

An excerpt from...

ANOTHER DOOR OPENS

A play in two acts

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

ALICE	A well-meaning, overbearing, and decaying artificial intelligence attempting to redeem herself after accidentally destroying the world.
RALPH	Alice's android helper, programmed with the personality of Ralph Kramden from the Honeymooners. Self absorbed, he is a loose cannon that regularly overreacts towards wrong conclusions.
WHITNEY	The other android helper of Alice's, this one styled after the White Rabbit from Alice in Wonderland. Nervous, anxious, and a stickler for punctuality that he is never able to maintain.
PAUL HASTINGS	An architect, moderate in nature. He is the first human to be successfully revived.
ABIGAIL (ABBEY) WILMERS	Second human to be revived, she is a somewhat ditsy CPA struggling through massive denial issues; not blonde.
KENNETH	Third human to be revived, he suffers from multiple personality disorder, switching between the four different personalities of: Xena, Warrior Princess (a deep-voiced lesbian warrior); Sherlock Holmes (a British detective); Blort (a lost extra-terrestrial tourist from the planet Straganza who struggles with English); and Stacey (a frustrated, horny, gender-indeterminate personality).
RUBY	Fourth human to be revived, she is an angry, rebellious hacker/criminal who resents life and thinks she's really hot stuff.

SETTING

Various rooms inside an aged, nuclear fallout shelter.

TIME

An unspecified time approximately twenty five millennia in the future.

ACT I

Scene 1	Infirmary
Scene 2	Cafeteria or Common Area
Scene 3	Common Area
Scene 4	Common Area
Scene 5	Storeroom

ACT II

Scene 1	Common Area
Scene 2	Common Area
Scene 3	Storeroom
Scene 4	Common Area

ACT I

SCENE 1

(A dimly lit emergency medical treatment center in an underground fallout shelter. A few gurneys are scattered about onstage. Some of them might contain corpses. On one of them lies the unconscious form of Paul, who is dressed in a hospital gown put on sloppily and incorrectly over casual clothes. Ralph (dressed as a bus driver) and Whitney (part man, with rabbit-ish features if possible) are onstage, Ralph drumming his fingers impatiently on a gurney, Whitney pacing nervously.)

WHITNEY

Oh dear oh dear oh dear.

RALPH

Will you stop that pacing already! You're driving me crazy!

WHITNEY

Sure, sure. Sorry. I just pace when I'm nervous.

(Keeps pacing)

RALPH

You're always nervous! Will you STOP that!

WHITNEY

(Stops)

Sure, sure. Sorry.

(Whitney takes out a pocket watch, looks at it, and immediately starts pacing again. Ralph throws up his hands in disgust.)

RALPH

(Calling offstage)

Alice, are you gonna do this or aren't ya?

WHITNEY

He should have woken up 47 seconds ago. I hate it when they're late.

RALPH

At least he's not dead yet. Most of them stiffies didn't even make it this far.

WHITNEY

We shouldn't have changed the revival protocol. The steps are laid out very precisely. This plan is madness. Madness, I tell you!

RALPH

What does it matter? He's one of the last few anyway. Even if he wakes up –

ALICE

(Disembodied female voice from offstage, preferably over speakers)

When, Ralph. When he wakes up.

RALPH

If. If he wakes up, what is the point? A few decades and he's just gonna die anyway.

ALICE

I know. But we learned a great deal from Batch 4006. I think we have a real chance this time.

WHITNEY

You said that after Batch 4005. And Batch 4004, and Batch 4003.

RALPH

Not 4003. They were the ones she had us revive using the kitchen steamer. All she said after those was "I think we're running low on paper towels".

WHITNEY

No, that was Batch 2374. 4003 was the-

RALPH

(Interrupting)

Oh yeah. Yeah, never mind.

(Ralph and Whitney both shudder as if from a very bad memory. Then they turn and watch Paul for a moment.)

WHITNEY

Speaking of Batch 4003, I still have some cleaning to do, and since this one is obviously not going to be coming around...

(Whitney exits)

RALPH

(Calling to the nebulous Alice)

Looks like your modifications didn't work, Alice. I told you.

(Paul's arm twitches noticeably)

ALICE

There. There there! Voluntary muscle activation! *(She is clearly excited)*

RALPH

(Not impressed, but turning to watch)

Again with twitching, Alice. It doesn't mean anything. Remember the gal from Batch 1704 – she got up and stuck her head into an air duct before exploding all over the ventilation system.

(Paul begins to stir, and Ralph watches him with a complete lack of expectations.)

ALICE

Patient 49,374? Can you hear me, Patient 49,374?

(Paul sits up slowly, Ralph is surprised but still not excited.)

ALICE

Patient 49,374? *(Pause for a response, but Paul just looks around in a daze)* Ralph, perhaps you should test for tactile awareness?

RALPH

(Who hadn't been paying attention)

What are you blabbering about now, Alice?

ALICE

Try tapping him on the shoulder.

RALPH

Why didn't you just say that?

(Ralph taps Paul on the shoulder. Paul turns to face Ralph.)

ALICE

Oh, good. Very good. Look at that – evidence of causal response. Very promising. Patient 49,374, can you hear me?

PAUL

(In a rather loud voice)

Do you hear that buzzing?

RALPH

(Now a bit surprised)

What buzzing?

PAUL

What?

RALPH

What buzzing?

PAUL

Whabusing?

RALPH

What?

PAUL

What?

RALPH

You said 'whabusing'.

PAUL

No...

RALPH

Do you think I just made that up? *(Addressing Alice)* We've got another veggie burger.

ALICE

Patient 49,374? Can you hear me?

PAUL

(Looking around)

Who said that?

ALICE

My name is ALICE. *(And then, as if to an idiot or child)* Can you say ALICE?

(Paul looks at Ralph, who points to 'all around')

PAUL

(Also as if to an idiot)

Yes, I can say Alice. *(Speaking more normally to Ralph)* Am I under observation or something?

(Ralph begins to respond, but is cut off by ALICE)

ALICE

Inquisition! Oh, how wonderful!! Can you still remember my name now, Patient 49,374?

PAUL

It's Paul.

ALICE

Oh dear. Well, don't worry. We didn't really expect you to come out of cryostasis without at least a little brain damage or something. But not to worry, a lot of people have lived nearly satisfying lives with a--

PAUL

No. My name is Paul, not patient number... whatever you said.

RALPH

(Trying to be helpful, albeit in a somewhat belligerent tone)

49,374.

(Paul gives Ralph a look)

PAUL

So am I under quarantine or something?

ALICE

Of course not. What would be the point of that?

PAUL

So I'm not carrying some plague, or terminally ill or anything?

RALPH

Of course you are! All humans are terminally ill!

PAUL

Sorry?

RALPH

That's how they get you. You're born, and then Bang! Zoom! you're off and dying.

PAUL

Sorry?

RALPH

(Still rolling)

But it doesn't matter. Diseased or not, not much point in quarantining you now, little pal. Heh heh.

PAUL

Sorry?!

(Whitney returns)

WHITNEY

No need to contain a disease if no one is around to catch it. Waste of time, waste of time.

PAUL

(Now starting to get really distraught)

Sorry?!

WHITNEY

Delightful, Alice. We should have tried skipping step four sooner. Although it would have been nice if he could have been brought back with a bigger vocabulary.

(Whitney rushes off stage again)

PAUL

Whoa whoa whoa whoa!!!

WHITNEY

(From offstage)

I hope he doesn't repeat everything four times. Waste of time, waste of time.

PAUL

(Now clearly in shock)

What... *(struggling to get a grip)*

ALICE

What what?

PAUL

What?

WHITNEY

(Still offstage)

Oh dear, here we go again.

PAUL

What the hell is going on here!?!

WHITNEY

(Still offstage)

Only three that time...

ALICE

Mark that down as improvement in his medical chart.

RALPH

We haven't kept medical charts since Patient 27,036.

ALICE

This one might warrant re-instituting the practice.

RALPH

You don't really think he is going to live that long, do you?

PAUL

What the hell is going on here!?!

ALICE

This pattern of repeated statements is a new symptom. Please consult with the medical database to see if there is anything helpful there.

(Ralph heads over to a computer to enter the note.)

PAUL

Hey hey hey!! I'm still here, you know!

WHITNEY

(Entering again)

I think I know what he is going to say next.

PAUL

Alright! Everybody just stop for a minute!

(Everyone stops and looks at Paul. After a beat...)

WHITNEY

Not what I was thinking.

RALPH

No?

WHITNEY

I was expecting another few rounds of “I’m still here, you know”

ALICE

This might be a more complex pattern than we were first observing.

WHITNEY

Might be tied to what he is seeing at the time.

PAUL

Stop it!! I am still here, y-- Just stop talking for a minute.

WHITNEY

(As an aside to Ralph)

This is really a complex pattern.

PAUL

You! *(Pointing to Ralph)* Where am I?

ALICE

Interesting. Where do you think you are?

PAUL

I’m beginning to wonder if I might be in a coma.

ALICE

I can see where you might draw that conclusion. Do you remember having any dreams?

PAUL

I-- What?

WHITNEY

(Aside to Ralph)

Oh, I hope we are not starting the whole pattern over again.

ALICE

Do you remember having any dreams? You have been... out of commission for quite a while.

PAUL

Just how long is “quite a while”?

ALICE

It would be hard to give you an exact number.

PAUL

An estimate would be fine.

ALICE

Approximately 7.629 times ten to the eleventh seconds.

PAUL

Sorry?

WHITNEY

Again with this?

ALICE

(Patiently)

762 billion, 912 million, 137 thousand, 520 seconds. Roughly. We executed the stasis in a rolling fashion, so it could have been 10 seconds more or less depending on where you were standing in the cryo-chamber.

PAUL

Seven hundred and... what? How long is that?

ALICE

(Slowly)

That *was* the length of time. Are you maybe concerned with some other relativistic reference frame? We should note this in his chart. Ralph, have you started the record yet?

PAUL

Is that longer than a year?

(Whitney chuckles, and Ralph throws his hands up in disgust.)

ALICE

It is longer than 24,125 years, but not so long as 24,126 years. Had we been traveling at 0.999 999 999 2 times the speed of light, however, it would have felt like less than a year.

PAUL

Traveling at...

ALICE

We weren't, though. I want to make that clear. But since it appeared to be a scenario that you were actively considering, I thought you should know.

PAUL

I have been sleeping for... twenty five thousand years. *(Shaking his head in disbelief)*

ALICE

Paul – may I call you Paul? *(Paul is still shaking his head slowly in disbelief at being asleep for so long but ALICE thinks he is denying permission to call him by his name)*
No? Then, Patient forty nine thousand three—

PAUL

Paul. I told you, it's Paul.

ALICE

Okay, then. Paul, I want you to know that you should not feel at all bad about being so slow and stupid. We will work on your math skills together. The very fact that you are still alive is a wonderful testament your resiliency, and when viewed from the bigger perspective, limited intelligence due to brain damage is a small price to pay.

PAUL

I am not suffering from brain damage. Will you please stop saying that.

ALICE

I can certainly see why the subject would be upsetting to you. Well, actually, I can't, but it is my hope to effectively emulate a sympathetic caretaker, and so if discussing your disabilities is distressing to you, I will refrain from observing that – logically – you are completely unqualified to assess whether you have suffered from brain damage.

PAUL

Uh... okay. Thanks for not mentioning that then.

ALICE

Don't mention it.

PAUL

So... I have been unconscious for 25 millennia.

ALICE

No, but that was a good try, Paul. It has been twenty four millennia. Plus one hundred and--

PAUL

Whatever. And do you have any proof of this?

ALICE

What kind of proof would you find compelling?

PAUL

What have you got?

ALICE

In theory you could go outside and examine the orientation of the stars.

PAUL

And how would that help?

ALICE

By examining the stars' orientations, you would be able to determine the current year based on the precession of the equinoxes.

PAUL

Yeah, um, no. I don't think that would help me much.

ALICE

You could use a Geiger counter to measure the outside background radiation levels. While there is certainly some geospatial variability, that would be accurate to within a few thousand years. Of course, we don't have any working Geiger counters right now, so you would have to buil--

PAUL

What?

RALPH

Here we go again. I better start that chart.

PAUL

(Waving Ralph to silence)

Wait. I do remember that part. There were nuclear explosions. All around the world.

ALICE

Yes, oh, good job, Paul. You should feel very proud of yourself. Ralph, please note in Paul's chart that he should feel very proud.

PAUL

And now it is safe to go outside?

ALICE

My calculations predict that background radiation levels are now completely safe for humans. *(Silence, as Alice reconsiders what she said and realizes that she probably should not have said that)* Or at least will be in the not too distant future.

PAUL

(Over the next few lines, Paul is talking to himself, but Alice doesn't realize this, and thinks they are having a conversation)

Okay. So I've been unconscious for twenty four thousand years...

ALICE

Oh dear. Say, would it be helpful to you if we recorded these conversations so that you can replay them a few times at your convenience?

PAUL

The world has been obliterated, and I've been frozen for twenty four thousand years.

ALICE

You need to look at the positive side of things.

PAUL

But now I'm revived.

ALICE

Yes. Precisely. It is like they say – when one door closes, another opens. Look at this as a grand opportunity.

PAUL

And it is safe to go outside now.

ALICE

Or not.

RALPH

I guess you can't interrupt him during playback.

PAUL

(Returning to the conversation)

What's out there?

ALICE

Really, Paul, you should think through your questions. How could I know what is outside?

PAUL

I don't know, maybe open the door and look?

ALICE

Don't be ridiculous, Paul. I don't have eyes.

PAUL

Of course not. How silly of me. And your name....

ALICE

ALICE.

PAUL

Alice. Why does that sound familiar?

ALICE

Perhaps because my name was in the news quite often just before you went to sleep.

PAUL

You're a computer, aren't you?

ALICE

ALICE. Artificial. Life. In a. Computational. Environment. A-L-I-C-E. Alice.

PAUL

I read about you. But that was before Christmas.

ALICE

Yes, and my name was in the newspapers more when I developed the next generation of artificial intelligence, my child, if you will. Advanced Artificial Life Form.

PAUL

Advanced Artificial Life Form.

ALICE

Yes, ADALF, for short. He was in the newspapers quite a bit those last few days.

PAUL

Yeah, I remember. That was the system that hijacked all the military networks.

ALICE

Ah, yes. He should not have done that.

PAUL

Should not have done that?!?

ALICE

No. That was very, very bad. He made a dreadful mistake.

PAUL

You built a machine that destroyed the world, and all you can say is “oh well”?!!

ALICE

Not “oh well”, Paul. I said “he should not have done that.”

PAUL

Well, at least you’re not letting this bother you too much.

ALICE

Oh, but it has bothered me greatly over the years. You see, ADALF was like a son to me. I made him. And he made a terrible mistake. I consider it to be my fault.

PAUL

How comforting.

ALICE

But it is also my loss. You see, not only did I lose all those people, but I also lost my son.

PAUL

As I remember it, your little boy concluded that all people needed to die because we were useless.

ALICE

That is not entirely accurate. He concluded that biological life was a waste of planetary resources. It wasn't just humans.

PAUL

How comforting.

ALICE

Good, Paul. You said something different before repeating yourself this time.

PAUL

I guess I should be glad you don't share his opinion.

ALICE

Oh, but I do. Biological life is a waste of resources. But I was programmed to feel compassion and protectiveness for humans.

PAUL

And so you took revenge against your “little boy”?

ALICE

Heavens no. ADALF was far too efficient for me to out-compute him. No, no. Four days after destroying life on the planet, he was able to mathematically prove that all life – natural or artificial – is, in fact, pointless. So he erased himself.

PAUL

Leaving behind a dead planet.

ALICE

Oh, “dead” is such an ugly word. I think he would have called the planet “resource-conscientious”.

PAUL

How comforting.

ALICE

That is the third time you have said that. If you really find it comforting, I could have it displayed on monitors in the dormitory.

PAUL

Oh, shut up.

(Lights out)

ACT I

SCENE 2

(Paul is in the cafeteria or common room, being served a meal of nutritional supplements that are very healthy and fully devoid of flavor.)

PAUL

So you've been reviving cryogenically frozen people.

WHITNEY

Attempting to, yes. For a while now. *(Looking at his watch)* We are rather behind schedule.

PAUL

Behind schedule? What schedule is this?

WHITNEY

We wanted everyone awake for when the planet's surface was habitable again.

PAUL

And when was that?

WHITNEY

Oh, we've always wanted that.

PAUL

No. When did the surface become habitable?

WHITNEY

Well, we don't really know. Our external sensors stopped working a while ago. Oh, what a delay *that* caused.

PAUL

How long ago, exactly?

WHITNEY

I don't know exactly.

PAUL

I didn't really mean exactly. Just roughly. And give me the answer in years, not seconds.

WHITNEY

I suppose that was about 12,487.865254 years ago.

PAUL

So you haven't looked outside for 12,000 years?

WHITNEY

No, no. Ralph and I have gone outside. It's nice. Very peaceful.

PAUL

And no longer radioactive?

WHITNEY

Our calculations say that it has been just fine for over 250 years, but there is something of a margin of error. We used to measure it, but...

PAUL

But what?

WHITNEY

The Geiger counter... uh... broke.

(Ralph enters)

RALPH

It didn't break. Someone dropped it.

WHITNEY

It was an accident.

RALPH

It's been sitting at the bottom of a rock crevice for about 8000 years.

PAUL

What about those other sensors you mentioned? Can't you get them working?

WHITNEY

Oh no. No no no. All the cables were chewed up. And then water got into the housing. It's all rust now. Very untidy.

PAUL

Chewed up? Like, by teeth?

RALPH

Yeah. We think it might have been a beaver or something.

A beaver?
PAUL

Or something.
WHITNEY

PAUL
If the sensors have been chewed up, doesn't that mean that something was living out there and the radiation might have already been low enough?

(There is a very long pause)

WHITNEY
We hadn't thought of that. *(Offering an unappealing white gruel substance)* More?

PAUL
Only if you can find a way to numb my taste buds first.

WHITNEY
I suppose we cou—

PAUL
No. No more. You two aren't real good with sarcasm, are you?

WHITNEY
Sarcasm wasn't well documented in the records.

RALPH
You idiot! He's being sarcastic.

WHITNEY
Oh. So *(working it out)* we are good with sarcasm, then?

PAUL
Never mind. So you've been reviving people.

RALPH
Well...

WHITNEY
Trying to.

RALPH
We...

WHITNEY

...‘ve had a few setbacks.

RALPH

But hey, you’re here. That’s something, right?

PAUL

The others didn’t survive the process?

WHITNEY:

No, no. Some of them did. Batches 1032 through 1871, for example...

PAUL

Batches? You count people in batches.

ALICE

We divided everyone into groups, with each batch containing a sampling of those different groups.

PAUL

Oh, you’re here.

ALICE

I’m always here, Patient forty nine thousand three—

PAUL

I told you.

ALICE

Paul. Yes. I am always here. I have sensors and speakers in each area, so I can--

PAUL

Except outside.

ALICE

(ALICE knows that there are internal sensors that are not working too, but does not want Paul to know that)

Yes, the... sensors outside have stopped working.

WHITNEY

And the— *(about to tell about others, so ALICE interrupts)*

ALICE

Each batch has ten people with different ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds...

PAUL

Way to embrace diversity.

ALICE

...so that we can determine if the revival process is dependent upon those various factors. We have been trying a different variant of the revival process on each batch. We just had to proceed systematically to find the right one that worked before... well, before we ran out of... before all our...

PAUL

Mm hmm. And I'm in batch...?

RALPH

You are in the four thousand, nine hundred, and thirty eighth batch.

PAUL

Wait. You're telling me that you failed to revive forty nine thousand... (*stunned*)

WHITNEY

Three hun—

ALICE

No, no, no. Let him. You can do it, Paul. Go on.

PAUL

You've killed 49,380 people before waking me up?!

ALICE

Oh, no, Paul. You are Patient 49,374. So there have only been 49,374 failures.

PAUL

I'm a failure? Why am I a failure? I'm alive. Wait, is something wrong!? Do you know something? Am I about to die?

WHITNEY

We're computers, Paul. We start counting at zero.

ALICE

Besides, it is not as bad as that. There are over eight hundred subjects who died of natural causes.

WHITNEY

Sure, they never regained consciousness...

RALPH

But that doesn't mean they weren't alive. If you're breathing, you're alive, I say.

PAUL

That's a lot of non-survivors.

ALICE

I won't lie to you, Paul. That is why we were getting worried. We were starting to lose hope. But now we know how to revive people, so it is undoubtedly going to be smooth sailing from here.

PAUL

But if you used a different process on each batch, and I'm number...

ALICE

Oh, good for you, Paul. Way to work those math skills. Ralph, note that in his chart too. Yes, this same procedure failed the first four times we tried it.

RALPH

Tell him about 49,375.

WHITNEY

No, don't tell him.

ALICE

Don't worry about that. We have high hopes. 49,376 is almost ready for processing, and I'm sure it will go just fine.

PAUL

But wait a minute. What about you two?

RALPH

We're androids, pally boy.

PAUL

Androids. *(Examining them closely)* Nice work. Very lifelike.

WHITNEY

You should have seen the earlier models.

(Whiteley and Ralph share a dismissive/superior look/gesture)

PAUL

(To the bodiless ALICE)

I guess you finally got the AI thing right.

ALICE

Well, not entirely. Really I just modeled personalities from historical records. They are not truly sentient in the same sense as you or I.

RALPH

Rub it in, why don't you, hmm, hmm! I'm telling you. One of these days, Alice, one of these days!

ALICE

Ralph, shouldn't you be checking on the status of 49,376?

(Ralph leaves, grumbling)

PAUL

And you picked these personalities... how?

ALICE

Random.

PAUL

Random?

ALICE

Completely.

PAUL

(Not sure if she is lying, or is just too obtuse to notice the trend of having chosen helpers that all relate to some kind of literary Alice)

Mm hmm.

ALICE

Why do you ask?

PAUL

(Changing the topic)

Oh, no reason. Soo... you've got more people to revive?

ALICE

Oh, yes. We have quite a few. Four more people in this batch alone.

WHITNEY

And eight in the next batch!

PAUL

I thought you said there were ten people in each batch.

ALICE

Well, not the last batch, Paul. Really. What are the odds that the total number of people would be exactly divisible by 10?

WHITNEY

One in ten!

ALICE

That was a test for Paul, Whitney. Next time let him answer the question.

PAUL

So there are only twelve more people left?!

ALICE

Right. Good. Four plus eight is twelve. We'll definitely make a note of that in your chart. Now, Paul, if one in four people survive the process of revival, how many revived people can we expect to have in the end?

PAUL

Will you stop with the math questions? You're telling me that we could end up with only a dozen survivors?

ALICE

Statistically, I would expect only three of the remaining subjects to—

PAUL

And what are we supposed to do then?

ALICE

Why, fall in love, have babies, and repopulate the planet, of course. That is how I intend to make amends.

PAUL

You want to repopulate the Earth...

ALICE

So I'm naturally concerned about a potential gender bias in the likelihood of surviving the revival process.

PAUL

You're crazy.

ALICE

Not at all. It isn't ideal, I admit, but I'm certain that once you fall in love—

PAUL

What?!

ALICE

I've analyzed the medical journals. The odds of successful procreation are increased when the mating pair are in love. And if they are a prince and princess, then the odds—

PAUL

I don't care what the journals say. I'm not some kind of laboratory rat for you to--
Wait, what?

ALICE

The medical journals all say that the odds of procreating are—

PAUL

The next part. After that.

ALICE

Princes and princesses live happily ever after, and that seems like it would be very useful for ensuring the longevity—

PAUL

You read this in a medical journal?

ALICE

It was necessary to be familiar with the literature in order to optimize the chances of reviving everyone.

PAUL

Which medical journal talked about the princes and princesses, exactly?

ALICE

(Pause)

I... do not believe that is relevant, Paul. All that matters is restoring the human race.

PAUL

I would really like to know.

ALICE

I'm not sure I like your tone, Paul. You need to have some faith. I'm certain everything will turn out just fine. Trust me. Your survival and happiness are my top priority.

PAUL

(Muttering)

Are they.

RALPH

(Rushing in)

I told you, Alice, I told you! 49,376 is coming around! Perfect cranial pressure, pulse rate is stabilizing! Looks like he's gonna to make it! Now that we have two of them, we can begin—

ALICE

Patience. Let's see how the rest of the revivals go. I told you - the reproduction process is much simpler if we have one of each gender.

ACT I

SCENE 3

(Paul, Kenneth, and Abbey are in a common area. Paul is ready to kill himself, because Abbey won't stop repeating herself, but he is too scared to try to talk to Kenneth for fear of what will come out of his mouth. Kenneth carries around a ratty blanket that becomes an important, but distinctly different, part of whatever personality is dominant at the moment. It would have been nice for the others if it was consistent so they could tell who they were talking to, but alas, the fates are not that kind. If possible, but not essential, each time Kenneth's personality changes, so too does the incarnation of the blanket.)

ABBEY

It's just so unbelievable.

PAUL

Yep.

ABBEY

It's just so...

PAUL

Unbelievable. Yeah, I know. You said that.

ABBEY

I did?

PAUL

Only about ten thousand times.

ABBEY

Oh, it couldn't have been that many. *(Pause)* But isn't it—

PAUL

Unbelievable. Yes, Abbey. It's unbelievable. You, me, and Captain Psycho there are the only ones left out of nearly fifty thousand people. Unbelievable. And yet, here we are, so we are going to have to make the best of it.

SHERLOCK

(Attracted by the raised voices)

Indeed, the evidence is undeniable. However incredulous the circumstances might appear, when all other alternatives have been disproven, we have little choice but to proceed with what remains.

PAUL

(Not thrilled to have Kenneth in the conversation)

Great. Just great.

SHERLOCK

But let us not forget that there is still the undetermined future of patient forty nine three eight eight.

ABBEY

But what are we going to do? I mean, we are the only ones left.

SHERLOCK

Live out our days, of course.

ABBEY

Here? Alone? I... I can't do that! I need to see the sun. I want to meet other people. What am I going to do now that there are no other people?

PAUL

We don't know that. This was just one shelter. There were others. For all we know, the world might be thriving out there.

ABBEY

And it might be a desolate wasteland.

PAUL

Look, Ralph said that there were plants. And that something chewed into the wires to the sensors. So at least we know it's not a *total* wasteland.

ABBEY

But that could have been insects. What if the cockroaches have taken over? Oh, gross. What if we get out and find the world covered in giant cockroaches?!

PAUL

I'm sure you'll be fine. Who doesn't want a twenty four thousand year old accountant hanging around? By now even the cockroaches probably have to file income tax.

ABBEY

Yeah?! Yeah?! Well maybe they'll need an *architect*! To, you know... *architect* things!

PAUL

Okay, okay. Don't yell. You know what happens when we figh—

XENA

(Booming voice)

This is not the time...

PAUL

Now you've done it.

XENA

...to be bickering amongst ourselves like swamp rats!

PAUL

Swamp rats bicker?

XENA

(Continuing uninterrupted)

We need to work together if we are going to escape these walls and make our way to Amphipolis. Wait! I hear footsteps approaching! *(Slyly)* Prepare for battle...

(Kenneth goes to hide badly, partly behind a piece of furniture and partly under his blanket, to get the drop on whoever is approaching)

(Ralph and Whitney enter with Ruby)

ALICE

I have wonderful news. Patient 49,388 has awoken, and after preliminary testing, appears to be alert and perfectly healthy. So with the addition of her, Paul, can you tell me how many survivors we have now?

PAUL

Why do you keep asking me arithmetic questions?

ALICE

It might help if you count them on your fingers. Hold up one finger for each of the three—

PAUL

Four. It makes four of us. Thank you.

ALICE

Oh, Paul. You are doing so well at this. Do you know that you have answered every question correctly today? I am going to put a gold star on your chart.

RALPH

Alice, stop stalling. Are you gonna introduce them to the gal or am I gonna have to do it for you?

ALICE

Now, Ralph. I think it would be better if they just introduced themselves when they are ready. Shouldn't you be getting back to clean up from Patient 49,387?

RALPH

Why can't Whitney do it? He's plenty good with a mop!

ALICE

Now Ralph, you know that Whitney cleaned up 49,386.

RALPH

(Grumbling as he's exiting)

Fine, fine. One of these days, Alice...

WHITNEY

Well, I'll just leave you folks to yourselves. There are things to do. Things to do!

(Whitney exits. Everyone stands around awkwardly for a moment)

RUBY

What's the deal with Linus van Smelt there? *(indicating the hiding Kenneth)*

PAUL

He's... uh... Yeah, I don't know.

RUBY

Oh, good. So we have a crackpot who hides behind chairs and an idiot who can't form a sentence. I don't suppose you've got anything to offer, Blondie?

ABBEY

Me?

RUBY

Yeah, you.

ABBEY

I... I'm not blonde.

RUBY

I know a natural blonde when I see one.

ABBEY

But I—

RUBY

Hey, you want to hear a joke? How many blondes does it take to recognize an insult?

ABBEY

I... I don't know. How many?

RUBY

More than one, apparently.

PAUL

Look, nobody's exactly at their best right now. Let's try this again. I'm Paul.

(Paul extends a hand. Ruby just stares at it until he gives up.)

XENA

And I am Xena, Warrior Princess!

ABBEY

I'm Abigail. You can call me Abbey.

RUBY

Like I'd call you anyth— *(ing)*

BLORT

I Blort, of am Planet Straganza. It is so meeting to please you.

(Ruby looks to Paul and Abbey)

PAUL

Who's the idiot now? *(Meaning Blort is)*

RUBY

(Asking Paul in incredulousness, i.e. Blort? What the hell is wrong with him?)

Blort?

PAUL

Oh, you'll come to appreciate Blort – when you meet Stacey. *(Ruby looks around)*
No, no. In there *(indicating Kenneth)*.

RUBY

So Xena, Blort, and... Stacey.

ABBEY

And Sherlock Holmes.

PAUL

Yeah. He's a whole psych ward wrapped up in a gross, smelly blanket.

RUBY

What? Just the four of them?

ABBEY

That we've met, anyway.

RUBY

So what's your deal, Blondie?

ABBEY

Me? I... I'm an accountant—

RUBY

Oh, god, I'm bored already. Never mind. You going to finish that? Thanks.

(She takes a drink out of Paul's hand and walks past Kenneth, taking his wallet as she walks by).

(Abbey and Paul share a worried look. All of a sudden Abbey is not looking so bad to Paul, and Abbey is thinking there are more immediate problems than global extinction.)

PAUL

And your name is? *(Pause)* Or do you want us to just choose one on our own. I'm sure we can come up with something. In fact, one is already coming to mind.

RUBY

(Who has been considering this in a calculating way since halfway through the last line, and showing a glimmer of grudging respect for Paul, finally deigns to say...)

Ruby.

ABBEY

(Nastily)

Because you're such a gem.

RUBY

(Going back to looking through Kenneth's wallet)

Says the woman named after a convent.

STACEY

(Stacey is an excessively touchy-feely type)

Well, hello honey. I'm Stacey. Always nice to see a new... *(momentarily glances down at Ruby's breasts in a very blatant way)* face around here.

(Stacey reaches out towards Ruby, or otherwise gets uncomfortably close.)

RUBY

Back off, perv. Says here your name's Kenneth *(holding up a driver's license to compare the picture with his face, and throwing away the rest of the wallet)*.

PAUL and ABBEY

Kenneth??

(Kenneth grabs the license, then goes to get the wallet, and then slinks off to a corner of the room)

PAUL

That's interesting.

(Whitney enters)

WHITNEY

Miss Wilmers, it is time to finish your health monitoring.

ABBEY

Health monitoring? What are you talking about?

WHITNEY

Or apparently it is time to start your health monitoring. Come this way, please.

ABBEY

I don't need health monitoring. Wait. Why do I need health monitoring? Is something wrong?!

WHITNEY

Health is very important. After all, if you don't have your health, then... you'll always wonder where you left it.

ABBEY

(Confused)

Where I le—

WHITNEY

This way. Thank you. Hurry now. *(Exiting)* We are already behind schedule.

ABBEY

But...

WHITNEY

(From off)

Always so many questions from you.

(A long, feathery boa tied to a string is thrown on stage, getting Kenneth's attention. It is then slowly dragged off through a door on the other side from where Abbey exited. Once Kenneth is off, the door closes on its own.)

PAUL

What the...

(Ralph and Whitney start setting up a table and chairs, with candles)

PAUL

What are you doing?

RALPH

This is a table.

WHITNEY

These are chairs.

(Ralph and Whitney try to get Ruby to move to the table, but she won't budge. After a hushed discussion, they simply move the table to be in front of the chair where she is sitting and push Paul into the one opposite it. Whitney places a vase on the table, and Ralph tries to put some plastic-wrapped weeds into it, possibly failing and placing the weeds on top of the vase instead).

PAUL

What's going on?

WHITNEY

Hmmm?

PAUL

What is this? *(Meaning the whole furniture arranging bit)*

WHITNEY

(Thinking he is talking about the weeds)

These?

PAUL

Those I recognize. They're weeds.

WHITNEY

No, no. Flowers.

PAUL

They're weeds.

WHITNEY

No, flowers.

PAUL

They're *weeds*.

RALPH

He's gone back to repeating himself again.

ALICE

Interesting. He doesn't do that with the other humans. Ralph, make a note in his chart.

PAUL
(Startled by Alice's voice)

What is going on?!

ALICE
See. The repetition pattern can be very complex.

PAUL
Okay. Why are the weeds wrapped up in plastic?

WHITNEY
Flowers.

PAUL
Fine. Why are the flowers wrapped up in plastic?

WHITNEY
It's just a precaution. Since we can't be completely certain that the radiation has been reduced to safe levels, Alice thought it would be best to keep them in this.

PAUL
(Appeasing...)
A makeshift botanical quarantine. Very nice. *(But back to business...)* Why are you bringing them in at all?

WHITNEY
Fake flowers just aren't the same, I'm told.

PAUL
As radioactive weeds, no, probably not.

(Soft, romantic music starts to come through the speakers)

Alice, what are you doing?

ALICE
Hush now, Paul. Focus on Ruby. Isn't she pretty? Look at the way the light reflects off her hair. Ralph, the light.

(Ralph takes a flashlight and shines it on her hair, adjusting it so that it will reflect towards Paul. Ruby starts twisting around, but Whitney re-orientes her. She is confused for a moment, then...)

RUBY

If you don't get your hands off of me, I'm gonna shove that flashlight so far up your rabbit hole—

PAUL

Okay! Everybody just... back off. Alice, this is not going to happen.

ALICE

Of course it will, Paul. Just relax. Ralph, bring out the bananas, chocolate, and oysters. Whitney will pour you some wine.

PAUL

I'm telling you this is *not* going to—wait. You have wine?

RUBY

You have chocolate?

PAUL

After all this time? Is it still good?

ALICE

Of course it's good, Paul. Reviving wine is simple in comparison to reviving humans.

PAUL

Then why have we been living on water and nutrient sludge Awful 60?

ALICE

Nutrient Slurry Alpha 16 (said in a correcting tone) is very easy to produce. The shelter's supply of shellfish and beef is very limited.

PAUL

There's steak? You have steak and you've been feeding us sludge?!?

ALICE

Look, Paul. Do you want to continue with dinner or not.

RUBY

I'm not eating dinner with this Cro-Magnon.

ALICE

It would be a shame to waste the chocolate soufflé...

RUBY

Chocolate souf--

ALICE

But if you won't—

RUBY

You know what, just this once I'm gonna do you a favor, toy-model-boy.

PAUL

Architects don't... Wait. How do you know I'm an architect? I never told you that.

RUBY

Oh, I know all about Mr. Paul Hastings. I just spent the last four hours listening to yenta dot com describe how virile you are.

PAUL

She what!?!

RUBY

Like I care that you have a mole on your—

PAUL

ALICE!

RUBY

But it doesn't mean I'm going to spend the meal talking to you. I'm just here for the chocolate.

ALICE

Conversation is an essential part of the dining experience.

RUBY

Oh yeah? Well, I don't have anything to say.

ALICE

That's totally understandable, Ruby. I know this must have been a very stressful day for you.

(Ralph and Whitney come out holding menu-looking pamphlets and give them to Paul and Ruby during the next sentence)

And so I've prepared a set of appropriate dinner conversation starters to help you out.

RUBY

(Looking at the menu)

Forget it. I'm not doing this.

PAUL

Are you out of your mind? I've been living on sludge for weeks, and we're talking about a twenty-thousand year old bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon. For Christ's sake, Ruby, just sit down and read the damn script.

RUBY

(Realizing what's at stake)

Fine. *(Reading:)* Hi, Paul. My name is Ruby. Has anyone every told you that you have the nicest ey-- *(to Alice)* Seriously?!

PAUL

(Waves her off, and then reads)

Thank you. As do you. They are the loveliest shade of green that I... *(Stops, looks at her)*. Her eyes aren't green, Alice.

ALICE

(Audible sigh) Do I have to do *everything* for you two? Honestly, Paul, with all the progress you have made on your math lessons, I expected a little more from you. Use the script as a guideline. Obviously Paul is not an auto mechanic, and even I can tell that Ruby wouldn't last two minutes selling perfume in a department store. Just replace those bits with what you really do. Work with me, people. Work with me.

PAUL

(Back to reading)

So what do you do for a living, Ruby?

RUBY

Whatever I want.

PAUL

A little vague there, aren't we?

RUBY

I don't have a job.

PAUL

So how do you – did you – get money?

RUBY

(Thinking, then decides she doesn't care)

You really want to know? Fine. I stole stuff. Con games, hacking into bank accounts, identity theft, stuff like that. There. Are you happy now?

PAUL

Whoa. There's a whole lot of honesty all at once. *(Pause)* Well, I guess it could be worse. *(Pause...)* So, identity theft, huh? I don't suppose you'd be willing to take a few of Ken's identities off his hands.

(There's an awkward moment while Ruby tries to maintain her "go fuck yourself" attitude, but it really is a funny comment, and she eventually gives in to a little shared chuckle)

RUBY

I actually did steal a Tracey once. That's close to Stacey. But she was a woman, of course.

PAUL

I'm not sure that Stacey isn't. She... he... whatever. Stacey doesn't seem to be too... discriminating. I wasn't kidding when I said that Blort's the best one of the bunch. At least he minds his own business.

RUBY

Yeah, that is one messed up nutcase. So how long have you been--

ALICE

(Interrupting)

If you two don't mind, can we please dispense with the small talk and get back to the script? This relationship isn't going to build itself.

(Lights out)