

# **THE PLAY - REFRAMING SADNESS**

**A challenging, amusing and dramatic family interaction to do the impossible ... to find joy in life ... so that a sad past ... can gently be allowed to fade away**

**Original Author - Dr Bob Boland**

**Adaptation by Oliver Hollis-Leick and all of the cast**

**Artistic Director - Victor Sobchak**

**LORD STANLEY THEATRE/VIDEO VERSION  
CAMDEN, LONDON AUGUST 31, 2011**

**Act 1 – The Past (page 4)**

**Act 2 – The Mix of Past and Present with AA (page 9)**

**Act 3 – Planning for the Future (page 21)**

**Copyright: RGAB/2011  
drbobboland@hotmail.com**

## **THE PLAYERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:**

<b>George Bryan</b>	<b>Dr Silkworth – German, 50, medical doctor, distinguished AA Founder</b>
<b>Nick Simons</b>	<b>Arch – Polish, 80 years, humorous, busy, ambitious, successful politician, father of George. And also Patrick – AA member, raspy, nicotine voiced, recovering, old, humble.</b>
<b>Maggie Nicolas</b>	<b>Eliza – English, 75, aristocratic, rich, caring, gentle, confused, mother of George</b>
<b>Nicolas Gauchi</b>	<b>Dr Xavier – French, 30, medical professor, psychiatrist, aggressive, creative</b>
<b>Paul Vates</b>	<b>George - English, 43, intelligent, creative, tired, a bit alcoholic, depressed, husband of Miche</b>
<b>Kristell Elling</b>	<b>Miche – Italian, 45, caring, dynamic, active, manager, wife of George</b>
<b>Jules Brown</b>	<b>Bill - AA Sponsor – speaker, gentle adviser, dignified, kindly, Humble and sincere</b>
<b>Lily Alyss</b>	<b>Alice and the Nannies</b>

**AA Group members played by all the cast members as disguised secondary roles**

**Note:**

**The play is designed as intriguing, amusing and dramatic fiction.**

**All discussions are imaginary.**

**Some ideas and values may be worthy of consideration.**

## BACKGROUND OF THE PLAYERS

George Bryan – Dr Silkworth. Has just completed his Masters Degree at Central School of Speech and Drama and is thrilled to be a part of 'Theatre Collection'. He comes from Chicago in the United States and received his Undergraduate Degree in Acting and Psychology at New York University where he has performed in numerous productions in New-York.

Paul Vates - George. Trained at East 15 Theatre includes: Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Broughton Hall, Yorkshire); Donald Duck in Blue Remembered Hills (Marina Lowestoft); Trevor in Bedroom Farce, Scanlon in One Flew (>ver The Cuckoo's Nest and Feste in Twelfth Night (all Millfield, Edmonton). Paul has recorded over 30 titles for Listening Books. This is his first production with the Theatre Collection.

Maggie Nicolas – Eliza; Has acted and sung in many productions, including, 'Pucka Ri', with Pierce Brosnan, 'My Name is Rosa Luxembourg' with Ann Mitchell, and 'The Fourth Wall', with Paola Dionosotti written by Dario Fo and Franca Rama. She founded the ongoing women workshop performance group 'Contradictions' in 1980 and in 2009, cofounded the 'Absurdly Moving Theatre Company' whose latest show 'Refuse', received rave reviews. [www.maugienicols.com](http://www.maugienicols.com)

Jules Brown – Bill. Graduated from Bretton Hall in 2007. His most notable performances include Bassanio in The Merchant of Venice, Danceny in Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Cliff in Look back in Anger and Macbeth. He has recently finished filming Lullaby in Midnight City in which he played the lead character, Detective John Hodges.

Nick Simons – Arch; Graduated from Central many years ago. Has performed in regional theatres around the country, Glasgow Citizens, Birmingham, Colchester, and Bristol, little before emigrating in Canada in 1962. While there he performed in many theatre, TV and film productions. Returning to UK in 1973 again he performed Birmingham, Bristol Old Vic and two seasons with RSC. Has directed many rehearsed readings for the North West London Branch of Equity and North American Actors Association Play Readings festival. This is his second appearance in a Dr Boland play after "Love Yourself", where Nick played Sam.

Kristel Elling – Miche. Is a professional actress from Estonia. With Television and Film credits spanning across the UK and European markets. Kristel has undertaken roles in feature films, guest and regular appearances for popular TV drama series and played in major theatre productions. "Trained at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and Central School of Speech and Drama, she is also an experienced model and commercials actress, [www.kristellelling.com](http://www.kristellelling.com)

Nicholas Gauci – Professor Xavier. Graduated from Drama Studio London this summer. His love for the stage began over a decade ago in Malta, where he took part in several One Act Comedies as well as Panto. Credits while training include 'Vanya' in Uncle Vanya and 'Stiva' in Anna Karenina. He forms part of an Improvised 'Theatre Company, called the "ImProDigies", and has already performed at the Light Industrial Theatre and the Roundhouse in Camden.

Lily Alyss – Alice and Nannies. Passion for the theatre started at a young age in France. She recently graduated from Drama Studio London after having studied Russian theatre in Paris for a year.

# ACT 1 – THE PAST

## SCENE 1 – OPENING

**ARCH SITTING WITH HIS WIFE ELIZA. DR SILKWORTH, THE VERY DISTINGUISHED FOUNDER OF AA, COMES ON WITH SERIOUS STATEMENTS!**

**LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH IN FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** – Reframing sadness, is a challenging, amusing and dramatic family interaction ... to do the impossible ... to find joy in life ... so that a sad past ... can gently be allowed to fade away. Can they do it?

In late 1934 I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless.

In the course of his third treatment he, quite astonishingly, acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery. As part of his rehabilitation he imparted his ideas and conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others.

I joined forces with this man and thus Alcoholics Anonymous was born.

**ARCH PLAYS AN ACTIVE VIDEO GANGSTER COMPUTER GAME, SHOUTING**

**Arch:** Got you, you Bastard!!! Two for me and one for you!!!

**MEANWHILE ELIZA PREPARES HERSELF WITH FOR EXERCISES WITH A WHOLE RANGE OF “KEEP YOUNG” ACTIVITIES, WITH HER FACE COVERED IN BROWN FACE CREAM. FINALLY SHE RESTS ...**

**Arch** – Eliza darling.

**Eliza** – Yes dear.

**Arch** – Aren't we lucky. Still here and still together after years of adventures.

**Eliza** – Oh yes Arch.

**Arch** – And do you love me as much as you did all those years ago?

**Eliza** – Not a bit less.

**Arch** – In spite of all my bad habits?

**Eliza** – Oh I don't mind, they've always given me something to complain about.

**Arch** – That's true. You are a terrible complainer.

**Eliza** – Darling, George has been phoning at all hours again. Terribly distressed, and babbling on about feeling worthless. It's that awful depression. It's not his fault. He does his best but he can't seem to let go of the past and move on.

### **ELIZA CLEANS UP AND DRESSES**

**Arch** – But we're old. What can we do for him?

**Eliza** – I don't know. We didn't exactly help when he was a child.

**Arch** – But George had a wonderful, luxurious childhood!

**Eliza** – I'm not so sure about that. We should have done something about those nannies before it got out of hand.

**Arch** – What on earth do you mean?

**Eliza** – Oh come on darling. I had to fire three of them. You remember the first one, who looked after George for three years when we were going backwards and forwards to Switzerland. He was about 9 month old when she started with us.

**Arch** – I remember her. Delicious!

**Eliza** – Well, it seems your delicious nanny turned her charms on George.

**Arch** – Really? Not alas on me.

**Eliza** – What a terrible shame. Anyway I walked in on them once and I'm sure I saw nanny pouring my brandy into George's comforter and doing something untoward.

**Arch** – You never mentioned this before.

**Eliza** – I did tell you darling but you were busy looking after international security politics. You just told me to stop complaining and deal with the problems. I didn't know how to cope with a discovery like that. George was so young. Anyway, I appointed a new nanny, a bit old for your liking, and George grew up into a lovely boy, if a bit withdrawn. Then when we all moved to Switzerland and you insisted on hiring that pretty young nanny.

**Arch** – Ah yes. Lovely Maria. We all got quite close to her didn't we?

**Eliza** – Yes but not as close as she got to George. Don't you remember how strangely he acted all those times she took him out into the countryside alone when we were busy?

**Arch** – Oh dear.

**Eliza** – And then came The French Mademoiselle – a bit of a martinet. How an earth she managed to walk in those boots I don't know. She used to go into George's room late at night when she thought we were asleep. And then I couldn't get rid of her, even after I fired her.

**Arch** – Oh well. It all settled down eventually. Who would have thought that while I was spending my days working in international security politics, that the real security threat was the bloody nanny?

**Eliza** – Well I finally convinced myself that it was probably a good thing that George had had relations with an older woman.

**Arch** – I prefer mine younger.

**Eliza** – Yes, dear, when you were up to it, many, many years ago.

**Arch** – In my opinion, we all made too much of a fuss about the whole thing. We smothered the boy. In the old days things it was very different.

**Eliza** – Different how?

**Arch** – Well, if the old father interfered with his daughter, nothing was discussed; in fact the wife was often quite relieved.

**Eliza** – Oh I don't believe a word of your old stories Arch. Anyway it wasn't long after that, George began to suffer those long bouts of depression. His school work went from being first rate to average. His reports kept mentioning an attitude problem. I really think we should have paid more attention.

**Arch** – Are we really to blame though? I recall that one day he brought home a sexy Greek countess thirty years his senior. Too old even for me.

**Eliza** – It was years before he was interested in women his own age. I told him that he was fortunate to have had those early experiences, that they distinguished him from other men his age. That made him feel quite superior to his contemporaries. Anyway, now he is forty three and depressed.

**Arch** – I admit he hasn't always been on top, but he did have a very successful business career.

**Eliza** – Yes but he had breakdowns every ten years.

**Arch** – But he always picked himself up and got on with things.

**Eliza** – And those terrible diagnoses. I had no idea there were so many ways one could be disordered. bi-polar, schizo-affective, borderline personality, attention deficit, oppositional defiance and then the suicide attempts.

**Arch** – Well we all have our ups and downs. And with the pills and the mood stabilizers and a good psychiatrist we've had no more suicide attempts.

**Eliza** – Well I've Professor Xavier to come and visit us. He is medically very knowledgeable. Perhaps he can help us understand what's really going on. He should be here at about eleven.

**Arch** – **(LOOKS AT HIS WATCH AND GETS UP)** Good lord! I haven't seen my old friends Terry Workshop at the club. **(ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE)**.

## **KNOCK AT THE DOOR**

**Eliza** – That must be him.

**Arch** – You might have given me a bit more warning darling. I must make arrangements.

## **SCENE 2 – THE PROFESSOR ARRIVES**

**ELIZA OPENS THE DOOR. ENTER PROFESSOR XAVIER**

**Eliza** – Hello professor.

**Xavier** – AH, Ah, Ah. Good morning Eliza. Hello Arch. How are you both?

**Eliza** – Oh we're fine thank you. Please sit down. Would you like some tea?

**Xavier**- Oh, no, no, no, thank you, I'm fine. WE are here all set to talk about George. Are we not? You know his case as well as I do, so let me speak frankly and we can do something to help him.

**PROFESSOR PRODUCES A HUGE POINTER AND A PACK OF CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS TO GIVE A LECTURE ON GEORGE. VERY DYNAMIC AND CONFIDENT**

**Arch** – Of course, we want to help the doctor ... the professor! We'll do anything we can.

**Xavier** – Of course. Now the problem is that George's early experiences have left him confused, in more ways than one.

**Arch** – Confused?

**Xavier** – Well he is confused about whom to trust, and even about his own identity. Although you pronounced his early sexual experiences as positive, I'm afraid that just isn't the case.

**Eliza** – We thought it would be the best thing for him at the time.

**Xavier** – I'm sure you acted out of love. The thing is, George is an intelligent man and in recent years he has done extensive research into the effects of childhood sexual abuse. He knows that his own history of chronic depression and breakdowns are almost certainly a result of his childhood.

**Arch** – Oh, we really missed the mark didn't we.

**Xavier** – Missing the mark is quite an understatement!!! So shall we look at his relationships? He was involved with numerous women, much older than he, that deepened his condition.

**POINTING TO HIS CHARTS LIKE A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR TEACHING STUDENTS**

He perpetuated the cycle of abuse because the dysfunctional model in his brain which he used to find relationships had been forged at so early an age.

He married his first wife early, had a lovely son, but then his wife left him and he felt completely abandoned. His second wife was a member of a very religious American tribe.

**Arch** – And I never liked her.

**Xavier** - The relationship fell apart and eventually she was arrested for assaulting him. Yes and here I say ... third time lucky! His last and current wife Miche is wonderful and very loving, but the stress caused by George's mental health is proving too much for her.

And George has now finally concluded that in this world, no one can be trusted.

**Eliza** – Poor Miche. She must be having a terrible time.

**Arch** – You forget how strong Miche is. She's stuck by him for eight years and done wonders for the boy.

**Xavier** – The good news is that it seems George has finally realized that he must change if he's going to find happiness. He has joined Alcoholics Anonymous, and is finding it very rewarding.

Personally I have my doubts. I don't approve of their philosophy, and I've met patients who have found the group to be no help whatsoever. But the fact that he is trying to heal himself is truly a step on the road to recovery.

**Arch** – I'm afraid all this information is all a bit too much for me. I need time to digest it all. Poor George!!! I must admit I do feel at least partly responsible. Thank you for coming Professor.

**Xavier** – My pleasure. Hopefully the end is in sight, we just have to be as supportive as we can be ... while he finds his way through this!!!!

**PAUSE**

**LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH IN FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** – The spiritual body of the alcoholic or depressive is quite as abnormal as his mind. Our bodies are sickened as well. Any picture of the alcoholic or depressive, which leaves out this physical factor, is incomplete. It is imperative that a man's brain be cleared before he is approached, to give him a better chance of understanding and accepting what AA has to offer.

Some form of moral psychology is of urgent importance, but its application presents difficulties beyond our medical conception, despite our ultra-modern medical standards. We are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of good that lie outside our technical medical knowledge.

Hence AA ...

**END OF ACT 1**

# **ACT 2 – THE MIX OF PAST AND PRESENT WITH AA**

## **SCENE 1 FIRST AA MEETING**

**ALL ACTORS COME ONTO THE STAGE IN DISGUISED AA ROLE AND ARRANGE THE CHAIRS INTO A SEMI CIRCLE, AND THEN BRIEFLY TALK SILENTLY AMONGST THEMSELVES BEFORE TAKING THEIR SEATS. MICHE AND GEORGE ARRIVE LAST.**

**LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH IN FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** –Treating the cases of alcohol and depression that we have followed through, has been most interesting. The unselfishness of these men as we have come to know them, the entire absence of profit motive, and their community spirit, is indeed inspiring to one who has labored long and wearily in this alcoholic field, for so many years. They believe in themselves, and still more in the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics and depressives back from the gates of death!

**SILKWORTH MAKES AN ONSTAGE COSTUME CHANGE AND SITS DOWN WITH THE GROUP MEMBER AS THEY APPLAUD. AT THE SAME TIME, GEORGE AND MICHE ENTER. BILL WAVES THEM IN TO SIT DOWN AND JOIN THE GROUP. AMAZING GRACE IS HUMMED QUIETLY IN THE BACKGROUND AS BILL BEGINS TO SPEAK.**

**Bill** – Up AA. We believe in Jesus. We believe in common welfare and unfaltering AA support. We welcome all those who feel powerless over life, who have lost the way. We take them by the arm and guide them gently towards recovery. Now, Patrick, I think you have a story. You all know Patrick.

**Patrick** – I am Patrick. I am an alcoholic. Where do I begin? I was so sick I couldn't attract flies. My problem was that I loved Guinness. I could drink the stuff all day and all night. I lost my job and my family got fed up with me and kicked me out, and I deserved it. I slept on the streets, and I met a lot of old fools doing the same thing.

I begged and I stole food to survive. I was ashamed. So ashamed of what I'd become. And then AA found me. They picked me up out of the gutter and took me to a refuge. They helped me but it wasn't easy. They taught me to look at all the decisions I'd made and take responsibility for them.

They showed me that change was just on the horizon waiting for me, but that I had to want it.

I studied the twelve steps with my sponsor, for a year going to meetings. I prayed a lot. I read books. I talked with others. I learned phrases like... **(PAUSE)**

**Arch** – Easy does it.

**Eliza** – This too shall pass.

**Xavier** – Trudging the road of happy destiny.

**Patrick** – It got to me, deep, deep down. I began to see that recovery might be possible. Even to a man like me. A man who had been so deeply down in the gutter. It doesn't seem possible.

But I began to believe that there could be an end to my pain. Physical, mental and spiritual salvation. My family took me back and I haven't touched a drop of Guinness since.

**THE GROUP ALL APPLAUD AS PATRICK TAKES A SEAT.**

**Bill** – Thank you Patrick. That is our main story. We have a little time. Anyone else have a burning desire? No? ; Please remember that at AA meetings ... anonymity is the key ... so everything we say and hear is kept strictly here and never goes outside.

**ALL AGREE**

**Bill** - That concludes this week's meeting. So we all stand for the AA Creed.

**ALL UP TOGETHER HOLDING HANDS**

**All** - God please help me ... to accept the things I cannot change ... with the courage to change the things I can ... and ... the wisdom to know the difference ...

**Bill** - Thank you to all of you who shared with us tonight. See you next week.

**THE GROUP STANDS UP AND PLACE SOME OF THE CHAIRS TO THE SIDE, THEN LEAVE THE STAGE. ONLY MICHE, GEORGE AND BILL REMAIN SITTING SILENTLY AS BILL STACKS A COUPLE OF CHAIRS, HE THEN NOTICES THE COUPLE AND COME UPTO THEM.**

**Bill** – Are you Miche? I am Bill. So glad you came. You did a good thing coming here George.

**GEORGE DOESN'T RESPOND.**

**Bill** – I know it can be a bit overwhelming at first, but over time it starts to make a lot of sense.

**George** – You mentioned something about twelve steps.

**Bill** - There what we use to guide us through the recovery process.

**George** - What are they?

**Bill** - Don't worry about all of them for now, they're broken down into stages so just concentrate on the first stage, to find god.

**George** - Oh, no, I'm sorry I'm not in to all that..

**Bill** - No. No. It isn't like that George. God just means something bigger than you. It can be a very personal experience, find your own God, your own sense of greater meaning.

**George** - So what is it stages or steps?

**Bill** - That's the first stage, the first step is this: Admit that you are powerless over your addiction that your life is out of control. I can tell you from experience George, coming to these meetings is not an easy thing to start doing, but it works. It really works. Here, have some information. Have a read through it.

### **HANDS OVER BOOKLETS**

**Bill** - You're always welcome here. Both of you! I've got to go and lock up the rest of the building. Nice to meet you.

**BILL EXITS.**

## **SCENE 2 - GEORGE AND MICHE – WITH HOPE**

**Miche** - So what do you think?

**GEORGE SHRUGS**

**Miche** - Didn't you think that old man's story was beautiful?

**GEORGE DOESN'T ANSWER.**

**Miche** - George? What's wrong? Talk to me.

**George** - Well they're like some kind of cult.

**Miche** - How can you say that? Just because they care about each other and support each other that doesn't make them a cult.

**George** - Well what do you want me to say? Hallelujah! Oh yes, praise the Lord! I've found it! I've found the meaning of life, here in this cruddy little hall.

**Miche** - Stop it! Don't make fun of them. They seem a lot happier than you do.

**George** - I've seen it all before. self-help groups, lectures, hypnosis, meditation, mountain retreats. More medication. None of it works.

**Miche** - But how do you know this is the same if you don't even try it.

**George** - I came didn't I?

**Miche** - You've spent five minutes here and you think you've tried it? You have to give it a chance.

**George** – I'm not like them. I'm not some mindless robots who clap hands and sing along. I'm not going to waste my time with these drunken idiots, who put all that faith into some e all powerful entity that's going to solve all my problems in twelve easy steps. What is the point?

**Miche** - Because I can't do this anymore, George! I've had enough. You're destroying me. Do you understand? I'm trying to help but I don't even know what's wrong with you because you won't communicate with me.

It's all about you and your miserable life, you never think about me and how I feel. I haven't had one single happy day within six years.

Not a one single day! And now you've drained everything out of me. I've had enough of it. I'm leaving you, George!

**GEORGE SITS DOWN NEXT TO HER, PLACES A HAND ON HER SHOULDER.**

**Miche** - George, I'm tired. I want you to get well and us to be happy again, like we were in the beginning.

That was the happiest I've ever been. I've tried everything to help you, but you're not helping me. I love you George...with all my heart... but if you're not going to change then I have to leave you.

Do you understand? Because I'm tired, i can't go on like this anymore. Do you understand George?

**MICHE LEANS ON AND HOLDS GEORGE.**

**George** - I'll try.

## **SCENE 3 - SECOND AA MEETING**

**ALL AA MEMBERS PRESENT SITTING DOWN**

**LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH I N FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** - Perhaps alcohol and depression are allergies of lost self-confidence, and reliance upon things human, and as problems pile up on them, they become astonishingly difficult to solve.

They need a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives. They need a mental, spiritual and emotional change, or there is little hope of recovery.

**SILKWORTH MAKES AN ONSTAGE COSTUME CHANGE AND SITS DOWN WITH THE GROUP AS THEY APPLAUD.**

**Bill** – Welcome everyone to our AA meeting. Would anyone like to celebrate any anniversary?

**ELIZA HAND UP**

**Eliza** – One year in the group today<

**APPLAUSE**

**THE DOOR OPENS AND A YOUNG GIRL WALKS IN. SHE WATCHES THE GROUP FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND THEN GOES TO LEAVE.**

**Bill** - Hello?

**THE GIRL STOPS.**

**Alice** - Hi.

**Bill** - Would you like to join us?

**Alice** - Uh.

**Bill** - Why don't you have a seat, stay for a minute and see what you think.

**ALICE WALKS OVER TO A SEAT AND SITS DOWN.**

**Bill** – Does anyone have a burning desire to speak?

PAUSE

**Bill** – Then we can close the meeting?

**GEORGE HAND UP**

**Bill** – George? Some of you may remember George who came to the meeting last week. Welcome back George.

**THE GROUP WELCOME HIM**

**Bill** - Perhaps this week you might like to try sharing something with us?

**GEORGE LOOKS NERVOUS. HE LOOKS TO MICHE, AND THEN STANDS UP.**

**George** - My name is George and I'm not an alcoholic.

**THERE IS A DEGREE OF UNREST, BUT A LOOK FROM BILL QUIETENS THE GROUP.**

**George** - I feel...lost. I just thought I was just unlucky, born with some kind of mental defect. I thought my depression was all due to a poorly functioning brain, unable to process simple chemical reactions.

But recently I've been doing my own kind of research, asking the right questions for the first time in my life. I discovered something that's been haunting me ever since. I think I was sexually abused as a child.

I have these flashes, images. it seems from what I've read that my behavior as a child was symptomatic of sexual abuse.

**GEORGE SITS DOWN THE LIGHTS CHANGE.**

**SCENE 4 - ABUSE AND SPONSORSHIP**

**GEORGE AND MICHE STANDING IN FRONT OF THE GROUP**

**Miche** – You were sexually abused as a child. George, that's awful. By who, your parents?

**George** – No, by my nannies.

**Miche** – You're saying it was more than one of them?

**George** – Years ago when my son was born, they were the happiest times in my life. But it didn't last. One day I was changing his nappy and out of nowhere an image flashed into my mind. A distant memory! I didn't know what it meant, but it soon dawned on me. That was the first time I realized what had happened to me as a baby.

**Miche** – Oh my darling. I'm so sorry. I can't believe you just came out with it in front of the group like that. I'm so proud of you George. That can't have been easy.

**George** - I don't want to run from this any more Miche. I've spent half my life trying to escape just a few years of my childhood. I know it will be painful and hard. And now it's time to face it. I don't care how hard it will be, how terrifying, how painful, I just want to be free of it now.

**BILL PUTS A HAND ON GEORGE'S SHOULDER AND ENTERS THE SCENE CHANGES TO INCLUDE HIM.**

**Bill** - You can be free of it George. We all want that for you. You've just completed step one; you've admitted your problem. I think it's time you moved on to the next steps. None of us are alone in this, the next steps are to admit that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. Then George, you make a decision to change forever and turn your life over to God.

**George** - You said I didn't need to believe in god.

**Bill** - Yes. It's that connection to something bigger than yourself. There is room in AA for all kinds of strong beliefs.

**George** - It's just all so confusing. How did you do it?

**Bill** - With help, George.

**George** - From God?

**Bill** - Yes. With help from God and from my sponsor Jane, She was with me the whole time when needed. For three years, so far. .

**George** - Sponsor?

**Bill** - When you finally admit to yourself that you need help, and you become able to ask for it, you ask someone from the group to be your sponsor. That person will then be there for you every step of the way till you find recovery.

**George** - Does everyone have a sponsor?

**Bill** - Eventually, yes.

**George** - Bill, would you be my sponsor.

**Bill** - Thank you George, I'd love to be your sponsor. I want you to know that I'm like you George, I have that same broken voice inside me that tells me I'm not good enough, not clever enough, that tells me I'm a failure, that wants to destroy me.

I found a way to help myself George, by helping others, by helping you. I want you to keep coming back here George, come to the meetings, talk to the others, and see for yourself how it's changed their lives.

Get out of that sick head of yours. I'm here for you twenty four hours a day to help you find your way through the twelve steps.

### **LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH IN FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** - Men drink to escape a craving beyond their mental control. Many situations cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people.

They have one symptom in common: an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. This immediately precipitates us into a seething caldron of debate.

Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians, the general opinion seems to be that most chronic alcoholics and depressives are doomed, hence AA.

## **SCENE 5 – THIRD AA MEETING - CHILDHOOD**

**Bill** - Welcome everyone to our AA meeting; Remember, everything here is private to us.

**Bill** – Anyone want to speak?

**George** – My name is George. I am an alcoholic. I remember being so horribly sad. I remember wanting to be such a good boy that no one could think I was bad. I started to enjoy the attention I was getting. It made me feel Of course, when approached some of the nannies refused. And I began to realize special. And I started wanting them to touch me. .And I began to realize, why at the core, it was because of my mother. .But I was so desperate to be loved by my mother, that she

What was happening to me, I wanted them to touch me, but I developed an intense feeling of guilt as a result.

There were even times when I asked one or two of the nannies and they said no. They told my parents, and then I felt bad, evil, disgusting I started acting out, playing with my mother's clothing, and over-eating. I was desperate to be loved by my mother, but she was never there,

### **ALICE AS AA MEMBER BECOMES NANNY 1 WITH AN OUTSTANDING DRESS AND MOVES OVER TO GEORGE. AS IF LOOKING INTO A COT**

**George** – Mother was never there.

**ALICE Nanny 1** – Hello little Georgie boy. You're so beautiful.

### **STOPS LOOKING INTO THE COT**

I loved little George so much. All I wanted was to please him in every way I could. He loved it when I played with him. He giggled and cooed. I wasn't doing him any harm; we were just having fun together.

**George** – And yet I loved my nannies. When I was moved to Switzerland to live with my parents they hired a girl called Maria. She was gorgeous ... big busted with red lips and jet back hair. When I was seven I used to spend hours and hours with her, playing in the long grass.

### **ALICE CHANGES DRESS TO SECOND NANNY ROLE**

**Alice Nanny 2** – Things between George and me started out perfectly normal, but George soon began encouraging something more. Stray hands, legs winding, lips brushing skin, he let me know that it was ok, and so we just played together, hidden amongst the grass.

**George** – She stayed in my life for 18 months. When she left I was so sad, I needed her so much. Then followed a succession of 'normal' nannies but whenever I approached them, they simply refused, resigned, or left because of my obnoxious behavior. But when I was thirteen I had a beautiful French Nanny. She became infatuated with me.

### **ALICE CHANGES DRESS TO THIRD NANNY ROLE**

**Alice Nanny 3** – I fell hopelessly in love with little George. I couldn't bear to be apart from him. Every night after his parents were asleep, I would sneak into his bedroom. Wrapped in that thick darkness I would slip out of my clothes and into his bed. I know it was a bit naughty of me but I meant him no harm. I just had to be next to him.

### **ALICE BACK AS AA MEMBER IN A COAT**

**George** – I enjoyed it. I wanted it and I invited it. I felt superior to boys my own age. In fact the only reason that my passionate nights with the French maid came to an end was because she wanted to keep them a secret and I didn't. I wanted to boast about my sexual prowess, so I told my parents and they fired her on the spot. Now when I think about what happened with her I feel far too disgusted and ashamed of myself.

**Miche** – What did your parents say when they found out?

**George** – They told me it was a good thing.

**Miche** – What?

**George** – They said I was lucky, that I was ahead of my time. I think they were just way out of their depth and tried to act as though it was all completely normal, hoping it would just disappear.

**Miche** – But it didn't.

**George** – No. It didn't.

**Miche** – Why didn't anyone intervene, how could they have missed it happening right in front of their eyes.

**George** - The nannies really were so loving to me

**Miche** – George, that's not love, its abuse. I can't believe this, how could they let it happen to a child. It's all their fault!!! George, don't you see, they could have stopped it so many times but they just let it happen over and over again. It's all their fault!!!

### **BILL STEPS IN AND TAKES HOLD OF MICHE**

**Bill** - Miche, stop please. I know you're angry, I understand, but George has to finish what he's started. He needs to tell his story from beginning to end. Everything will be alright, just trust me.

### **BILL TAKES MICHE OFF TO ONE SIDE.**

**George** – I grew up with an empty my heart, something I couldn't fill no matter how I tried. I so desperately wanted to prove to my parents and myself that I could have a normal relationship with a normal woman.

Instead I got involved with a Greek countess, old as my mother. When that finished. That vision turned to anger at the slightest thing could set me off. Someone roughly brushing past me. Someone laughing too loud in a pub. Or burning my tongue on a hot drink. Or the TV remote simply refusing to work. Would send me into a rage. And I tried so hard to control it.

On the outside I was quite a successful businessman. But on the inside I was broken, misunderstood, and deeply unhappy. And I searched for that help ... DR everywhere, I tried so hard to find a solution, a cure ....

## **SCENE 6 - MEDICATION CHAOS**

**ALL AA MEMBERS CONTINUALLY ACTIVE MAKING GREAT NOISE SUGGESTING SO MANY CURES ... WITH LOUD MUISIC ... REPEATED OVER AND OVER WITH INCREASING VOLUME ALL TOGETHER AS CHAOS...**

**Silkworth** - Cure? I am Doctor Werner from the clinic in Germany. There we treat all of our patients with love. Come sit.

**George** – I'm having these nightmares.

**Silkworth** – George, My cure is love ... come down on the floor with me ...what is your problem ...yes, you just need love ... need love... need love ... **(CONTINUING IN BACKGROUND)**

**Xavier** – George. Got it!!! I've finally got it. The answer to your problem. Look at my charts. Consider yourself a triumph .. in a circle. A triumph!! ... **(CONTINUING IN BACKGROUND)**

**.Eliza** - George, All you need is medication. Aspirin, histamines, depressives, hypertensive, sexual stimulators, Prozac, Nozak ... **(CONTINUING IN BACKGROUND)**

**Alice** – George, Come and make love to me **(DRAGS HIM OFF TO LIE DOWN)** ...this will solve all of your problems ... **(CONTINUING IN BACKGROUND)**

**Arch** – George. I'm Carl Rogers. Now I ask you ... be open with yourself and everyone will have a positive regard ... as you talk to yourself and explain away all of your problems ... **(CONTINUING IN BACKGROUND)**

**OVERALL A TERRIBLE NOISE OF SHOUTING AND MUSIC ... CONTINUALLY REPEATING THEIR DIFFERENT INSTRUCTIONS TO CURE HIS PROBLEM**

**GEORGE FINALLY COLLAPSES IN CHAOS SHOUTING**

**George** – I can't do it!!! I can't do it!!! I can't do it!!!

**LIGHTS DOWN**

## **SCENE 7 - MOVING ON**

**SAQM<E SCENE WITH EVERYONE SILENT**

**BILL AND MICHE CLOSE TO GEORGE ON THE FLOOR**

**George** - I can't do it. It's just too hard.

**Bill** - You can do it George, you just have to stay with it. Every time you stand up and share with us, you're moving further and further forward, confronting your fears and leaving them behind.

**George** - But I don't want to remember any more.

**Miche** - I will support you.

**George** - I always thought you were so judgmental, so critical of me, pushing me to try all these treatments, but each time i failed, you were there. You've always been there; you don't deserve any of this.

**Miche** - But everything's going to change now.

**Bill** – Well done George, you've just made it to the next step !! Trust me. It's time you made a list of all the people you have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them.

This can take time George and only when you're ready should you move on to make direct amends to such people wherever possible ... except where to do so would hurt them or others.

**George** – Can I start now?

**Bill** – Yeah of course.

**George** - I'm sorry Miche for what I did. The late nights, the arguments and the long silences. Can you ever forgive me, Miche?

**(SERIOUS AND THEN IN HUMOUR)**

**Miche** - I will forgive you only if after coming back from work you notice me and give me at least a nod that I could feel that I exist for you.

And when we go to bed you will tell me “good night, my dear Miche”

And ... when I come to the office while you're working ,, you will take time for me ... and give you a hug then you won't get angry with me.

And...when you come to the kitchen for dinner you will surprise me with a kiss as you used to ...

And...every Wednesday you will take me out to the restaurant as you used to...

**George** – Your favorite

**Miche** - And...I will forgive you only if you clean the oven, do all the washing up and will iron all your 164 shirts...ok?

**George** – I will start with the white ones. And will start leaving little messages for you all around the house.

**Miche** - Maybe this a bit too much to be asked but...breakfast in bed and fresh roses waiting for me in the living room every morning ...and a good morning and a good night kiss...that is an order.

**George** – I promise to give you everything you ask for, you deserve all of it.

**Miche** - Then I forgive you.

**BILL COMES OVER**

**Bill** – It feels good doesn't it?

**George** - Yes. This list, is it everyone I've ever hurt?

**Bill** - yes, as many as possible, as long as there's no danger of hurting them or others. I can't stress that enough.

**George** - Then I think I need to talk to my parents.

**Bill** – That's a good place to start. You're taking control of your own recovery now George, you should be very proud. It's amazing really to think that when you first joined us, about six months ago. You nearly ran a mile when you thought we were all a bunch of Christian crack pots! Now look at the progress you've made. We all are very proud of you George. Stay with the program.

**THE AA GROUP COMES TO LIFE!!!.**

**Bill** – Not supposed to say anything ...but today is Brian's birthday. (**APPLAUSE**). We all going to have meal at Starbucks. Turn right. Go straight down. Pass the pub (**LAUGHTER**) and there is Starbucks. You are all invited. I think we all agree this was very moving day.

Remember that everything you see and hear here, stays here. So let's finish here with the AA creed

### **ALL UP TOGETHER HOLDING HANDS**

**All** - Please God grant us ...to accept the things we cannot change ...to change the things we can ... and the wisdom to know the difference ...

**Bill** - Thank you, to all of you who shared (LAUGHTER) with us tonight. See you next week.

### **GROUP LEAVES. SAY GOODBYE TO GEORGE. GEORGE GOES TO LEAVE. ALICE STOPS HIM TO SPEAK.**

**Alice** - Hi George.

**George** - I'll see you outside.

**Miche** - Of course.

**Girl** - Sorry I didn't mean to intrude, but I just wanted to say thank you for what you said. I didn't know why I came, I didn't really want to, but what you did today really helped me, so thanks.

**George** – Thank you. That means so much to me. Thank you. Are you going to come back? Do consider coming back.

**Alice** - Maybe. I think so.

### **ALICE LEAVES. GEORGE FOLLOWS SHORTLY AFTERWARDS**

#### **LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH I N FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** - Strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, suddenly finds himself easily able to control alcohol and depression, and the only effort necessary being to follow a few simple rules and steps.

Men have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal: "Doctor, I cannot go on like this! I have everything to live for! I must stop, but I cannot! You must help me!" Faced with this problem, if a doctor is honest with himself, he must sometimes feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, often it is not enough.

One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential change

## **END OF ACT 2**

## ACT 3 – PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

ARCH AND ELIZA SIT TOGETHER AS THEY WERE IN ACT ONE. THEN PROFESSOR XAVIER ARRIVES AND HELPS HIMSELF TO A LARGE WHISKEY!

### SCENE 1 – ILLUSIONS

**Eliza** - I'm so happy you're here professor, we've both been feeling rather guilty about George, and you always explain things so well.

**Xavier** – I'm delighted that you asked me to come over. Unfortunately, people like me end up being the enemy.

**Eliza** – Why is that?

**Xavier** – Well George thinks we see him as just another case. He probably thinks, “What the hell do they know about this hell I’m living in.”

**Arch** – But you must know, surely.

**Xavier** – Of course I do! I spent seven years training at Oxford University. His behavioral patterns and quasi-sociopathic symptoms fit the theoretical model devised by Erich Fromm perfectly.

Indeed, I'm currently writing a paper and my findings thus far fit this model, like a glove. I know exactly what he is going through but he seems to think that a bunch of alcoholics will know better.

They simply don't have the training to comprehend as I do!!!

**Arch** – Well, I'm just glad that he thinks he's found the right solution for himself. This mess has been going on far too long. It truly never occurred to me that nannies could be so dangerous.

**Eliza** - Perhaps that's because you so busy following your great political career.

**Arch** – Hang on a minute. I don't remember you paying too much attention; otherwise I wouldn't have hired those bloody nannies in the first place.

**(XAVIER STOPS THEM)**

**Xavier** – Hey, hey, hey. You've found yourselves caught in the blame cycle, an almost textbook example in fact. These sorts of emotions are typical in the circumstances but they're not helpful.

**Eliza** – Sorry Professor.

**Arch** – Yes, sorry. This is just very different than the sort of thing we're used to. We're not really sure how to deal with everything.

**Xavier** – And of course next comes despair. It's alright. These sorts of feelings are also typical.

**Arch** - So what now?

**Xavier** – George needs to overcome the feeling of self-loathing that lies within him, which he ascribes to being sexually abused as a child. Frankly, I think it's poppycock, if you ask me.

**Eliza** – George's nannies definitely got up to something. I knew it at the time but I just couldn't face it.

### **A KNOCK AT THE DOOR**

**Eliza** – Who could that be? I can't see anybody, just now.

**Arch** – Open the door.

### **ELIZA OPENS THE DOOR. GEORGE AND MICHE ENTER.**

**George** – Greetings everyone ...

**Arch** - George, my boy! And Miche, darling.

**George** - Professor? I wasn't expecting you be here.

**Xavier** – Yes, well your mother invited me round for a chat and I thought I might stay for dinner.

**Eliza** - Would you like a sherry?

**Miche** - No, thank you.

**Eliza** - A cup of tea.

**Miche** - I'm fine.

**Eliza** – Come and sit down. You are making me feel uncomfortable.

**Miche** - I'll stand thank you.

**Eliza** - Oh, are you sure.

**Miche** - Yes.

**George** - Mother, please sit down.

**Arch** - What is going on?

**George** - I need to talk to you both. **Xavier** - Excellent! The prodigal son returns!

**George** - Please professor.

**Eliza** - What is it George?

**George** - There are some things that need to be said. You know last year I started going to Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Eliza** - Yes.

**Xavier** - Yes, I'm quite intrigued. How has that been working out for you?

**George** - Inspirational. It's been a difficult journey, but I've achieved things there that no other method has allowed me to do.

**Xavier** - I suppose you're going to tell us that now you're completely cured!

**George** – No. It's not that simple, as you very well know. If you're an addict, whether it's being addicted to booze or abusive relationships, you can't ever consider yourself totally cured. You wrestle with the demons for the rest of your life, but the recovery comes in the way that AA teaches you how to win the fight day to day. I'm not there yet, but I'm getting closer.

**Xavier** - I fail to see how a room full of addicts, spewing out talk of God, Demons and salvation can in any way incite recovery in an individual. You need a professional hand who understands the dysfunctional behavioral cycle that you've become locked into.

**George** - I'm sorry but you don't know how far you are from the truth.

**Xavier** - Are you all hearing this?

**George** - If you don't mind, I'd like to speak to my parents alone. I'd appreciate it if you'd leave.

**Eliza** - but George, Charles has helped us all so much.

**George** - I'd prefer it if he left.

**Xavier** - I see. Well I can't say I approve but it seems I'm no longer welcome. Eliza. Arch.

**Arch** – Professor?

**Xavier** – Goodnight!!!

**XAVIER EXITS.**

## **SCENE 2 – REALITIES**

### **SAME SCENE**

**Eliza** - I don't understand George.

**George** – There's a reason I've come here to see you today. I now see how I've been blaming others for my condition. All I achieved by doing that was to isolate myself from my family and friends. So I want to apologize to you both.

**Eliza** - Oh, darling. You don't need to apologize. You're our son.

**George** - I do apologize. I now see how difficult I've been. Long rambling phone calls, turning up on your doorstep, unexpected at any time ... forgetting your birthdays.

**Miche** - George.

**George** - Please, Miche. I can only change once I take control of my life and stop blaming others. I'm sorry mother. I'm so tired.

**Eliza** - Thank you, darling. Of course, I forgive you.

**Miche** - You forgive him? How can you talk about forgiving? This is all your fault. Where were your eyes when he was being abused?

**George** - Miche, please! Stop.

**Miche** - No! I'm not going to stand around while you let them get away with it. You are his mother, and it was your job to protect him but instead you let him suffer. There is no excuse for what you have caused to him.

**Eliza** - Miche, I'm sorry but you can't just come uninvited into this house and start insulting me like that. You have no idea what it was like to be a mother in my situation. Things were different then. I had to keep my distance.

Our class provided the powerful leaders in every field< WE couldn't control our boys. George would never have grown up to be a powerful man, like his father, if he'd become too attached to me.

**Miche** - But you neglected him and you let his nannies sexually abuse him! What sort of man did you think that was going to make him?

Why do you think he was having relationships with women thirty years older than him?

Because he was looking for his mother, to compensate for your non existence.

**Eliza** - I did not neglect him, everybody had nannies. We certainly didn't expect nannies to behave that way.. Wasn't allowed to look after him. If I had said anything at all about his upbringing, I was told to leave it to the nannies, and get on to supporting my husband and his political duties.

**Arch** - Oh for heaven's sake stop it!

**Eliza** – No I won't be silent. I was terrified of your father as he dominated our home.

**George** – Yes mother.

**Eliza** – Darling please listen, I carried you, I gave birth to you, and then I had to give you up. It wasn't easy, in fact it almost broke my heart, and I used to sneak into your room whenever I could. And look at you sleeping.

I wanted to hold you, but I didn't dare pick you up in case woke you and got into trouble, you're father would have been furious.

When I saw what I saw, I convinced myself I had to be imagining things. It was inconceivable. I told myself it had to be the side effects from all the pills I was taking for my nerves.

I couldn't face it. I tried to talk to you Arch, but you were just to go away. You told me I must be “seeing things”. I didn't know what to do. I was and I am ... so sorry.

**Arch – (SCREAMING)** How can you blame me!!! How could I know?

**George –** Alright. Alright mother. Calm.

**Arch –** Alright. I wasn't around very much> I was trying to provide a living for my family. How was I supposed to know what was going on in Switzerland with the bloody nannies? Why didn't you come and talk to us before this?

**George -** I've always felt that you would have preferred it if I had just got on with things and pretended it was all OK.

**Arch –** We wanted to help you. We just didn't know what to say or do. We had no idea how to help you.

**.George -** Don't say you were there for me.

**Eliza -** Your father loves you, George, he really does. Tell him dear. Tell him!

**George -** Yes, go on. Tell me.

**Arch -** Well, I've always been proud of you.

**George -** You have to forgive everybody. But I'm having a really hard time having to forgive you.

**Arch -** Well, my father used to say to me "You must always forgive your enemies, both for their sake and yours, lest you spend your life carrying round a great angry cross in their behalf".

**George –** It's not so easy .... to forgive sexual abuse.

**Arch –** Let me tell you something my son. With my medical problems any sense of personal sanctity is completely redundant. My trousers have been invaded more times than the French. I beg your pardon.

**Eliza –** Arch, It's not quite the same thing.

**Arch –** Of course it is. Those doctors have had their hands down my trousers, time after time. They seem to be conceptually fascinated with that particular part of me.

Of course they ask for permission, but what choice do I really have.

I either have to accept it or leave my prostate problems to Mother Nature.

No thank you!!!!

**Eliza –** But what happened to George was abuse.

**Arch –** Do you think my weekly visits to the hospital were like going to a health spar? When I leave there I feel positively violated.

**ELIZA BREAKS DOWN)**

**GEORGE AND MICHE CONSOLE ELIZA, SHOCKED BY HER SHOW OF GRIEF.**

## **ARCH MOVES OVER**

**Arch** – Eliza. There. There. Eliza.

**Eliza** – I just don't want to live!!!

**Miche** - Please Eliza I'm sorry I said those things.

**Eliza** - You're right Miche. You're right about everything.

**George** - Father, console her, she's your wife.

**Arch** - There, there.

**George** - I forgive you mother.

**Arch** - I deeply regret that I neglected you as a boy. And of course my dear wife. Eliza. I was too focused on my job ... I was too focused on my job!!! I had no idea what was going on ...

**George** - I forgive you too father.

**Arch** - Thank you, my boy.

## **ALL IN GENTLE TOGETHERNESS ... EMBRACING EACH OTHER ... AS A FORGIVING FAMILY GROUP**

### **LIGHTS LOW - DR SILKWORTH IN FORMAL DRESS**

**Silkworth** – There are thousands who appear to have recovered from alcohol. There are others who have failed.

Men have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal: "Doctor, I cannot go on like this! I have everything to live for! I must stop, but I cannot! You must help me!"

Faced with this problem, if a doctor is honest with himself, he must sometimes feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, often it is not enough.

One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change.

Much of the medical discussion is pro and con, but the general opinion of physicians is that most chronic alcoholics and depressives could find some benefit from AA.

Our play "Reframing Sadness" is a challenging, amusing and dramatic family interaction ... to do the impossible ... to find joy in life ... so that a sad past ... can gently be allowed to fade away.

## **END OF PLAY**