Susan Shear





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THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW

by Susan Shear

CAST

3 M, 4 W, flexible. Actors can play several roles. This play also works for a larger or smaller cast. Many scenes can be played by all female characters.

ACTS and SCENES in this play can stand alone and are customizable for your production. You may choose to include one act, both acts, or a selection of individual scenes at your discretion.

LIST OF SCENES

ACT ONE

The House of Tomorrow
 It's Time 1
 Pam, Rick

3. Fast and Friendly Clarice, Charlie, Mrs. Clark, Angel

4. It's Time 2 Pam, Bonnie

5. Technically Speaking Marion, Barbara, Jenny

6. Freedom Road 1 Sid, Marge, Mike, Harriet Herman,

7. Freedom Road 2 Sid, Nate, Marge 8. High Horse Dennis, Grace

9. Freedom Road 3 Sid, Mike, Harriet Herman

10. It's Time 3 Pam, Rick 11. It's Time 4 Rick, Gene

12. Go for It George, Dwayne, Jill, Velma

ACT TWO

1. Dollars and Sense Tanya, Essie, Lydia, Francie

2. Mortified Waitress, Actor 1, Actor 2, Carolyn, Art

3. It's Time 5 Rick, Gene

4. Searching
5. It's Time 6
6. Movin' On
Ray, Rebecca, Misty
Pam, Rick, Bonnie
Henry, Wilma

7. Minding Mom Sylvia, Kass, Geoff, Linda, Jeremy, Sandy

8. Whizzing Actor 1, Actor 3

9. It's Time 7 Pam, Rick 10. The House of Tomorrow Full Cast

SCENE NOTES

It's Time: Versions are throughout the play, with characters Pam and Rick, seniors who are looking for new love. Both are widowed and anxious about dating and their aging looks. Bonnie and Gene are their friends and are the same age.

Fast and Friendly: Clarice is a retired senior, single, energetic and feisty. She's a *nobody-messes-with-me* kind of gal. Charlie (any age, can be played by male or female) should have a foreign accent and should sound like a programmed machine. Mrs. Clark, a quintessential corporate droll, and the Angel can be any age.

Technically Speaking: Marion is an elderly senior who plays on her neediness and tosses guilt like a discus thrower. Her daughter, Barbara, is a likeable and caring senior. Jenny, the granddaughter, is youthful and savvy, and can be any age over 50.

Freedom Road: Sid is a senior widower who loves being active. His children, Mike and Marge, can be in their 40's, 50's, or even 60's, busy but overly involved in their father's life. Mike may be played by a female as a sister, if desired. Mrs. Herman is a curmudgeonly, fussy, and humorless senior.

High Horse: Dennis and Grace are both over 50. Dennis is a down-to-earth blue-collar worker and may be played by a female as a sister. Grace has been divorced several times, with kids.

Go for It: George is a senior, tired, and worn down by years of boring work. The others can be any age but are clearly corporate worker bees. Dwayne could be played by a female, or even eliminated.

Dollars and Sense: Lydia is elderly and old fashioned, dressing frugally and simply, with a Brooklyn accent, if possible. Francie is a youthful looking senior (or tries to be) and dresses in fashionable, expensive clothes. Essie and Tanya are any age. Essie dresses simply and has a typical beauty parlor, while Tanya is hip and works in a salon/spa.

Mortified: Art and Carolyn are seniors who care about their appearance and want to look good. Carolyn especially tries to impress. The Waitress, who can be any age, has a wry sense of humor. The man and woman can be any age and are snooty and sophisticated.

Searching: Misty is over 40, an unconventional, creative 'hippie' type. Rebecca, senior, is a practical type. Ray, senior, is a 'Father Knows Best' type.

Moving On: Wilma and Henry are youthful and spunky seniors. There's still a spark of romance in their marriage although they don't see it at the moment.

Minding Mom: Sylvia is very elderly, conservative, hard of hearing, and somewhat cranky. Kass is a senior retired schoolteacher type. Geoff, her husband, is a retired bureaucrat. Jeremy, in his 50's or 60's, is flashy and lives a high lifestyle. His wife, Linda, about the same age, likes her money more than Jeremy's family. Sandy is gay but tries to hide it from Sylvia.

Whizzing: Actor 1 is an older man who shows his age by his slow peeing. Actor 3 is more youthful and pees like a waterfall. Sound effects are very effective in this scene.

ACT ONE Scene 1: House of Tomorrow

Setting: A generic living space with simple bar stools, benches, tables and chairs, and a coat rack which will moved as needed in individual scenes.

At Rise: ACTOR 1 enters, followed by ACTOR 2, ACTOR 3, ACTOR 4, ACTOR 5, ACTOR 6, ACTOR 7.

ACTOR 1: The other day my grandson called to say he needed to write a school report about people of different ages. He wanted to know...

ACTOR 2: What it felt like at *my* age. I don't know, I said sometimes like an old house, past its prime...

ACTOR 3: Sitting on a foundation a bit cracked from life's stresses...

ACTOR 4: A house with walls of creases and lines, curled and coiled...

ACTOR 5: Plumbing that's rusty but thankfully still working...

ACTOR 6: The old house frame, a little bent out of shape, a few stiff joints, shingles worn thin and weathered. Minutes and days, weeks and years tucked away ever so neatly...

ACTOR 1: And while on a stormy night, the old house shudders and creaks, shaking from winds of woe and wet from tears of trauma...

ACTOR 4: Faded but fond memories still hang on, filling empty spaces and corridors of time...

ACTOR 3: With all its wear and tear, the old house has its own history to pass on and the old house perseveres. In the twilight hours, mirrors stand tall allowing for self-reflection at last...

ACTOR 6: But, I told my grandson, the old house can be remodeled, rejuvenated; each room filled with new experiences that surprise and delight. The old house is what you make of it, what strength you take from deep within the walls of yesterday and what passions you pursue in your tomorrows...

ACTOR 7: It can be vibrant and full of life if you keep your doors and windows wide open and welcoming...

ACTOR 1: I said to my grandson...the old house is not old unless you think of it that way. The old house has a future, it can become...A House of Tomorrow. (*they exit*)

ACT ONE Scene 2: It's Time 1

At Rise: PAM enters and crosses to an imaginary mirror at Down Center. She makes faces in the mirror, fluffs her hairs, looks at her arms, legs etc. She sighs in disgust and exits. RICK enters, crosses to the 'mirror,' tries to pull in his stomach, checks his teeth, runs his hands through his hair etc. He exits in disgust.

ACT ONE Scene 3: Fast and Friendly

Setting: *CLARICE's apartment*.

At Rise: CLARICE enters her apartment, takes off her coat, and sees that she has a phone message.

CLARICE: Oh no, I hope they aren't canceling dinner. (she picks up a pad of paper and a pen nearby and presses play)

MESSAGE: (*voiceover*) This is Fast and Friendly Medicare Mail Order Pharmacy calling with an important message for Mrs. Clarice Fletcher. You have a prescription refill ready. Just give us a call and we'll help you out right away. 1-888 887-8777. Give our agent this code: FFZH so we can expedite your call. Thanks for using your Fast and Friendly Medicare Mail Order Pharmacy. Goodbye.

CLARICE: (*CLARICE writes the phone number & code on the pad*) It must be my Zoloft. (*she goes to the phone and calls the number, puts the phone on speaker*)

MESSAGE: (*voiceover*) This is Fast and Friendly Medicare Mail Order Pharmacy. Please listen carefully as our menu has recently changed. Say or enter 5249 if you're a customer.

CLARICE: 5249...yes. Good.

MESSAGE: Thanks for calling Fast and Friendly Medicare Mail Order Pharmacy. Please enter 5249 if you're a customer.

CLARICE: I did that already but okay...5249 one more time!!!

MESSAGE: Your call is very important to us but our Fast and Friendly agents are currently helping other customers at this time but we'll be with you shortly. (music plays. CLARICE puts the phone on speaker and takes off her coat etc. She walks around, waiting)

MESSAGE: In order to serve you better, please tell us your phone number starting with the area code.

CLARICE: My phone, yes, 444-234-5679.

MESSAGE: I'm sorry. I didn't get that. Please tell us your phone number.

CLARICE: (louder) 444-234-5679.

MESSAGE: That's 444-234-5677.

CLARICE: (yelling) No! 444-234-567-nine!!

MESSAGE: Sorry, I'm still not getting it. Please enter—

CLARICE: (yelling) I want to speak to a real person. A real live person.

MESSAGE: Hold please. (music returns)

CHARLIE: (offstage) This is Charlie, your Fast and Friendly agent here. Can I be of assistance?

CLARICE: Oh good, a real person. This is Clarice Fletcher and I'm calling to refill my prescription and, oh yes, there's a code I'm supposed to give you to speed up the process. Here it is, FFZH.

CHARLIE: Hmmm. Let me see. Where did you get that code from?

CLARICE: From the recorded message your company left today on my phone.

CHARLIE: Hmm. I see. Hold please. (*music again. CLARICE paces*) I'm back. I don't know anything about a code. Can you please spell your last name for me?

CLARICE: Yes of course. F-l-e-t-c-h-e-r. Fletcher.

CHARLIE: Got it.

CLARICE: Good. You see I'm in a bit of a hurry here so if you could—

CHARLIE: Of course. Now Mrs. Letcher, can you give me your phone number?

CLARICE: Not Letcher, Fletcher!

CHARLIE: Can you spell it please?

CLARICE: F as in Frustrated; L as in Lousy; E as in Evil; T as in Ticked Off; C as in Cranky—

CHARLIE: Great. I have it now. Let me see...hmmm...uh huh.

CLARICE: Look I've got company coming for dinner and I just want to order the refill. I gave you the code which is supposed to--

CHARLIE: Ah, the code. Let's try the code again. Please hurry as I have my break coming up—

CLARICE: (she reads from the note pad) FFZH.

CHARLIE: FFZ8

CLARICE: (yelling) Not 8, H as in Hell.

CHARLIE: We seem to be having a bit of a communication problem. Hold Mrs. Letcher. (he's gone and music returns)

CLARICE: Hello...hello?

CHARLIE: I'm back, Mrs. Fletcher. I see what the problem was. It's Fletcher not Letcher. I have it now. You must have an accent because I couldn't understand you.

CLARICE: Right. So we're finished?

CHARLIE: I certainly hope so. Hmmm? Oh my!!!

CLARICE: What? Now what?

CHARLIE: There is one little problem. It seems we delivered this prescription to you two weeks ago so you can't get it now because it's too soon. Medicare won't cover it. It seems I've missed my break for nothing. You really should not have contacted us—

CLARICE: No...no. I never received it. I never even ordered it. There must be some mistake.

CHARLIE: The computer says that we sent it out so there's nothing I can do. Now I have to—

CLARICE: What's your name?

CHARLIE: Charlie.

CLARICE: Look, Charlie, I did not receive it two weeks ago. Check your records again. This is ridiculous. What kind of a jackass, inefficient, disorganized company—

CHARLIE: Hold please. (music plays)

MRS. CLARK: (*offstage*) Hello Mrs. Letcher. This is Mrs. Clark, a Fast and Friendly supervisor. What seems to be the problem here?

CLARICE: I've been on the phone with your, whatshisname...Charlie, forever. Can we just take care of this refill so—

MRS. CLARK: My, my, Mrs. Letcher. We are a bit anxious today, aren't we? I can see why we need that Zoloft. Just take a deep breath and let's start from the beginning. Can you tell me—

CLARICE: Are you kidding me? From the beginning? Look I want to speak to someone so I can...hello? *(dial tone)* Heaven help me. Heaven help me. (*CLARICE puts her head on the table.*)

ANGEL: (*enters carrying a bell*) You've reached Heaven, the Office of the Angels. We're not here at the moment, so please leave a message after the bell and we'll get right back to you. Got to fly, have a heavenly day. (*ANGEL exits*)

CLARICE: (CLARICE stands, opens the bottle of Zoloft, empties all the pills in her hand, swallows them and walks out as in a daze)

ACT ONE Scene 4: It's Time 2

Setting: PAM's living room. There is an imaginary mirror Down Center.

At Rise: *PAM* and *BONNIE* enter outfitted for a day of shopping.

PAM: I'll just be a minute, Bonnie. (*PAM exits and yells from offstage*). I can't believe I almost left without my wallet. I'm so absent minded these days.

BONNIE: No problem. We've got all day to shop. (*PAM re-renters with her wallet*) Is it the online dating thing that's got you frazzled? You're not yourself.

PAM: Maybe. It's just, uh...I don't know if I'm ready.

BONNIE: Any responses?

PAM: A few. Wow, one guy compared himself to a car.

BONNIE: A car?

PAM: Oh yeah. He's a refurbished model in fairly good condition with a hot interior and his gears are still cranking! Of course, his photo looked like he'd been in a few wrecks along the way. (*beat*) I don't know about this online dating.

BONNIE: Wasn't it your Ruthie who talked you into it?

PAM: She said it was time.

BONNIE: Look, Pam, give it a chance. They can't all be Edsels. And Ruthie's probably right. It *is* time. Come on, let's lighten up that wallet of yours! (*they exit*)

ACT ONE Scene 5: Technically Speaking

Setting: *MARION's living room*.

At Rise: BARBARA, MARION's daughter, enters followed by JENNY, BARBARA's granddaughter. They move a few furniture pieces around. JENNY looks at her watch)

JENNY: All done! Jesus, it's getting late. I've really got to get going and I thought you needed to help Dad? Weren't you here nearly every day this week?

BARBARA: Yes, but you know your grandmother. (*BARBARA yells offstage*) Ma...we'll be going then. (*MARION enters with a crossword puzzle book and a pen*)

MARION: What'd you say, Barbie?

BARBARA: We're going. Thanks for breakfast and lunch. I think we got a lot done in the basement and we re-arranged the furniture up here like you wanted.

MARION: You leaving so soon? What do you have to do that's so important?

BARBARA: We have stuff to do, you know. Jack wants me to help with the taxes and Jen has--

MARION: When were you here last, Barbie? I can't even remember? I know it wasn't Monday because I had a dentist appointment. Henrietta took me.

BARBARA: I was here on, Wednesday and Friday but (*she looks at JENNY*) I guess we can stay a little longer. Jen?

JENNY: Sure, Mom, but just a few minutes. I really need to get going. (JENNY rolls her eyes but sits and takes out her iPAD. BARBARA sits next to MARION, who starts working on her crossword puzzle book)

MARION: What was the name of that funny boy on *Our Gang*? You know, uh, the one with the squeaky voice. Six letters...hmm. (*Phone rings very loudly. Barbara and Jenny react but MARION calmly goes to the phone and answers*) Hello. HELLO? Anyone there? Hello? Yes, I can barely hear you. Who is it? What? Hello? (*she hangs up*) This darn phone. The minute I pick it up there's all this crackling noise so I can't hear who's there; happens all the time.

BARBARA: I thought you liked this phone! Remember we hooked up the other phone but you said it didn't work right? So now you don't like this one either?

JENNY: Grandma, could it be your hearing aids?

MARION: Huh?

BARBARA: Your hearing aids?

MARION: What?

JENNY: (loudly) Your hearing aids, grandma?

MARION: No, it could not! It's the new-fangled phone I tell you. The phone. I'm not even wearing my hearing aids.

BARBARA: All right. I'll re-connect the other phone. Where is it? In the hall closet? (*she exits*)

MARION: The third shelf from the bottom. The one with Dad's old radio. See it? Henrietta's daughter knows where everything is in her mother's house because she's there every day. (BARBARA re-enters with the phone and starts to set it up)

BARBARA: Okay, let me unplug this one and set it up. Jen, give me a hand, will you sweetie? Hopefully it will work this time and you'll be good to go. But, maybe putting in your hearing aids would help? (JENNY and BARBARA install the new phone)

MARION: Huh?

BARBARA: Never mind. Okay...let's see. All done.

JENNY: Great. Time to go. We'll see you soon, Grandma. (*JEN starts to rise when MARION goes to the phone and looks it over*)

MARION: So many buttons. I don't remember there being so many buttons. Hmm, I can't remember how to work this one. Can one of you show me what to do?

BARBARA: Ma, it's not very different from the other one that you had. Remember how much time we spent going over and over all the directions? (MARION looks helplessly at her. BARBARA crosses to phone and JEN sits/types on her phone) Okay, let's see. You sit yourself there and I'll go over it all again. (BARBARA holds up the receiver) This button is for call waiting and this...

MARION: Call waiting? What's that again?

BARBARA: It's when someone clicks in and you want to catch that call while you put the other call on hold. See you push this here. It says 'Flash.'

MARION: Uh huh. Yes. Why do they call it 'Flash' if they mean--

BARBARA: Call waiting. Yes well, I don't know, just try to remember 'Flash.' Now here's the volume...and it seems you like it very loud, so this is how you set this—

MARION: So that's on the side but there are 3 buttons here. How will I know which to use?

BARBARA: Ma, it's this one with the sound icon here. See?

MARION: I-what?

BARBARA: A picture, see the little...uh...sound thingy?

MARION: I'll be needing my other glasses for that. Just a sec. (*MARION exits and returns with other glasses which she puts on*) Now let's see that little 'I-thingy' again. Uh huh. Yes. That picture makes more sense than...'Flush.'

BARBARA: Flash! Well, would you want to put it on speaker at any time? If so, here's the speaker button—

MARION: Speaker? Why would I be wanting that?

BARBARA: It's so anyone in the room can hear.

MARION: Barbie, I'm here by myself most of the time unless Henrietta stops by. Of course, she wouldn't be interested in my calls. You know Henrietta, don't you? And her daughter, Tessie? I get to see Tessie a lot because she visits her mom every day!

BARBARA: Maybe Tessie doesn't have a frickin' life.

MARION: What?

BARBARA: Nothing. I think that should do it. Jenny, let's go. (*BARBARA starts to get up. JEN rises*)

MARION: Barbie, I'm thinking we should write it all down. I'll never remember all this after you leave and you'll probably not be back to visit for quite a while. Now where is my pad of paper?

JENNY: I think I'll get something to drink, something strong...like arsenic! (*JEN exits. BARBARA finds pen and paper*)

BARBARA: So, let's see. Didn't we write this down already, last time? (*MARION looks confused*) But what the heck, one more time! I'll draw a picture of a phone here, see. And here's the talk button and—

MARION: You never mentioned a *talk* button before. Where is that?

BARBARA: (*loudly*) Here Mom! The green one and it's what you push when the phone rings and you want to talk if the good Lord is lookin' after us and there's no crackling.

MARION: And look, here's the off button. Hot diggity! It's not so hard, is it? (BARBARA finishes the drawing and gives the pad of paper to MARION. MARION fiddles with the notes and the phone. BARBARA rises, hugs MARION, starts to exit then yells to JEN who is still offstage)

BARBARA: Oh I nearly forgot. Jen! (JENNY enters with a glass and a bottle of liquor)

JENNY: Yeah? Ready?

BARBARA: Sorry sweetheart, before we go, I meant to ask you a little something about my smart phone. Could you take a look? (*BARBARA pulls out her cell phone*) I updated some apps and now something is really screwed up. I can't find any of my contacts, and I just—

JENNY: Mom, we've been through this before. But...okay...sure. Like, if you want to get into your contacts you go here, swipe this, type this code here, go into Preferences, choose this, then go to utilities, move this to here, download this and then, click this. All set! Can we go now?

BARBARA: I'm sorry, sweetie, I didn't quite get all that. I think I better write it down. Hang on a minute. I'll get some paper in the kitchen. (*BARBARA exits*)

JENNY: Mom, wait. I'll come in there and we can go over it all again! Bye, Grandma. (*JENNY kisses MARION*, as the phone rings very loudly. *JENNY rolls her eyes and exits*. *MARION answers the phone*)

MARION: Hello? Hang on a minute. You see, I'm here by myself. I have to get my notes...don't go away. Uh, yes, oh I hear a click, and I think I'm supposed to push a button but I don't know which one. You see I haven't had time to go over all...hello? Hello? (dial tone. MARION hangs up, yells) Barbie. You still here? Could you find that old phone, the one we used a while back? I think it was harvest gold. (MARION exits)

ACT ONE Scene 6: Freedom Road 1

Setting: SID's living room

At Rise: SID enters. There is a ballgame playing low on TV. SID's son, MIKE, and SID's daughter, MARGE, are on cell phones outside talking to each other.

MIKE: I said I'd do it, Marge, and I will. But I don't see you here giving me any support. Shit! He's not going to like this. And why is it always me?

MARGE: Always you? Always you? That's a laugh!

MIKE: Fine. Okay. Fine! (MIKE opens the front door and enters SID's apartment) Pop, turn that TV down. You're gonna get old Mrs. Herman after you again.

MRS. HERMAN: (offstage yelling) What's all that racket down there?

MIKE: Pop!!

SID: Hey Mikey. I wasn't expectin' you today. You're lucky I was in. Just got back from softball and lunch with the guys at the deli. Take a load off and watch the finals with me.

MIKE: Pop, thanks but I don't have time. Can you turn that thing off for a minute? I've really got to—

SID: Okay, okay. I'll put it on pause; it's recording on my DVD. (SID puts the TV on pause. Sound out)

MIKE: DVR.

SID: Yeah, whatever--one of those 'D' things. (doorbell rings. SID crosses to the door) Jeez. That'll be Mrs. Herman, our super duper Super.

MIKE: I told you to turn that down. (SID opens the door)

SID: Ah, Mrs. Herman. How lovely to see you. To what do I owe this surprise?

MRS. HERMAN: Mr. Frankel!

SID: Sid. Why don't you call me Sid and I'll call you—

MRS. HERMAN: Mrs. Herman. Now, Mr. Frankel, I hate to have to come down here again but the other residents are kvetching about the noise and it's my job to make sure that—

SID: Mrs. Herman. I am so sorry. What you heard before was...was...just my son, Mikey here...listening to some rock music. It won't happen again, will it Mikey?

MIKE: Uh...no...I'll be good! You can trust me...us...it will be very quiet down here.

MRS. HERMAN: Alright then. Have a nice quiet day. (*she exits*)

SID: Sorry, Mikey. What a pest. Look, how about a beer?

MIKE: Pop, no thanks. I...look...can we sit for a minute? (*They sit. It's silent for several seconds*)

SID: We've sure made Mrs. Herman happy.

MIKE: I think I'll take you up on that beer after all. (SID exits. MIKE paces. SID re-enters with 2 beers) Pop, you see, Margie and I have been talking and—

SID: Good. That's good cuz sometimes you and your sister don't talk for weeks. Makes me sad, would've made your mother sad.

MIKE: So, what it is, what we think is, that you...shouldn't be...driving anymore! (SID stares at him in disbelief, stands)

SID: Me not drive? There's not a damn thing wrong with my driving. Did your sister put you up to this? I'm not giving up driving, not on your life, no way in hell. End of discussion! (*beat*) Don't you have somewhere you need to go? Or do you think I need a baby sitter now?

MIKE: Pop, look Marge and I love you. We don't want anything bad to happen to you. You've had two accidents in a year and that ticket last month. Remember what the cop said about driving at your age?

SID: I was driving before that cop was even on training wheels. I should sit home all day? Is that it? Is that it?

MIKE: We'll take you wherever you want to go, Marge and I.

SID: I can take myself where I want to go. I don't need my kids schlepping me around. (SID takes his car keys from his pocket and clutches them and holds them up) Tell your smarty pants sister I said no!

MIKE: Sure, okay for now. We'll talk about this another time. Sorry Pop. (MIKE's cell rings) I'm on my way. Yeah it took longer than I thought...talk to you soon. Just think about it. (MIKE exits)

SID: (*yelling out the door*) Think about it? I'll tell you what I'm thinking about. I'm thinking about how you want to take my freedom away from me. (*MARGE enters*)

MARGE: Hey, Dad.

SID: Ah, my daughter, the traitor.

MARGE: What'd you say?

SID: Nuttin'.

MARGE: Just thought I'd come see how, to say hi. Did, uh, Mike drop by?

SID: Mikey, yeah he was here.

MARGE: Did you talk?

SID: Oh, sure we talked. You'll be happy to know it's all settled.

MARGE: Great. I'm pleased. It's for the best. Wasn't that terrible about Mrs. Fisher?

SID: Huh?

MARGE: The accident left her in such a mess and the man in the other car...well, they don't know. Imagine if her grandkids had been with her. If only she'd been sensible and responsible like you.

SID: Yeah.

MARGE: So just call if you need a ride anywhere. (phone beeps) Jeez, I nearly forgot, I've got a meeting. Gotta dash. Love you. (she kisses him and starts to exit) Dad, I'm so proud of you! Remember, I'm just a call away! (MARGE exits. SID takes out his keys, throws them in trash and exits)

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!