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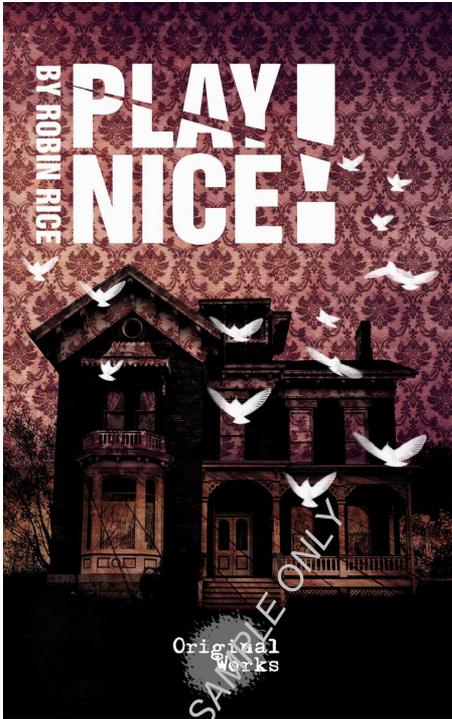
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Alice in Black and White
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Also Available by Robin Rice



PLAY NICE!

Synopsis: The Diamond siblings use the only resources they have, the dramatic role-play of their imaginations, to cope with the abusive Dragon Queen - their mother. Play Nice! is a mystery in which Isabel, Luce and Matilda embark on a journey within themselves to discover who poisoned her.

Cast Size: 3 Females, 1 Male

ALICE IN BLACK AND WHITE

by
Robin Rice

SAMPLE ONLY

For the awesome women at Looking for Lilith
and all others fighting for equality.

Excelsior!

SAMPLE ONLY

ALICE IN BLACK AND WHITE was first produced with Looking for Lilith Theatre Company in The MeX Theater at The Kentucky Center in Louisville, KY. The play opened on February 28, 2013.

Producer: Shannon Woolley Allison
Director: Kathi E. B. Ellis
Scene and Projections Designer: Christé Lunsford
Lighting Designer: Tom Willis
Costume Designer: Lindsay Chamberlin
Sound Designer: Nathan Roberts
Stage Manager: Lauren Camargo
Props Manager: Dana Hope
Camera and Photography Research: Paul Kepler
Dramaturg: Karole Spangler
Graphic Designer: Holly Stone

The Cast:

JENNIFER THALMAN KEPLER: Alice Austen
SHANNON WOOLLEY ALLISON: Elizabeth Austen/
Street Person/Poorhouse Attendant
TED LESLEY: John Austen/James/Rogers Winthrop/City
Official
DAWN SCHULTZ CAMPBELL: Minn Mueller/Violet/
Harry/Grace Mandia
LAURA ELLIS: Gertrude Tate/Julia
TRINA FISCHER: Sally Lally
JOE HATFIELD: Oliver Jensen

ALICE IN BLACK AND WHITE opened Off-Broadway on August 3, 2016, at 59E59 Theatre, New York City, Elysa Kleinhans, Artistic Director, presented by Looking for Lilith Theatre Company.

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MEGAN ADAIR: Minn Mueller/Violet/Harry/Grace
Mandia

LAURA ELLIS: Gertrude Tate/Julia

TRINA FISCHER: Sally Lally

JOSEPH HATFIELD: Oliver Jensen

Special thanks to Janice Monger, the Alice Austen House, Manhattan Oracles, and The Great Plains Theatre Conference.

CHARACTERS**

The play may be performed by seven actors, doubling roles as desired.

In 1951:

OLIVER JENSEN: 40s. Writer. Historian. Determined.

SALLY LALLY: 40. Tightly wound receptionist. Crazy for history.

In 1876-1951:

ALICE AUSTEN: Ages 10-86. Smart, curious, sarcastic, independent.

ELIZABETH AUSTEN: Alice's mother. Straight-laced. Wounded by the past.

GERTRUDE TATE: Younger than Alice. Alice's soul-mate. Intelligent. Gentle.

JOHN AUSTEN: Alice's grandfather, Elizabeth's father. Loving.

MINN MUELLER: Ages throughout play. Alice's aunt, Elizabeth's sister. Quirky.

JULIA: Ages 14 and 25. Alice's dear friend. Fun-loving but innocent.

VIOLET: Ages 14, 25, 40. Alice's close friend. Sheltered. Does what's expected.

JAMES: 30. Suitor of Alice. Tries hard, but clueless.

HARRY: 25-30. Suitor of Alice. Tries harder.

GRACE MANDIA: 40-50. Italian. All business.

ROGERS WINTHROP: Middle-aged cousin of Alice. Hard as stone.

CITY OFFICIAL: In New York City. Male or female. Bored.

STREET PERSON: Male or female. Homeless.

POORHOUSE ATTENDANT: Male or female. Caring.

** Only the roles of Oliver, Sally and Alice must not be doubled. If desired, young actors may play Alice, Violet and Julia as children. This is not necessary, however.

SETTING

Staten Island, NY

TIME

1876-1951

NOTES

*No blackouts unless in the script. Scenes flow one to the next without interruption. SHIFT indicates a new time and/or location (often with a light change, often introduced by sound). Characters from the earlier segment will exit.

*See Notes from the Playwright after script for ideas about the use of projections.

*The play may be performed on a stage that's bare except for a few set pieces.

*Stage directions in the script are suggestions. A director may reinterpret, delete or change them, add choreographed movement, etc.

SCRIPT PUNCTUATION

-- indicates speaker is interrupted by a thought, the next speaker or something else.

... indicates thought has wandered off.

/ indicates place where next speaker overlaps

ALICE IN BLACK AND WHITE

(PRESET: Projection of an Alice Austen photo of her family home, Clear Comfort.)

ACT I. THE LARKY YEARS

(AT RISE: 1876. SOUND: steam ship whistle. Summer. Front lawn of Clear Comfort, a home on Staten Island on the shore of the Hudson River. In a rocker on the vine-covered porch, JOHN AUSTEN smokes a pipe, reads the N.Y. Times. His granddaughter, ALICE, 10, gazes at a camera on a tripod. She has never seen anything so fascinating.)

ALICE: It can freeze time?

JOHN: In photograph pictures. On photographic negative plates.

ALICE: Negative plates?

JOHN: Slices of special glass.

ALICE: Will the pictures last forever?

JOHN: So they say.

(ELIZABETH and MINN enter arm-in-arm.)

ALICE: Mama! Mama! I'm going to make photographic pictures!

ELIZABETH: Don't touch. It's not a toy.

ALICE: I don't play with toys.

JOHN: Alice is almost 11.

ALICE: Father would let me.

ELIZABETH: You don't have a father.

ALICE: Do too!

JOHN: It's all right, Lala. Mr. Thoreau tells us: "The cornerstones of a happy life are independence and self-reliance."

ELIZABETH: You're encouraging bad behavior.

JOHN: I will encourage my only grandchild as much as I like.

ALICE: Is Father tall like Uncle Pete?

ELIZABETH: Never you mind.

ALICE: Does he have sparkly eyes like Aunt Minn? Somebody tell me! Is he ever coming back?

(ALICE looks from person to person. Silence. ELIZABETH is getting a headache.)

ALICE: If Father was here I'd make a picture of him with the camera. Anytime I wanted to see him I'd take it out. I'm going to make pictures of everything I love and put them where I can look at them anytime I want.

MINN: Collect! Collect!

ELIZABETH: Nobody is talking about collecting.

MINN: I collect fans from Japan. Oswald collects Oriental vases. Alice will collect photographs.

ALICE: Boodles!

MINN: Scadoodles!

JOHN: My friend Ralph Waldo Emerson opposed collecting as materialistic.

ALICE: A good Transcendentalist makes order out of disorder. My photographic collection will be very orderly.

MINN: Papa, you collect stories about people who stay at Clear Comfort. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Rutherford B. Hayes --

ALICE and MINN: (*mimicking John*) Baron Wilhelm von Knyphausen!

ELIZABETH: Cameras are complicated.

ALICE: Uncle Oswald can teach me.

JOHN: Alice is clever.

ELIZABETH: Young men aren't attracted to clever girls.

JOHN: (*very pointed*) It isn't Alice who needs to attract young men, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: The process requires chemicals.

ALICE: Oh pooh. Uncle Pete can get those at Rutgers.

MINN: Alice is going to be a famous photographer!

ELIZABETH: Fame isn't ladylike.

ALICE: I'm a kid, not a lady.

ELIZABETH: You are not a kid. Kids are baby goats.

ALICE: I'll take photographs of you dressed as a geisha,
Aunt Minn!

MINN: You'll be richer than rich and buy a house in
Manhattan!

ALICE: Yaaaay! No. Wait. I don't want a different house.

JOHN: My firm belief as a firm Transcendentalist is that
right here at Clear Comfort is your place in the univer-
sal puzzle.

ALICE: Nobody's going to make me leave?

JOHN: Not ever.

ELIZABETH: Transcendentalism gives me a headache.

ALICE: Look! A nest!

(ALICE runs to a nearby tree.)

MINN: Run, Alice, run!

ELIZABETH: Be careful!

MINN: Climb, Alice, climb!

JOHN: My granddaughter's a corker!

(ALICE climbs a ladder to look at a nest in the tree.)

MINN: *(calls)* Can you see in the nest?

ELIZABETH: *(calls)* Moderation, Alice! You can like nature and also practice moderation! *(to others)* I dream of a daughter who sits still in church and keeps her hair neatly arranged instead of looking like she's been dragged through a knothole backwards.

ALICE: Robin's eggs!

ELIZABETH: The universe can see her ankles.

ALICE: Three eggs!

ELIZABETH: *(calls)* Get down before you break your neck. Embroider pillow-slips, press flowers, play a mandolin for the love of God.

JOHN: She does all that. And very well I might add.

ELIZABETH: Photography won't bring her father back from Egypt or Africa or wherever he ran off to.

ALICE: In my photographs you'll be able to see the teensy tiniest things. Teensy tiny birds, teensy tiny bugs, teensy tiny --

ELIZABETH: Not your father. You can't take pictures of things from the past and put them in the future as if they were still here.

(OLIVER speaks, either in voiceover or apart:)

OLIVER: I need the negatives.

(ALICE, still up the ladder, hears OLIVER. No one else does. She looks around, puzzled.)

ALICE: Somebody said: "I need the negatives."

ELIZABETH: Nobody said that. Don't try to distract me.
Climb down.

(ALICE climbs down.)

ALICE: *(flattering)* My first photograph will be of you,
Mama.

ELIZABETH: I didn't give permission for this silliness.

ALICE: You sitting under the Linden tree in your apple
green dress. Blue like the water. Green like the grass.

ELIZABETH: Photographs don't have colors.

ALICE: You'll look like a beauty queen!

ELIZABETH: *(flattered)* The apple green dress?

ALICE: With a yellow ribbon in your hair.

ELIZABETH: Not the lavender dress?

MINN: *(clapping)* Hurray for Alice! Hurray for Alice!

(SOUND: 1950s phone ring.)

*SHIFT. 1951. Summer. Staten Island Historical Society
reception desk. SALLY is on the phone. OLIVER waits
impatiently.)*

SALLY: You want the zoo. This is the Historical Society.

(SALLY hangs up.)

OLIVER: I need the negatives.

SALLY: Can't help you.

OLIVER: They're in the basement.

SALLY: Sorry.

OLIVER: A Mr. Brinley let my assistant into the basement. She saw the negatives.

SALLY: No Mr. Brinley here now.

OLIVER: Glass photographic negatives from when cameras were first available to the public.

SALLY: The mid-1870s. With the introduction of the first practical dry plates. I know my history, Mr. Jensen.

OLIVER: I need to have the negatives developed by Monday.

SALLY: Tomorrow?

OLIVER: I need to have the prints on the publisher's desk with the manuscript by the close of business yes tomorrow.

SALLY: Cutting it a little close, aren't we?

(SALLY turns away, opens The New York Times.)

OLIVER: Your Mr. Brinley gave my research assistant a scrap of paper with "Gertrude Tate" and "1945" written on it. Who was Gertrude Tate? What's the meaning of "1945"?

SALLY: Ask your assistant.

OLIVER: She fell in love with a long-distance trucker. She's gone.

SALLY: You think you've got problems?

(SALLY reads the headlines in the newspaper:)

SALLY: "Fannie Brice Dies. Truman Fires MacArthur. Death Penalty for Rosenbergs."

OLIVER: My book. *(clears his throat)* The Revolt of American Women. Quote: "Women have undergone enormous changes in a brief time. Today society demands a thousand skills outside the home and insists that women also remain proficient in nursery, kitchen and bedroom."

(SALLY pats her forehead with a handkerchief. History makes her very unsettled – in a good way.)

SALLY: Quite the expert on women are you?

OLIVER: I have photos of women joining the workforce, temperance promoters... What I'm missing is images of upper middle class life from the Victorian Era. Are you sick?

SALLY: Talk about history makes me perspire.

OLIVER: Why don't women say what they mean?

SALLY: No basement. How's that?

OLIVER: Where's your superior?

SALLY: Fiji.

OLIVER: While the cat's away --

SALLY: Not this mouse.

(SALLY begins tidying her already orderly desk, trying to quell her attraction to OLIVER.)

SALLY: The Historical Society offers tours of Richmond Town's restored buildings. We also operate Decker Farm, cultivated since 1810. The public is welcome to view our collections Sundays, 2-6.

(OLIVER picks up a pencil, flirting.)

SALLY: Stop touching my things. The public -- that's you -- the public is forbidden to go into non-public areas, i.e., the basement.

OLIVER: Do you always follow rules?

SALLY: Five days a week nine to five I work in accounts payable at Simmons Mattress. It's killing me. Put down the pencil. Ever since I read "Little House on the Prairie" I've dreamed of devoting my life to bringing Staten Island history alive. I can't do it as a weekend volunteer. The job of Assistant Curator will be available in two weeks. It's always been held by a man, but -- If you think for one second I'm going to jeopardize my chance of getting the Assistant Curator job by letting you in the basement then you need your head examined.

OLIVER: What's in your personal basement that's got you wrapped tight as a sausage? A pretty sausage, but wrapped so tight.

(SALLY snatches the pencil, puts it carefully in a specific spot on her desk.)

OLIVER: My assistant said the negative plates are signed "E.A.A." Emily? Emma? Elizabeth?

SALLY: Eugene? Edward? Edgar?

OLIVER: If the photographer was a man his work would be your featured exhibit.

SALLY: It wouldn't be a woman. Not in the 19th Century. Probably not today either, but definitely not then.

(SALLY ties on a Victorian bonnet.)

OLIVER: Her life is in those negatives. Please. Sally...

SALLY: Miss Lally.

OLIVER: Leave the negatives in the basement and it's as if she never existed.

SALLY: Clever subtext, Mr. Jensen. I'll have you know my basement is fine and dandy. My life is full, thank you very much. Excuse me. I have a tour to conduct.

(SALLY exits with "Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management" and a tour guide flag. SOUND: jump ropes slap the ground.)

SHIFT. 1880. Clear Comfort lawn. VIOLET and JULIA, young teenagers, skip rope and sing, facing each other,

pursing lips in the kissing part. ALICE, now 14, adjusts her tripod and camera.)

JULIA and VIOLET:

A cannibal king with a big nose ring
Fell in love with a dusky mai-ai-aid;
And every night by the pale moonlight
It sounded like this to mee-ee-e:
Carrump (*make smacking sound of kissing two times*)
Carrump (*kiss kiss sound*) --

ALICE: Freeze!

*(JULIA and VIOLET freeze in the middle of "kissing."
FLASH.)*

JULIA: Take me doing a handstand. Hold my ankles, Violet. Duck behind my skirts so it looks like I'm really doing it.

VIOLET: That would be fudging the truth. Alice doesn't do that.

JULIA: What was it when she had us stick on pretend mustaches and pose like men?

VIOLET: She wasn't trying to really fool people into believing we were really men, right Alice?

ALICE: Right. Pose by the stone wall.

JULIA: You took six already.

ALICE: The clouds moved.

JULIA: Mother's expecting help with Aunt Ella's layette.

VIOLET: I thought we were going swimming.

ALICE: Stay and I'll tell you something juicy.

(JULIA and VIOLET turn back quickly.)

JULIA and VIOLET: Okay.

ALICE: Mr. Corning is sowing wild oats!

JULIA: Who says?

ALICE: Granpa.

VIOLET: *(puzzled)* Mr. Corning delivers ice.

JULIA: *(puzzled)* He could be a farmer too.

(VIOLET and JULIA pose. ALICE adjusts the focus.)

ALICE: Angle your left shoe two inches to the right, Violet.

VIOLET: Sowing like seeds or sewing like a seam?

JULIA: Men don't sew like a seam.

ALICE: Tip your head back.

VIOLET: Me?

ALICE: Julia. More. Less. More. Good.

VIOLET: Mr. Fish the tailor sews seams.

JULIA: That's different. He's an immigrant.

VIOLET: Our fathers could sew seams if they wanted.
Our fathers and Alice's grandfather.

ALICE: Don't move.

JULIA: Everybody can't willy-nilly do what they want.

VIOLET: They can if they're Alice.

JULIA: What's "juicy" about wild oats?

ALICE: It means sex.

(JULIA and VIOLET shriek. FLASH. ALICE writes in a journal:)

ALICE: Northeast corner of garden. Violet and Julia.
September 17, 1880. 4 p.m. Instantaneous. *(to Julia and Violet)* Now sit under the Linden.

JULIA: Mama's expecting me.

ALICE: This is important. It's like when we jump off the rowboat into the river. Time dives down and gets sucked into the sand. When we come up for air we're older. Different. Every second that passes --

VIOLET: Whoosh! Gone!

(VIOLET starts "flying" around the yard.)

ALICE: Unless I capture it in a photograph. Then you can feel how you felt in that moment all over again.

JULIA: What if it's a bad moment?

ALICE: Nothing's so bad as losing it.

JULIA: Don't you love anything but taking pictures?

VIOLET: She loves swimming!

ALICE: Tennis.

VIOLET: Bugs!

ALICE: Flowers.

VIOLET: Flying!

ALICE: If any person is ever going to fly, it'll be me.

VIOLET: She loves her Grandma's bouillon set that's thin as onion paper! And the portrait of Great-Grandfather Austen in the parlor! Alice loves a million things!

ALICE: My family, your families, Staten Island, President Grover Cleveland --

JULIA: I thought Transcendentalists didn't like politicians.

ALICE: Granpa says exceptions are allowed if you're an exceptional individualist which I am.

(VIOLET plucks petals off a daisy. With each petal she names something ALICE loves.)

VIOLET: Alice cares about kids who don't have a yacht club next door. And poor women who have to go to work.

ALICE: Rufus who mows our lawn and trims back the sea grass.

VIOLET: Love Rufus!

ALICE: Mildred who makes excellent sour candies despite unfortunate bouts of flatulence.

VIOLET: Love unfortunate bouts of flatulence!

JULIA: Mostly Alice loves listening to her "within voice."

ALICE: Voice within. The voice of the spirit of the world.

VIOLET: The Hudson River. People on ships from mysterious places.

ALICE: Wisteria squeezing through the eaves into my bedroom. Curtains blowing before a storm. I love so much I want to suck the insides out of every second, every inch, every breath of it all. You, Julia, you and Violet -- I never want to lose you. I want us to be like right now forever. Clear Comfort too. If somebody made me go away it would be like a chunk torn out of my body.

(ALICE sings:)

ALICE:
My Grandfather has a very fine house,
A very fine house has he...

(ALICE crosses to the edge of the water, singing. JULIA and VIOLET follow, singing.)

VIOLET, JULIA and ALICE:
With a garden here, and a garden there,
And a very fine house has he!

(*SOUND: whistle of a ship in the Harbor. They watch the ship pass, waving to passengers, maturing from children into young women.*)

SHIFT. 1951. SALLY [wearing the Victorian bonnet] with the tour guide flag, speaks to a tour group [the audience?]. OLIVER is there.)

SALLY: (*as Mrs. Beeton, with an upper-class English accent*) Gather 'round. Welcome to the second half of the 19th Century. I am Mrs. Isabella Beeton. My book, "Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management," contains all a woman needs to maintain a happy home. Do you have children? Yes? The children's behavior is reflected upon the husband you know. It is vital that the lady of the house instill obedience. My book contains advice concerning disgusting behavior such as thumb-sucking.

OLIVER: Kids grow out of it.

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) Rub the thumb with bitter aloe, tie it to the pointer finger.

OLIVER: How about positive reinforcement?

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) Wrong century, Mr. Jensen.

OLIVER: Does your starched collar make you happy, Mrs. Beeton?

SALLY: (*as Beeton:*) Rapid industrialization and urbanization threaten to destroy our way of life. We must identify with the gentry to distinguish ourselves from the middle class.

OLIVER: Do you live to a ripe old age in a happy home, Mrs. Beeton, or do you die giving birth to your fourth child at the age of 28 while your husband goes on to remarry and --

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) Remarry and remarry and remarry? Hm, Mr. Jensen?

OLIVER: Forget it.

(*OLIVER exits.*)

SALLY: Huh! Thinks he's the only person who can do research. (*as Mrs. Beeton again*) I will now read from Florence Nightingale's "Notes on Nursing" to acquaint you with common childhood diseases: chicken pox, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, fits, typhus and worms.

(*MUSIC: "A Bicycle Built for Two."*)

SHIFT. 1885. JOHN weeds in the garden at Clear Comfort. ALICE, now 19, sits with legs sprawled in the grass repairing a push lawnmower.)

JOHN: A matter is weighing heavy on my mind.

ALICE: A bicycle?

JOHN: Bicycle schmicycle. Not thinking about bicycles.

ALICE: A Columbia only costs \$75.

JOHN: Metal thingamajigs made in factories.

ALICE: Plus 10 cents for Graphitoleo which reduces friction on the chain and break bearings.

JOHN: Like to rub Graphitoleo on my mind to ease that too.

ALICE: Oh pooh. Grease on my skirt. Mama will tear her hair out.

JOHN: Come sit on the porch so we can talk.

ALICE: A bicycle is the perfect birthday present for a granddaughter who's turning 19 and loves her grandfather to squirrely-bits.

JOHN: Bicycles are not what I want to discuss.

ALICE: Mr. Thoreau says nature and people are inherently good. Bicycles are good too.

JOHN: Bicycles are corruptors of the purity of the individual like organized religion and political parties. Besides, you know your mother and ankles.

ALICE: I'll put lead weights in the hem of my skirt so it doesn't fly up when I ride. I'll wear bloomers.

JOHN: Your mother had a tizzy over a photo of Amelia Bloomer on a bicycle in Sunday's Times. (*mimicking Elizabeth*) "All the news that's fit to print? I think not. That woman is scandalous!"

ALICE: Horrible picture. Half in shadow.

JOHN: Alice, the future of our family --

ALICE: A Raleigh's only \$50.

JOHN: Don't interrupt.

ALICE: All my friends have bicycles.

(To get her attention, JOHN pretends to be bit by a snake.)

JOHN: Ow! Dagnabit! Excuse my Albanian.

ALICE: Granpa!

JOHN: Grass snake.

ALICE: You got bit?

JOHN: No. I needed to get your undivided attention.

ALICE: You frightened her.

JOHN: Pretty little thing.

(ALICE and JOHN enjoy watching the snake wiggle off. He gets up, but has a cramp in his back from bending over.)

JOHN: Whoever said time is on our side was full of it.

ALICE: I'll rub liniment on your back when I'm done with the mower. This Burr is a clunker.

JOHN: Come along, Lala.

(JOHN heads for the porch, knocking ashes out of his pipe, preparing to discuss what's on his mind.)

ALICE: Mr. Wilson's Farabee has better rotary blades and wheel placement.

JOHN: My friend Ralph Waldo would say: "What did you have for breakfast? A bowl of modern nonsense?" Next you'll be wearing clothes with zippy things.

ALICE: Zippers.

JOHN: Come along.

(JOHN packs fresh tobacco in his pipe. ALICE turns the mower upright, puts tools in a bag as apart, in 1951, OLIVER brings a sleeping bag to the Historical Society stoop, opens a bottle of Coke with a church key, gazes into the distance. ALICE joins her grandfather on the porch.)

JOHN: Hear me out. Don't interrupt and don't bring up bicycles. Come here. Sit down. Thank you for fixing the mower. Thank you for mending the arm on my rocker last week. Thank you for giving me head rubs after supper. Thank you for being strong and independent and the best granddaughter any man ever had. I have no doubt you'll give me what I want most in the world.

(He pauses, but she doesn't reply.)

JOHN: It looks like your mother isn't going to remarry. I want assurance the family won't dwindle out with you.

ALICE: Are you talking about babies?

JOHN: You love babies.

ALICE: Not as permanent fixtures.

JOHN: That's a terrible thing to say!

ALICE: *(seeing how upset he is)* I didn't --

JOHN: You didn't mean it.

ALICE: Not at all no. If you get me a bicycle I'll get married and have 20 babies.

JOHN: Two or three would be sufficient.

ALICE: Done!

JOHN: Serious?

ALICE: Serious.

JOHN: Promise?

ALICE: Cross my heart.

JOHN: You've made me very happy, Lala.

(JOHN hugs ALICE, kisses her cheek, goes in the house. OLIVER is on the stoop of the Historical Society.)

OLIVER: *(musing)* Elizabeth? Elizabeth Anne? Elizabeth Amy?

(ALICE hears him indistinctly as if on the wind.)

ALICE: *(whispers)* Elizabeth Alice.

(OLIVER sees ALICE. She sees him across time and space. They are amazed, befuddled.)

ALICE: They call me "Alice."

OLIVER: Alice.

ALICE: Are you my father?

(SALLY enters to the stoop, breaking the spell.)

SALLY: You!

(ALICE and OLIVER can no longer see or hear each other.)

OLIVER: Changed your mind?

SALLY: You made a shambles of my tour. What's that?
A sleeping bag?

OLIVER: I'm not leaving until you let me in the basement.

(SALLY crosses her arms.)

OLIVER: You're even prettier when your cheeks turn pink.

SALLY: What will you have when your book's published? Will you have a happy home?

OLIVER: What do you know about my home?

SALLY: Five.

OLIVER: What?

SALLY: Wives.

OLIVER: Four.

SALLY: So far.

OLIVER: When did you... ?

SALLY: You called last Sunday at closing time. I had a feeling you'd show up this week.

OLIVER: You did a background check?

SALLY: Research.

OLIVER: The truth is in the details.

SALLY: Interpretation of the details.

OLIVER: Objective interpretation. By the way, I know the photographer's name. I saw her.

SALLY: A parallel universe?

OLIVER: She saw me too.

SALLY: Dragged out the old Ouija board?

OLIVER: An alignment -- twist of time -- confluence. Parallel time. Maybe. Maybe askew. Maybe our times will collide. Maybe I'll never see her again. Maybe I want the negatives so much I imagined her. Maybe -- God! I don't know! I don't understand either.

SALLY: Like you don't understand history?

OLIVER: I understand history fine. I can pin it down and dissect it and separate truth from fiction. It's great. It's fabulous. I particularly love photographs. They don't lie. Women in photographs --

SALLY: Women in history you mean.

OLIVER: I heard her. I saw her. She told me her name is "Alice."

SALLY: You ran out of women in the present so you're pestering women in the past?

OLIVER: Don't women want men to be strong?

SALLY: Not invulnerable.

OLIVER: I'm hardly invulnerable.

SALLY: Not to marriage apparently.

OLIVER: I'm not giving up this time.

SALLY: (*hopeful, a bit flirtatious*) On who?

OLIVER: My photographer.

(*SOUND: clip-clop of horse hooves.*)

SHIFT. 1890. ELIZABETH reclines with a headache. ALICE, now 24, positions her camera on a tripod.)

ELIZABETH: Last night I had a nightmare. You were a horse in the Kentucky Derby. Your name was Also Ran.

ALICE: Scooch higher on the pillow. It has to be just so.

ELIZABETH: My forehead is a mass of wrinkles.

ALICE: You look pretty, Mama.

ELIZABETH: Why don't Minn and Oswald have babies? What about Nellie and Pete? I'm old. I'm tired. Pickle me, put me in a jar.

ALICE: *(to cheer Elizabeth)* Cook made strawberry tarts for supper.

ELIZABETH: I have a brain tumor.

ALICE: Dr. Farley --

ELIZABETH: Farley's a quack.

ALICE: Turn a smidge to the left.

ELIZABETH: The sun's in my eyes.

ALICE: Keep them closed.

ELIZABETH: My crows-feet are multiplying at an alarming rate. Early crows-feet are a sign of brain tumors. Mary Higgins had early crows-feet. Nobody paid her any mind. Her tumor was the size of a musk melon.

ALICE: That's good. Don't move.

ELIZABETH: Your uncles are senile. Your grandfather's frail. What will happen when there's no man in the house? Your future weighs on me like a boulder.

ALICE: Granpa says more than sufficient has been invested.

ELIZABETH: I'll have a seizure and need constant nursing care. The bank account will be drained.

ALICE: My father --

ELIZABETH: In all these years the louse hasn't sent as much as a postcard.

ALICE: Don't move, Mama!

ELIZABETH: It's not proper for a lady to go into business, but there's no other solution. You must sell your pictures.

ALICE: People don't buy photographs.

ELIZABETH: Art.

ALICE: Photographs aren't art.

ELIZABETH: Close enough.

ALICE: I'm a preservationist. My photographs might find their way to an historical museum some day, but they're history not art. Like that vase. It was brought from Germany wrapped in this quilt over 100 years ago by Granpa's sister. The story is what matters, not what the vase could bring at auction. Preserving the past, that's what's important. A dollar today will be a penny tomorrow, but that vase has intrinsic value. I won't waste time on stupid stuff.

ELIZABETH: But if --

ALICE: You don't know what you're talking about.

ELIZABETH: Watch your mouth.

ALICE: "If." "If." If wishes were beaus you'd be married and we wouldn't be having this conversation.

ELIZABETH: If Papa hadn't filled your head with Transcendental claptrap.

ALICE: Don't criticize Granpa.

ELIZABETH: You promised him.

ALICE: I'm only 24.

ELIZABETH: That's hardly young.

ALICE: You ruined the exposure.

ELIZABETH: Most husbands treat their wives like angels.

ALICE: How would you know?

(ELIZABETH is leaving.)

ALICE: The only angels I've seen have had their wings clipped.

ELIZABETH: You'll get used to it.

(ELIZABETH exits. MUSIC: solo mandolin.)

SHIFT. 1892. The porch. VIOLET, 25, plays a mandolin. ALICE, now 26, has a camera. JULIA, 25, has a book.)

JULIA: Because I'm getting married. It explains you know.

VIOLET: "You know"? Oh! "You know"!

ALICE: Aunt Minn has the same book.

(Simultaneously, in 1951 SALLY as Mrs. Beeton has an identical book. SALLY speaks to a tourist group. OLIVER is there.)

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) The photographs of flowers in this book are from a lady's journal. See how carefully each flower was pressed. A woman would note when the first sprout appeared in the spring, when a touch of frost signaled the onset of fall.

OLIVER: (*to Sally as Beeton*) She'd have been ignorant about finance.

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) Fair warning, Mr. Jensen.

OLIVER: (*to Sally as Beeton*) Utterly clueless about the facts of life.

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) Couth people don't mention the facts of / life.

OLIVER: (*to Sally as Beeton*) Parts of the female anatomy must not be mentioned in public. Only furniture has "legs" and those are best concealed behind pantallettes.

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) So men like you don't get ideas.

ALICE: Read it, Julia.

SALLY (*as Beeton*) and JULIA: (*reading together*) "Dutchman's-breeches."

SALLY: (*as Beeton*) "Although Dicentra produce seeds, they favor vegetative -- "

SALLY (*as Beeton*) and JULIA: (*reading together*) "...reproduction by means of bulbs."

VIOLET: (*giggling*) Bulbs?

SALLY: (*as Beeton*): "The bulbs of Dutchman's-breeches look like -- "

SALLY (*as Beeton*) and JULIA: (*reading together*)
"...tiny lily bulbs."

VIOLET: It doesn't say that!

SALLY (*as Beeton*) and JULIA: (*reading together*)
"New plants grow from bulblets."

VIOLET: (*shrieks*) Bulblets!

(*VIOLET, ALICE and OLIVER laugh.*)

JULIA: (*very uncomfortable*) No more. Please.

VIOLET: What do you think they really look like?

ALICE: The Dutchmen, their breeches or their bulbs?

(*ALICE and VIOLET shriek with laughter. JULIA is very uncomfortable.*)

ALICE: Read page 27.

VIOLET: No! All right. (*reading*) "To attract insects, flowers douse themselves in perfume and exude sweet nectar."

JULIA: Like ladies getting dressed for a ball?

VIOLET: (*reading*) "A girl who shies from attention might be called a "shrinking violet." Like me.

ALICE: Violets don't shrink. They're sexually bold. All flowers are sexually bold. Their purpose is to unite their ova with sperm in grains of pollen. I memorized the next part: "Violets assume postures that invite their pollinators' entry. Dog-tooth Violets bow their heads, jut their lips, spread their petals, and lift their faces to the suitor."

JULIA: I'll never look at another flower.

ALICE: Pose like flowers! Be a violet, Violet. You be a rose, Julia.

JULIA: I don't want to be a flower. I won't feel comfortable around flowers for quite some time. I'm going to be a wife, not a flower. Violet, you should change your name to Penelope. Let's go shopping.

(JULIA exits. VIOLET starts to follow, but ALICE catches her arm, takes her hand. SALLY has turned away from the tourist group to confront OLIVER. Her frown melts and she sweats like crazy as slowly he seduces her, pulling on one of her bonnet ribbons, loosening the bow. The sexual tension between both couples could be cut with a knife.)

OLIVER: *(seductive)* Gettysburg.

SALLY: Please. Mr. Jensen...

OLIVER: The War of 1812.

SALLY: Don't.

OLIVER: Fort Ticonderoga.

SALLY: Dear God.

(SALLY indicates the tour group.)

SALLY: The tour...

OLIVER: Peter Stuyvesant.

SALLY: Not Peter Stuyvesant.

OLIVER: Plymouth Rock. Pilgrims. The Nina, the Pinta, the Santa Maria.

SALLY: Not the actual... Not historically... The names...

(OLIVER lifts the bonnet from SALLY's head with a gesture that's like a familiar caress.)

SALLY and VIOLET: I have to go.

OLIVER: No.

ALICE: Stay.

SALLY and VIOLET: I shouldn't.

OLIVER: Where do you have to go?

ALICE: Why do you have to go?

(A moment of hesitation, then:)

SALLY and VIOLET: *(both very flustered)* I forget.

(SALLY and VIOLET rush off. OLIVER and ALICE have a moment of feeling they are in the same space, then SOUND of a Jack-in-the-box playing "Pop-Goes-the-Weasel" music.)

SHIFT. 1895. A cemetery. ALICE, now 29, has her camera on a tripod. JAMES, 30, is on one knee in front of an old tombstone engraved NOYES.)

JAMES: Marry me, Alice.

ALICE: The light is extraordinary!

JAMES: Did you hear me?

ALICE: Don't move.

JAMES: You wangled an invitation from Skippy, dragged me to the godforsaken Finger Lakes in godforsaken upstate New York --

(He slaps at a mosquito.)

JAMES: I've had to endure endless dinners with Skippy's tiresome parents and their chatter about China and India and Lord knows what skummy places! Why, Alice? Why are we here?

ALICE: For the light. For the Noyes tombstone. I've been thinking since I last visited Watkins Glen. There's something... Bigger than... Different. Not different -- more.

JAMES: Yeah. Me.

ALICE: What? No.

JAMES: Damn bugs!

(Frustrated, he stomps on a passing beetle.)

ALICE: James!

JAMES: Jeez Louise!

ALICE: "The beetle that you kill in jest, dies in earnest."

(ALICE puts the finishing touches on setting up her equipment.)

ALICE: There. That's it.

(ALICE joins JAMES, having run a cable from the camera. She sits at the base of the tombstone, blocking the "YES" part of the inscription.)

ALICE: Get down on one knee.

JAMES: Finally.

(He gets down on a knee.)

ALICE: Don't block the "N.O." letters you big galoot.

JAMES: My prospects are excellent, Alice.

ALICE: Don't talk.

JAMES: Shermerhorn's Feed and Grain had the best year ever.

ALICE: Move over.

JAMES: You already got a picture.

ALICE: Six inches more.

JAMES: We're adding blacksmith services and tackle.

ALICE: More to the right.

JAMES: You'll never do better than me.

ALICE: Hurry. It's going to rain.

JAMES: Marry me goddamnit!

ALICE: What about me attracts you?

JAMES: You're not hard on the eyes.

ALICE: It's simple. Kneel and pretend to ask for my hand in marriage. I'm positioned in front of the "Y.E.S." part of the name on the stone so only the "N.O." is visible and my answer is writ on the photograph.

(He blocks the letters "NO" leaving "YES" visible. ALICE jumps in front of the "YES.")

JAMES: This isn't pretend.

(She squeezes the bulb. FLASH.)

JAMES: Stop taking pictures! I can't wait any longer, Alice. Marry me!

ALICE: Read what it says.

JAMES: Y.E.S.

ALICE: N.O.

JAMES: You lead me to believe --

ALICE: I never.

JAMES: Alice. Darling --

(SOUND: thunder.)

ALICE: Afternoon wasted. This singular afternoon gone.
Help pack before the clouds open up.

(He helps her pack up the camera equipment.)

JAMES: Nobody but me would overlook how you hug trees, commune with rocks, lug cameras around like misshapen appendages. The way you want to preserve moments like frogs in formaldehyde. How you don't conform when everybody conforms. Your age.

ALICE: You disparage me and ask for my hand in the same breath?

JAMES: Then there's the matter of your missing paternal lineage.

ALICE: How dare you!

JAMES: You promised your grandfather.

ALICE: He told you?

JAMES: Alice Austen, I'm your last chance for a normal life.

(SOUND: thunder. MUSIC: "Shoo Fly Don't Bother Me.")

SHIFT. A few days later. In a darkroom. Dim blue LIGHT. A string of Noyes tombstone prints hang drying. ALICE examines them -- has an epiphany.)

ALICE: One, then another, then another. One afternoon. Two hours, 48 minutes. He said, I said, he kneeled, yes, no, I moved left... His past, his background, his

wanting me to... Me wanting not that. Wanting a perfect print. A series. A series. A series! Not bracketed by two hours, 48 minutes, no, yes, not bracketed. Not a still life. Not stuttering, single frames. Of course! Everything that happened before -- everything that hasn't happened yet -- connected. One is a bridge. Singular. Particular. Isolated. Together, they're a river. An endless expanse!

(Suddenly, OLIVER is there -- apart but they see each other.)

OLIVER: Alice?

ALICE: It's connected!

OLIVER: I'm not your father.

ALICE: It's dark in here.

OLIVER: No. I'm not. I'm sorry.

ALICE: Who are you?

OLIVER: Just a man.

ALICE: Your clothes are funny.

OLIVER: It's like looking through a membrane.

ALICE: Around a bend. Not only the trestle, the nuts and bolts, the ironwork. Not only the water below the bridge. I have to follow what's flowing toward me from around the bend to the north, down, closer, then moving past right now and away, around the curve to the south. I never thought to look around the curves before. I've been focused on here and now. Dear God, there you are, and so much more!

OLIVER: It's something to do with time and space, a formula of energy and mass and damn I flunked physics. It's happening because of your negatives.

ALICE: You, me, all of it. The dots connecting! It opens everything!

(LIGHT on both of them is fading.)

OLIVER: I need the negatives.

ALICE: I need the connection.

OLIVER: Can you --

ALICE: Don't go!

OLIVER: Wait!

ALICE: What's your name?

OLIVER: Where are you?

ALICE: Mister --

OLIVER: Alice --

(LIGHT has faded out in the darkroom and on the stoop.)

END OF SAMPLE