

B l o m

A funny, one-act, two-character play
by **Leeann Minogue**





When Alice Ridgeway, recently widowed Co-Chair of the Stony Valley Communities in Bloom Committee, takes a walk at her late husband's farm, she's horrified to find a marijuana grow-op in the old barn. Whose plants are they? And they sure could use some fertilizer.

Bloom premiered at the 2010 Edmonton International Fringe Festival featuring:

Jan Taylor
 Stephen Heatley
 Rebecca Star
 Lori Biamonte-Mohacsy

Director
 Dramaturg
Olive Richards
Alice Ridgeway

"one of the sweetest plays at the fringe..." "it's the perfectly matched Biamonte-Mohacsy and Starr that give us two warm-hearted souls reminiscent of our mothers, aunts and grandmothers – intelligent women loaded with grit and humour."

Anna Borowiecki, *St. Albert Gazette*, St. Albert, 2010

"... the play takes an unexpected turn, the plot becoming thick with sinister overtones, twisting with humor and complexity."

Janice Hagan, *See Magazine*, Edmonton, 2010

"A fun, PG pot story that really reminds you what good friends are there for, with a devilishly munchable script by Leeann Minogue."

Fawnda Mithrush, *Vue Weekly*, Edmonton, 2010

Characters:

Alice Ridgeway	Late 50s or a bit older, recently widowed
Olive Richards	Alice's friend, about the same age as Alice

A note about the text:

The “/” symbol indicates that the speaker is interrupted by the next character. Words after the “/” are not necessary to the play, and are only included to give readers an indication of the direction of the thought.

Setting:

Most of the play is set in Alice's house. Alice and her husband Walter moved into town a couple of years ago. On stage there is a dining table, some chairs, and maybe part of a kitchen. There are two exits – one leading outside and another leading to the rest of the house. There is also a telephone and an answering machine.

ACT I

Scene 1

Alice's House

ALICE is home alone. The dining room table is stacked with clean, mismatched Tupperware containers and casserole dishes, thank-you cards, paper, pens, and her address book.

ALICE has neatly labeled each of the empty containers with scotch tape or sticky notes. Now she's writing thank you cards. She finishes one, puts the card in the envelope, then tapes the finished envelope to the appropriate dish. She crosses a name off her list, then begins to write on the next card.

There is a knock at the door.

OLIVE (offstage): Hello?

OLIVE opens the door and rushes in. She's carrying a small, hot casserole dish covered in tinfoil. She might be using potholders. OLIVE hurriedly sets the dish on the table or countertop. ALICE jumps up to put a potholder under it, to protect her table.

OLIVE: Hello Alice. You're looking well. I hope you don't mind. I need to use your washroom.

While she's speaking, OLIVE rushes offstage, exiting to the rest of the house. ALICE continues with her cards, shaking her head.

ALICE: *(sarcastically pretending OLIVE is still in the room)* Hello Olive. So nice to see you.

There could be sound effects of a toilet flushing. OLIVE returns.

OLIVE: Sorry about that. I've been going to Weight Watchers. When you're drinking eight to ten glasses of water a day, you can hardly drive across Stony Valley without / having to

ALICE: I see what you mean. Is it healthy to drink that much water?

OLIVE: It's quiet as a tomb in here. ... Oh! I just meant maybe you could turn on a radio, or let in more light.

ALICE: Oh Olive. Another casserole?

OLIVE: I was making lasagna anyway. The kids are coming for supper.

ALICE: Even Charlie?

OLIVE: He had a free evening so he's coming home from the city to show off his new car. ... Alice, are you writing your thank you notes already? It's barely been forty-eight hours since the funeral.

ALICE: Thank you notes should be prompt.

OLIVE: Yes, but nobody expects / you to

ALICE: Walter's dead, but I'm still civilized.

OLIVE: People would understand if you took a break. You've had such a terrible year. Seeing Walt go through so much.

ALICE: I've had time to prepare for this.

OLIVE: And these past few days must have been so hectic, with your in-laws around. Especially Walt's sister.

ALICE: Eleanor's fine. Families should mourn together.

(OLIVE indicates the containers.)

OLIVE: Everyone in Stony Valley must have brought over some food. But how did you get all these containers emptied and washed so soon?

ALICE: I put the casseroles in my own dishes as soon as people brought them.

OLIVE: Why?

ALICE: So I could return these.

ALICE indicates the containers.

OLIVE: People expect you to take a few days to eat the food.

ALICE: I could hardly serve other people's cooking to Walter's family. I once heard Janet Anderson tell someone she cooks raw hamburger in her slow cooker.

OLIVE: Lots of people do that.

ALICE: Exactly.

OLIVE: So what did you do with all the casseroles?

ALICE: They're in my deep freeze.

OLIVE: Until the end of time?

ALICE: I can't throw them out. Not now that I'm living in town. What if the bag tore open? The men who pick up the garbage might recognize the food their wives sent over. ... I'll take the casseroles to the farm one night. Darryl can burn them with his trash. ... Of course I've eaten the food *you* brought.

OLIVE pulls a flashy water bottle out of her purse and starts drinking.

ALICE: Do you really need to drink more water?

OLIVE: You know, this is only the third time I've been in your house since you moved in from the farm last year?

ALICE: Really?

OLIVE: And I don't think you've been to my place all year.

ALICE: I've been spending so much time with Walter. Up at the Health Centre.

OLIVE: Alice. I know what it's like to lose a husband.

ALICE: Your Peter had an accident. Cancer is different. I've had time to prepare.

OLIVE: We've both lost husbands. You can always talk to me.

ALICE: Of course. We've been friends for thirty years.

OLIVE: We've just been a little busy lately. ... All those years of complaining about our husbands. Who'd have thought we'd miss them? ... I suppose we spent at least as much time worrying about our boys.

ALICE: You could be right.

OLIVE: Who ever thought your Darryl and my Charlie would grow up?

ALICE: They did get up to quite a bit of trouble.

OLIVE: A bit? I never thought either of our boys would make it to thirty. Especially after that incident with Darryl down at the lake. There were days when I thought the two of us might kill them both.

ALICE: Civilized people don't resort to violence.

OLIVE: At least we're at the end of that tunnel. I suppose we can finally relax. Focus on ourselves for a change.

ALICE: I'm newly widowed.

OLIVE: Yes. And you'll have to keep busy.

ALICE: I have lots to do. I have to finish these thank you notes. And I'm Chairing the Communities in Bloom Committee.

OLIVE: You'll be done those cards by suppertime. And the Communities in Bloom contest will be over in a month, after the judge comes. Then what? ... I suppose you'll have paperwork to sort out. The will.

ALICE: It's simple. Darryl gets the farmland. I get the rest.

OLIVE: So you'll have an auction sale to organize. Good. Walt's farm machinery and all those grain bins should bring in more than enough to leave you comfortable.

ALICE: I can't sell anything Olive. Darryl needs it to keep the farm running.

OLIVE: Darryl's going to run the farm?

ALICE: Yes. It was so important to Walter.

OLIVE: But... Darryl?

ALICE: He's always helped Walter. He'll be fine.

OLIVE: Sure. ... What about insurance?

ALICE: There's no life insurance.

OLIVE: I've seen you buy a three-year warranty for a twenty dollar toaster. And you didn't insure Walt?

ALICE: It was so expensive, after he had that health scare in '92.

OLIVE: Oh dear. Thank goodness you bought this house.

ALICE: Don't worry. The house will be paid for. As soon as Darryl brings in a few good crops.

OLIVE: Oh dear. Now I *am* worried about you. And ... Alice, I saw Doctor Baker talking to you in the corner at the funeral lunch.

ALICE: I'm fine.

OLIVE: Really?

ALICE: Doctor Baker thinks I'm under stress.

OLIVE: He gave me some great pills after Peter's accident. It was almost worth losing Peter.

ALICE: Olive!

OLIVE: I'm joking.

ALICE: Medication is no laughing matter.

OLIVE: So what did Doctor Baker give you?

ALICE: I wouldn't take any pills.

OLIVE: I thought you might try to do something crazy like that. So I brought you these.

OLIVE pulls a vial of pills from her purse.

ALICE: Olive! You can't give those away.

OLIVE: Don't worry. I have a few stashed away for myself.

ALICE: Those were prescribed for you. And I don't need any pills. There's nothing wrong with me that a little exercise won't cure.

OLIVE: Oh. Do you want to go to that laughing yoga class in the school gym?

ALICE: Don't be ridiculous. I'll walk.

OLIVE: Great! If we walk for half an hour, I'll earn enough Weight Watchers points to eat..... let's see... two Oreos.

ALICE: I'm not going to strut up and down Main Street so you can gorge on store-bought cookies. What would the Ridgeways think? ... People would think I'm walking because I *need* to walk.

OLIVE: You do.

ALICE: I don't need the whole town discussing my problems.

OLIVE: Lots of people walk.

ALICE: Lots of people cook hamburger in slow cookers. I'll drive out to the farm and walk through the fields.

OLIVE: Okay. I'll earn even more points, walking in a soft field.

ALICE: I'd really prefer to walk on my own.

OLIVE: Have a nice time then. All by yourself. If you decide to eat that lasagna, you can cook it at three-fifty for an hour. But I'm sure it'll freeze up nicely.

ALICE: Olive / I didn't

OLIVE: I'm going to use your washroom again. I have to 'go' before I go. And you might want to take another look at those cards. You've signed that last one "from Alice and Walter."

OLIVE exits to the washroom. ALICE looks at the card, then puts her head in her hands.

Suggested Transition to Scene 2: ALICE has been walking (maybe she's wearing running shoes.) She enters from outside, obviously shocked. She slams the door behind her and stands alone, with no idea what to do. She exits to the rest of the house. Light changes, and soon she's back, with running shoes.

Scene 2

*A day or two later
Alice's Kitchen and Dining Room*

ALICE is at the table thinking. Or maybe cleaning her already spotless home. The containers are gone.

OLIVE knocks at the door and lets herself in while she talks.

OLIVE: I got your phone message. I rushed over as soon as I weighed in at my Weight Watchers meeting. I lost point four of a pound this week!

ALICE: Don't breathe in. You'll gain it back.

OLIVE: I'm so glad you're ready to talk. The death / of a spouse

ALICE: I don't want to talk about Walter. I just needed to... see you.

OLIVE sniffs.

OLIVE: Did you bake your peanut butter cookies? How many points are in them?

ALICE: One cookie won't hurt you.

OLIVE: Maybe one small one.

While they keep talking, ALICE gives OLIVE coffee and a cookie. OLIVE makes a great show of taking a notebook out of her purse and writing in it.

Later, during the conversation, OLIVE takes her water bottle out of her bag, looks from her water bottle to the coffee, then chooses the coffee, but looks guilty about it.

ALICE: What are you writing?

OLIVE: I have to write down everything I eat.

ALICE: Oh for heaven's sake.

OLIVE: So what do you want to talk about?

ALICE: I... I... went for a walk.

OLIVE: Good. Did it help you relax?

ALICE: Well... not exactly. When I was out walking, I

OLIVE: Oh, you had time to think. Walking is great for that.

ALICE: I was exercising. Not thinking.

OLIVE: I'll walk too. So we'll both be in great shape by November.

ALICE: Why?

OLIVE: We're going on a cruise.

ALICE: I'm not going on any cruise.

OLIVE: Picture us. Standing at the rail. The wind in our hair. The sun on our faces. Our linen dresses fluttering in the breeze.

ALICE: Linen wrinkles.

OLIVE: Inside then. Cocktail hour with the captain.

ALICE: I don't drink.

OLIVE: I had a fantastic time on that Mexican cruise two years ago.

ALICE: So do that again. Leave me out of it.

OLIVE: It would be so much more fun with a friend.

ALICE glares.

OLIVE: It's my idea, so I'll treat. I've saved enough, working part time at the newspaper.

ALICE: Look. What I wanted to tell you was that I took a walk. After the Communities in Bloom meeting.

OLIVE pauses, waiting for ALICE to talk. When she doesn't, OLIVE urges her on.

OLIVE: The Committee is going alright? Maybe chairing's a bit too stressful right now?

ALICE: The Committee's fine.

OLIVE: We're on track to win a national prize?

ALICE: In our size category.

OLIVE: Okay... Then Did you want to talk about Darryl?

ALICE: He's fine.

OLIVE: The farm's be a big responsibility for him. With no wife to help. And no real business experience.

ALICE: No, because he's spent so much time helping Walter and me.

OLIVE: I didn't mean anything. My Charlie's a lot like Darryl.

ALICE: Walter would have been so happy to finally see Darryl running the farm.

ALICE pauses and gazes off into the distance.

ALICE: I'm sorry. I'm distracted.

OLIVE: Yes. You are.

ALICE: I need to tell someone...

OLIVE: I've felt that way since I lost Peter. Now I mostly talk to the microwave.

ALICE: You rely too much on that microwave.

OLIVE: Blurt it out already. Like you're pulling off a band-aid.

ALICE: I've been walking. Out by the farm.

OLIVE: Under cover of darkness. Wearing a hood.

ALICE: If you're not going to be serious...

OLIVE: What happened? Did someone see you? Don't tell me they waved?

ALICE: Nobody saw me. At least I hope not. ... I walked north of our farmyard. Past the old Sampson place.

OLIVE: Hmmm?

ALICE: That old homestead. On the land Walter bought back before his scare in '92.

OLIVE: Oh right. That yard with the rickety old barn. So?

ALICE: There were tracks. Someone's been inside.

OLIVE: And?

ALICE: There were extension cords running down from the power line. Into the barn. So I peeked in.

OLIVE: And?

ALICE: There were lights on. Inside.

OLIVE: In the daytime.

ALICE: And plants.

OLIVE: What?

ALICE: That old barn is filled to the rafters with marijuana.

OLIVE: What?

ALICE: Marijauna, Olive. Pot. Weed. Reefer. Mary Jane. Hemp. Bud. Cannibis. Grass. Dope. The Devil's lettuce. Row and rows of it. With special lights. Olive – it's a grow op.

OLIVE: Where did you learn all those words?

ALICE: I watch television.

OLIVE: Oh my God. I'm going to need another cookie. ... How can you recognize marijuana?

ALICE gets another cookie for OLIVE. OLIVE eats it, absentmindedly.

ALICE: I know plants, Olive. Aren't you going to write that cookie in your book?

OLIVE: This is an emergency. It doesn't count. How long did it take the police to get there?

ALICE: I didn't see any police. Have you heard something?

OLIVE: You didn't call the police?

ALICE: No.

OLIVE: You always call the police. You reported the mayor on sports day.

ALICE: He was littering.

OLIVE: He was throwing candy to kids on the parade route.

ALICE: I want to call the police. But ...

OLIVE: Why don't you?

ALICE: It's on my land.

OLIVE: Nobody would think it had anything to do with you. It could be anybody. Bikers. A gang.

ALICE: I suppose.

OLIVE: Where would you even get those fancy lights? They don't sell them at Canadian Tire. And besides, you don't even own the land anymore. It's It's.... Darryl?!

ALICE: It makes sense.

OLIVE: You think Darryl's running a grow op?

ALICE: He's got so many payments. On the land. His new truck. This house.
Yes.

OLIVE: This isn't really Darryl's thing. Darryl's more interested in projects you can do from a bar stool. Or the couch.

ALICE: This is no time to be mean.

OLIVE: I understand about Darryl. Lord knows my Charlie's behavior has been enough to drive me to drink.

ALICE: That's never the answer. ... That farm's been in Walter's family for three generations. It meant so much to him. ... I wasn't sure Darryl even wanted to farm. But now ... I think he's taking responsibility.

OLIVE: So, what are you going to do?

ALICE: Maybe... nothing.... For now, anyway.

OLIVE: You're serious?

ALICE: Yes. And I hope you'll keep this to yourself while I figure out what to do.

OLIVE: I guess it won't hurt me to keep my mouth shut. For now.

ALICE: Thank you.

OLIVE: I'd better get home. I have to work out how many points I have left for supper. (*OLIVE roots around in her purse.*) Here's a brochure about the cruise. Maybe Darryl can make enough money selling drugs to buy you a ticket.

OLIVE sets the brochure down on the table, ALICE ignores it.

ALICE: Olive, I know this situation is unusual. But we can't have people getting suspicious. We have to get the squares ready for Marg's Birthday Tea at the Health Centre just like everything's normal.

OLIVE exits. On her way out the door, Olive gives a signal to indicate that she'll keep the secret, possible a tap on the nose or a thumbs up.

Suggested Transition to Scene 3: ALICE puts on dark glasses and ties a scarf around her head. She exits to outside, looking around furtively to make sure no one is watching.

Scene 3

*Next Day
Alice's House*

There are reference books and recipe books on the table. There's a new live plant in the room. ALICE is tidying up after baking.

OLIVE knocks on the door, then turns the knob and rattles it. She's carrying a big bag.

OLIVE (offstage): Alice? Is your door locked?

The noise at the door stops. OLIVE enters from the house (rather than from the outside entrance) and ALICE jumps in surprise. Later, while they're talking, ALICE tries to hide the plant.

ALICE: How did you get in here?

OLIVE: I used that doohickey from Star Trek. ... I came in the front door. Don't go locking your door if you're trying to act 'normal'.

ALICE: What are you doing here?

OLIVE: Picking you up for Marg's birthday tea.

ALICE: You're early.

OLIVE: Not much. I think Marg's in too much pain to enjoy a tea. But if the nurses are forcing her to celebrate, we can at least show up with squares. Shall we get going?

ALICE: Just sit a few minutes. We won't be late.

OLIVE pulls a flashy water bottle and a bag of raw vegetables out of her bag and starts eating.

OLIVE: I guess this isn't your first Come and Go tea. What are you up to, Alice? People have seen you driving back and forth to Walt's farm in that crazy trenchcoat every day this week.

ALICE: There's no privacy in a small town

OLIVE: This isn't downtown Iran, Alice. You stand out, dressed like that.

ALICE: What are you doing?

OLIVE: Raw vegetables. I can eat all I want. They're zero-point.

ALICE: For Heaven's sake.

OLIVE rummages in her bag.

OLIVE: Since we've got a few minutes.... I brought you a hat. For the cruise. I got one for myself too.

ALICE: I'm not going on any cruise. And I wouldn't wear that hat to the garbage dump.

OLIVE: It's more stylish than your trenchcoat.

ALICE glares, and checks her watch.

OLIVE: So... um.... How's the Communities in Bloom committee going?

ALICE: You knew about that.

OLIVE: Well...

ALICE: The nerve of those women. Appointing a Co-Chair.

OLIVE: After Walt. And you've been so 'busy' I wanted you to have things to do, but maybe it was too much. You've seemed a bit stressed.

ALICE: This wasn't your idea?

OLIVE: I thought you could use a hand. I was going to do it myself, but as soon as I said 'maybe you could use a co-chair', Janet Anderson leapt to her feet and volunteered herself. I knew you wouldn't want to work with her. I tried to talk her out of it.

ALICE: The woman doesn't know a perennial from a telephone pole.

OLIVE: She's enthusiastic. And you could use some help. This is a big deal for these women. They'll be crushed if we don't win the national award for Best Bloomin' Town. In our size category.

ALICE: Janet Anderson?

OLIVE: You're still mad about something you think you overheard thirty years ago.

ALICE: Thirty-four.

OLIVE: I don't even think she said it.

ALICE: I heard her plain as day. In the bathroom stall at my wedding.

OLIVE: The acoustics have always been awful in the skating rink bathroom.

ALICE: Imagine her. Saying I wasn't good enough to marry into the Ridgeway family. I was nervous enough. Trying to make Walter's family respect me. It's hard to rise above your roots. Especially in a small town.

OLIVE: Even if Janet did say that, I don't know why you care. I liked Walt, but his family is a bunch of boring, / stuck up

ALICE: Walter's family are fine, respectable people.

OLIVE: Even his sister?

ALICE: Eleanor is a fine woman with high standards.

OLIVE: Eleanor's got something jammed / right up her

ALICE: She's well groomed. Her yard's impeccable. She never takes a drink.

OLIVE: A stiff drink would be good for her. I could use one too. Or at least a cookie.

ALICE: You can eat at the tea.

OLIVE: Think of poor Marg. Only ten years older than us, stuck living up at the Health Centre. Life is short. You might as well enjoy yourself.

ALICE: I know.

OLIVE: So swallow your pride and work with Janet.

ALICE: I suppose it's better than letting her Chair on her own... She'd have us hauling all the bath tubs out of the old hotel to use as planters on Main Street.

OLIVE rolls her eyes.

ALICE picks up a folder from the table and thrusts it at OLIVE.

ALICE: Look at this. These are Janet's "ideas".

OLIVE: A folder. She *is* enthusiastic.

ALICE: She wants us to climb up the town water tower to hang flowerpots.

OLIVE: You could use the town cherry picker.

ALICE: And repaint the town fire hydrants to look like members of the committee.

OLIVE: No.

ALICE: And don't get me started on her ideas for painting ceramic gnomes to decorate the Town Hall garden for the Judge's Reception.

There is a pause. OLIVE sees the plant and takes a closer look.

OLIVE: Is that one of those plants? It is, isn't it?

ALICE: I went back to take a better look.

OLIVE: So that's why you're creeping around in that trenchcoat.

ALICE: I needed to know for sure. I found some information in my old textbooks from that university extension class.

OLIVE: The university teaches people how to grow dope?

ALICE: Plants are plants, Olive. And this plant definitely needs more fertilizer.

OLIVE: What?

ALICE: So I ordered some from that garden supply store in Saskatoon. A liquid nutrient solution with just the right balance of nitrogen and phosphate. I'll pour it into that water tank outside the barn. You'd think when he was installing the drip irrigation system and timer clocks, he would've put in a separate nutrient tank. Oh well. ... Darryl never needs to know he had any help. Especially not from me. I can't have him thinking I approve of this.

OLIVE: So... you're helping. With a grow op.

ALICE: Oh Olive. Darryl's been so much trouble. Drinking. And driving. And that incident down at the lake. This is the first time I've felt really ... proud of my son.

OLIVE: This is criminal behavior.

ALICE: It's not the career I would have chosen for him. But Darryl's really doing something.

OLIVE: You are proud.

ALICE: One crop from a barn full of these plants is worth four times the price of a bin full of canola.

OLIVE: How would you know that?

ALICE: I know how to research, Olive. I called Constable Matthews.

OLIVE: Oh dear. Now I really do need a cookie.

ALICE: I told the Constable I was writing an article.

OLIVE: He bought that?

OLIVE is looking toward the kitchen, or wherever the cookies would be.

ALICE: You write for the paper all the time. I might even write an article without typos. ... I'm not giving you a cookie. This vegetable extravaganza is bad enough.

OLIVE: Then let's get to the tea. I'm starving.

ALICE: I just need another couple of minutes.

OLIVE sniffs.

OLIVE: Alice!... Your squares for the tea are still in the oven! Since when do you do your baking at the last minute?

ALICE: I'm perfecting a new recipe.

OLIVE: You haven't used a new recipe since the early eighties. What's going on with you?

ALICE: I've just been distracted. Thinking about Marg, in all that pain.

OLIVE: I know.

ALICE: And Walter. He suffered so much.

OLIVE: It must have been hard for you. Watching him day after day.

ALICE: It was much harder for him.

OLIVE: Oh Alice. It's good for you to let this out.

ALICE: I'm not an overfilled tire, Olive.

OLIVE: Oh Alice... I need to use your washroom.

OLIVE exits. ALICE jumps.

ALICE: No! You can go at the Health Centre! We don't want to be late.

OLIVE (offstage): I can't wait. Eight to ten glasses a day!

OLIVE comes back immediately, shocked.

OLIVE: Alice Ridgeway! What have you got in that bathroom?

ALICE: Nothing.

OLIVE: You've got dried plants hanging all along your shower curtain!

ALICE: It's not a problem. I can still take baths.

OLIVE: Are you planning to smoke that stuff?

ALICE: I'm not Cheech and Chong Olive.

OLIVE: Not both of them, no.

ALICE: I'm just experimenting. To see what Darryl's dealing with.

OLIVE: How do you know what you're doing?

ALICE: The librarian helped me use the internet.

OLIVE: Oh boy. I really have to go.

OLIVE exits, to the bathroom again, and once again comes back immediately, shocked.

OLIVE: I thought I was smelling your chocolate coconut bars. But you're. Baking. Brownies.

ALICE's oven timer dings.

Suggested Transition to Scene 4: *Alice packs up some cookies (quickly) and they exit together.*

Scene 4

*A couple of hours later
Alice's House*

ALICE and OLIVE come stumbling in. Giggling. ALICE is carrying an empty Tupperware container. She drops it on the table.

OLIVE: That was the best Come and Go Tea in Stony Valley history!

ALICE: Marg isn't feeling any pain today.

OLIVE: I didn't think old Edith Larsen could get around without her walker!

ALICE: Who would have guessed Alma could tap dance, with that bad foot?

OLIVE: Alma was on to us. She asked for more brownies next week.

ALICE: Did you see Eleanor poke her head in and then leave? I wonder what she was up to.

OLIVE: She just didn't want to be in a place where people were having fun.

ALICE: They weren't all supposed to be having so much fun. Most of them weren't supposed to get any. That damn Janet Anderson.

OLIVE: It wasn't all her fault.

ALICE: No. It was mostly your fault.

OLIVE: I thought you told me to put the special brownies on the blue plate.

ALICE: I said the green plate.

OLIVE: They're both ocean colors.

ALICE: If I'd known the special brownies were on the blue plate, I never would have asked Janet Anderson to pass them around.

OLIVE: And she didn't even eat any herself.

ALICE: She's on a diet.

OLIVE: Damn Janet Anderson.

ALICE: At least she left early. ... If you knew the special brownies were on the blue plate, why were you eating them?

OLIVE: I saw *you* eating them. I thought if *you* were doing it, it must be okay.

ALICE: But I thought the special brownies were on the green plate!

OLIVE: Oh really? You had no idea? Even by your third brownie?

ALICE: Well... I saw how relaxed Alma was getting. And since it's Darryl's business, I thought I should give them a try.

OLIVE pulls her notebook and pen out of her purse and starts writing while ALICE exits offstage to the living room.

OLIVE: Matrimonial square... brownie.... punch... brownie... Where are you going?

ALICE (offstage): Downstairs.

OLIVE: What for?

ALICE comes back in.

ALICE: Well, I can't remember. What did I go down for? Oh, right. I'm starving.

ALICE exits again, and soon returns with a Tupperware container, takes the lid off, then puts it in the microwave. She's about to hit the button.

OLIVE: Wait! Stop!

ALICE: What now?

OLIVE: Microwave! Tinfoil!

The two giggle while ALICE takes the dish out of the microwave to remove the tinfoil.

ALICE: If I had a dime for every time I told Darryl and Walter not do that...

OLIVE: You wouldn't need a grow op! Shepherd's Pie?

ALICE: I hope it's not Janet Anderson's. But I'm hungry enough to risk it.

OLIVE: (*still looking at her paper*) add twelve, carry the two.... Oh no. I've eaten all my points for two days. Maybe deserts with herbal ingredients don't count.

ALICE: You can always find a way to justify yourself.

OLIVE: Since when do you care about my points?

ALICE: Not that. I meant... sometimes.... We need to believe we're doing the right thing.

OLIVE: The brownies? Marg's never felt better. And no harm's been done.... Although I think the evening nurse might have a few of the residents wearing each other's teeth.

ALICE: Not the brownies. Walter.

OLIVE: I *knew* you'd be ready to talk about Walt soon.

ALICE: He suffered so much.

OLIVE: I know. I know.

ALICE: And I loved him, Olive. I really did.

OLIVE: Of course.

ALICE: Dr. Baker didn't have anything else to give him.

OLIVE: I know.

ALICE: I visited him every afternoon, up at the Health Centre.

OLIVE: Of course you did.

ALICE: And every afternoon I smuggled him in a flask of vodka.

OLIVE: Of cour... WHAT?

ALICE: It was the right thing to do.

OLIVE: Vodka.

ALICE: That's why I never missed a day of visiting.

OLIVE: Vodka. You should've told me.

ALICE: I just did.

OLIVE: I'm glad.

There is a quiet moment, then OLIVE spies a CD with a note attached. It's been left near the door, but OLIVE and ALICE didn't see it earlier.

OLIVE: Hey – somebody left you something.

ALICE: Oh my goodness. I can't have people in here! I should've locked the door.

OLIVE: Maybe it was just Darryl.

ALICE: No. He's off to Vancouver for a few days. Probably finalizing deals with buyers.

OLIVE picks up the note and holds it out, away from her eyes so she can see.

OLIVE: *(reading from the note)* It's from Janet Anderson.

ALICE: See? She is out to get me.

OLIVE: "Hello Alice, I stopped in to drop off this CD. Showtunes! I was going to give it to you at the tea, but you seemed a bit ... 'off'. Give it a listen. My granddaughters have worked up the cutest routine and I'd like to have them dance for the judge at the Communities in Bloom reception tomorrow."

ALICE: Oh good Lord. Have you seen her granddaughters? Warthogs in tap shoes. Once the judge sees them, we won't stand a chance.

OLIVE: There's more. "I saw the lush green plants in your porch."

ALICE: She better not have used the bathroom!

OLIVE: Oh oh. She says "I'm sure you won't mind. I took one home with me. Since you have so many."

ALICE: What?

OLIVE: She wrote: "I know the perfect place to put this plant, with these lush leaves. And just in time for the judging."

ALICE: What is the matter with that woman?

OLIVE sets the note down.

OLIVE: Maybe she's a little *too* enthusiastic.

ALICE: Maybe she'll kill it when she replants it.

OLIVE: Or maybe you'll be out in your trenchcoat, pulling marijuana plants out of Janet's stupid flower bed before the judge gets here.

ALICE: I hope they don't lock me up.

They giggle again. OLIVE notices the telephone message light.

OLIVE: Look! You've got a phone message, too. Who do you think it is?

ALICE walks to the phone and hits a few buttons, including speakerphone.

ALICE: Janet Anderson? With a new plot to get me? Or maybe the Drug Enforcement Squad?

OLIVE: Just hit the button.

ALICE presses the button. The machine beeps.

ANSWERING MACHINE – MALE VOICE: I'm looking for Darryl. He's not picking up his cell, but there's only this one Ridgeway in the phone book. Anyway, I just want to tell him I'd like to come out and see it for myself, but if it's a good as he says, I'm interested. *[beep]*

ALICE: Darryl's turned into such a great businessman.

OLIVE: Is that Shepherd's pie ready yet? I'm starving.

Suggested Transition to Scene 5: *OLIVE eats and stumbles outside. ALICE stumbles to her room, maybe coming back for more food. Then she changes offstage into something more formal (maybe just adding a jacket over her original outfit.)*

Scene 5

*The next day.
Alice's House*

ALICE is getting ready for the reception, straightening her hair, looking for her good purse.

OLIVE knocks and is surprised when the force of her knock opens the unlatched door. She's carrying a camera, her purse, and a water bottle.

ALICE: Oh no! I forgot to lock the door again!

OLIVE: I'm not surprised. We were both pretty out of control last night.

ALICE: I certainly was not.

OLIVE: Alice, we ate an entire Shepherd's pie. And then you made me jog to the Esso to buy potato chips! Giggling all the way.

ALICE: Ladies don't giggle. And you earned two exercise points.

OLIVE: I don't think that cancels out three cans of Pringles. But never mind. Alice, I need to tell you something.

ALICE: Is it important? We should get going.

OLIVE: I suppose it can wait until after the reception. But you do need to know that Constable Matthews left a message on my answering machine last night.

ALICE: Oh no.

OLIVE: He wants one of us to phone him right away.

ALICE: Oh my Lord.

OLIVE: So play it cool if you see the Constable.

ALICE: What if he hauls me out to his squad car? In front of the judge?

OLIVE: I'm taking pictures for the *Stony Valley Review* today. I'll get your good side. I'm kidding.

ALICE: I worried about getting caught, but I didn't think it would happen so soon. What am I going to do? And what is that smell?

OLIVE: Is it coming from under your fridge?

ALICE: It's your water bottle.

OLIVE: Oh, *that* smell. I'm doing a cleanse. I had to take drastic action.

ALICE: Oh give me strength.

- OLIVE: Colon-cleansing liquids and all-natural vitamins. It's scientifically proven.
- ALICE: Oh, honestly. I'm going to call Darryl. I'm sure he's got a plan in place in case this happens.
- OLIVE: There's no time now. It'll seem suspicious if you don't get downtown on time for your speech. You haven't been late for anything since 1986.
- ALICE: They started that meeting early. I'm calling Darryl. I'd rather be late than sent to the slammer. I need Darryl's expertise to deal with the police.
- OLIVE: Darryl does have experience with the police. After that incident down at the lake.
- ALICE: Darryl was a teenager then. He's a business man now.
- OLIVE: Sure. One of the Fortune 500.
- ALICE: He's more productive than your Charlie. ... Oh, I forgot. We don't mention Charlie, do we? Not now that the tables are turned and Darryl's successful while Charlie fritters his life away.
- OLIVE: Fine. I thought it could wait until after your speech. But I'll tell you right now.
- ALICE: Go ahead.
- OLIVE: It's not Darryl's operation.
- ALICE: Of course it is.
- OLIVE: Darryl's thick as a loaf of rye bread.
- ALICE: Olive!
- OLIVE: He probably hasn't even noticed anything happening in that barn. He can't see if from his couch.
- ALICE: Olive Richards. Darryl is / perfectly capable
- OLIVE: I don't want to hear any more about Darryl. You can pretend he's a business tycoon. Or an outstanding farmer. But he doesn't have the gumption and we both know it.
- ALICE: But / he

- OLIVE: If we weren't friends I wouldn't say this. But Darryl couldn't run a lemonade stand. You should sell that farm before he bankrupts it, and you're left eating cat food and living in a tent.
- ALICE: But.... Olive....
- OLIVE: I'm not telling you anything you don't know.
- ALICE: If that's how you feel, why did you help me lug all that liquid fertilizer up into the water tank?
- OLIVE: Don't you hear me? Darryl has nothing to do with that grow op.
- ALICE: Olive.
- OLIVE: Think, Alice. Have you ever heard him talk about it? Seen any sign that he's involved?
- ALICE: But Who else?
- OLIVE: Charlie. It's my Charlie.
- ALICE: That's ridiculous.
- OLIVE: My son can't run a grow op just as well as your son?
- ALICE: Darryl is perfectly capable / of running a
- OLIVE: Why do you think Charlie's been home from the city so often this summer? How do you think he bought that new car?
- ALICE: Oh my Lord. ... You're right, aren't you. It's not Darryl. ... But why didn't you tell me?
- OLIVE: I just found out. Charlie saw us out on the town last night. When you fell down in front of the post office, he figured something was up.
- ALICE: Someone should talk to the mayor about that pot hole.
- OLIVE: Charlie told me this morning. He's worried we might draw attention to his ... business.
- ALICE: Oh my Lord.
- OLIVE: But he's really pleased about how healthy his plants look. He said to say thanks, and tell you to send him a bill for the fertilizer.

ALICE: This is a disaster.

OLIVE: Because my son's a criminal instead of your son?

ALICE: I would never have gotten involved in something like this if it wasn't a way to save the Ridgeway farm.

OLIVE: What about Marg? And old Edith Larsen? Alma? You helped them. And what about you? You've been so passionate about all this.

ALICE: What about the police? And Eleanor? I've taken such a risk.

OLIVE: I thought you liked helping people.

(pause)

ALICE: It's over now. Charlie has to get rid of it.

OLIVE: It's okay for your son to run a grow op, but not mine?

ALICE: It's on our land. And Darryl was saving a family farm. Charlie just wants a new car.

OLIVE: Fine. This little operation isn't Charlie's only rodeo. He's got quite a few irons in the fire. Used stereo sales. And an internet business with a Nigerian prince. Charlie's not some small-time salesman with one popsicle stand. He says he "allocates his risk".

ALICE: Charlie's quite a businessman.

OLIVE: He is supporting himself.

ALICE: Unlike Darryl.

OLIVE: If the grow-op fits, Alice...

ALICE: I need to calm down before my presentation. You'd better go.

OLIVE: Fine.

ALICE: Fine.

OLIVE leaves. ALICE paces the room, then goes to the telephone and dials.

Suggested Transition to Scene 6: *ALICE could mime talking on the phone for a second while music plays, then look worried, then adopt an “I’ll hold my head up through this” attitude, grab her purse, and head out the door.*

Scene 6

*A couple of hours later
Alice’s House*

ALICE: *(from offstage)* I don’t need help.

OLIVE: *(from offstage)* I know.

OLIVE opens the door and enters, helping ALICE. ALICE has her arm in a sling and looks generally disheveled.

ALICE: I could’ve made it on my own.

OLIVE: Friends help each other home. Especially after the leap you took.

ALICE: Anyone would have done it.

OLIVE: I just wish you could’ve seen the judge’s face. He didn’t expect you to bellyflop right into the bedding plants!

ALICE: Only Janet Anderson would plant marijuana in the town hall garden.

OLIVE: It did look nice in that spot. Aesthetically.

ALICE: Thank goodness I saw you signaling me, so I had a chance to trample down that damned plant before the judge saw it.

OLIVE: I’m sure Doctor Baker thought I was having some kind of attack, the way I was jumping around. He might’ve given me a prescription for something, if you hadn’t stolen the scene.

ALICE: I’m glad you saw the plant before the judge did. It’s too bad I landed on the souvenir Stony Valley centennial plate I was going to present to him.

OLIVE: It’s too bad you broke your arm. ... And a shame about the goody table. I was so disappointed that you knocked it into the philodendrons when you ran through the crowd.

- ALICE: I thought you were on a cleanse.
- OLIVE: What's the point of avoiding marshmallow cake if nobody can see me avoiding the marshmallow cake?
- ALICE: How have you survived this long with so much trouble feeding yourself?
- OLIVE: You saved my son today. I'm so grateful.
- ALICE: I didn't nosedive into the town hall garden to cover up for Charlie. I'm the Communities in Bloom Chair.
- OLIVE: Co-Chair.
- ALICE: I wanted so badly for us to win a national award. In our size category.
- OLIVE: The contest isn't over until the winners are announced.
- ALICE: As I flew by, I kicked the judge in the - well, you know.
- OLIVE: Don't worry. Doctor Baker said the man would be able to stand up straight again in no time. And who knows what might happen in the other towns in our size category? ... You kept Charlie's operation a secret. For now. Even after those horrible things I said about Darryl. Alice. I'm sorry.
- ALICE: I talked to Darryl. Before the reception.
- OLIVE: *That's* why you were late. Janet's granddaughters were dancing their routine for the third time when you finally showed up.
- ALICE: Darryl sold the farm.
- OLIVE: What?
- ALICE: I thought he was selling pot. But he was busy selling the land that's been in Walter's family for three generations. Without even talking to me.
- OLIVE: Oh dear.
- ALICE: Walter's legacy. Gone. Darryl sold his inheritance to finance another decade on his couch in Vancouver. You were right.
- OLIVE: I didn't want to be right.
- ALICE: I feel so terrible, Olive. And how will I tell Eleanor?

OLIVE: Maybe you can wait until someone else tells her.

ALICE: I'll go to see her myself.

OLIVE: Confronting the dragon. That's brave. And there's something else I was hoping we could do. Together.

ALICE: What's that?

OLIVE: Clean out the barn. We'll put a stop to this.

ALICE indicates her broken arm.

OLIVE: I could use a lookout.

ALICE: All this time, while I was saying all those terrible things about Charlie, my Darryl...

OLIVE: It's just luck, you know. We can't control how they turn out.

ALICE: I suppose.

OLIVE: Let's meet at the barn at two o'clock tomorrow. I'm going home to make some vegetable soup. Zero point. Do you want some?

ALICE: For God's sake Olive. You've been the same weight for the last twenty years.

OLIVE: All my life I looked after Peter. Then the kids. Now it's time to do something that's just about me. And I recommend you do the same.

OLIVE leaves. ALICE finds a brownie and is about to eat it when the phone rings.

ALICE: Hello, Alice Ridgeway speaking. ... Oh, hello Constable Matthews. ... Yes, I'm sorry I had to leave the reception in such a rush. ... At the Come and Go Tea? ... Well I'm glad we relieved your mother's pain. ... Well, yes. I will let you know when I have another batch ready. ... No, no. I won't call you at the station. Goodbye Constable Matthews.

ALICE hangs up the phone and begins to eat the brownie. She looks upward, as if to heaven.

ALICE: It's medicinal, Walter.

Suggested Transition to Scene 7: *The ladies smile at each other, set up a fake “railing” to represent the edge of a cruise ship, and put on ridiculous cruise-wear hats. OLIVE goes to fetch drinks.*

Scene 7

*A few months later.
On a Cruiseship*

The scenery doesn’t need to be elaborate. Perhaps a railing, nautical-themed hats, and the sound of gulls squawking.

ALICE is at the railing alone. OLIVE comes in with two cocktail glasses and hands one to ALICE.

OLIVE: Isn’t this the life? I could cruise forever.

ALICE: Or until the boat sinks. I’ve seen *Titanic*.

OLIVE: And the Caribbean Sea is *full* of icebergs. ... How about a toast?

ALICE. I suppose.

OLIVE: Janet sure gave a great toast at your birthday party last week.

ALICE: (*sarcastic*) Yes. Thanks for inviting her. I’m surprised she didn’t volunteer to take your place on the cruise, just like the Communities in Bloom committee.

OLIVE: I’m sure she would have been enthusiastic.

ALICE: More than you. You didn’t even take notes at the afternoon seminar.

OLIVE: Can’t we just enjoy ourselves?

ALICE: You can have fun and learn at the same time.

OLIVE: I’m glad Eleanor finally told you the truth. I always knew Janet didn’t say anything rude at your wedding.

ALICE: I heard someone say it. But I didn’t suspect Eleanor. Imagine, my own sister-in-law telling everyone I wasn’t good enough to marry into her family.

OLIVE: Oh big surprise. I always told you Eleanor / was full of

ALICE: At least she finally told the truth.

OLIVE: After you plied her with pot.

ALICE: Two brownies and I knew everything from the secrets of her past to her underwear size.

OLIVE: Yuck. Let's get back to the toasting.

The ladies raise their glasses.

OLIVE: To the auctioneers, for raising enough at your sale to send you on this cruise.

ALICE: I never really liked living out on that farm.

They clink glasses and take a drink.

ALICE: Pppphhttttt! Olive! Is there alcohol in this?

OLIVE: It was the special.

ALICE: Honestly.

OLIVE: Pass that here.

ALICE passes her drink to OLIVE, then pulls a container filled with brownies out of her purse.

OLIVE: I told you not to bring those things! It's bad enough you're still using them at home.

ALICE: They're medicinal. My arm still aches.

OLIVE: This explains that warning from the cruise director this morning, telling people not to eat or drink anything that doesn't come from official staff.

ALICE: That woman from Winnipeg was nauseous, Olive. Seasick. She perked right up after she had a brownie.

OLIVE: She almost fell overboard. ... You're lucky you weren't arrested at the airport. I should have kept a closer eye on you when we were cleaning out that barn.

ALICE: You'd rather see Marg and Alma in pain?

OLIVE: I'd rather not have Constable Matthews winking at me every time he sees me. ... But on the other hand, I never would have got you on this cruise if you weren't having a two brownie evening when we booked the tickets.

ALICE: Thank goodness I was sober enough to insist on an educational cruise.

OLIVE: Pass me a brownie. I'm on a holiday.

ALICE: You don't need one.

OLIVE: I'll cut back a few points tomorrow.

ALICE: These are medicinal.

OLIVE: Fine. I don't need your medicine. I'm already fabulous.

ALICE: What?

OLIVE: Positive affirmation. My group leader says if I act like a thin person, I'll feel like a thin person, and soon I'll *be* a thin person. I can think myself thin.

ALICE: That's ludicrous. How many points are in those cocktails anyway?

OLIVE: They don't count. They're medicinal.

They both laugh. ALICE raises her brownie, OLIVE raises her drink. They 'clink'.

ALICE and OLIVE: To us.