she gets there.

DI

It's such a shame. I don't know whether we're doing the right thing.

PETER

I can't see what else we can do. She'll be well cared for.

DI

I better go and check to see if she's O.K.

She moves towards the door.
Suddenly there's a bang of
something falling and a gunshot.

Oh my God.....

She rushes out.

PETER

What's she done now? She wouldn't...oh no...oh no!
I'd better call an ambulance. I should have kept my
mouth shut. Where the hell's my phone?

He has to search for it

Here it is...

He shouts..

Di?

Makes for the door

DI

(from off stage)

It's O.K.

Re-enter Di and Clarene

CLARENE

(Badly shaken)

It just went off. Your Dad's service revolver. It was under the hat...it fell..such a bang.

DI

It's all right. It was just an accident. She's not hurt ,the bullet went into the wall.

PETER

Are you all right Mum?

CLARENE

Gave me such a fright. I was getting my hat. I forgot it was up there. That's where your dad left it.

PETER

A good job nobody was hurt.

CLARENE

He always left the bullets in it. He kept it on the shelf. He used to say "What good is a gun if it isn't loaded"? He wanted me to be protected.

DI

No harm done.

PETER

It's O.K. Mom.

Pause. She looks at each of them slowly.

CLARENE

He's not coming back is he? Your Dad.

Pause

PETER

No. Mom. He's not coming back.

DI

It was twelve years ago, mom.

Pause

CLARENE

Tell me. Do they have gardens at this ...Hotel ?

PETER

Beautiful gardens.

CLARENE

No dandelions?

DI

No.

PETER

No dandelions.

CLARENE

Well,...let's go to lunch. Your dad never liked
Hotels. Did I tell you that? I like hotels.

Music... Randy Travers. I'm going
to love you forever.

CURTAIN