

STILL ALICE

GLATZER & WESTMORELAND

**ADAPTED FROM A NOVEL BY
LISA GENOVA**

INT. NEW YORK RESTAURANT - EVENING

In a fashionable uptown Asian-Fusion eatery, a birthday celebration takes place. At the head of the table is ALICE HOWLAND, a woman who could be said to have it all: a high-flying academic career, a successful marriage, and three healthy grown children. She is whip smart, charming, undeniably beautiful. To her right is her husband, JOHN HOWLAND, also an academic, a bear of a man with a gleam of high intelligence. To her left is her oldest daughter ANNA HOWLAND JONES, a successful lawyer, and handsome husband CHARLIE. One chair at the table is conspicuously empty.

ANNA (PRE-LAP)

Okay. Happy Birthday, Mom!

Anna hands Alice a gift-wrapped bag.

ALICE

Is that for me?

CHARLIE

Exactly, I don't believe it. You don't even look forty, much less fifty.

ALICE

Oh Charlie, please - but thank you. I appreciate it. Can I open this now?

ANNA

Yes, open it. Please.

Alice opens the present and gasps.

ALICE

Oh! Oh I love it.

ANNA

Oh good.

ALICE

It's so beautiful.

ANNA

You can exchange it if it doesn't fit.

ALICE

No, no, no. I'm not going to. I absolutely love it. You always get me things I love.

A smart young man bearing a resemblance to John rushes up.
This is TOM HOWLAND.

TOM
Sorry I'm late..!

Tom kisses his mom on the cheek.

ALICE
Oh hey!

Tom finds a seat.

ALICE
Isn't...um...Lisa coming?

TOM
No, we split up.

ANNA
Yes, I did notice that your status
popped back to single...yet again.

He gives his sister a tight-lipped smile. Then, to Alice:

TOM
I forgot your present. Left it in
my locker.

ALICE
I just hope you didn't spend too
much.

ANNA
Don't worry, he didn't.

JOHN
Where have you been?

TOM
The ER was like a madhouse. This
one guy came in - six stab wounds.
I swear one missed his heart by,
seriously, an inch.

ANNA
No. Tom, it's dinner time. Please.

TOM
Not yet it isn't.

ANNA
Nearly.

JOHN

So what kind of antibiotic do you use..?

As John and Tom engage enthusiastically in a rehash of the poor guy's trauma, Alice turns to Anna and Charlie.

ANNA

Mom, have you spoken to Lydia?

ALICE

Yes. She wanted to be here tonight, but she had a really important audition.

ANNA

What for?

ALICE

A guest spot on some TV thing. Something Enemy.

Anna shakes her head.

CHARLIE

Maybe this will be her big break.

ALICE

Yeah maybe.

ANNA

Don't hold your breath.

CHARLIE

Meow.

ANNA

(laughing)
Stop it.

CHARLIE

You two must have been something growing up. Why do I picture dolls with heads cut off?

ALICE

No, my sister and I were very close, actually.

Charlie and Anna both look at her, a little surprised.

CHARLIE

Oh...sorry...I was talking about Anna and Lydia.

ALICE

Oh my goodness, I don't know why I said that.

Anna steps in to change the mood.

ANNA

Well we're here to celebrate you, Mom. So Dad, what about a toast.

She turns to her dad, who is still rattling on about E.R.

ANNA

Dad, a toast?!

JOHN

Oh yes, yes, yes.

They raise their glasses.

JOHN

To the most beautiful and the most intelligent woman I have known my entire life.

ALICE

Thank you.

EVERYBODY

Happy Birthday!

INT. UCLA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - CORRIDOR - LOS ANGELES - DAY

We follow Alice from behind as she walks down the bright, broad corridor of the academic institution.

PROFESSOR JOHNSON (O.S.)

My name is Frederick Johnson, I'm an associate professor of cognitive science here at UCLA and I'm here to welcome today's speaker who has just flown in from New York.

INT. FUNCTION ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

A lectern has been set up in front of a projection screen. About FORTY ACADEMICS are sitting, listening. Young, confident, PROFESSOR JOHNSON is introducing Alice as she waits at the side.

PROFESSOR JOHNSON

Now in my dissertation I spent about a chapter and a half fairly vituperatively citing today's guest and saying why I thought she was wrong...

The audience laughs, Alice as well.

PROFESSOR JOHNSON

For the record, every time Alice and I have argued, she's right. Alice Howland is the Lillian Young Professor of Linguistics at Columbia University. She famously wrote her seminal textbook, *From Neurons to Nouns*, while raising three children - I'm sure getting more than a few "Ah-ha" moments from them - and it is now considered one of the cornerstones of linguistics education all over the world. Please welcome...Dr. Alice Howland.

Warm applause from the assembled. Alice takes her place behind the lectern.

ALICE

Thank you. Thank you so much.

She taps a computer sitting on the lectern. A photo of an adorable, bright-eyed baby comes up on the screen behind her. She launches into her talk with great self-assurance.

ALICE

Most children speak and understand their mother tongue before they turn four, without lessons, homework, or much in the way of feedback. How do they accomplish this remarkable feat? Well this is a question that has interested scientists at least since Charles Darwin kept a diary of the early language of his infant son. He observed, "Man has an instinctive tendency to speak, as we see in the babble of our young children."

She taps her computer - a photo of Charles Darwin comes up.

ALICE

Much has been learned since then
but today I'm going to show you
some recent studies from my lab in
children between the ages of
eighteen months and two and a half
years.

She taps again - a picture of a toddler in a kid-friendly
lab.

ALICE

Now, this might sound like it falls
into the great academic tradition
of knowing more and more about less
and less until we know everything
about nothing.

(audience chuckles)

But I hope to convince you that by
taking these first baby steps into
the...

The smooth, assured flow of Alice's lecture is broken - a
word isn't forthcoming.

ALICE

Into the...

The audience waits patiently.

ALICE

(deadpanning)

I knew I shouldn't have had that
champagne.

An appreciative murmur. Alice takes a slight detour round
the word.

ALICE

...into the word stock of a given
language...

(hits her stride again)

...we will learn crucial
information about the interaction
between memory and computation that
is the very essence of
communication.

INT. BLACK CAR -- MOVING -- LOS ANGELES

Alice stares out the window - something is troubling her.
She closes her eyes as if to squeeze out a thought.

ALICE
(under her breath)
Lexicon!

Satisfied, she looks at a WORDS WITH FRIENDS game on her iPhone. Moving three letters, she forms the word "HADJ" on a triple.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - KOREATOWN - LATE AFTERNOON

The black car arrives at a two-story run-down Seventies apartment building.

EXT. SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR

Alice exits the elevator and walks down the corridor of the low-rent building. She passes a room where she glimpses a few young people hanging out listening to indie rock. A little further down, she finds Lydia's door.

The door is answered by LYDIA HOWLAND, a feisty young woman with dark hair.

LYDIA
Hey.

ALICE
Hi.

LYDIA
Hey, sorry. You just caught me by surprise. Come on in. It's messy but I was in the process of cleaning.

INT. LYDIA'S APARTMENT

ALICE
It's fine, honey. Don't worry.

Alice looks around. A living room adjoins a kitchen, separated only by a counter that is cluttered with left-overs from lunch. There are some pieces of eighties thrift store furniture, some carelessly discarded men's boots.

LYDIA
(picking up a few things)
The boys are total slobs. The kitchen is the main battleground, but I've got them in training. So we'll see how that goes.

Alice glances at some photobooths on the wall - Lydia and two young men goofing for the camera.

ALICE
So where are they?

LYDIA
At work. Doug's at Starbucks.
Malcolm does some catering.

ALICE
I guess that's what they mean by a
working actor?

Lydia gives a tight-lipped smile. Acting is always a sore
topic for them.

INT. L.A. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is typical Silverlake -- hipster Mexican.
Lydia has finished eating. Alice is still working on it.

ALICE (PRE-LAP)
Are you involved with either one of
them?

LYDIA
Doug's gay. And Malcolm and I did
have a thing, but it's over. He got
me in with Open Space though. It's
like the best theater company.

ALICE
Yes, I heard.

Alice's plate is taken away prematurely by a BUSBOY.

ALICE
(joking)
Thank you. Yeah, I'm done.

LYDIA
It would have been awesome if you
saw 'No Exit.'

ALICE
Daddy said you were really good.

LYDIA
I was *all right*. Not my best
night, but at least he got a sense
of it all. Figure out why he's
doing - you know - me a solid with
the company.

Alice didn't know this. Lydia immediately realizes she
shouldn't have said anything.

ALICE

What do you mean?

LYDIA

It's just really nice of him to help out.

ALICE

How is he helping out with the company?

LYDIA

It's our responsibility as members to raise equity for our productions we put on. And then eventually we get a cut of the box office - it's like we're shareholders...

ALICE

So you have to...pay to act, basically?

LYDIA

No. It's a theater group. It's just the reality of the situation. That's how it is here. It's Los Angeles.

ALICE

Lydia, don't you think it's time you reconsidered things? You're so smart. There's so much more you could be doing with your life...

LYDIA

(interrupting, annoyed)
Like going to college?

ALICE

Yes! Like college.

LYDIA

Yeah...Like we've never talked about that before...every single day of my life. I figured out what I wanted to do and I'm doing it. It's a good thing.

ALICE

But on whose dime?

LYDIA

You're helping Tom with Med school. You helped Anna with law.

ALICE
Sweetheart...those are real
careers. I just don't want you to
limit your choices.

LYDIA
You want to make my choices.

ALICE
No, I don't.

LYDIA
I'm really happy.

ALICE
I'm sorry. I don't - I don't want
to argue about this. Just forget I
said anything.

LYDIA
It's forgotten.

A noise dings on Alice's phone.

LYDIA
You going to check your phone?

Alice looks at the phone.

ALICE
It's just a game. Your sister and
I have developed an obsession with
Words with Friends.

LYDIA
(feeling a bit left out)
That's cute.

ALICE
(reading this)
Believe me, you don't want to play
her. She's a demon.

LYDIA
I'm not surprised.

Alice sighs and looks for a way to re-start the conversation.

EXT. TOWN CAR - MOVING - AFTERNOON

Alice is travelling, once again, now through the streets of
New York.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - ENTRY WAY

She enters with her bags and closes the door behind her.

ALICE

John? Hi.

INT. KITCHEN

Depositing her keys in a goldfish bowl, she glances at a small memory board on the wall. No note has been left for her.

ALICE

John?

She gets her iPhone out of her bag and texts John:

TEXT

Where R U?

EXT. UPTOWN STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Now in athletic wear, Alice runs down the cold street. She navigates around PEDESTRIANS and MOMS WITH STROLLERS.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK

In the light of the late afternoon, she runs through the trees on a familiar path.

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS -- DAY

Students and academics are going about their business. A young STREET VENDOR is passing out leaflets calling, "Sale at the Shoe Warehouse."

Alice runs into the center of the square then slows down. Suddenly, she's not sure of where she is.

TIGHT CLOSE-UP OF ALICE

THE DEPTH OF FIELD has become very shallow, completely isolating her from her surroundings. The normal University soundscape fades away disconcertingly. She looks from one building to another - from one person to another. Things swim momentarily into focus but there's no context - no bigger picture. Her breathing starts to quicken.

She ventures one way a few paces, up some stairs. Her breathing is rapid, her face flushed with fear. She puts her head down, forcing herself to focus.

Then, she recognizes the Columbia Library Building in front of her. Normality returns. People walk by her, chatting. Everything is in focus now.

She heads towards her home.

STREET VENDOR

Want one?

ALICE

No thanks.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - ENTRYWAY

There's the sound of a key in the door.

JOHN (O.S.)

Ali...

From the kitchen area, John appears, hair messy, a day's stubble visible. Alice enters, trying not to show the turmoil she's feeling.

JOHN

I was wondering where you were.

He goes to hug her.

ALICE

Don't. I'm all sweaty.

JOHN

How did it go?

ALICE

What?

Alice heads to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

JOHN

UCLA..?

ALICE

Good. They were really...receptive.

JOHN

I'm sure they were. And how was Lydia?

ALICE

Good, y'know...

JOHN
You guys argue?

ALICE
Well we spent the whole evening trying not to. You know, I have to say the news that you were bank-rolling her theatre company didn't exactly help.

JOHN
I told you about that.

ALICE
You didn't.

JOHN
I thought I did.

ALICE
You didn't.

JOHN
Well...you're not gonna like this either, but I still have a lot of things to do at the lab. So maybe you could walk me over there right now...

ALICE
(annoyed)
No. I don't want to go to campus. I just went for a run. I really need to be home now.

JOHN
(a flicker of concern)
Are you okay?

ALICE
Yeah, I'm fine. I just - you said we were going to spend the evening in.

JOHN
I did - and we will. The sooner I go, the sooner I'll be back. And we can watch a movie.

Alice takes a breath.

ALICE
I'm sorry. I'm just exhausted.

He kisses her on the forehead and heads off.

JOHN

Get some rest. Try to relax.

John walks out.

INT. DR. BENJAMIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alice sits in a chair being questioned by DR. BENJAMIN, an unseen Neurologist. In one long take, we see her trademark confidence start to erode.

ALICE (PRE-LAP)

I've started forgetting things. Little annoying things likes words and names. And I got lost - completely lost - running on campus. I talked to my doctor about it and she said it could be menopause and the last time I had a period was in February but then I had one in September right before my birthday so...

DR. BENJAMIN

Are you taking any pills, any medication, supplements?

ALICE

I take a multivitamin, flax seed oil, calcium, iron and occasionally a sleeping pill when I travel.

DR. BENJAMIN

Have you had any head injuries?

ALICE

No.

DR. BENJAMIN

Would you consider yourself depressed, or under undue stress at the moment?

ALICE

No. I work a lot but I thrive on it.

DR. BENJAMIN

How's your sleeping?

ALICE

It's fine. Like seven hours a night.

DR. BENJAMIN

Now I'm going to ask you to remember a name and address. I'll ask you for it again later, okay?

(she nods)

John Black, 42 Washington Street, Hoboken. Can you repeat that for me?

ALICE

John Black, 42 Washington Street, Hoboken.

DR. BENJAMIN

Good. How old are you?

ALICE

I'm fifty.

DR. BENJAMIN

What's today's date?

ALICE

November 26th.

DR. BENJAMIN

Where are we?

ALICE

We are on the third floor of New York Presbyterian.

DR. BENJAMIN

Can you spell 'water' for me?

ALICE

W-A-T-E-R.

DR. BENJAMIN

Now spell it for me backwards.

ALICE

R-E-T-A-W.

DR. BENJAMIN

Can you tell me what you see on these cards?

ALICE
Pliers. A ladder. A sea horse. A
screwdriver. An elephant.

It seems absurd for Alice to be answering such childish questions.

DR. BENJAMIN
Tell me about your parents.

ALICE
They're both dead. My mother and
sister died in a car accident when
I was eighteen. My father died in
1999 of liver failure.

DR. BENJAMIN
Hepatitis?

ALICE
Cirrhosis. He was an alcoholic.

DR. BENJAMIN
And what was he like towards the
end?

It's an uncomfortable subject for Alice.

ALICE
Incoherent. Incontinent. To tell
you the truth we didn't see a lot
of each other. He lived in New
Hampshire and...we weren't that
close.

DR. BENJAMIN
Sorry. Do you have any other
siblings?

ALICE
No. I only had the one.

DR. BENJAMIN
Now can you tell me the name and
address I asked you to remember?

A wall. Alice tries to recall.

ALICE
Um...John Black.

DR. BENJAMIN
And the address?

She takes a moment.

ALICE
Damn it, I forgot.

DR. BENJAMIN
42 Argyle street, Cole Street,
Washington Street or South Street?

A pause. She shakes her head.

ALICE
I was distracted, talking about my
parents. Can we do that one again?

DR. BENJAMIN
There's no need to at this time.

ALICE
Okay.

DR. BENJAMIN
I'd like to do an MRI, just to rule
some things out.

ALICE
Like what? Because I think I have a
brain tumor.

DR. BENJAMIN
It's just a precaution. But it
will also allow us to see if there
are any lesions or signs of a
stroke. Find out what's going on
in there.

Alice nods, absorbing this.

ALICE
Okay - what should I do in the
meantime?

DR. BENJAMIN
You can get plenty of exercise.
It's always good to get the blood
pumping. And drink lots of water,
hydration is excellent for the
memory.

Alice takes this in.

DR. BENJAMIN

And the next time that you come and see me, can you bring in someone that knows you well? Your husband or a close relative?

After a brief hesitation, Alice nods.

ALICE

Okay.

EXT. ALICE'S NEIGHBORHOOD -- DAY

Snow has fallen. The busy streets of New York are suddenly, and magically, quiet.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

We see winter squash chopped; brussel sprouts peeled, a turkey in the oven being checked.

Alice is busily preparing Christmas dinner. A timer rings. She goes over to the far wall murmuring...

ALICE

Stethoscope. Millennium. Hedgehog.

Lifting a dish cloth on a memory board, she checks three words - Stethoscope. Millennium. Hedgehog.

Erasing the words, she thinks a moment and writes, "Cathode, Pomegranate, Trellis."

She places the cloth back over the words and resets the timer.

MOMENTS LATER

Alice is peeling carrots. There's the sound of someone coming in the front door.

TOM (O.S.)

Hello!

ALICE

Hi. Come on in.

Tom appears with a new GIRLFRIEND.

TOM

Hey Mom.

ALICE

Good to see you.

TOM
This is Jenny.

ALICE
I'm Alice. I'm so happy you could
join us.

JENNY
Thank you for having me.

ALICE
Of course. Sweetheart, why don't
you guys go in the and get a drink
and grab the - cheese thing. All
right? I'm so happy you could
join, I really am, Jenny.

JENNY
Thank you.

Tom and Jenny head to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

JENNY
It smells so good in here.

TOM
Beautiful.

Tom admires the table spread.

INT. KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Alice assembles milk, sugar, white chocolate, challah bread
on the counter. She opens a box of eggs and stares blankly
at them.

ALICE
(to herself)
How many goddam eggs..?

The timer goes off again.

ALICE
Cathode. Pomegranate...Trellis.

She goes over to the memory board, checks the results. Right
again! She erases the words as Lydia appears.

LYDIA
Hey Mom!

ALICE

Hey!!

They hug warmly.

LYDIA

Merry Christmas.

ALICE

Aw, Merry Christmas.

ALICE

How was your flight?

LYDIA

Actually awful. This guy coughed all over me the entire time.

ALICE

I hope you don't get sick.

Lydia glances at the ingredients on the counter.

LYDIA

Does this mean what I think it means?

ALICE

Yes.

LYDIA

Bread pudding!

ALICE

It's your favorite.

ANNA (O.S.)

Mom! Merry Christmas!

Anna and Charlie enter the kitchen in expensive casual-wear contrasting with Lydia's thrift-store chic. Anna hugs her mother.

ANNA

Have you seen my latest Words With Friends?

ALICE

Oh no. I haven't had time yet, sweetheart.

ANNA

It's a real zinger.

CHARLIE
JEALOUSY on a triple.

ANNA
Don't spoil it.

CHARLIE
It's already trending on Twitter.

Lydia greets her sister.

Alice is distracted, staring at the bread pudding ingredients, as the sisters attempt some friendly conversation.

ANNA
How's California?

LYDIA
It's great.

ANNA
Warmer than here..?

LYDIA
Yes. Definitely warmer than here.

ALICE
Okay now, all get outta here. I have to concentrate or there'll be no food.

LYDIA
Where's dad?

ALICE
He's upstairs.

Lydia goes into the living room.

ANNA
Can I help you with anything?

ALICE
No, I'm fine. Just go get a drink or something.

ANNA
Okay. It's going to be delicious.

ALICE
Oh I hope so.

ANNA

It will be. I can't wait.

Anna and Tom go into the living room. Alice checks her phone for a bread pudding recipe.

INT. DINING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Anna, Charlie, John, Tom and his girlfriend, are seated drinking wine.

ANNA

It's a very big decision. We're excited. The place was recommended by a couple of friends who'd been trying for years and have just had their first child. So we'll see...

JOHN

I've heard good things about Wellspring.

ANNA

Good. It's expensive, but we obviously want it to work.

TOM

I can't believe you're going to be a Mom.

ANNA

I know!!

They carry on chatting as Alice enters carrying a soup tureen.

ALICE

Here we are...

She places the tureen in the center of the table.

LYDIA

What kind of soup is it?

ALICE

It's butternut squash.

LYDIA

Nice!

Alice notices Jenny sitting next to Tom.

ALICE
Hi, I'm Alice. I'm so happy you
could join us.

JENNY
I'm - Jenny.

Jenny looks a little startled. Lydia glances over at her.
Alice takes a breath.

ALICE
It's really nice to meet you. Well
I think I deserve a glass of wine
after all that, don't you?

LYDIA
You want white?

ALICE
Yes. Thank you. Does everyone
have a glass?

ANNA
Yes, we do!

ALICE
Let's have a toast. To Christmas!!

ALL
Merry Christmas.

They clink glasses.

INT. DR. BENJAMIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alice is nervously listening as the doctor reviews her file.

DR. BENJAMIN (PRE-LAP)
No cerebral vascular disease, no
evidence of any stroke, no masses.

ALICE
(under her breath)
Thank God.

DR. BENJAMIN
And your blood work came back
completely clear. But what worries
me are the memory tests that I sent
you for. You have sporadic memory
impairment totally out of
proportion to your age and there is
evidence of decline in your level
of mental function.

(MORE)

DR. BENJAMIN (cont'd)
I think we should do a PET scan.
It's similar to an MRI but it can
pick up things at the molecular
level...

ALICE
(interrupting)
I know what a PET scan is but what
in particular are you looking for?

DR. BENJAMIN
I want to see if the results are
consistent with Alzheimer's
disease. It would be rare for
someone as young as yourself. But
you do fit the criteria.

Alice nods, absorbing this.

DR. BENJAMIN
Now last time you came I asked you
to bring a close relative.

ALICE
I really didn't think that would be
necessary.

DR. BENJAMIN
Next time, for sure. Okay..?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

John is at the counter top, reading e-mails on his computer.
At the sink, scrubbing a pot, Alice responds to him almost on
autopilot.

JOHN
"...enhancement of endogenous
levels of beta endorphin has not so
far been shown to reduce the
incidence of metastasis in the
distant cell sites."

ALICE
That's not good.

JOHN
Tell me about it. We've been
working on this for months! "The
beta-endorphin doesn't
significantly impact the microphage
activity"...

ALICE
How about the cytokines?

JOHN
Elevated. Slightly. Oh god back
to square one. Are we both here on
the seventeenth?

ALICE
I don't remember.

JOHN
Phil and Diane were saying they
might come to town for the weekend.

No reply. John looks up at her. She is still determinedly
scrubbing.

JOHN
How long are you going to keep at
that thing?

ALICE
Until it's clean...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John is sleeping soundly. Unable to sleep, Alice looks at
the clock. It's 2.15.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

She enters, switching on the too-bright light, then looks at
herself in the mirror, face scrunched. Opening the bathroom
cabinet, she takes out some sleeping pills.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's now 4:35 a.m. Alice remains awake. Her eyes open, her
thoughts racing. Deliberately, she turns on the bedside lamp
and touches John's shoulder.

ALICE
John...John, sweetheart. Wake up.

He groans, shifts around under the covers. He groggily opens
his eyes.

JOHN
Hmmm... What time is it?

ALICE
I need to talk to you...I've...I've
got something wrong with me.

He gradually starts to wake up.

JOHN

What are you talking about..?

ALICE

I've been seeing a neurologist.

JOHN

You've been seeing a neurologist?
Why?

ALICE

They think it might be early onset
Alzheimer's.

JOHN

What? That, that makes absolutely
no sense.

ALICE

I didn't want to tell you because
they don't know anything for sure
but I've been doing all these tests
and I'm really scared.

John sits up in bed.

JOHN

Ali, that is completely insane.

ALICE

I got lost when I was running on
campus awhile ago. I can't remember
appointments. Words...

JOHN

Honey, we all have memory lapses.
That's a sign of getting older.
The other day I forgot the word -
'glucose.'

ALICE

It's not like that. It's like
something just drops out under me.

JOHN

But there's no diagnosis yet?

ALICE

No.

JOHN

Well I think that this is ridiculous. It's complete bullshit, you don't have Alzheimer's.

He reaches out again for her, but she pulls away. Her emotion, stoked by a sleepless night and a failed Ambien, turns to anger.

ALICE

God dammit! Why won't you take me seriously? I know what I'm feeling. And it feels like my brain is fucking dying. And everything I've worked for in my entire life is going. It's all going...

JOHN

Come here don't cry.

In his eyes we see care and concern but also the first signs of reckoning.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Alice sits at the counter in a baggy sweatshirt. John is dutifully preparing some cereal. They both look exhausted.

JOHN

What time is your tutorial?

ALICE

Eleven.

JOHN

Well, that gives you some time. I'm going to be a little late because I have a departmental meeting. But when I get back maybe we can do dinner, have some Thai food?

ALICE

Yeah. Okay. I'm okay...last night just got the better of me, that's all.

Their routine conversation seems almost stripped of meaning, yet they do what people do - they carry on.

JOHN

Well two things; I think it's way too early to jump to any conclusions and whatever happens, I'm here.

She looks at him, weighing him, wondering about the future.

INT. DOCTOR BENJAMIN'S OFFICE

A computer shows a brightly colored cross-section of a brain. Alice's brain.

DR. BENJAMIN

You can clearly see in here. The red areas are high in beta amyloid. The build up has probably been ongoing for several years. I'm sorry.

John sits beside Alice. He is not buying it.

JOHN

There is evidence of high amyloid in older people with normal cognitive functioning, correct?

DR. BENJAMIN

Yes but not in someone as young as Alice. At least, it would be extremely rare.

JOHN

I also read that high amyloid is associated with conditions other than Alzheimer's.

DR. BENJAMIN

Unfortunately, in Alice's case this corroborates the clinical symptoms she's presenting.

JOHN

Shouldn't any diagnosis be accompanied by a genetic test?

ALICE

John, hold on a minute, please.

DR. BENJAMIN

Actually, I was going to suggest that.

(MORE)

DR. BENJAMIN (cont'd)
In a case like this - with the onset being so early - we'd like to check for presenilin mutations. That would be an indicator of Familial Alzheimer's Disease which is a rarer form. We can make an appointment for you to see a genetic counsellor.

This news really hits Alice. When she speaks, it takes an effort to control her voice.

ALICE
So this concerns my children too?

DR. BENJAMIN
Yes.

ALICE
I assume if I have the gene, the chances of passing it on to each one is fifty-fifty?

DR. BENJAMIN
I'm afraid so.

ALICE
And if they are carrying the gene, what are the odds of them developing the disease?

DR. BENJAMIN
I'm afraid it's 100%.

She nods, still trying to stay calm as her eyes betray a rush of emotion.

INT. MEDICAL BUILDING ELEVATORS -- DAY

Alice and John wait by the elevators. There's a tremendous weight upon them. For a moment, neither can speak.

ALICE
The kids will be here for our anniversary.

JOHN
I don't think we should tell them. Not until we have the test results.

ALICE
We will by then. If I go in next week...

Suddenly, John leans forward and punches the button.

JOHN

Where the hell is this goddam elevator? Here we are in a major hospital, and they only have one elevator running.

ALICE

John, it's okay.

JOHN

We could have taken the stairs by now.

ALICE

It doesn't matter.

The elevator arrives and they get in silently.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Anna, Charlie and Tom are on the couch, Lydia sits apart. Alice wants to make an announcement but the words just won't come.

ALICE

Well, um everybody...

TOM

What's going on?

ALICE

Oh boy.

She looks at John.

LYDIA

Are you guys breaking up, or...

ALICE

No. It's nothing like that.

ANNA

Mom are you sick..?

ALICE

I've been seeing a neurologist for the past few months and I have Alzheimer's disease. Early onset.

There is a sense of unease and shock in the room.

TOM

That...That makes no sense.
Are you sure? It may be...

JOHN

There's no doubt. She has the
disease.

TOM

But at her age...

JOHN

It's rare but it's been confirmed.

ANNA

(tearing up)
You're so young Mom. I don't
understand that.

LYDIA

I had noticed one or two things.
You didn't know Tom's girlfriend
when she came over at Christmas--

ANNA

(under her breath)
Lydia!

Anna shakes her head at Lydia.

TOM

What medications are you on?

ALICE

Right now Aricept and Numenda.

TOM

And they can slow its progress?

ALICE

No.

JOHN

(as Alice tries to talk)
I'm afraid not. They can help
alleviate the symptoms but not
actually prevent the disease.

ALICE

John! The thing is that the type
of Alzheimers I have is very rare.
And, well, it's familial -- it's
passed on genetically.

ANNA

Oh my god.

JOHN

We believe she got it from her father. And of course we're very worried about the three of you. Now there is a test you can take. But it's completely up to you whether you want to find out or not.

Anna starts to cry. Lydia sits on her own, quietly reckoning.

ALICE

I'm sorry. I'm sorry...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Alice reaches for a pill container with different capsules for each day of the week. She empties out Wednesday, starts to down them with water.

John passes by the doorway. He doesn't like to watch her regimen.

INT. COLUMBIA LECTURE HALL - DAY

TWO DOZEN STUDENTS are waiting. Alice enters, flustered, opens the computer and clicks on the folder that says "Linguistics Classes." It contains six files: Syntax, Acquisition, Semantics, Comprehension, Phonology, and Pathologies.

Looking at the list, she is momentarily confused - which lecture is she giving? Meanwhile, her students are starting to get restless.

ALICE

Can anyone tell me what it says on the syllabus for today?

A few hands shoot up and a voice calls out "Phonology."

ALICE

And can anyone tell me what phonology is..?

No answers. She clicks on the appropriate file.

ALICE

"Phono" is from the Greek word
"phoné" meaning sound, and
phonology, broadly speaking, is the
study of the sounds of language.
It should be carefully
distinguished from phonetics...

EXT. COLUMBIA CAMPUS -- DAY

Bundled up against the cold, Alice walks briskly across the
campus. Her phone goes off. It's Anna.

ALICE

Hi Anna.

ANNA (O.S.)

Hi Mom.

ALICE

Are you okay?

ANNA (O.S.)

I got the results, I'm positive.

ALICE

Oh God, Anna. I'm sorry. I'm so
so sorry.

ANNA

Tom turned out negative and Lydia
didn't want to know. But I'm
positive.

ALICE

Baby, how you feeling?

ANNA

I'm okay. One good thing, at least
I found out now before the next IUI
session. I guess there's a way
they can test the embryos. So we
can be sure - that the baby'll be
okay.

ALICE

Anna, where are you? I've got a
lecture but I can cancel it and I
can be right there.

ANNA

No no, Mom. It's okay. I'm with
Charlie.

ALICE

No, I want to. I want to be there.
I can come.

ANNA

No, please don't worry. I'll be
fine.

ALICE

Okay. I love you, sweetheart.

ANNA

I love you.

ALICE

Bye.

ANNA

Bye.

She walks off across the campus alone.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

Alice reaches into the fridge and stops for a moment.
There's a bottle of shampoo on the top shelf. She picks it
up and looks at it.

INT. LIBRARY BUILDING -- DAY

Back at the university, Alice walks round the rotunda.

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - HEAD OF DEPARTMENT'S OFFICE - DAY

The Head of Department, ERIC WELLMAN, is an avuncular fifty
year-old with an intimidating air. He reads from his computer.

ERIC WELLMAN

"I had been looking forward to this
course my sophomore year but I was
thoroughly disappointed. The
content was often muddled and
delivered with little focus or
care."

Alice listens uncomfortably.

ERIC WELLMAN

"Class was a waste of time. I
ended up just following the on-line
version."

(then the next)

"I found Linguistics 201 very
erratic.

(MORE)

ERIC WELLMAN (cont'd)
I had a hard time following Dr.
Howland's lectures--even she seems
like she gets lost in them."

Eric turns to her. Alice looks down.

ALICE
Eric, I am so sorry. I - I didn't
know the students felt this way.
Obviously I will make the necessary
adjustments and we can reevaluate
my performance next semester.

ERIC WELLMAN
Listen, is everything okay at home?
Is everything all right between you
and John?

ALICE
Yes, everything is fine with John.

ERIC WELLMAN
Is it something we can help with?
Stress, depression--

ALICE
No. It's not that...

ERIC WELLMAN
Substance abuse?

ALICE
Oh god, no. Eric...No it's nothing
like that. It's, uh, it's medical.
It's a medical issue. And I admit
I had a hard time teaching last
semester and I wasn't aware of how
much it showed.

ERIC WELLMAN
Alice, I'm not following.

ALICE
I have a mild cognitive impairment.

ERIC WELLMAN
Would you unpack that for me?

ALICE
In early February I was diagnosed
with Early Onset Alzheimer's
disease.

ERIC WELLMAN

What? Alice...Oh my God. I'm so sorry.

ALICE

It's early. It's still in the early stages. I mean obviously it will limit my abilities as time goes on but for now I feel perfectly capable...

ERIC WELLMAN

(he takes a breath)

Really there's no need to...We don't want you under any undue stress. That would be counterproductive.

ALICE

I can handle the stress. I would like to remain in the department for as long as we all think it's possible.

He looks at her, takes a breath.

ERIC WELLMAN

I'll have to let the department and faculty know

Alice nods, absorbing this.

ALICE

Yes, of course.

ERIC WELLMAN

I'm so so sorry.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - LATE AFTERNOON

Once again, Alice runs on the streets.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK

Alice's breath comes in clouds as she runs beneath the trees.

INT. STREETS OF NEW YORK

She slows down, out of breath, and sees something ahead.

A FAMILY is coming out of a Pinkberry Frozen Yoghurt shop. After a moments thought, she walks toward the brightly lit franchise.

INT. PINKBERRY

Looking at the array of toppings, Alice orders.

ALICE
I'll have a regular with blueberry
and coconut, please.

MOMENTS LATER

Alice sits on her own, eating her frozen yoghurt.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

When Alice comes in the front door, John is irate.

ALICE
Hi.

JOHN
Alice, where the hell were you?

ALICE
I went for a run.

JOHN
But you've been gone for over two
hours. I was worried.

ALICE
I stopped for Pinkberry.

JOHN
Pinkberry?

ALICE
Yes, Pinkberry.

She heads into the living room. John follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN
Well I hope it was worth it because
you completely blew our dinner plans -
Susan Kirby and her husband.

ALICE
I'm sorry. I forgot. I have
Alzheimer's.

She looks at him boldly. For a moment he's at a loss for words. He looks away.

JOHN

I texted you. I e-mailed you. There are lots of ways of managing this.

ALICE

John, I said I was sorry.

JOHN

She's chair of my department, for crying out loud. I had absolutely no idea where you were, if something had happened to you. Why didn't you bring your phone?

ALICE

I can't while I'm running.

JOHN

Why don't you wear a fanny pack? Is it really so inhibiting?

ALICE

Yes!

She sighs heavily and sits on the sofa.

ALICE

I hate that this is happening to me.

JOHN

I hate it too.

He sits opposite her.

JOHN

But we have to keep the important things in our life going. We have to try or we're going to go crazy.

ALICE

I know. I know, John. I am sorry. But I don't know what I would have been like at a dinner party. I might not be able to remember names or answer simple questions, never mind get through an anecdote.

JOHN

I think you're doing great recently.

ALICE

Relative to what?

They look at each other.

ALICE
I wish I had cancer.

JOHN
Don't say that.

ALICE
No, I do. I mean it. I wouldn't feel so ashamed. When people have cancer they wear pink ribbons for you and go on long walks and raise money. And you don't have to feel like some kind of a - social...I can't remember the word.

*

EXT. MOUNT AUBURN NURSING CENTER - DAY

Winter has ended, the air is warm, birds are singing.

Alice heads toward a large building bordered with sprouting crocuses and budding bushes.

INT. MOUNT AUBURN NURSING CENTER - ENTRANCE/CORRIDOR

Alice walks from a reception area down a broad corridor with TRACEY FREDERICKS, an African-American CAREWORKER. A few OLD FOLK shuffle around as a COUPLE OF ORDERLIES go about their business.

CAREWORKER
In 2013 we completed repairs and inside we replaced the elevators, refurbished the auditorium, library and lounge area and upgraded our HVAC system.

ALICE
That's good.

CAREWORKER
We also took away most of the old security doors. Residents are issued a bracelet instead, which keeps them from using elevators or leaving the building - depending on their level. I don't know if you've experienced this yet with your parent, but a lot of times they get nighttime restlessness and wandering.

(MORE)

CAREWORKER (cont'd)
This way, we can prevent their
elopement without our patients
feeling they are locked in.

ALICE
I see.

INT. COMMON ROOM -- DAY

Many OLD PEOPLE stare into space or hum to themselves. One
old lady puts curlers into another one's hair.

CAREWORKER
We saw after a while that large
group activities left most
residents unengaged and even
distressed by the confusion they
experienced from all the
stimulation. So we redefined
activities to include all
interactions between staff and
residents in the unit. All the
staff looks for opportunities to
make a meaningful connection with
residents, starting with knowing
about the person who they've been,
and what makes them comfortable.
One resident who had worked as a
nurse sat part of most days at the
nursing station, writing notes.

ALICE
That's heartbreaking.

CAREWORKER
Yes but its a behavior we see time
and again.
(Alice nods)
We don't have any restrictions on
visiting times. Friends and family
are welcome any hour of day or
night.

ALICE
It doesn't look like anyone is here
today.

CAREWORKER
Well, Sunday's the day they usually
come by.

An alarm goes off. Across the room, an OLD LADY is up out of
her wheelchair in an agitated state. A SECOND CAREWORKER
tries to calm her.

CAREWORKER
(talking over her)
That's a chair alarm. Certain
residents have them so we know when
they're up and about.

The Old Lady is seated once more in the chair and the alarm
is silenced.

ALICE
Is she all right?

CAREWORKER
It's just a precautionary measure.

ALICE
It's all women.

CAREWORKER
We do have mainly female residents
here but there are a couple of
gentlemen. There's William over
there - William was part of the
team that sent the first satellite
into orbit.

William is nearly bent double, shuffling towards a table
using his walker. This really gets to Alice.

"BUTTERFLY" SEQUENCE

A WHITE SCREEN

Words appear quickly typed on a iPhone:

ALICE, ANSWER THESE THREE
QUESTIONS.

1) WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR OLDEST
DAUGHTER?

INT. PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN'S OFFICE

ALICE
They just aren't powerful enough to
send me to sleep.

DOCTOR
Do you want to try Lunesta?

ALICE
How about Rohypnol?

DOCTOR
They're very strong...

ALICE
I need something strong.

ON THE WHITE SCREEN

2) WHAT STREET DO YOU LIVE ON?

INT. HOME OFFICE

Alice has plugged a small video camera into her computer.
She reaches to press RECORD then sits in front of the camera.

ALICE
Hi Alice. I'm you and I have
something very important to say to
you.

INT. MOUNT AUBURN MANOR NURSING CENTER--LOBBY

Alice types questions onto her phone (dialogue from previous
scene continues)

ON THE WHITE SCREEN

3) WHAT MONTH IS YOUR BIRTHDAY?

ALICE (V.O.)
So I guess you've reached that
point - the point that you can no
longer answer any of the questions.

INT. ALICE'S HOME--OFFICE

Alice continues making the recording.

ALICE
So this it the next logical step.
I'm sure of it.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - MASTER BEDROOM

Alice writes a note to herself.

ALICE (V.O.)
In your bedroom is a dresser with a
blue lamp. Open the top drawer.
In the back of the drawer there is
a bottle with pills in it. It says
take all pills with water.

(MORE)

ALICE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Now there are a lot of pills in
that bottle. But it's very
important that you swallow them
all.

Alice attaches a label to the bottle of prescription pills.
She puts them at the back of her dressing table drawer,
behind bits and pieces of jewelry and accessories.

Then something catches her eye: an old pendant of a small
enamel butterfly, brightly colored, a bit gaudy. She takes
it out and weighs it in her hand.

INT. ALICE'S HOME -- OFFICE

Alice finishes up the video and drags it to a folder on her
desktop labelled 'Butterfly.'

ALICE (V.O.)
Okay? And then lie down, and go to
sleep...And don't tell anyone what
you're doing.

ON THE WHITE SCREEN

WHEN YOU CAN NO LONGER ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS GO TO A FILE ON
YOUR COMPUTER LABELLED BUTTERFLY

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Suddenly, Alice awakens. She's been napping, curled up on a
big old sofa. There's the sound of waves. She looks around -
a little disoriented.

She sees a BOWL OF SHELLS on the table in front of her and a
MEMORY IMPAIRED bracelet on her wrist.

Slowly, she gets up and wanders towards the french doors.
Stepping out on the balcony, she sees the ocean.

EXT. LIDO BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Alice walks along the virtually abandoned beach. Down by the
water's edge, she takes in the massive beautiful landscape.

MOMENTS LATER she is sitting on a rock. A hundred yards
away, John comes running.

JOHN
Ali!

He joins her on the rock. They sit for a moment looking out
at the sea.

JOHN
I love it here.

ALICE
I know. I love it too.

They move in for a tender kiss. The song, "If I had a Boat," comes up on the soundtrack.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice and John are in the bedroom, laughing together.

ALICE
Remember Santorini?

JOHN
Can you believe that was 30 years ago?

ALICE
Don't do that to me - oh my god.
Oh that was a complicated time,
huh?

JOHN
What was it - about a year after?

ALICE
Yeah. Something like that.

JOHN
I know I've said this to you before, but I am sorry I never got to meet your mother and your sister.

ALICE
Me too.
(she sighs)
We had a great time though.

JOHN
Yeah.

She shifts a little and looks up at him.

ALICE
Don't you ever wish we'd had more of that?

JOHN
If you mean blow jobs on the beach, yes I do wish we had more of that.

ALICE

You know, yeah all of it. It all happened so fast, you know. Anna was born, our careers.

JOHN

You were pretty relentless. You wanted everything and all at once.

ALICE

That's how I am. That's how I like it. Anna's the same way, right.

JOHN

I like the way you are. I like everything about you.

She comes to kiss him and they roll over together.

ALICE

This is so great you know. I kind of like it, being liberated from Columbia. Why don't you take a sabbatical next year?

JOHN

And we're going to do what, tour around the country in an R.V?

ALICE

Sure. I don't know. Spend more time here. Go to Bhutan.

JOHN

I think our summer on the Island is all the excitement I can handle right now.

ALICE

Well, you know what, this might be the last year that I'm myself, you know...

This brings John up short.

JOHN

Please don't say that.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE--LIVING ROOM

Alice answers the questions on her phone.

82

IPHONE SCREEN

82

1) WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE STREET YOU LIVE ON?

The answer 1 - 1 - 2 - T - H

Then WHAT MONTH WERE YOU BORN IN?

O - C - T - O - B - E - R

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - LIVING AREA - MORNING

Alice finishes up her daily memory-check on her iPhone.
Then, gets up and walks out of the door.

EXT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - GARAGE - MORNING

It's a foggy, overcast morning.

ALICE

John...

JOHN (O.S.)

I'm over here.

John, down below, planting some shrubs in the garden.

ALICE

Hey when do you leave for the
conference?

JOHN

On Monday.

ALICE

And when is Lydia coming?

JOHN

Lydia comes on Sunday.

ALICE

She doesn't have to come all that
way to baby-sit me.

JOHN

Well shes's coming to do the Chekhov
play at the Saugatuck, remember?

She looks around at the misty morning.

ALICE

...Right.

JOHN

When I get finished are we still going to go for a run?

ALICE

Yeah, I just need to grab another layer.

She heads inside.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Entering the master bedroom, she goes over to a large dresser. She opens a drawer, digs around and finds what she is looking for - a lightweight top. It's a bit more colorful than her taste usually runs.

She puts it on over her T-shirt, turns, and notices something.

It's a photo album of her childhood, with fading photos and Polaroids, held in place by yellowing cellophane.

EXT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BALCONY - MINUTES LATER

Alice sits, studying the photo album.

In one photo, her MOTHER, a woman in her thirties, and her sister ANNE, mid-teens, are on the beach, smiling for the camera. Turn a page, and there is young Alice eating dinner, her mouth full of spaghetti.

Another page and there is her FATHER, giving the camera a slightly askew smile. Alice ponders him for a moment.

JOHN (O.S.)

Hey, are we still going running?

He appears from inside.

ALICE

I'm sorry. Hey look I found this photo album with these pictures of my mother and my sister.

(John nods patiently)

Hey, when are you going to the conference?

JOHN

Monday.

ALICE

And when is Lydia coming?

JOHN
Lydia is coming Sunday.

ALICE
Ok.

JOHN
Are we going running?

ALICE
Yes we are, I just have to go pee.
I'll be right back.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - UPSTAIRS

Alice walks in but feels disoriented, suddenly unsure of where she is.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - HALLWAY/LIVING AREA

She comes downstairs, looks into the kitchen, then makes her way to the hallway, trying doors but not finding the bathroom. There's a closet. Then Lydia's room. Then an office.

Hurrying towards the living room again, she becomes more and more anxious. She tries the door to her right -- the closet again.

CLOSE ON ALICE

Her skin is flushed, reddening with humiliation.

John rushes down the stairs.

JOHN
Alice!

She is standing by the hallway, her sweat pants soaked in urine.

JOHN
Ali...

ALICE
I couldn't find the bathroom.

JOHN
It's okay, baby. Come on, let's get you cleaned up.

ALICE
...I don't know where I am.

She starts to cry. John puts his arm round her and they go upstairs.

EXT. LIDO BEACH - DAY

A wide shot of the empty beach. Small in the frame, the figures of Alice and Lydia walk along the shoreline.

EXT. LIDO BEACH - BOARDWALK

LYDIA
I like that necklace.

ALICE
You haven't seen it before?

LYDIA
Nope.

ALICE
My Mom gave it to me.

Alice fingers the butterfly pendant as they walk along.

ALICE
When I was a little girl, second grade, my teacher told me that butterflies don't live a very long time, they live like a month or something - and I was so upset. And I went home and I told my mother, and she said, yeah but you know, they have a nice life. They have a really beautiful life, so...it makes me think about my mother's life and my sister's life. And to a certain extent my own.

LYDIA
You're going to be around for a long time Mom.

ALICE
Yes yes...There are some things I want to do. I want to take a sabbatical year with daddy, but I don't think that's going to happen. I want to read some classic books I've always meant to read. And I want to see Anna have a baby, I want to see Tom graduate...

LYDIA
You will!

ALICE

And I'd like to see you go to college.

Lydia looks at her.

ALICE

Not for medicine, or anything - but for drama.

(Lydia shakes her head)

You know, and then if acting doesn't work out you could teach or you could do workshops. You'd have some kind of backup plan.

LYDIA

Yeah...I don't want a back-up plan. I want to do this. I want to give it a shot, it's not going to happen if I don't believe in myself.

ALICE

I believe in you, Lydia. I do. It's just that, you know, life's tough. It is tougher than you know. I want you to have some sort of security before I go.

LYDIA

Mom - you have to - you can't use your situation to get me to do everything that you want.

ALICE

Why not? Why can't I?

LYDIA

Because it's not fair.

ALICE

I don't have to be fair. I'm your mother. Right...

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Flashbacks of Alice's memory play like a movie. She is on the beach with her mother and sister.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Framed photos show the Howland family at a younger age.

Alice is playing Words With Friends.

She drags three letters onto the board to make the underwhelming word TONE. As ever, the game is with Anna Howland-Jones.

Alice looks sadly at a photo of Anna, then gazes out of the window into nothingness.

EXT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - UPSTAIRS

John is answering e-mails on his computer as Alice walks up the stairs.

JOHN

Hey.

ALICE

What's going on?

JOHN

I'm just working. How about you?

ALICE

Nothing. I need something to read.

JOHN

I thought you were reading Moby Dick.

ALICE

Yeah. I was. I got tired of reading the same page over and over again. I can't focus.

JOHN

That happens to me when I read Moby Dick too.

(she smiles)

Why don't you try something lighter.

ALICE

What like the Cat in the Hat?

JOHN

How about some of those plays Lydia has downstairs? They're quicker, they're easy to read. Might give the two of you something to talk about.

Alice nuzzles against him, trying to distract him, but he continues.

ALICE

Okay.

She gets up to head down the stairs.

ALICE
You work all the time.

INT. SECOND BEDROOM

Alice enters. Lydia's personality can be felt in her absence: incense on the window sill, paintings on the wall, clothes strewn over chair backs.

On the bedside table there's a pile of plays. Alice picks up a few of the thin volumes and looks at them - Proof, Three Sisters, Angels in America. She opts for Angels in America and is about to set the other two back on the stack when she notices something: a small notebook with the handwritten label "Lydia Howland Journal."

Alice hesitates a moment, then opens it.

EXT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Lydia and Alice are trying to have a productive discussion as per John's suggestion.

ALICE
What I really liked about it was
how...

She searches for a word.

ALICE
How...big...how wide...the scape of
it was.

LYDIA
Yeah the scope of it.

ALICE
The scope of it, yes that's the
word. God, listen to me.

Lydia perseveres.

LYDIA
It's unbelievable to me that you
guys had to live through that. You
must have known somebody who died
from AIDS right?

ALICE
Oh yes, honey. Everybody did. We
lost a lot of people.

She looks at Lydia.

ALICE

What did you think? You and Malcolm - you played the Mormons, didn't you - the husband and wife? You did the scenes in your acting class.

LYDIA

Yeah - how'd you know that?

Alice hesitates.

ALICE

I don't know. You must have told me about it.

LYDIA

I didn't tell you.

ALICE

Well, I don't know how I know.

Lydia looks right at her.

LYDIA

Mom, did you read my journal?

Alice looks away, trying to remember.

LYDIA

Why? Why would you do that? Mom?!

ALICE

I am so sorry Lydia. I honestly didn't understand what I was reading.

LYDIA

You didn't understand "Lydia Howland" written across the front of the notebook?

ALICE

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

LYDIA

I don't believe you!

ALICE

I didn't mean to...

LYDIA
Okay, it's fine. I just can't...

Lydia storms off.

ALICE
Lydia, I didn't - I really didn't
know...

LYDIA
Just stop!

ALICE
I wouldn't do that to you.

A door slams. Lydia is gone.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE DINING AREA

In the bright clean light of the day, the table is laden with bagels, lox, toppings, and fruit salad. Anna, Charlie and Tom are visiting. Lydia is conspicuously absent. Alice struggles to follow the conversation.

TOM
So you can't eat this you know.

ANNA
No, I know. No sushi, no hot dogs -
hot dogs are the worst!

CHARLIE
No alcohol.

ANNA
No alcohol.

CHARLIE
Cigarettes.

ANNA
I've never even smoked.

CHARLIE
Well I mean...

JOHN
You mean to tell me you've never
smoked a cigarette in your entire
life?

ANNA
Not one.

CHARLIE

You can't be too careful.

ANNA

He was so cute. He even grabbed my hand the other day as I was walking down the stairs.

CHARLIE

I was just trying to protect my investment.

General laughter. Alice jumps in. Rather awkwardly.

ALICE

Anna, I want you to return my Words with Friends.

ANNA

I'm sorry, Mom. I haven't had time.

Lydia walks up to the table.

LYDIA

Hey congrats.

ANNA

Hey. Thank you.

She hands Lydia a mimosa.

LYDIA

So it's twins, huh?

ANNA

Yes. A boy and a girl.

TOM

Kinda perfect.

JOHN

It's exactly what your mom and I were hoping for.

ALICE

It's so wonderful.

John's phone goes off. He checks the I.D.

JOHN

Oh gosh. I'm sorry. I've got to take this.

He heads back to the office talking into his cell.

LYDIA

How far along are you?

ANNA

Five weeks. I know it's very early days, but...well the timing of things, how we found out, and when we did...well it really worked out in the end.

LYDIA

Great. That's amazing.

Alice smiles, not completely following.

TOM

So Mom, how are you feeling?

ALICE

Mostly fine.

TOM

Really?

ALICE

Yeah. I use this thing. You know, instead of a memory. It reminds me to take my medications and things like that.

Alice produces her iPhone.

TOM

It's nice how technology can help.

Alice starts to open up her iPhone calendar.

ALICE

Lydia, what time is the play?

LYDIA

It's eight o'clock.

CHARLIE

Are you nervous about tomorrow?

LYDIA

Yes. It'll be find once I'm up there, but I'll definitely have to block all of you out.

ALICE

I'm sorry, what time did you say it was again?

LYDIA

Eight o'clock.

ANNA

Mom, you don't have to schedule it. It's ok.

ALICE

No, no. I want to put it in! And where is it?

LYDIA

The Saugatuck theater.

ALICE

Can you spell that?

ANNA

Come on, Mom - it's not like we're going to forget to bring you.

LYDIA

Just let her do it. S - A - U - G -
(carries on)

ANNA

(under her breath)
Oh God.

TOM

Anna, you're not helping.

ANNA

No, you're not helping. Why should she have to worry about remembering something that she doesn't have to remember?

LYDIA

Well, if you just let her do it she won't worry. What's the problem? Don't talk about her as if she isn't sitting right here.

ANNA

I'm not - I'm talking to her. Aren't I, Mom?

ALICE

Yes. Yes you are.

ANNA
And what makes you such an expert?

LYDIA
Shut up.

ANNA
Grow up Lydia!

LYDIA
Suck it!

ANNA
Oh, that's very articulate. Well
said.

ALICE
Girls...

LYDIA
You want me to show you?

ANNA
Are you kidding me?

ALICE
Girls that's enough!

LYDIA
Why are you such an asshole?

John re-enters in the middle of the argument.

ALICE
Both of you stop it!

JOHN
What is going on?

An awkward silence.

CHARLIE
Alice, this is a wonderful spread.

ALICE
Thank you, Charlie.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

With the rest of the family on the balcony, Alice ladles out
fruit while Lydia folds napkins.

ALICE

Lydia. Baby. I have a feeling that we argued about something yesterday but I can't remember what it was about.

LYDIA

It was nothing, honestly.

ALICE

No, I know I upset you. I should apologize.

LYDIA

No. I should apologize. I'm - I feel really bad. I was so insensitive yesterday. Will you forgive me? Honestly?

ALICE

But what for?

Lydia sighs.

LYDIA

It was about you not respecting my privacy. And I don't want that, and I take it back - completely. And I'm sorry.

ALICE

I'm sorry. It's not as if I can remember it.

LYDIA

I know.

Alice laughs. Lydia takes a long look at her Mom.

LYDIA

What is it like? I mean what does it actually feel like?

ALICE

Well, it's not always the same. I have good days and bad days. On my good days, I can almost pass for a normal person. But on my bad days, I feel like I can't find myself.

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

I've always been so defined by my intellect, my language, my articulation, and now sometimes I can see the words hanging in front of me and I can't reach them and I don't know who I am and I don't know what I'm going to lose next.

LYDIA

It sounds horrible.

They pick up some bowls and head outside.

ALICE

Thanks for asking.

INT. LIDO BEACH HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice finishes cleaning her teeth. As John enters the bathroom, she comes into the bedroom, ready for sleep.

She is about to climb into bed, when she notices something. Under the covers is an old-fashioned school notebook, with the label Lydia Howland Journal. There's a yellow post-it on it that says "No Secrets." Alice is deeply moved.

ALICE

Oh, Lydia...

INT. SAUGATUCK STREET THEATRE

In small community theater, Lydia is on stage, playing Irina in Chekhov's THREE SISTERS. All three sisters are on stage. MASHA speaks. The family watches Lydia.

MASHA

They are leaving us. One has quite left us, quite and for ever. We remain alone, to begin our life over again. We must live... we must live....

LYDIA/IRINA

There will come a time when everybody will know why, for what purpose, there is all this suffering, and there will be no more mysteries. But now we must live...

IN THE AUDIENCE

Watching Lydia perform, Alice is calmly attentive.

BACK ON STAGE

LYDIA/IRINA

...we must work, just work! Tomorrow, I'll go away alone, and I'll teach and give my whole life to those who may perhaps, need it. It's autumn now, soon it will be winter, the snow will cover everything, and I shall be working, just working....

IN THE AUDIENCE

Abruptly, there's resounding APPLAUSE.

John stands, smiling, clapping. Alice follows suit.

ON STAGE

Lydia and the rest of the cast take their bows.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CORRIDOR

We follow Alice from behind, as she walks backstage following her family. The corridor is crowded with FRIENDS OF THE CAST.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DRESSING ROOMS

The family greets Lydia, who's just emerged from the dressing room. There's a cacophony of voices, as Charlie, Tom, John, and Anna all chime in on Lydia's performance.

ANNA

There she is! Hey, you were amazing.

JOHN

Miss Howland, would you sign this for me?

When Alice arrives, Lydia comes into focus. Alice chooses her words carefully.

ALICE

It was just wonderful. I found it so easy to empathize with her. You really caught her despair, but also her joy.

This pleases Lydia enormously.

LYDIA

Thank you. Awesome.

ALICE

So will we get to see you in
anything else this summer?

Lydia's looks at her nervously, her eyes scanning her
mother's face, but she keeps her emotion in check.

LYDIA

No, this is the only job I got.

ALICE

Oh so you're here just for the
season?

LYDIA

Yeah -

Tears well in Lydia's eyes - but she does not have the heart
to contradict Alice's misunderstanding.

ANNA

Mom! Mom, this is Lydia. Your
daughter.

ALICE

...I know that.

John looks on worried. Lydia tries to keep the
conversation going.

LYDIA

Thanks for coming, to see me.
This is so weird, it's like
embarrassing.

ALICE

Don't be embarrassed. Please,
don't be.

INT. DR. BENJAMIN'S OFFICE - DAY

We see Alice gradually coming into focus.

ALICE

Giraffe...Hammer...Comb.
Oh I know what that is. It's like
a chicken. But it's not..

The card shows a duck.

ALICE

It's...it's a duck!

DR. BENJAMIN
How about this one?

ALICE
Basketball.

He puts the cards down.

DR. BENJAMIN
Can you spell water backwards for me?

ALICE
Well, let me try it forwards first.

She holds her fingers up one by one. John looks very uncomfortable.

ALICE
W...A...T...E...R. So backwards...
(folding down her fingers)
R...E...T...
(she hesitates)
A...W!

DR. BENJAMIN
Very good.

Alice nods - pleased to have completed the task.

DR. BENJAMIN
Now do you remember the name I gave you a few minutes ago?

ALICE
I feel as though you always tell me and I never remember it.

DR. BENJAMIN
Was it John Black, John White, John Jones, or John Smith?

She guesses randomly.

ALICE
Smith.

DR. BENJAMIN
And his address, was it East Street, Washington Street, Main Street or Humbolt Street?

John speaks up.

JOHN

Sorry to jump in here, we're both concerned about the rate of deterioration. Is that normal?

DR. BENJAMIN

Every case is different. With Familial Early Onset, things can go fast -- and actually with people who have a high level of education, it can go faster. Often they've managed to sustain their mental processes by innovative means and that delays diagnosis. Clearly Alice's memory is failing but she's still incredibly resourceful.

ALICE

Thank you.

DR. BENJAMIN

I know you're discouraged. But sometimes I've seen patients plateau, even at this point. Don't lose hope. Alice, I read your name in the Dementia Care Conference brochure. You're going to give a speech.

Alice nods.

ALICE

Will you be there?

DR. BENJAMIN

Yes, I'm looking forward to it.

JOHN

I'm going to be away on business in Minnesota and I'm worried. Are you sure this is a good idea -- considering the state that she's in? She's going to be under a lot of stress.

DR. BENJAMIN

Oh, I think it will be great for her. I'm sure everything will be fine. You're not worried are you, Alice?

She ponders this for a moment.

ALICE
No, I don't think so.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - OFFICE - DAYS LATER

Alice is practicing her speech out loud, going over the words with a yellow marker. On the computer in front of her, Lydia is on Skype.

ALICE
"Various ways to prevent the production of Amyloid are being tried. There is a new study that combines base and gamma secretase inhibitors and this is one of our best hopes for the future..."
That's it. That's the speech.

LYDIA
It's good, Mom. It's good. It's very scientific.

ALICE
Yes. Well, you know.

LYDIA
And I'm sure it's valid. But um...

ALICE
But what?

LYDIA
I mean, is there any value in making it a bit more personal?

ALICE
I don't understand. What do you mean by personal?

LYDIA
It's not a speech to a room of scientists. What I want to know really is how you feel. What does it feel like? What does this disease mean to you?

ALICE
(getting irritable)
You weren't listening because that's all there. That's in the speech.

LYDIA
Okay. Don't ask me then.

ALICE

Oh no then, I won't ask - then.

Lydia gives it a moment then tries to re-engage her mother.

LYDIA

Hey...mom...let's give it one more shot, okay?

ALICE

(annoyed)

I can't because I have done it already. I use this - this yellow thingy - to make it so I don't have to read the same line over and over and over again.

Alice waves her highlighter pen at the screen.

LYDIA

Got it. Totally. Just print out one more.

ALICE

Do you know that it took me three days to write this?

LYDIA

You can print out one more...

ALICE

No no! It took me three days!

LYDIA

Sorry.

ALICE

Three days.

She clicks off the Skype and stares at the blank screen.

INT. LECTURE THEATER - AFTERNOON

From behind, we follow Alice and Tom as they enter a large, crowded lecture hall, led by LUCIA GUZMAN, a coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association.

LUCIA GUZMAN

Here you are...

ALICE

Thank you.

She removes two 'RESERVED' stickers on places at the front of the auditorium. Alice sits, a sheaf of papers in her lap. Tom cranes around to look at a sea of unknown faces.

Alice sees Anna and Charlie about eight rows behind and waves. A voice comes in from the left.

DR. BENJAMIN
Hello there.

TOM
Hello.

Alice turns and sees Dr. Benjamin - recognizes him, but can't remember his name.

ALICE
Oh, Hi. Tom this is my doctor.
This is my son.

DR. BENJAMIN
I'm Travis Benjamin, I'm your
mother's neurologist.

ALICE
This is my son, Tom.

DR. BENJAMIN
So how you feeling Alice?

ALICE
I think I'm nervous.

DR. BENJAMIN
You're going to do great. Break a
leg!

He smiles encouragingly as he departs.

DR. BENJAMIN
(to Tom)
Nice to meet you.

INT. LECTURE THEATER -ON STAGE AFTERNOON

Lucia Guzman is now at the podium.

LUCIA GUZMAN
It's a great honor to welcome our
next speaker, Alice Howland. A
former Professor of Linguistics at
Columbia, she's written textbooks
and she's lectured all over the
world.

(MORE)

LUCIA GUZMAN (cont'd)
Alice has been living with Early
Onset Alzheimer's with the care and
support of her loving family.
Please welcome Alice Howland.

Alice walks to the podium, sets down her file and looks out
to the sea of strange, intimidating faces.

ALICE
Hello. Please give me a minute
here.

She uncaps her pen. And she begins reading from her speech,
highlighting each sentence as she goes. It makes for an
awkward presentation.

ALICE
Good morning. It's an honor to be
here. The poet Elizabeth Bishop
once wrote: 'the Art of Losing
isn't hard to master: so many
things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no
disaster.' I'm not a poet, I am a
person living with Early Onset
Alzheimer's, and as that person I
find myself learning the art of
losing every day.

She turns the page and looks up.

ALICE
Losing my bearings, losing objects,
losing sleep, but mostly losing
memories...

When she looks back down, she knocks the pages from the
podium. A murmur from the assembled. Alice tries to gather
up the pages with the help of Lucia Guzman. For a long
moment, she seems lost in confusion. Finally, she finds a
page with some yellow markings on it and resumes.

ALICE
I think I'll try to forget that
just happened.

Warm laughter from the crowd - they're with her!

ALICE
All my life I've accumulated
memories - they've become, in a
way, my most precious possessions.
(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

The night I first met my husband,
the first time I held my textbook
in my hands. Having children,
making friends, traveling the
world. Everything I accumulated in
life, everything I've worked so
hard for - now all that is being
ripped away. As you can imagine,
or as you know, this is hell. But
it gets worse.

In the audience, Dr. Benjamin is willing her on.

ALICE

For who can take us seriously when
we are so far from who we once
were? Our strange behavior and
fumbled sentences change other's
perception of us and our perception
of ourselves. We become
ridiculous, incapable, comic. But
this is not us, this is our
disease. And like any disease it
has a cause, it has a progression,
and it could have a cure. My
greatest wish is that my children,
our children - the next generation -
do not have to face what I am
facing.

Anna watches her mother from the audience, the words
resonating.

ALICE

But for the time being, I'm still
alive. I know I'm alive. I still
have people I love dearly. I still
have things I want to do with my
life. I rail against myself for
not being able to remember things -
but I still have small moments in
the day of pure happiness and joy.

She turns the final page. Tom has tears in his eyes.

ALICE

So, 'live in the moment' I tell
myself. It's really all I can do,
live in the moment. And not beat
myself up too much for mastering
the art of losing. One thing I
will try to hold onto though is the
memory of speaking here today. It
will go, I know it will.

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

It may be gone by tomorrow. But it means so much to be talking here, like my old ambitious self who was so fascinated by communication. Thank you for this opportunity. It means the world to me.

Alice looks up from her pages.

ALICE

Thank you.

The audience breaks into applause. Strong applause that builds and builds. Spontaneously, people rise from their chairs and give her a standing ovation.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK

A cold and rainy day. Winter is approaching.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - BEDROOM -- MORNING

John is dressing for work, in mid-explanation. Alice is sitting on the bed in a crumpled shirt.

JOHN

It's the Mayo Clinic. It would start up next spring and I would be heading my own team.

ALICE

So you want to move to...

JOHN

Minnesota. Rochester, Minnesota. It could be a whole new adventure for us. You might even like it there.

ALICE

Everything I know is here. Anna and Tom and the babies that are coming.

JOHN

It's a two hour flight. We'd see them almost as much as we do now. Ali, this just came up and they haven't even made a formal offer. But don't you see? This is it - they're working on so many cutting edge treatments, they've got so many resources-

Alice, visibly distressed, tries to think this through.

ALICE

I understand. I understand that work is important. I miss working. I think you should ask them if you can start in a year.

JOHN

It's not academia, Ali. They don't give sabbaticals.

ALICE

But to pick up and move, at this point, when I...when we...
(shakes her head,
frustrated)
Why can't I say what I want to say?

JOHN

Ali, one way or another, we'll still be together.

ALICE

So no time off.

JOHN

(getting frustrated)
I just can't take a year off. Financially - it's not an option. God knows what we'll be facing further down the line.

ALICE

That's it then, that's it.

JOHN

What?

ALICE

You - you don't want that. A year at home, with me, watching this. You don't want it.

JOHN

I didn't say that.

ALICE

You didn't have to.

She turns and looks right at him. He looks away.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice is doing her daily questions.

ON A WHITE SCREEN

WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR OLDEST DAUGHTER?

The answer comes in A - N - N - E

Then corrects: A - N - N - A

WHAT MONTH WERE YOU BORN IN?

The predictive text has a hard time figuring out "October."

INT. ALICE'S HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice lies awake in bed. She checks the alarm clock - 2.05. After a moment, she sighs and gets out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY

Tentatively she descends the stairs in the dark.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN

Entering the kitchen, she finds her bag on the counter and begins to empty out the contents: keys, wallet, tissues.

She looks in a second bag -- magazines, papers.

She opens the kitchen drawer. It contains a wide assortment of items - screwdrivers, packets of seeds, a tape measure, Scotch tape, drink coasters, a potato.

ALICE

Where the hell is it?!

In frustration, she picks up the fish bowl full of keys and loose change and unceremoniously dumps it out. It makes an explosive sound as the contents scatter across the granite counter top. Manically, she begins sorting through everything.

John enters.

JOHN

Ali, what are you doing?

ALICE

I can't find it!

JOHN
Can't find what?

ALICE
I'm looking for my phone.

JOHN
It's the middle of the night.

ALICE
It goes off at 8 o'clock every morning and asks me these questions. I have to find it.

JOHN
We'll look for it in the morning.

ALICE
No, I have to find it.

JOHN
I'll help you find it tomorrow.

ALICE
No...No.

JOHN
Tomorrow. I'll help you find it.

ALICE
Help - help me find it.

JOHN
I promise we'll find it. Come to bed with me. Come to bed with me please...please.

ALICE
Okay...

Her manic rage finally subsides.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN - MIDDAY

From the front room, there are sounds of John on the phone. At the kitchen table, Alice, in a quiet mood, is doing a jigsaw puzzle.

Someone approaches from the dining room, carrying take-out.

ANNA
Hi.

ALICE
Anne? Hi.

ANNA
Hi Mom. It's Ann-a.

She kisses Alice on the cheek.

ALICE
I thought you were my sister.

ANNA
It's ok.

ALICE
How are you feeling?

ANNA
So uncomfortable. I can't breathe.
I can't sleep. Was it like this
for you?

ALICE
I didn't have two at a time.

ANNA
This is true.

Anna unloads the Thai food on the counter. John enters.

JOHN
Did you get the green curry?

ANNA
I did. It's right here.
Everything on track?

JOHN
Yeah. They've made a very generous
offer.

ANNA
Oh, that's great.

JOHN
I guess.

John sighs, conflicted.

ANNA
No it is. It's absolutely the
right decision.

JOHN
Would you like some water?

ANNA
Yes, please.

John starts getting some glasses out for drinks.

ALICE
John, what happened? Who was that
on the phone?

JOHN
That was that hospital honey, the
Mayo Clinic

ALICE
Oh. Is someone sick?

JOHN
No. Nothing's wrong. Everything
is absolutely fine.

He moves to the freezer, opens it and picks out an ice tray.

JOHN
Oh My God.

Reaching into the back of the freezer, he produces a frozen,
frost-encrusted iPhone. He shows it to Alice.

ALICE
Oh no.
(she approaches)
I was looking for it all last night.

She takes the phone and examines it.

JOHN
(quietly, to Anna)
That was over a month ago.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Alice is slowly, painfully, trying to tie her shoe-laces.

123

EXT. SUPER 8 FOOTAGE - PARK

123

Young Alice and her sister play with their Dad.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Alice sits before a blank TV, staring. The home-help, ELENA,
is vacuuming the rug.

EXT. SUPER 8 FOOTAGE - BEACH - DAY

Young Alice is given a piggy back ride by her dad by the shoreline. She rushes suddenly towards the camera.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alice looks at herself in the mirror. For an instant, she doesn't recognize her naked older face. Then she takes some toothpaste and smears it over her reflection.

JOHN (O.S.)

Ali, wake up.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Alice opens her eyes.

JOHN

Hey. Wake up. Wake up baby. It's time to wake up. It's time to get dressed. I'm going to help you.

Slowly, Alice gets up out of bed. John begins laying out clothes for her - more like her original style.

JOHN

I've got some very good news for you. Let me help you get your pants on.

ALICE

I want my green one.

JOHN

Oh, I think this one would be really really nice. Let's put that one on. Lean on me. Okay hold on.

Tenderly, he helps her get dressed.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Led by John, Alice walks along brightly lit corridors, passing DOCTORS, NURSES, PATIENTS. They approach Anna's room.

ALICE

(whispering)

What's wrong with her? She looks terrible.

JOHN
She's just delivered the babies,
honey!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

They walk through a door. Anna is in the bed cradling a baby. Charlie is by her side with another.

ALICE
Anna! You had your babies!

ANNA
I did mom!

Charlie unfolds the blanket, revealing a small pink face.

CHARLIE
This is Allison.

JOHN
You look so beautiful.

ANNA
Thank you.

CHARLIE
And that's Charlie Jr.

JOHN
My goodness.

Allison starts crying.

ALICE
Can I hold her?

CHARLIE
Um -- is that a good idea?

ALICE
I know how to hold a baby.

ANNA
That's okay, Mom. You can sit right
there in that chair.

Alice sits on a chair and Charlie hands her the baby.

ANNA
That's good.

CHARLIE

Something tells me you've done this before.

Alice looks down happily at the baby, then over to Anna.

ALICE

She looks like you.

Something breaks in Anna -- she beams back at her mother. Alice continues to look at the baby with pure unalloyed joy.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice is asleep on the sofa. Out of focus in the distance, her family talks about her future.

JOHN

There are days she knows where she is, certainly, but just as many days when she doesn't. Maybe she thinks she's a child back in New Hampshire, or who knows where...

ANNA

It's happening more and more, Tom. She doesn't know what's going on.

TOM

Yeah, but...I always think of what she said in the speech, y'know, how important her memories are to who she is...

ANNA

I know but, but that was months ago.

JOHN

Guys, this is difficult for all of us. But what we have to remember is who Alice was. She would not want to be a burden. Anna, you have the babies, and you want to go back to work. And you're not in a position to care for her, not seriously, Tom. And I can't keep Mayo waiting. Beginning of the month, I'm gone.

Alice starts to wake up.

JOHN

Now I want to take her with me.
And once she adjusts to Minnesota,
she'll be happier for it and so
will we all.

A thoughtful moment.

TOM

Lydia's gonna flip out.

ANNA

So let her.

TOM

Well, she is.

ANNA

She has no right to. If she really
cared, she wouldn't be on the other
side of the country.

Suddenly, they become aware of Alice sitting up, listening.

ALICE

It's hot in here.

There's a moment's self-consciousness at the table: how much
did she overhear?

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Alice is talking to Lydia on Skype. A kettle is close to
boiling on a stove in the background.

ALICE

So who is he exactly?

LYDIA

A manager. His name's Bill
Thompson.

ALICE

And why is he so important?

LYDIA

He'll open doors, get me to
auditions I wouldn't have access
to. He got me some good headshots.

ALICE

I see. What's his name?

LYDIA

Bill Thompson. He's with Thompson and Gould if you want to look them up. They're good.

ALICE

The kettle's boiling.

LYDIA

Where's Elena?

Alice goes over to the stove, puts a tea bag in the cup and pours water over it.

ALICE

I'm making myself a cup of tea.

LYDIA

Cool...where's your caretaker?

ALICE

Elena is not here today. Her daughter is sick. She's at the doctor.

LYDIA

So you're there alone?

ALICE

I can make myself a cup of tea.

She returns to the computer.

LYDIA

Okay. You want to check out my headshot? If I send you a link can you open the file - download the file?

ALICE

Yes!

LYDIA

Good.

(she sends)

There you go. I'll talk to you later, okay. I love you.

ALICE

Bye.

LYDIA

Bye.

Alice clicks on the file from Lydia to download it.

When the download is complete, she clicks Skype closed but cannot find the file. She clicks one folder on her desktop, then another, then another.

One of the folders opens revealing a Quicktime with a picture of herself on it.

Surprised, she clicks on it. It is the Butterfly file. There on the screen is Alice - younger, sharper, coherent, reassuring.

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

Hi Alice. I'm you and I have something very important to say to you. I guess you've come to that point, the point where you can't answer the questions. And this is the logical next step. It's the right step, I'm sure of that.

Present-day Alice watches, intrigued, amused, not reckoning with the seriousness of what her old self has to say.

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

Because what's happening to you, the Alzheimer's - you could see it as tragic. But your life has been anything but tragic. You've had a remarkable career, you've had a great marriage, and three beautiful children.

Alice on Quicktime has to struggle to control her emotions. Present-day Alice just sits there watching like a curious bird.

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

All right. Listen to me, Alice. This is important. Make sure you are alone. Go to your bedroom. There's a dresser by the window, the one with the blue lamp on it. Go to the dresser and open the drawer. In the back of the drawer are some pills. It says 'take all pills with water' on it. There are a lot of pills in that bottle, but you need to swallow them all.

Present-day Alice is now listening attentively.

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

Then go to the bed, lie down and go to sleep. And don't tell anyone what you're doing, okay?

Abruptly, the Quicktime ends. Alice obediently gets up and leaves the room.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - STAIRCASE

Alice climbs the stairs, muttering to herself.

ALICE

Dressing table, blue lamp.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - MASTER BEDROOM

Alice enters, still muttering.

ALICE

Dressing table, blue lamp.

Dressing table, blue lamp.

She stands in the center of the room, looking around, confused. She goes to the dressing table...There's a blue lamp on it...But she doesn't know what to do next.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

ANGLE ON THE COMPUTER

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

...Go to your bedroom. There's that dressing table, the one with the blue lamp on it. Go to that table and open the drawer. In the back of the drawer are some pills. It says 'take all pills with water' on it.

Present-day Alice, listens, again trying to memorize the instructions.

INT. STAIRCASE

We follow Alice from behind as she heads back up the stairs.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

She enters again, heads over to the dressing table.

ALICE

Dressing table, blue lamp.

Dressing table, blue lamp.

She pulls the drawer out. There are bits of old jewelry and accessories, some coins. Alice picks out a bracelet made of polished grey stones, puts it on and inspects it. She realizes she's forgotten something -- but what was it?

INT. STAIRCASE

Now Alice heads back up the stairs carrying the laptop as the message plays:

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

...Go to your bedroom. There's a dresser by the window, the one with the blue lamp on it. Go to the dresser and open the drawer. In the back of the drawer are some pills.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

She enters and sees the drawer already open. She wanders up to it and looks down. This time she seizes immediately on the pill bottle and holds it up. We see the attached note in Macro close up - TAKE ALL PILLS WITH WATER.

ALICE ON QUICKTIME

It says 'take all pills with water' on it. There are a lot of pills in that bottle, but you need to swallow them all. Then get into bed and go to sleep. Then go to the bed, lie down and go to sleep. And don't tell anyone what you're doing, okay?

INT. BATHROOM

She enters the bathroom. Going over to the basin, she empties out the contents of the toothbrush mug into the sink. She fills the mug with water and empties the pill bottle into her hand. Then -- A NOISE!

ELENA (O.S.)

Hello?

Alice turns her head and, in shock, drops the pills. They scatter everywhere.

INT. HALLWAY

Elena enters downstairs and closes the door.

INT. BATHROOM

Alice stares down at the pills blankly not knowing what to do next.

INT. PINKBERRY - DAY

Alice and John are at the head of the line, looking at the array behind the counter.

JOHN

May I have cookies and cream and a chocolate hazelnut. Alice, you know what you want right?

ALICE

Cookies and cream and a chocolate hazelnut.

JOHN

No honey. You usually have the original with blueberries and coconut.

ALICE

Ok...

JOHN

Original with blueberries and coconut please.

MOMENTS LATER

John and Alice are eating their frozen yoghurt.

JOHN

Ali, you see that building over there? Do you know what it is?

He points to a structure in the distance.

ALICE

I don't think I know that.

JOHN

That's Columbia. Where you used to teach.

ALICE

Someone told me, I was a good teacher.

JOHN

Yes, you were.

ALICE
I was really smart.

John looks away, fighting back emotion that threatens to overwhelm him.

JOHN
You were the smartest person I've ever known.

He looks at her, struggling with something.

JOHN
Alice. Do you still want to be here?

She answers brightly.

ALICE
I'm not done yet. Do we have to go?

JOHN
No. Don't worry. Take your time.

EXT. ALICE'S HOME - DAY

Blossoms in a tree show signs of another spring. A taxi pulls up outside.

INT. HALLWAY

Alice sleeps on the sofa in the front room. John carries a suitcase into the hallway. Behind him is Lydia.

JOHN (O.S.)
Is this all of your stuff?

LYDIA
I shipped some boxes as well.

JOHN
Were you sad to leave L.A.?

LYDIA
I'm trying to convince myself I'm more of an east coast girl. Where's mom?

JOHN
She's sleeping.

He indicates the sleeping Alice.

INT. ALICE'S OFFICE

The room has been partially converted back to being a bedroom, but some of Alice's touches remain.

JOHN

Yeah well - here it is. Your old room.

They drop the bags.

JOHN

How did it go with your manager...?

LYDIA

It's a west coast company, so...you know. Not good.

JOHN

Oh. That's too bad. You sure you don't mind..?

LYDIA

Dad, we've had that conversation.

JOHN

Okay.

LYDIA

This is New York. I'll audition. Do theater. I know this is where I need to be so...

John nods, weighing his daughter's sacrifice.

JOHN

Well...you're a better man than I am.

She looks at him. Troubled, he looks quickly away.

LYDIA

Dad...I got her, okay.

Unexpectedly, the dam bursts. He starts sobbing uncontrollably. She pulls him into a hug.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY

We see the seasons pass -- spring, summer, fall...

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

It's a bleak winter's day in a small unfriendly park overlooking the cold Hudson river and the distant grey shores of New Jersey.

A few PEOPLE are scattered through the park -- walking dogs or jogging by.

A TEENAGE BOY strums a melancholy tune on his guitar and harmonizes with his GIRLFRIEND.

On a bench nearby, Lydia is checking her phone. Next to her sits Alice, visibly diminished. She picks repeatedly at her coat.

LYDIA

It's getting pretty cold, huh. You want to head home? Come on. Let's do it.

Lydia helps Alice up and they shuffle off down the path.

INT. ALICE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Alice and Lydia enter through the main door to be greeted by the nurses aide, ELENA.

LYDIA

Hey.

ELENA

Hi. How was your walk?

ALICE

I don't think I know you!

ELENA

Yes, you do.

LYDIA

Mom, it's Elena.

Alice responds with a vague, unfocused look. It's not clear she even recognizes her.

LYDIA

I'm going to get you some juice, okay.

ELENA

Come on, let's take off your coat and go inside.

INT. HOWLAND HOUSE - FRONT ROOM

Alice has a cup of juice and is staring into space. Lydia sits in front of her, book in hand, reading a speech from Angels in America.

LYDIA (O.S.)

Night flight to San Francisco;
chase the moon across America.
God, it's been years since I was on
a plane. When we hit 35,000 feet
we'll have reached the tropopause,
the great belt of calm air - as
close as I'll get to the ozone. I
dreamed we were there.

Lydia looks directly at her Mom, but Alice seems absent.

LYDIA

The plane leapt the tropopause, the
safe air, and attained the outer
rim, the ozone, which was ragged
and torn, patches of it threadbare
as old cheesecloth, and that was
frightening. But I saw something
only I could see because of my
astonishing ability to see such
things.

Then -- a flicker of comprehension. Alice's eyes turn to Lydia as she reads.

LYDIA

Souls were rising, from the earth
far below, souls of the dead, of
people who'd perished from famine,
from war, from the plague, and they
floated up like skydivers in
reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling
and spinning.

Lydia notices her mother's attention and it inspires her reading.

LYDIA

And the souls of these departed,
joined hands, clasped ankles and
formed a web - a great net of
souls. And the souls were three-
atom oxygen molecules of the stuff
of ozone, and the outer rim
absorbed them, and was repaired.
Nothing's lost forever.

(MORE)

LYDIA (cont'd)
In this world, there is a kind of
painful progress, a longing for
what we've left behind, and
dreaming ahead. At least I think
that's so.

Alice looks down. Lydia breaks from her performance.

LYDIA
That's it.

She comes over to Alice, sits down next to her.

LYDIA
Hey...did you like that? What I
just read, did you like it?

Alice nods. It's unclear she even knows what Lydia is
talking about. But Lydia persists, wanting some kind of
affirmation.

LYDIA
What was it about?

ALICE
Love. Love.

Tears come into Lydia's eyes.

LYDIA
Yeah, Mom. It was about love.

Alice smiles and looks at Lydia. She is still able to
connect.

There is a SUPER 8 FLICKER, a memory, of Alice and her sister
walking away from the camera on a beach long ago.

THE END