

ETHEL. "Eat a toad

For breakfast every morning?

Wear out my belly grovelling in the dust?

No, I thank you, and again I thank you no!

But..."

*(ROSALIND enters from the street door, carrying a suitcase. She's bright and attractive, in her 20s or 30s. She sees ETHEL and smiles with affection.*

*ETHEL is facing the other way and can't see ROSALIND. Also, as we'll soon realize, ETHEL is quite deaf and is never aware of very much unless it's in front of her and shouting.)*

"To sing, to laugh, to dream,

To walk in my own way and be alone,

Free, with an eye to see things as they are."

ROZ. Grandma.

ETHEL. "To travel any road under the sun,"

ROZ. *Grandma!*

ETHEL. "Nor doubt if fame or fortune—"

ROZ. *GRANDMA!!*

ETHEL. *(Startled, then overjoyed.)* Oh! ...Rosalind! Dearest girl! What a surprise! You're getting more beautiful every day. *(A big hug.)* You look adorable!

ROZ. So do you.

ETHEL. What?

ROZ. *(Louder.)* So do you! You look great!

ETHEL. I'm afraid you'll have to speak up, dear.

ROZ. *Grandma, can I get you your hearing aid?!*

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* No thank you, dear, I'm not in the mood for lemonade. Oh, I miss you terribly. It isn't the same here without you.

ROZ. *I miss you too, Grandma. Hey! How is the tour going? Do you like Buffalo?*

ETHEL. No. I don't. It stinks. If it wasn't named for an animal, it would have nothing going for it. I don't

mind so much for myself, really, but it's quite a come-down for your mother. She played Broadway, you know, in the forties. Then your father dragged her down to his level.

ROZ. Grandma—!

ETHEL. Revivals of tired old plays. B-movies. You should have heard him doing *Cyrano* just now at the dress rehearsal. The man is a walking ham. They should stick cloves in him and serve him with pineapple.

ROZ. *Grandma, listen! I have a surprise. I'm getting married.*

*(It takes a moment to sink in...then ROZ and ETHEL squeal with delight, like schoolgirls, jump up and down and hug each other.)*

ETHEL. Oh, Rosalind, how wonderful! I've always said that you and Paul were made for each other.

ROZ. It isn't Paul.

ETHEL. The boy has spunk—

ROZ. *Grandma, it's not Paul! Paul and I broke up!*

ETHEL. ...It isn't Paul?

ROZ. NO!

ETHEL. Well that's a mistake.

*(ROZ sighs; here it comes.)*

You look ravishing on the stage together. You could do all the great couples—

ROZ. *Grandma, I'm not an actress anymore! I'm in advertising.*

ETHEL. Yes, I know, and it's revolting.

ROZ. *Don't you remember the talk we had at Christmas?!*

ETHEL. ...No.

ROZ. *(Holding ETHEL's hand and really pouring her heart out.)*

Grandma, this is your life. And Mother and Dad's. And that's fine. I'm very proud of you. But I grew up with it. I want something different. Something that doesn't drive me crazy all the time. Does that make any sense?

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* Rosalind, dearest, can I tell you something?

ROZ. Sure.

ETHEL. I haven't heard a single word you've said.

ROZ. ...*Grandma, can I please get you your hearing aid!!!*

ETHEL. All right. Fine. One glass. ...Now listen to me, young lady. The theatre may be dying. The glamorous invalid may be crawling through the desert with but a single lung in its feeble chest, but it is still breathing and it is all we've got. It is our lifeline to humanity. Without it, we would all be Republicans. I'm very tired now, dear, and I'm going to lie down. *(At the door.)* It's wonderful having you back.

*(ETHEL exits. ROZ runs to the door and shouts:)*

ROZ. GRANDMA! I LOVE YOU!

*(At which moment, we hear a knock at the street door.)*

Come in. (...*Knock knock knock.*) Come in! (...*Knock knock knock; angry:*) *Would you come in, please, the door's open!!*

II

*(HOWARD enters. He's in his late 20's, very good-natured and quite good-looking. At the moment, he's rather frightened.)*

ADDITION

HOWARD. ...Sweetheart?

ROZ. Hi, honey. Come on in.

*(They kiss.)*

HOWARD. Are your parents here?

ROZ. I don't think so.

HOWARD. *(Relieved.)* Oh, good.

ROZ. Howard...

HOWARD. Well I'm sorry. You know how I feel about this. "Meeting the in-laws." It makes me nervous.

ROZ. You have nothing to worry about.

HOWARD. I'd be all right if they weren't such...big stars. The glamorous life...

ROZ. Howard, does this look glamorous?