Older But Not Wiser
Younger But Not Cute

a musical play in two acts
by Andrew C. Backus and Christine Lilly Backus
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Characters

The Narrator, who is 45
Grandpa (Ben), who is retired
Sarah, the granddaughter at 12
Sarah, the granddaughter at 22
Ruth, who is retired (Grandpa’s partner)
Jacob, Sarah’s (the older) fiancé

ACT ONE

The setting is Grandpa’s apartment: faded couch, old TV near the couch, battered coffee table, dining table, baby grand piano (used for accompaniment), and kitchenette in the background.

Scene 1

[music: #1: “Fantasy Waltz”]

NARRATOR: [entering during the music] Life is a dance, for sure. And the music keeps us going, keeps us looking ahead – always to the next step . . . fortunately. I know this. I’m 45; maybe you figured about as much. That’s right: midlife – right there in the middle, floundering around not knowing which way to turn next. If there ever was a time in my life I needed to just stop for a moment, look back, look forward, take stock and move on, it is now. Stop the world, I say – but not get off . . . I love life too much for that. And I will keep making plans, even though they so often crash and burn.

NARRATOR sings: 

#2: “Best Laid Plans”

Narrator: Dreams we have, will they ever come true? Not always, I know, but sweet when they do. Tenderly we hope: find our dreams. In the light of dawn they fade away. Let them go, breathe in the new day. Dreams we have, do they never come true? But always they lead to something quite new.

NARRATOR: Well, you know the rest. Indeed, the story you are about to witness concerns people you may know: Sarah is twelve years old and her parents have decided to go skiing on the next four Saturdays and to leave their daughter behind in Grandpa’s care. The two of them, who are left together, are not too sure about this arrangement. [exits]

GRANDPA: [enters, talking to himself] What were they thinking? What am I going to do with a twelve-year old all day long? [sits down on the couch]
SARAH: [*enters on her bike*] I just want to be clear from the start, Grandpa, I don’t want anyone to see me with you at the mall.

GRANDPA: Hey, kiddo, I’m done with this child rearing thing; just be nice. . . welcome to my home.

SARAH: Sorry. I guess it’s not so cool to hang out with parents, much less grandparents. I’m sure you understand that.

GRANDPA: Of course I understand. That doesn’t mean I have to like it. [*pause*] Since when am I not cool, anyway?

SARAH: Well . . . I think you are, of course. But my friends might not. They don’t know you. They might think you are just some boring old man and wonder why I would ever hang out with you.

GRANDPA: Hmmm . . . sounds like a double standard to me. You know what that means, right?

SARAH: Uh, sure . . . it must mean two ways of judging something. What’s wrong with that?

GRANDPA: The point is you ought to stick up for what you think is true, is right. If you really think I’m okay, then you ought to be willing to act that way under any circumstances. That’s all I’m saying.

SARAH: Hmmm . . . I guess so. [*she lapses into sitting on the couch and texting with her friends*]

GRANDPA: [*observing this behavior, then saying to himself*] Well, okay, if that’s how it’s gonna be. [*turns on the TV and starts watching a game with sounds heard*]

SARAH: [*after some moments of irritation*] Well, that’s not very sociable.

GRANDPA: [*turns off TV and pulls out cards and plays solitaire on the coffee table*] Okay . . . is this better?

[they fall into an uncomfortable silence]

SARAH: [*fascinated*] That’s really neat. I didn’t know you could play solitaire with actual cards.

GRANDPA: [*looks quizzical*] Uh, yes. Sarah --
GRANDPA and SARAH sing:  

#3: “What’s It Like to Be Young?”

**Grandpa:** What’s it like to be young? What’s it like to tweet? Will you ever meet those friends from Facebook, in the flesh, five hundred thirty of them?

**Sarah:** What’s it like to be old? What’s it like to nap? How much TV can you stand, dozing through re-runs of MASH? How do you keep going though all is done?

**Both:** What’s it like to be old/young? What’s it like to doze/text?

**Grandpa:** I only watch an hour a day.

**Sarah:** I have friends, three at least.

**Grandpa:** Are they from school; are they nice?

**Sarah:** How are you now that Grandma is gone?

**Grandpa:** She’s here with me; her love lives on in all that I do.

**Sarah:** I hear her laugh in my own voice when I’m with my three friends.

**Both:** Young or old, all we need is someone to love.

GRANDPA: Here – let me show you how to shuffle real cards. It might come in handy some day when you are in a poker game.  *shows her how to shuffle*

SARAH:  *after some thought* Why did they go off skiing without me? And why do they think I need a babysitter? No offense, Grandpa, but I’m pretty grown up now -- not that anyone treats me that way.

GRANDPA: I know. It’s tough. But don’t you think they deserve a break?

SARAH: From what?

GRANDPA: From rearing a smart-aleck 12-year old kid, that’s what.

SARAH: I suppose . . .

*freeze*

NARRATOR:  *enters* An uneasy truce it was – each groping for some understanding of the other. It shouldn’t be so hard, should it? She’s his daughter’s daughter, after all. Are family dynamics some sort of cruel test to see if we can handle real life? I don’t know. Sometimes I wonder, though. Anyway, in spite of it all, time flew by on this, their first morning together, and before they knew it, it was lunch time.  *exits*

*action resumes*

SARAH: I’m starving. Don’t you old people ever eat?

GRANDPA:  *ignoring the slam* Well, yes, Sarah, some lunch sounds pretty good. Say – how about some fruit and cottage cheese?
SARAH: Very funny. How about some actual food? How about I go out and get us some pizza?

GRANDPA: Well, I guess. [hesitantly] How far away is the pizza shop? You’ll go on your bike?

SARAH: Hey – I already have two overprotective parents in my life. How about giving me a break?

GRANDPA: All right, all right . . . just extra cheese and mushrooms for me. Here’s five bucks. [pulls out his wallet]

SARAH: You’re kidding, right? Try twenty.

GRANDPA: Oh, okay, if you say so. Drive carefully. [he gives her a twenty dollar bill]

SARAH: You know how to reach me, right? [she holds up her smartphone as she leaves]

GRANDPA: Of course. See you soon. [to himself] Don’t I need to know her phone number?

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] Her return, however, wasn’t soon – by any standards, young or old. Funny, isn’t it, how our sense of time varies so much over the course of our lifetime. Anyway, Sarah ran into friends at the pizza place and chatted for a bit longer than she had planned. Then she saw a dress she liked in a shop window. I guess, to be fair, we all know how that goes. [exits]

[action resumes]

SARAH: [enters on her bike with the pizza] Sorry – I got a little tied up.

GRANDPA: Tied up? Where have you been? Don’t you think an hour and a half to get pizza is a bit long? I was worried about you. I’m glad you are back safe and sound.

SARAH: You could have phoned, or texted.

GRANDPA: Well . . . [covering] . . . I didn’t want to nag you.

[they sit down together and start in on the pizza and drinks]

GRANDPA: Yuk. Isn’t pizza better when it’s hot?

SARAH: I notice you’re still eating it.

GRANDPA: I’m hungry – really hungry. [sarcastic] I wonder how I got to be that way?
SARAH: You could have had some cottage cheese while you were waiting.

GRANDPA: [after a long pause] You know, don’t you, that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit?

SARAH: Hmmm . . . I wonder who first said that? Here – I’ll look that up. [uses her smartphone]

GRANDPA: It’s in the Bible, of course – in the Book of Job, I think.

SARAH: [reading from her smartphone] No, it’s not. It’s by Oscar Wilde -- whoever that is.

GRANDPA: Well, I’m sure he wasn’t the first to say it, though that sounds right up his alley. . . . Say, that’s pretty nifty; how did you find that out so quickly?

SARAH: You have at least heard of Google, haven’t you, Grandpa?

GRANDPA: Okay – yes, but maybe not much more than that. I guess we do live in different worlds, you and I. But can’t we somehow make that into a good thing, not something that separates us?

SARAH: I suppose so. What do we have in common that we can celebrate together?

GRANDPA: You know, Sarah, we may be at different ends of our lives but so what? Some have said that the hardest part of life is the middle part. You and I are pretty much in the clear on that score. So let’s be glad of that.

GRANDPA and SARAH sing: #4: “No Midlife Crisis for Me”

Both: No midlife crisis for me!
Grandpa: Been there, done that.
Sarah: Not yet, no rush.
Both: No!
Grandpa: No more clock to punch. No tie to put on. No boss over my head.
Sarah: No high heels to wear. No cars to maintain. No brats under my feet.
Both: No midlife crisis for me!
Grandpa: Been there, done that.
Sarah: Not yet, no rush.
Both: No!
Grandpa: Never a payday now; money I have not got.
Sarah: Status I still don’t have. Nobody knows that I’m here.
Both: No midlife crisis for me!
Grandpa: Been there, done that.
Sarah: Not yet, no rush.
Both: No!
Grandpa: No more six a.m. No more lawn to mow. No more jobs to be lost.
Sarah: No briefcase to lug. No reports to write. No glass ceiling to hit.

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Both: No midlife crisis for me!
Grandpa: Been there, done that.
Sarah: Not yet, no rush.
Both: No!
Grandpa: I’m glad I made it through, and I would not go back.
Sarah: I guess I’ll learn to cope, just not tomorrow for sure!
Both: No midlife crisis for me!
Grandpa: Been there, done that.
Sarah: Not yet, no rush.
Both: No!
Grandpa: Riley, go eat your heart out!

[blackout]

Scene 2

NARRATOR: [enters] “Riley,” as in living the life of, I suppose. Oh, come on, you two – middle age isn’t that bad, even if I do complain about it. But I guess I can’t fault them for working with what they’ve got. Never mind my feelings. Anyway . . . it’s now a week later. Maybe they’ll both come to realize that when you are stuck with a situation, it might be a good thing to stop complaining and make good use of it instead. Or something like that. I guess we’ll see. So -- Sarah is in seventh grade and it’s the autumn of the year. Her very first school dance is tonight. [exits]

GRANDPA: [enters talking to himself] I guess I’d better admit it to myself: I am busier now since I retired than I ever was when I worked. Volunteering at the hospital. Bowling. Playing poker. Senior Center trips. And now the board of the condo association. How do I fit it all in? And still things nag at me . . . like today. What is today, anyway? Saturday, I guess. [pause and remembering] Uh, oh. Sarah’s coming today. I almost forgot. I guess I’d better straighten things up a bit. [starts neatening up the house]

SARAH: [enters on her bike, doughnuts in the basket] Hi, Grandpa. It’s really beautiful out there today.

GRANDPA: [a little quizzical at her enthusiasm] You certainly are in a good mood.

SARAH: Well, I got a new dress, a fancy one. I can’t wait to wear it. It makes me feel really grown up.

GRANDPA: [sarcastic] That sounds like a lot of fun. Your mom go with you to get it?

SARAH: Well, duh. Somebody had to pay for it. It’s for the dance tonight. It will be my very first, you know. You did get my email?

GRANDPA: No, I’m sorry. I only check it every few days.
SARAH: What? Grandpa, how do you expect people to reach you?

GRANDPA: [a little sarcastic] Texting? Tweeting? Tumbling? I don’t know. Okay, I’ll try to do better – especially if you write me. [pause] Say, those doughnuts look good. Do you want some milk to go with them? I’ll have some coffee.

SARAH: Sounds great.

[they sit down together and share food]

SARAH: [while they are preparing] Grandpa, what do you talk about when you dance with someone?

GRANDPA: Well, it is a little awkward, I guess, this formal dancing thing. I mean you are supposed to get very close to someone you hardly know and suddenly be very nice and charming to them. It’s a little weird, I admit.

SARAH: It could be fun, . . . I think.

GRANDPA: The idea, I guess, is that it’s okay to try out being close to someone else, what with all those other people around.

SARAH: Well, I sure hope somebody asks me to dance.

GRANDPA: Don’t forget, honey, it’s hard for everybody. Nobody really knows what to do.

GRANDPA and SARAH sing:

#5: “How Do You Know?”

Sarah: How do you know when someone wants to kiss you? How do you know when someone wants to hug? Am I the one who wants to be in love? Who am I? Am I too young to know?

Grandpa: You’ll find the tenderness within when love stirs gently in your heart. Trust in your hopes. Don’t be afraid. We learn through life from family, friends, then lovers. We learn to walk then dance our way to joy.

Sarah: How will I know?

Grandpa: Just listen to your heart.

Both: May I have this next dance with you?

[they bow to each other and dance a step or two]

SARAH: Grandpa, do you think I’m pretty?

GRANDPA: Put it this way: if I were in junior high again, I would ask you to dance in a flash. [contemplative] I remember the first time I ever danced with your Grandma. It took me half the night to get up the courage to ask her to dance. Finally when I did, I discovered she was relieved and had been waiting just as long for me to ask her. I guess nowadays it’s much more two-way. I hope you take advantage of that fact.
SARAH: You mean ask a boy to dance? No way.

GRANDPA: Why is that?

SARAH: It’s too scary. What if he laughs at me and says there’s not a chance?

GRANDPA: Well, welcome to the other side, honey. We boys have been facing that one forever. I guess there are two sides to women’s liberation.

SARAH: I thought I was just supposed to look cute and hope somebody notices.

GRANDPA: Where did you ever get that idea?

SARAH: I don’t know. It just seems like the way things are.

GRANDPA: Well, they certainly have been that way for a long time. You might consider changing “the way things are,” though. You pay a price for being the submissive one.

SARAH: Sure — but why should I stick my neck out and try to change things? People will just hate me for it.

GRANDPA: You’ve got a point . . . Still, if you like someone, don’t you think it might be worth the risk of letting them know? Otherwise you might miss out. Who knows, maybe they’ll like you, too?

SARAH: Maybe . . .

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] It was a good day for them this time. Neither realized, I suspect, just how far they had come in so short a time. Family, at least, provides opportunities for relationships if nothing else. Do we take them? That’s the question -- though there’s still time to take advantage of what you’ve got. In any case, before they knew it, their second day was over. Sarah was excited to be going to the dance tonight, but apprehensive. Grandpa was wistful.

[exits]

[action resumes]

GRANDPA: Good luck tonight, Sarah. Be strong, take a chance.

SARAH: Goodbye, Grandpa. [they hug, she leaves on her bike]
GRANDPA [alone now, sings]: #6: “Will You Still Love Me?”

Grandpa: Will you still love me when you grow up? Will you still like me when you know better? Child of my own child, gift from the heavens, do I deserve your love? Who am I? Tell me. What can I know? Now you come calling giving love freely. Blest by your sweet faith, I will be grateful all my days.

[blackout]

Scene 3

NARRATOR: [enters] Today is their third Saturday together. The dance did not go well. Do you remember your first dance? I remember mine. Does anyone’s first dance ever go well? [exits]

GRANDPA: [entering] How can I get everything done? This is crazy.

SARAH: [enters, with pink spiked hair and punk dress, preoccupied and not acknowledging Grandpa] They were so mean. I just can’t believe it.

GRANDPA: [not listening] You’d think I would have learned by now how to manage my time.

SARAH: [not listening] The boys just hung out on the other side of the room and laughed at us.

GRANDPA: [still not listening] Now the condo board wants to meet twice a month. What am I going to do?

SARAH: [still not listening] I thought about asking someone to dance, but I just couldn’t.

GRANDPA: [starts to speak then realizes what Sarah has been saying] . . . Oh, honey, I’m so sorry it didn’t go well.

SARAH: I guess it didn’t work to be the pretty wallflower, after all.

GRANDPA: Sometimes it pays to speak up. [pause] I like your hair, by the way.

GRANDPA and SARAH sing: #7: “The Dangers of Cute”

Both: The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
Sarah: I hate it when all I get are simpering smiles and grins. Puppies and kittens and babies are cute but I’m gonna be a teen.
Grandpa: Oh, once I was strong and proud, but spry’s what they call me now. My heart knows better: there’s good years ahead. And I’ll dance through every one.
Both: The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
Sarah: No princess am I to save. Take care of myself I will. Though they mean nothing but kindness I’m sure, I’ll do without cute, thank you!
Grandpa: They say a fire inside burns under a snowy roof. Let them keep calling me cute, but be sure that I’ve still got what it takes.
Both: The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
Sarah: Is cuteness the real me? Or just what they want to see? Can I be anything else that I choose, a tomboy or pink-haired punk?
Grandpa: A pat on the head we get when we fall in love again. Is it our fault they make fun of us, or is it just jealousy?
Both: The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
Sarah: Is cuteness the real me? Or just what they want to see? Can I be anything else that I choose, a tomboy or pink-haired punk?
Grandpa: A pat on the head we get when we fall in love again. Is it our fault they make fun of us, or is it just jealousy?
Both: The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
Sarah: Is cuteness the real me? Or just what they want to see? Can I be anything else that I choose, a tomboy or pink-haired punk?

[they dance together a few bars then sit down]

GRANDPA: I hate to break the news to you, Sarah – this is how life is: one lesson after another, often the hard way.

SARAH: I know that, Grandpa. I’ve had my share of disappointments already, and not just this one.

GRANDPA: I’m sure you have. Only they get bigger. [pause] But, then, so do the joys. The key to the whole thing, though, is learning how to get the lessons and then move on.

SARAH: You mean forgive and forget?

GRANDPA: Well, not quite. Holding a grudge, hating, getting even – these are all bad things, not just for other people, but for you, too. You know how they say to be careful about what you love? Well hate is the same way because you make it part of yourself, only it is destructive. So forgiving is just taking good care of yourself.

SARAH: I never thought of it that way.

GRANDPA: Forgetting, on the other hand, is just plain stupid.

SARAH: Because you don’t learn anything.

GRANDPA: Right. And you fail to notice that even though you have forgiven, things are not the same and they never will be – as they should be.

SARAH: I am pretty bummed that the boys were so mean at the dance. Can I just let that go even if I do learn something by it?

GRANDPA: I hope so. Use it as an opportunity if you can.
GRANDPA and SARAH sing:    #8: “Forgive But Don’t Forget”

**Grandpa:** Forgive, but don’t forget. Live in the world but not in spite of it. Cry and then move on. Just dry your eyes and lose your fears and dance your way to joy and true living. Forgive but don’t forget. Live in the world but not in spite of it. Learn then change the world.

**Sarah:** How can I help this old world keep on? I know but what will I do?

**Grandpa:** Just live fully, love boldly, look for the good and go on.

**Sarah:** Forgive and don’t forget. Live in the world but not in spite of it. Cry and just move on.

**Grandpa:** I know you’ve got just what it takes to move through life with grace and with giving.

**Both:** Forgive but don’t forget. Live in the world but not in spite of it. Learn and carry on.

GRANDPA: It really boils down to this, honey: don’t ever go to bed angry. It is very bad for your health. Believe me, I know. I’ve certainly failed to follow my own advice over the years. And I have a heart to prove it. [pause] Oh – which reminds me. I should have told you earlier. I have a doctor appointment that I must go to this afternoon. I know it won’t be quite time for you to go home then, but I think you can be trusted to be alone for a while! You will be okay, right?

SARAH: Certainly Grandpa.

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] It’s a rare thing, indeed, that a young person should be so receptive to the advice of an elder. Perhaps she is wise beyond her years and knows what a grain of salt can do for somebody else’s truth. I’m not at all sure I could have done as well at her age. It makes me wonder what things I missed that were offered to me -- because I was so sure I knew them already. Anyway, Sarah and Grandpa spent the day talking about life and love. Let’s only hope the learning was mutual. Finally, the day drew to a close . . . [exits]

[action resumes]

GRANDPA: All right, then. I’m off to the heart doctor. Let’s hope it is good news. I’ll see you next week.

SARAH: Are you worried, Grandpa?

GRANDPA: No, of course not. [hesitating] Everything will be just fine. Take care, Sarah. [they hug, he exits]

SARAH: [musing to herself, alarmed] What does he mean, heart trouble? That sounds serious to me.
SARAH [alone now, sings]: #9: “Will You Ever Leave Me?”
Sarah: Will you ever leave me? Are you going to die? Won’t you live forever and be there for me? Who will teach me poker? Who will meet my first love? Who will take me camping? Who will cheer me on? Will you ever leave me? Are you going to die? Can’t you live forever and take care of me?

[blackout]

Scene 4

NARRATOR: [enters] Another week has gone by, and the dance is a distant memory. The flush of newly acquired intimacy may have paled a bit, too. And the humdrum of regular life, spiked hair and all, seems to have set in. It is raining today. [exits]

GRANDPA: [enters carrying groceries talking to himself again] Well, bowling didn’t go so well last night and it is pretty wet out there. I certainly need a pick-me-up. I hope Sarah’s okay coming to today. I thought I should stock up first thing this morning, though. I need a few things, and besides, these teenagers sure gobble down the food. [starts putting away stuff]

SARAH: [enters on bike] Well, what can we do for fun today?

GRANDPA: Make plans, of course. By your hair, alone, you have declared yourself a new person, so that must call for some new action.

SARAH: Grandpa, what’s it like to have kids?

GRANDPA: [taken aback slightly] Aren’t you jumping the gun a bit, Sarah? [pause] I will tell you, though: nothing like you ever thought it would be. Plant a radish get a radish, as the song goes. There isn’t anything that proves more clearly the foolishness of making plans than having children. But it is a journey way worth taking, no matter where it leads you. Look at it this way: I wouldn’t have the privilege of knowing you otherwise.

SARAH: That’s very sweet, but I’m serious. It might be a little different for me. I’m the one who will have the children and take care of them.

GRANDPA: I wish we could ask your Grandma about that. She seemed okay with it. But in her day I don’t think she thought there was any other option. [pause] You do have time, though, to think this over.

SARAH: I guess I do . . .

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] It was unspoken between them, of course, but weighing on their minds was the fact that this was their last Saturday together. In a way each had been using the other for their own purposes, of course, but very nicely. Yet the inevitable had to happen: toward the end
of the day, in spite of their best efforts to rise above the ordinary adult-child conversation, Grandpa just had to ask the question. \(\text{[exits]}\)

\(\text{[action resumes]}\)

**GRANDPA:** Sarah, what do you want to be when you grow up?

**SARAH:** You would have to ask that, wouldn’t you? That’s what grownups always think they want to know. Uh . . . I want to be a firefighter. Happy now?

**GRANDPA:** Your hair will go great with the red truck. No, seriously, if you don’t have plans – as risky or unlikely as they may be – nothing good will ever happen. So it does pay in the long run to ask silly questions.

**SARAH:** I suppose. I just get tired of meeting adult expectations. Everyone, it seems, has ideas about what I can be or do. I just want to make my own plans, thank you.

**GRANDPA:** Good idea. Just don’t get your hopes up too high.

**GRANDPA and SARAH sing:** #10: “Best Laid Plans”

- **Sarah:** Dreams we have, will they ever come true?
- **Grandpa:** Not always, I know, but sweet when they do.
- **Sarah:** Tenderly we hope: find our dreams. In the light of dawn they fade away.
- **Grandpa:** Let them go, breathe in the new day.
- **Sarah:** Dreams we have, do they never come true?
- **Grandpa:** But always they lead to something quite new.
- **Both:** Looking far ahead with spirits high, we know that we will find our own way.

**SARAH:** You know, Grandpa, I’m glad we had this time together. But there’s no need to get all sad. I am sure we will see each other lots in the future.

**GRANDPA:** Well . . . you never know, Sarah. Our lives will move on, and time flies.

**SARAH:** Gee, doesn’t anything last?

**GRANDPA:** It just means that when you leave someone, even for just a while, you should say goodbye.

**SARAH:** I wish now I had said goodbye to Grandma before she died.

**GRANDPA:** That I understand.

**SARAH:** I suppose we can make all the plans we want but all we really have is the present, right this moment, right now.
GRANDPA: You could look at it that way. On the other hand, I’m not giving up on the future. I sure hope you will visit me again soon.

SARAH: Grandpa, wouldn’t you like to know what I’m up to? Will you be my friend on Facebook?

GRANDPA: Of course I will . . . [aside] Don’t I have to join Facebook first, though?

GRANDPA and SARAH sing: #11: “We Will Never Pass this Way Again”

Both: We will never pass this way again. So love life and hold on

Grandpa: loosely. When it’s time

Sarah: to take leave

Grandpa: say goodbye

Sarah: every time.

Both: We will never pass this way again. So love life and hold on

Grandpa: loosely.

BOTH: May I have this dance with you?

[they dance off the stage together]

[intermission]

ACT TWO

The setting is still Grandpa’s apartment: only with fancy new couch, giant flat screen TV, modern coffee table (laptop open on it), but with the same baby grand piano, dining table, and with the kitchenette in the background (now with microwave and Keurig coffee maker on the counter).

Scene 1

[Grandpa is sitting on the couch at the iPad with a Bluetooth in his ear]
[Ruth is washing dishes in the kitchen]

GRANDPA: [yells over to her] Hey, Ruth . . .?

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] It is now ten years later. [pause] Grandpa and Sarah’s plans – and promises to stay in touch with each other -- never came to pass. Life, did, indeed move on for them both. Sarah’s family moved far away and then she went to college. And Grandpa? Well his heart held up fine, as it turned out, but he let his fears paralyze him. How could he not reach out to her? I guess the momentum of everyday concerns just eats up the motivation to do those special things we should be doing. Who can judge? Now is now. It is what it is. [exits]
GRANDPA: Ruth, did you see online that computers will someday save paper, but not as previously thought, not today, that is?

RUTH: Well, Ben, I am sorry to say I missed it. But it sounds promising. [pauses] You really are into this computer stuff, aren’t you?

GRANDPA: Well, yeah. It took me a while to catch on, but now it seems second nature. Watch what I can do. [using his smartphone, Grandpa turns on the lights in the kitchen] There, does that help?

RUTH: [unsure] I guess. Thanks – though I could very easily have flipped on the lights myself if I needed them.

GRANDPA: Well, how about this? [using his smartphone, Grandpa demonstrates a security device that plays a recording of a dog barking ferociously and a voice saying, “I hear the door Ox; I’ll get it, but first quiet that Rottweiler of yours.”] That plays when a noise is heard in the house when we are away. What do you think?

RUTH: I don’t know, Ben. That may be the equivalent of posting a sign in the window that says, “THIS HOME PROTECTED BY THIS SIGN”

GRANDPA: Now, no need to be sarcastic. Hey, how about taking a break from the dishes for a while and sitting down here with me? I’d love your company.

RUTH: [dries her hands and comes into the living room, sits down next to Ben] If we’re going to talk, though, you have to take that thing out of your ear.

GRANDPA: [removes Bluetooth] Oh, all right, if you insist. But I might miss a call or something.

RUTH: I think you’ll live. [pause] Ben, how did you come to be this way?

GRANDPA: Well, . . . [thinks back]

GRANDPA sings:

#12: “Digi Old Folks”

**Grandpa:** I went down to the Senior Center, found a course. Took up with all those gigabytes and put away my horse. Learned to surf the internet and mastered it with ease. Soon we’ll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees. Digi old folks tweeting more each day. Upload, download, old folks hard at play. Attachments are a breeze for me. I import files. Not only did I learn a lot, I went the extra mile; scanned and faxed and texted with my iPad on my knees. Soon we’ll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees. Digi old folks tweeting more each day. Upload, download, old folks hard at play. My Facebook page grows every day by leaps and bounds. I never turn down friend requests; it’s better than it sounds.
Late at night if I can’t sleep, I love to shoot the breeze. Soon we’ll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees. Digi old folks tweeting more each day. Digi old folks; we are here to stay.

RUTH: Wow, Ben, this is something you are quite proud of.

GRANDPA: I am, and I’ve thought about this a lot. With retirement there is more time to do things, but less future to do it for. I guess, in part, I am trying to be like the young folks, to identify with them because they have what I so miss having – and it’s not youth. It’s a future. It’s plans. It’s goals.

RUTH: I certainly know that one. It helps, though, to have you in my life, to share these things with.

GRANDPA: [pauses a moment, takes her hand] Ruth, will you marry me?

RUTH: [non-plussed] Ben? . . . I don’t quite know what to say. . . But if you mean be your future for you . . . that I can’t do . . . I won’t fill that void. And I’m not sure I’d be up to it even if I wanted to try.

GRANDPA: I guess I sort of sprung that on you. I’m sorry.

RUTH: Don’t be. I’m touched, honest I am. But you have to understand. We have a lot of baggage, you and I, that we bring to this relationship. The future aside, there still remains the past, which, in our case, is a whole lot of stuff.

RUTH sings: #13: “They Promised Me Everything”

Ruth: They promised me everything, and the kitchen sink. They promised me everything, in a little while, I took the easy ride. And hopes were never met. They promised me everything, under that ole sun. They promised me everything, if I’d only wait. My heart had grown so hard. I blamed it on the world. I cursed the stars above. But then I looked inside. They promised me everything, but I was no fool. They promised me everything, now I understand. It took a lot of life to see the choice was mine: to be the helpless one or speak up and stand tall and promise for myself: rejoice in all I have, and live my life with those I love.

GRANDPA: I guess “older but wiser” is what they say, but I am not sure sometimes if the wiser part has come through as promised -- for me, anyway. Though we must have picked up some of it along the way, don’t you think?

RUTH: Maybe being wise is mostly knowing what you don’t know and just how unreliable our judgment can be at times.

GRANDPA: You can say that again.
RUTH: That and understanding that putting yourself first isn’t such a bad thing after all since if you don’t take care of yourself you’re not much use to anybody.

GRANDPA: Yeah -- not being selfish isn’t the same as being self-less. If growing older has taught me anything, I suppose, it’s that we live for one another. It might seem that survival is a very private, individual thing, but it isn’t.

RUTH: There are the kids, of course, but that’s not the point really. There is a greater debt, one we owe to all humanity.

GRANDPA: [pausing] Whoa! – how did we get into this heavy stuff all of a sudden?

RUTH: You asked me to marry you, remember?

GRANDPA: And you still haven’t answered me.

RUTH: Well . . .

GRANDPA: [cutting her off] That was a pretty risky thing for me to do.

RUTH: I know.

GRANDPA: With only a decade or two left to live shouldn’t we be taking more chances than ever, not fewer? Shouldn’t we be even less concerned about risk since there is obviously less at stake?

RUTH: I’m with you on that.

GRANDPA: Still, though, it seems from where I sit now that the decision as to just what risks to take is heavier than ever. It’s a two-edged sword, I guess. I need a plan.

[there is silence]

RUTH: So – you ask me to marry you? I might. Some day. But only if I am drawn to your hopes for the future, not because I want to take you on as a project. I love you, Ben. Truly I do. But you need to be thinking about what’s next in your own life before adding so much of mine into the mix.

GRANDPA: [recovering] Like dinner plans for this evening, perhaps. My place or yours?

RUTH: Mine, of course. It’s my turn to be home.

GRANDPA: Wait – we’ve spent a lot of time recently at your apartment. Isn’t it about time that . . . [stops himself]
RUTH: [pause – then they laugh at themselves] I guess this is not what we meant by contemplating the future.

GRANDPA: I love you, too, Ruth. So let’s decide on dinner using this iPad app to flip a coin. [starts to pull out his computer]

[blackout]

Scene 2

[the kitchen is dark]
[Grandpa is alone sitting on the couch, in morning clothes]

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] Today is another day, just like many days. Only, as Ruth has reminded us, there is the past, and it brings a lot of baggage – which can make some dramatic reappearances from time to time, often when we least expect them, and especially when we have been ignoring important things in our life. [exits]

[action resumes]

GRANDPA: [on the couch reading the news on his iPad and talking to himself] I don’t know if I should keep reading all these terrible stories in the news. Of course they only report the bad things. I know that. And there are plenty of them. But they are going to give me a very pessimistic view of the world if I’m not careful.

[Sarah enters unnoticed by Grandpa]

GRANDPA: [still to himself] Well, I guess if all the bad news hasn’t soured me by now I’m not in a lot of danger. Though I wonder just how warped I might be and not know it. [he sees Sarah and stands up immediately to greet her] [haltingly] Sarah? Is it really you?

SARAH: Hello, Grandpa.

[they stand apart and do not hug, only look at each other]

GRANDPA: [turning away] It’s been a very long time. How are you?

SARAH: [turning away] Nice of you to ask.

GRANDPA: What do you mean by that?

SARAH: Well, I guess you could have asked about me long before this.
GRANDPA: Me? How about you? You could have at least emailed me – not once in ten years, you know. I check my email many times a day. I learned that from you.

SARAH: I was so homesick at college. You could have sent me a care package – or just a postcard would have been nice.

GRANDPA: What happened to your three friends? Weren’t they company enough for you?

SARAH: [pauses, taken aback] Why are we saying these things?

[they stand side by side not facing each other, silent for a moment]

GRANDPA and SARAH sing: #14: “While You Were Gone”

Grandpa: I grew old when you were gone. I lost my joy in simple things. I always knew you were there. Not once did I let you know.

Sarah: I grew up when you were gone. I bid farewell to innocence. I always knew you were there. But did I ever let you know?

Both: I thought of you. I saw your smile each day. I heard your laugh each day. You held my heart in gentle care.

[they turn, face each other, and hug]

GRANDPA: It’s very good to see you again, Sarah. I have missed you. Did I fail to say that?

SARAH: Me, too, Grandpa.

[they sit down on the couch together]

GRANDPA: You’re all grown up now.

SARAH: Well, I wouldn’t say that exactly. My life is just more complicated.

GRANDPA: And you are through college. What now?

SARAH: Let’s not go there again. [pause] Though I can say with fair certainty that I am not going to be a firefighter.

GRANDPA: I guess we covered a lot of ground, you and I, on those few Saturdays we had together so many years ago.

SARAH: They seem like a dream now. I made you into the wise old guru.

GRANDPA: And I made you into the innocent little girl.
SARAH: I was. And it got worse before it got better. I thought being a teenager was going to be a lark. Well, it wasn’t. Sometimes I hate the insecurities I have now at 22, but they are nothing compared to those awful years.

GRANDPA: I think I know what you mean. You couldn’t pay me enough to go back there.

SARAH: I sure could have used your support during those dark times, but the truth is I probably would not have accepted it even if you had offered it. I knew everything, you see. Saying that to myself, anyway, was my only defense against the avalanche of new stuff coming my way. I was scared.

GRANDPA: I’m sorry I couldn’t help. I’ve been there, too – [sarcastic] which, of course, would make me the perfect one to know everything about the subject.

SARAH: That would have been about as useful as my overblown wisdom. I guess some things you just have to learn the hard way: like the fact that no one is exempt from the pain.

SARAH sings: #15: “Where Was the In-Crowd?”

Sarah: I was one of those popular girls, so I’m told. I was one of the loneliest girls, but no one knew. I was the brightest star. Everyone knew me. Yet there was no one there for me. But where, where was the in-crowd? And where, where were the lucky ones who had all the fun? Wouldn’t know. Wasn’t there. I was one of those popular girls, so I’m told. I was one of those uptight girls, but no one knew. Put on a cheery face and spoke the nice words, and kept the sadness in my heart. But where, where was the in-crowd? And where, where were the pretty girls who had all the dates? Who can say? Wasn’t me. So now I have learned that no one else can tell me who I am. So goodbye easy way to find my self. So now I have learned that no one’s life will ever have it all. So goodbye in-crowd and welcome to this real life.

SARAH: Grandpa, I’m getting married.

GRANDPA: [reacts with a mixture of joy, surprise, and fear] What? Who is he?

SARAH: His name is Jacob. [blurts out] Are we too young?

GRANDPA: [regaining composure] I am thrilled, Sarah. Just think: I can teach your children all about computers – and how to win at poker. It will be so much fun playing with them (and not having to care for them 24 hours a day).

SARAH: Aren’t you rushing things a bit?

GRANDPA: [oblivious] Have you thought about names? If you have a girl you can name her after your grandma, Esther. She would be honored, you know. [pensively] Now I have a future again. I can live on through them and through you!
SARAH: *indignantly and firmly* I don’t think so. Your immortality is too big a responsibility for me to take on. Sorry, Grandpa.

SARAH sings:  
**#16: “Mind Your Own Immortality”**  
Sarah: Mind your own immortality. I can only walk with you. I have my own life. Troubles enough for me. Mind your own immortality. Put your faith in the wide world. Dance to its soft beat. Know it will lead the way. Think of the people whose lives you have changed. Deep in the future your spirit will shine. Mind your own immortality.

GRANDPA: Okay. Okay. I get it. I will wait patiently for great grandchildren and not say a word. I promise. *pause* Say – in all this I forgot to tell you about Ruth. I want you to meet Ruth.

SARAH: And I want you to meet Jacob.

*[blackout]*

Scene 3

NARRATOR: *enters* After such neglect of one another, the two of them don’t deserve a happy ending you might think. And maybe so. But family connections are a gift from life itself. They don’t go away even when abused. Lucky us. *pause* So to get everyone together the old folks planned a family dinner, which is just now about to start. It could be a more significant occasion than any of them quite realizes at the outset. *exits*

*[Grandpa and Ruth enter from outside]*

GRANDPA: Good thing traffic wasn’t any worse. They are going to be here any minute.

RUTH: We’d better set the table. The food is in the oven. *hands silverware and napkins to Ben*

GRANDPA: So, let’s see – fork on the left, . . .

RUTH: *cuts him off* What’s she like, Ben? You haven’t seen her for so long.

GRANDPA: I’m actually more worried about this Jacob guy. What if he is a loser? . . . Sarah? Well, everything I expected, I think. What a great kid.

RUTH: You mean woman, no doubt.

GRANDPA: Of course . . . I do . . . especially now.

RUTH: What do you mean?
GRANDPA: Well, I logged onto Facebook this morning and read a very interesting comment by one of Sarah’s friends. Ruth, it sounds like Sarah is pregnant.

RUTH: What! She’s only 22 and not married yet.

GRANDPA: Well, that’s not a big deal these days. Unplanned is what worries me. If this were something she’d been planning she would have told me. I may have lost touch with Sarah over the years, but I don’t think she has changed that much. This is the kind of thing she would be very careful about.

RUTH: Are you going to ask her?

GRANDPA: I don’t know.

[doorbell rings, there is commotion]

RUTH: They’re here.

GRANDPA: [shouts] Come on in.

[Jacob enters first, followed by Sarah]

JACOB: [extending a hand to Grandpa] Hi, I’m Jacob. You must be Sarah’s grandfather. I’m so glad to meet you, sir.

GRANDPA: Call me Ben, please, Jacob. I’m so glad to meet you.

SARAH: [extending a hand to Ruth] And you must be Ruth. I’m Sarah.

RUTH: [insists on a hug, not a handshake] I’m so glad to meet you, dear.

GRANDPA: Please sit down, you guys. Dinner is ready.

[they sit at the table; Ruth and Grandpa set food out]

RUTH: I’m so glad you all are here. There is a lot of catching up to do.

JACOB: [to Grandpa] Sarah has told me so much about you, Ben. She has great admiration for you. I don’t quite know how you could ever live up to it all!

GRANDPA: I’m sure I won’t.

SARAH: I admit my information may be a little out of date.

GRANDPA: [with some irritation] So’s mine, Sarah. Are you pregnant?
SARAH: [non-plussed, then outraged] How did you know that?

GRANDPA: Facebook . . . of course.

SARAH: Facebook? What are you doing, spying on my life?

GRANDPA: What do you mean? You asked me to be one of your friends. Aren’t we?

SARAH: No, we’re not friends. You’re my Grandfather. There’s a big difference.

GRANDPA, RUTH, SARAH, and JACOB sing: #17: “We’re Not Friends”
Sarah: We’re stuck for life. Taken for granted, doing our duty, close enough for love but far enough to breathe. We’re not friends. We’re family.
Sarah and Jacob: [spoken] We want to be taken care of,
Grandpa and Ruth: [spoken] but never reminded of it. We want to be part of your lives,
Sarah and Jacob: [spoken] but never include us in yours.
All: We’re stuck for life. Taken for granted, doing our duty, close enough for love but far enough to breathe. We’re not friends. We’re family.
Grandpa and Ruth: [spoken] We love you dearly,
Sarah and Jacob: [spoken] but do not share with us your fears. We respect you truly,
Grandpa and Ruth: [spoken] but do not want our advice.
All: We’re stuck for life. Taken for granted, doing our duty, close enough for love but far enough to breathe. We’re not friends. We’re family.

JACOB: You’ve got to understand: this is all very new to us. We hardly know how to react, much less discuss it.

GRANDPA: I was feeling left out. That’s all. I guess I don’t have a right to know anything.

SARAH: Well, it’s too early to be sharing this news with anybody. I don’t even know what I am going to do yet.

RUTH: What do you mean, Sarah?

SARAH: I have to think this over. There are options, you know.

JACOB: [quickly] What she means is that we might give up the child for adoption.

SARAH: Jacob!

JACOB: Well, what can I say? That’s a tough one for me. And I’m all for women’s rights when it comes to reproduction, but it’s a little harder when we’re talking about a child that’s mine too.
SARAH: I know.

JACOB: I’m not so sure you do. It’s easy for you. It’s a medical/biological mandate for you. You are going to have to bear the child and be its mother. I get that. But my connection is just as strong in spite of my gender.

SARAH: It’s our future together that’s on my mind, Jacob – not so much my rights as a woman.

JACOB: I guess we both have some thinking to do.

SARAH and JACOB sing: 

**#18: “The Soul of a Woman”**

**Sarah:** The soul of a woman is deep and abiding. Her love will be my guide. The soul of a woman is strong and eternal. Her love will heal the world. But how, how can I live and be true to my dreams for a better world? Raise a child? Hold a job? I can’t know. The soul of a woman is wise and prophetic. Her truth will be my guide. The soul of a woman is just and decisive. Her truth will heal the world. But how, how will I know who it is that I’ll be to those after me? Just a mom? Just a boss? I can’t know. The soul of a woman is deep and abiding. Her love will heal the world.

**Jacob:** Through all life brings us I will be with you.

[blackout]

Scene 4

[Ruth and Sarah are sitting on the couch in serious conversation]

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] It’s a week later. And everyone has been thinking things over a lot. These life issues, when it really comes down to it, are above everyone’s pay grade. And being born into this world does not entitle anyone to a user’s manual. Would you trust it even if you got one? Not me. I would still do it my way (as the song goes) – even if I turned out to be wrong. And I suspect these guys are no different. [exits]

[action resumes]

SARAH: What am I going to do, Ruth? I just got a job offer in New York City, a really good one. They can say all they want about maternity leave; but how will I be viewed when it comes to promotions?

RUTH: I know what you mean, believe me. The good, politically correct talk doesn’t guarantee anything when it comes to real world attitudes – especially when push comes to shove. I could have done so much more with my career without having had children. Though I cannot say I have ever regretted having them, even for a moment.
SARAH: Jacob has said to me that he would be glad to be a stay-at-home dad and care for our baby. That seems ever so cool and hip – but I have to confess my own rather traditional prejudices. Could he ever do such a thing?

RUTH: I guess the tricky part about our modern-day culture is we may have only driven some things underground and don’t know they are still there. What makes you think he would not be up to the task?

SARAH: I don’t know. Maybe I am questioning myself as much as him. Would I be shirking my destiny as a woman to turn over my mothering to someone else – especially a man? Maybe I fear more that it is an arrangement that will suit me.

RUTH: These gender roles certainly continue to swirl around inside us all.

SARAH: So what should I do?

RUTH: Start by giving up on the word, “should.” What do you want?

SARAH: I’m not sure . . .

[the two men arrive]

GRANDPA: Boy, am I hungry. What’s for lunch, girls?

RUTH: Very funny, wise guy.

SARAH: Cottage cheese and fruit, anyone?

JACOB: [to Grandpa] I guess age has its privileges. I certainly couldn’t get away with a joke like that.

SARAH: [overhearing] Oh, come now, Jacob – are you calling me too serious?

RUTH: It does seem the season for it.

[they all sit down together]

SARAH: Jacob, I’ve thought it over a lot. And your offer to be the stay-at-home dad is very generous indeed . . .

JACOB: [cuts her off] Generous? Are you kidding? Selfish would be more like it.

SARAH: [to Grandpa] Grandpa, I’ve been offered a very good job in New York City. And I am going to take it.

JACOB: And I will take care of our baby at home.
GRANDPA: You are going to move far away -- again!?

RUTH: Ben!?

GRANDPA: Okay, okay. First things first, though. We’ve just barely met again after ten years. So I am sad on that score. I just have to be honest. But, of course I am thrilled, too. What a wonderful adventure. I am envious . . . and, Sarah, I am so proud of you for making such a bold move . . .

SARAH: [interrupting] Proud? [confused at first, then indignant] What do you mean by that? Does this mean your self image rests on my accomplishments or how well I dress or whatever? Doesn’t pride “goeth before the fall?” What is this?

GRANDPA, SARAH, RUTH, and JACOB sing:  #19: “Family Pride”

Jacob: Family pride wells up inside. It’s true and tried and lovely.
Ruth: What for?
Jacob: Family pride. We give advice; we don’t think twice, just do it.
Ruth: Or not.
Jacob: No one knows what’s deep inside of us, but rest assured we’ll always be true to kin.
Ruth: Family pride. Is it so strong that no one else can join in?
Jacob: No, ma’am.
Ruth: Let them see just how strong we can be when we all stick together. We can’t be beat.
Grandpa: [to Ruth] I love you still.
Sarah: [to Jacob] Take my hand.
Grandpa: [to Ruth] Stay at my side for good.
Sarah: [to Jacob] Here’s to our new life.
All: We’ve joined together as one.

GRANDPA: As long as we are sharing big news about our lives, I want to announce something to everyone. I went over to the college today and registered to be a student and earn my long overdue bachelor’s degree. [sarcastically] Now you can all be proud of me.

SARAH: [pointedly] Ha, ha. I guess we are both off to new adventures. This time, though, let’s stay in touch.

GRANDPA: No promises, please.

[blackout]
Scene 5

[Grandpa and Ruth are setting the table]

[freeze]

NARRATOR: [enters] So. The die is cast. Destiny is on a roll. The strong-willed young woman takes on the world. And the strong-hearted old man starts over. Sarah and Jacob leave tomorrow for their married life in New York. The newly gathered extended family is about to sit down for a final dinner before being scattered. It is a bittersweet occasion. [exits]

[action resumes]

GRANDPA: Ruth, I’m not sure I can do it. I haven’t been a student for fifty years.

RUTH: Of course you can.

GRANDPA: Well, thanks for that. Your confidence helps. But how will all those young people treat me? And the young professors – will they be put off by my impertinent questions?

RUTH: These are legitimate fears, for sure. But I guess voicing them will help you deal with it all . . . you know, this may not exactly be a picnic for me, either. I could lose you to the excitement of college life. Are you prepared to come home to the drab old me?

GRANDPA: Oh, come now, really?

RUTH: Ben, please don’t discount my fears. You may change more than you think, you know.

GRANDPA: I suppose. But I intend to keep you first in my life no matter how much fun it is at school.

RUTH: [chidingly] Good plan, pal. And I suppose I will need to join the crowd and find something exciting and new for my life, too . . .

[Sarah and Jacob arrive carrying flowers]

SARAH: [to Grandpa] Well, how is the Freshman Class President doing today?

GRANDPA: Hey – you never know. Maybe I’ll speak at graduation. I’ve got four years to write my speech, after all.

JACOB: Okay, okay, you two. Let’s sit down; I’m hungry.

[they all sit down to eat]
SARAH: Well, we leave tomorrow. Everything is packed and ready to go. All I need to do now is warm up my cold feet a little.

JACOB: Oh, come now, Sarah – you are going to do great things.

SARAH: Easy for you to say. Childcare is looking better and better as we get closer to actually doing this.

JACOB: Hey – don’t take away my job before I even start.

GRANDPA: You know, Sarah, I remember your once saying that plans almost never come true, but if you don’t make them, nothing good at all will happen.

SARAH: You said that.

GRANDPA: Well, whatever. The point is: go into this expecting surprises. With luck they will most often be good ones.

JACOB: You know, everybody – I have to say that the boy here who is about to be a mother is the one who is really going out on a limb. I’m not asking for sympathy, but I do want to say that I will make mistakes. So be prepared.

RUTH: We have every confidence in you, Jacob.

JACOB: Thanks, Ruth. To be honest, though, it’s not the childcare that most worries me. [to Sarah] Sarah, you know I love you – wildly. But I don’t know how good I am going to be at this life-long love thing. And everyone in this room is counting on me. When I think of that I, too, expect surprises, and not always the best ones.

JACOB sings, #20: “Imperfect Love”

Jacob: Romeo and Juliet had a perfect love and we all know what became of them. Desdemona and Othello loved like no other. Ooops! Out came the knife. Radames and Aida had the perfect love as well. But darn! Buried alive. There’s got to be a better way. Imperfect love, I’m here to say: imperfect love, it is the only way. Imperfect love, my gift to you. I will be true, to you until the end. Never mind what romantics say. Love is not made in heaven. It’s made right here on earth, one faltering step at a time. Imperfect love, I’m here to say: imperfect love, it is the only way. Imperfect love, my gift to you. I will be true, to you until the end.

GRANDPA: I think that just showing up is half the task in living. Being there. Staying in the game. I know I am not at all sure that I will be able to succeed in going to school again. But I do know that I will remain steadfast in my efforts to achieve a future.

RUTH: And I am behind you all the way, Ben. [pause] To be honest, though, I have to say this: you and Sarah are brave in what you are setting out to do. And you deserve a great deal of
credit for your courage. But you should admit it from the start: you have certainly opted for the traditional route to success – school and a high pressure job.

JACOB: Does everyone have to be on the cutting edge?

RUTH: Of course not. And our dear ones are only doing what they truly need to do.

JACOB: They certainly are. [thinking it over] Still, though, it is true: you guys are getting in the proverbial saddle and riding off into the sunset, as so many others have done before you. I guess we’re just saying. [walks over to the piano] Let’s be honest about it:

GRANDPA, RUTH, SARAH, and JACOB sing: #21: “Rat Race”

Jacob: [starts by playing the first notes on the piano]
Ruth: You’ve joined the rat race now.
Jacob: Try not to have a cow.
Grandpa: I know our dreams will all come true.
Sarah: They’ve already come into view.
Grandpa: Our chance to be all we can be,
Sarah: and finally set ourselves free.
Jacob: The devil has you now.
Ruth: You’re stuck behind the plow.
Grandpa: So say goodbye to lives of ease,
Sarah: and get busy trying to please.
Grandpa: Our foolishness is plain to see:
Sarah: let’s head for the hills, you and me.
Ruth: Do always what you’re told.
Jacob: Try not to be too bold.
Sarah: We’ll stay in touch to share our news;
Grandpa: together we’ll chase off the blues.
Sarah: This time we pledge to heed our hearts,
Grandpa: to keep us from growing apart.
Jacob: You need to fit the mold.
Ruth: You have to earn the gold.
Sarah: We know it will be hard to do,
Grandpa: but we’ll to our vision stay true.
Sarah: So listen up and don’t miss out:
Grandpa: the future is what it’s about.
Sarah and Grandpa: We’ve joined the rat race now. We’ll learn to love the plow. With eyes ahead and spirits high, we welcome the bright days ahead.

[all four dance together]

GRANDPA: Well, we sure will miss you two . . . I guess that’s a terrible understatement . . . I don’t quite know what to say, really. This is such a crossroads in all our lives. What do we do now?
SARAH: Say goodbye.

GRANDPA: [slightly whiny] No . . .

SARAH: I know it’s hard, but it’s about the only lesson I really learned from you, Grandpa.

GRANDPA: Okay, okay . . . but can we still be friends on Facebook?

SARAH: I’ll have to think about that one . . .

GRANDPA, SARAH, RUTH, and JACOB sing, #22: “We Will Never Pass this Way Again”

All: We will never pass this way again. So love life and hold on

Grandpa and Ruth: loosely.

Sarah: When it’s time

Jacob: to take leave

Ruth: say goodbye

Grandpa: every time.

All: We will never pass this way again. So love life and hold on

Grandpa and Ruth: loosely.

[all dance together off the stage]

NARRATOR: [enters] Well, they’re gone now. Off to see the wizard, I guess, or whatever lies before them. Makes me think, though: corny as it may sound, today really is the first day of the rest of your life.

NARRATOR sings: #23: “Remember the Future”

Narrator: Remember the future. Hold dearly the future. And weave it all together, all the lovely strands of life. Remember the future. Remember its promise. And grow the dreams forever. Everything has just begun.

NARRATOR: Goodbye everyone. Goodbye and Godspeed. [exits]

[curtain call music: #24: “Fantasy Waltz”]

[the end]
Best Laid Plans
No. 2

NARRATOR: ". . . even though they so often crash and burn."

1

Narrator:

Piano

7

always, I know, but sweet when they do. Tenderly we hope: find our dreams.

13

In the light of dawn they fade away. Let them go, breathe in the new day.

Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
Dreams we have, do they never come true? But al\-\thys\nalways they lead to some\thing quite new.
What's It Like to Be Young?

No. 3

GRANDPA: "Uh, yes. Sarah --"

What's it like to be young?
What's it like to tweet?

Will you ever meet those friends from Facebook,
in the flesh, five hundred thirty of them?
Sarah:

What's it like to be old?

What's it like to nap?

How much TV can you stand?

Dozing through re-runs of "M.A.S.H."

How do you keep on going through all is done?
Grandpa: I have friends, I only watch an hour a day.

Sarah: three at least.

No. 3 - What's It Like to Be Young?
No. 3 ~ What's It Like to Be Young?

How are you now that Grand - ma is gone?

She's here with me; her love lives on, in all that I do.

hear her laugh in my own voice when I'm with my three friends.
No. 3 - What's It Like to Be Young?

Young or old, all we need is someone to

love.

Young or old, all we need is someone to

love.
No Midlife Crisis for Me!
No. 4

Chris Lilly Backus
May 2013

GRANDPA: "... So let's be glad of that."

Andrew C. Backus
May 2013

Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
Grandpa: mid-life crisis for me! Been there, done that. Not yet, no rush. No!

Sarah: No!

Grandpa: Never a payday now; money I have not got.

Sarah: Status I still don't have. Nobody knows that I'm here. No

Both: mid-life crisis for me! Been there, done that. Not yet, no rush. No!
Grandpa:

No more six A.M. No more lawn to mow. No more jobs to be lost.

Sarah:

No brief-case to lug. No reports to write. No glass ceiling to hit. No

Both:

mid-life crisis for me! Been there, done that. Not yet, no rush. No!

Grandpa:

I'm glad I made it through, and I would not go back.

Sarah:

Both:
Sarah: I guess I'll learn to cope, just not tomorrow for sure! No

Grandpa: mid-life crisis for me! Been there, done that. Not yet, no rush.

Sarah:

Both:

Grandpa: Riley, go eat your heart out!

Sarah:

Both:
How Do You Know?
No. 5

Chris Lilly Backus
February 2013

GRANDPA: "... Nobody really knows what to do."

Sarah:

How do you know when someone wants to kiss you? How do you know when someone wants to hug? Am I the one who wants to be in love? Who am I? Am I too young to know?

Grandpa:

You'll find the tenderness within when love stirs.

Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 5 ~ How Do You Know?

Sarah:

Grandpa:

Both:
SARAH: "Goodbye, Grandpa."

Will you still love me when you grow up?

Will you still like me when you know better?

Child of my own child; Gift from the heavens, do I deserve your love?

Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
Who am I? Tell me. What can I know? Now you come calling

giving love freely. Blest by your sweet faith,

I will be grateful all my days.
The Dangers of Cute
No. 7

Piano:

Sarah:

Grandpa:

GRANDPA: ". . . I like your hair, by the way."

Sarah:

I hate it when all I get are sim-per-ing smiles and grins.

Grandpa:

Pupp-ies and kit-tens and ba-bies are cute but I'm gon-na be a teen. Oh,
once I was strong and proud, but spry's what they call me now.

My heart knows better: there's good years ahead. And I'll dance through everyone. The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.

Sarah:

No princess am I to save. Take care of myself I will.
Though they mean nothing but kindness I'm sure, I'll do without cute, thank you! They say that a fire inside burns under a snowy roof.

Let them keep calling me cute, but be sure that I've still got what it takes. The dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.
No. 7 ~ The Dangers of Cute

Sarah:

Is cuteness the real me? Or just what they want to see?

Grandpa:

Can I be anything else that I choose, a tomboy or pink-haired punk. A pat on the head we get when we fall in love again.

Both:

Is it our fault that they make fun of us, or is it just jealousy? The
dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.

Sarah:

So think on it carefully: just who do you want to be?

Grandpa:

How do you want them to figure you out, be cute or the real you? This

isn't a joke for sure; it's easy to understand:
No. 7 ~ The Dangers of Cute

Both:

choices you make to draw others to you will stay with you all your life. The

... dangers of cute are far and wide as young and old will testify.

... they dance together:
For the Piano:

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15

Piano:
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Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
-give but don't for-get.

Live in the world but

not in spite of it. Learn then change the world. How

can I help this old world keep on? I know but what will I
Grandpa: do? Just live fully, love boldly, look for the good and go on. For -

Sarah: a tempo

Grandpa:

give but don't forget. Live in the world but

Sarah:

rit. a tempo

Grandpa:

not in spite of it. Cry and just move on. I
Know you've got just what it takes to move through life with grace and with giving. Forgive but don't forget. Live in the world but not in spite of it. Learn and carry on.
SARAH: ". . . That sounds serious to me."

Will: Are you going to die?

Piano: Won't you live forever and be there for me?

Sarah: Will you ever leave me?

Piano: Who will teach me poker? Who will meet my first love?
Who will take me camping?
Who will cheer me on?

Will you ever leave me?
Are you going to die?

Can't you live forever and take care of me?

rit.
Best Laid Plans
No. 10

Chris Lilly Backus
May 2013

Andrew C. Backus
May 2013

GRANDPA: "... Just don't get your hopes up too high."

Sarah:

Dreams we have, will they ever come true? Not

Piano

Grandpa:

In the light of dawn they fade away. Let them go, breathe in the new day.

Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Sarah:
*a tempo*

"Dreams we have, do they never come true?"

---

Grandpa:

---

Both:

"Always they lead to something quite new. Looking far ahead with spirits high, we know that we will find our own way."

---
GRANDPA: "... Don't I have to join Facebook first, though?"
Both:

We will never pass this way again. So

Grandpa:

love life and hold on loosely

Both: "May I have this dance with you?"

No. 11 – We Will Never Pass This Way Again
Digi Old Folks
No. 12

GRANDPA: "Well, . . ."

I went down to the Senior Center, found a course. Took up with all those gigabytes and put away my horse. Learned to surf the internet and mastered it with ease. Soon we'll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees.

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 12 ~ Digi Old Folks

19

Digital old folks tweeting more each day.

23

Upload, download, old folks hard at play.

28

tachments are a breeze for me, I import files. Not

32

only did I learn a lot, I went the extra mile.
Scanned and faxed and textoed with my i-Pad on my knees.

Soon we'll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees.

Digi old folks tweeting more each day.

Upload, download, old folks hard at play.
Facebook page grows every day by leaps and bounds. I

never turn down friend requests, it’s better than it sounds.

Late at night if I can’t sleep, I love to shoot the breeze.

Soon we’ll all go paperless, and save a zillion trees.
Di - gi old folks, we are here to stay.
RUTH: "... is a whole lot of stuff."

Ruth:

They promised me everything, and the kitchen sink. They promised me everything, in a little while. I took the easy ride. And hopes were never met. They

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
They Promised Me Everything

No. 13

promised me everything, under that ole sun. They

promised me everything, if I'd only wait. My

heart had grown so hard. I blamed it on the world. I

cursed the stars above. But then I looked inside. They
No. 13 ~ They Promised Me Everything

promised me everything, but I was no fool. They

promised me everything, now I understand. It

took a lot of life to see the choice was mine: to

be the helpless one or speak up and stand tall and

3
No. 13 ~ They Promised Me Everything

pro-mise for my-self: re-joice in all I have, and

live my life with those I love.
While You Were Gone
No. 14

SARAH: "Why are we saying these things?" [pause]

1  Grandpa:
I grew old when you were gone.  I lost my joy in simple things.

7  Grandpa:
I always knew you were there.  Not once did I let you know.

13  Sarah:
I grew up when you were gone.  I bid farewell to innocence.

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 14 ~ While You Were Gone

I always knew you were there. But did I ever let you know?

Both (ad lib):

I thought of you. I saw your smile each day. I heard your laugh each day.

You held my heart in gentle care.
Where Was the In-Crowd?
No. 15

SARAH: ". . . no one is exempt from the pain."

Sarah:

I was one of those popular girls, so I'm told.

I was one of the loneliest girls, but no one knew.

I was the brightest star. Every one knew me. Yet there was no one there for me.

Music Copyright 2015 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2015 Christine Lilly Backus
But where, where was the in-crowd? And where, where were the lucky ones who had all the fun? Wouldn't know. Wasn't there.

I was one of those popular girls, so I'm told.

I was one of those uptight girls, but no one knew.
Put on a cheer-y face and spoke the nice words, and kept the sad-ness in my heart.

But where, where was the in-crowd? And where, where were the pretty girls who had all the dates? Who can say? Was n't me.
So now I have learned that no one else can tell me who I am, so

good-bye easy way to find myself. So

now I have learned that no one's life will ever have it all. So

good-bye in-crowd and welcome to this real life.
Mind Your Own Immortality
No. 16

SARAH: ". . . Sorry, Grandpa."

Sarah:

Mind your own immortality. I can only walk with you. I have my own life.

Troubles enough for me. Mind your own immortality. Put your faith in the wide world.

Piano:

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
Dance to its soft beat. Know it will lead the way. Think of the people whose lives you have changed. Deep in the future your spirit will shine. Mind your own immortality.
We're Not Friends
No. 17

Sarah:
We're stuck for life! Taken for granted, doing our duty.

close enough for love, but far enough to breathe.

We're not friends; we're family.

Sarah and Jacob:
We want to be taken care of.

but never reminded of it.

Grandpa and Ruth:
We want to be part of your lives.

but never include us in yours.

Sarah and Jacob:

Music Copyright 2015 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2015 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 17 ~ We're Not Friends

All:

We're stuck for life! Taken for granted, doing our duty,

19

close enough for love, but far enough to breathe.

23

We're not friends; we're family.

Grandpa and Ruth:

We love you dearly,

Sarah and Jacob:

but do not tell us your fears.
We respect you truly,

Grandpa and Ruth:

but do not want our advice.
a capella, a la barbershop with pitch pipe to start (and bow ties?),
slightly slower than before . . .

Sarah & Ruth:

We're stuck for life! Ta - ken for gran - ted, do - ing our du - ty,

Grandpa & Jacob:

close e - nough for love, but far e - nough to breathe.

We're not friends; we're fa - mi - ly.
The Soul of a Woman
No. 18

JACOB: "I guess we both have some thinking to do."

Sarah:

The soul of a woman is deep and abiding. Her love will be my guide. The soul of a woman is strong and eternal. Her love will heal the world. But how, how can I live and be true to my dreams for a better...

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 18 ~ The Soul of a Woman

world? Raise a child? Hold a job? I can't know. The

soul of a woman is wise and prophetic. Her truth will be my guide. The

soul of a woman is just and decisive. Her truth will heal the world. But

how, how will I know who it is that I'll be to those after
me? Just a mom? Just a boss? I can't know. The soul of a woman is deep and abiding. Her love will heal the world. Through all life brings us I will be with you.
SARAH: "... Doesn't pride goeth before the fall? What is this?"

Family Pride
No. 19

Chris Lilly Backus
September 2014

Andrew C. Backus
September 2014

Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus
Jacob:  Ruth:

No, ma'am. Family pride. It's true and tried. Safety for us in numbers.

Ruth: Jacob:

For sure! Let them see just how strong we can be when we all stick together. We can't be

Jacob: Ruth:

kin. Family pride. Is it so strong that no one else can join in?
Sarah (to Jacob):

Take my hand here's to our new life. We've joined to

Sarah and Ruth:

be

Grandpa (to Ruth):

I love you still. Stay at my side for good. We've joined to

Grandpa and Jacob:

gether as one.

- gather as one.
JACOB: "... and not always the best ones."

Imperfect Love
No. 20

Chris Lilly Backus
February 2015

Andrew C. Backus
February 2015

Music Copyright 2015 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2015 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 20 ~ Imperfect Love

Radames and Aida had the perfect love as well. But

darn! Buried alive. There's got to be a better way.

Imperfect love, I'm here to say: imperfect love, it is the only way. Imperfect love, I'm here to say: imperfect love, it is the only way.
- per-fect love, my gift to you. I will be true, to you un-til the end Ne-ver

mind-what ro-man-tics say. Love is not made in hea-ven. It's

made right here on earth, one fal-ter-ing step at a time.
No. 20 ~ Imperfect Love

Im - per - fect love, I'm here to say:

Im - per - fect love, it is the only way.

Im - per - fect love, my gift to you.

will be true, to you un - til the end.
JACOB: "... Let's be honest about it."

**Percussion:**

**Voice:**

**Ruth:**

**You've joined the rat race now.**

**Jacob:**

**Grandpa:**

*Music Copyright 2014 Andrew C. Backus*

*Words Copyright 2014 Christine Lilly Backus*
No. 21 ~ Rat Race

Sarah:
know our dreams will all come true. They've already come into view. Our

Sarah:
chance to be all we can be, and finally set ourselves free. The

Ruth (washboard sound):
devil has you now. You're stuck behind the plow. So

Grandpa:

Grandpa:
Sarah: say good-bye to lives of ease, and get busy trying to please.

Grandpa: Our foolishness is plain to see: let's head for the hills, you and me. Do

Sarah (rit.): Ruth (a tempo):

Jacob (scratching sound):

Jacob: always what you're told. Try not to be too bold. We'll
Grandpa:

stay in touch to share our news; together we'll chase off the blues. This

Sarah:

time we pledge to heed our hearts, to keep us from growing apart. You

Jacob:

Ruth (softer scritchting):

need to fit the mold. You have to earn the gold. We

Sarah:
No. 21 ~ Rat Race

Grandpa:

know it will be hard to do, but we'll to our vision stay true. So

Sarah:

list - en up and don't miss out: the future is what it's about. We've

Grandpa and Sarah:

joined the rat race now. We'll learn to love the plow. With

joined the rat race now. We'll learn to love the plow. With
55  slower but steady . . .

eyes a-head and spirits high, we welcome the bright days a-head.

eyes a-head and spirits high, we welcome the bright days a-head.

59  slower yet, but steady

all four dance

64  rit.
We Will Never Pass This Way Again
No. 22

SARAH: "I'll have to think about that one. . ."

Grandpa and Ruth:
love life and hold on loosely

Sarah:
When it's time to take

Jacob:
leave, say goodbye every time.

Ruth:

Music Copyright 2013 Andrew C. Backus
Words Copyright 2013 Christine Lilly Backus
No. 22 ~ We Will Never Pass This Way Again

**All:**

We will never pass this way again. So

**Grandpa and Ruth:**

love life and hold on loosely

all dance together
Remember the Future
No. 23

NARRATOR: "... first day of the rest of your life."

Narrator:

Remember the future. Hold dearly the future. And weave it all together. All the lovely strands of life. Remember the future. Remember its promise. And grow the dreams forever. Everything has just begun.

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Words Copyright 2015 Christine Lilly Backus
Fantasy Waltz
No. 24

Adnrew C. Backus
December 1992

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