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Go Ask Alice

A One Act Cutting

**Based on the (actual) diary
of an anonymous girl.**

**Play by
FRANK SHIRAS**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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GO ASK ALICE

For Five Men and Seven Women

CHARACTERS

ALICE ABERDEEN.....	sixteen
HELEN ABERDEEN.....	her mother, thirties
DOUGLAS ABERDEEN.....	her father, thirties
ALEXANDRIA.....	her sister, twelve
TIM.....	her brother, fourteen
CHRIS VETRANO.....	her best friend
JILL PETERS.....	teen
BILL THOMPSON.....	teen
JAN FUJARA.....	teen
JOE DRIGGS.....	teen
GLORIA.....	teen
JOEL REEMS.....	teen

The action is in the present and occurs chiefly during Alice Aberdeen's sixteenth year.



Go Ask Alice

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: ALICE is amazed that beneath the pounds she recently lost there exists a very pleasing figure. Growing up eager to meet the world, she has repeatedly felt rebuffed and is now distrustful, although not despairing. ALICE, dressed in jeans, is alone, sitting on the bed in her room. She takes the lock off of a strongbox from which she removes her diary. She then takes out a handful of pens and pencils, picking each up successively and speaking to it.

ALICE. There you are. You're one of my main men. (To another.) You're my most happy fella. (To another.) You're a big brute but I love you just the same. (To another.) You may be skinny, dear friend, but you're ever faithful and I'll always, always treasure you. (To another.) And you, do you know who you are? You're my knight in shining armor, and that's why I'm going to write with *you* today. You keep the knaves from breaching the moat and capturing me. They want to carry me off to their mountain hideout but *you* won't let them, and I love you for it. (She kisses the pen. There is a knock at the door.) Who is it?

ALEXANDRIA (offstage). Me!

ALICE. Come in, "me!"

(ALEXANDRIA enters.)

ALEXANDRIA. Alice, can I borrow your old radio?

ALICE. What for?

ALEXANDRIA. What do you care? It doesn't work good.

ALICE. Okay, Alex, borrow it. It's in my box.

ALEXANDRIA. Why do you keep that old baby box?

ALICE (archly). I've kept it because we're poor and can't afford to buy me a new one.

ALEXANDRIA. We've got enough money, Alice.

ALICE. Take the radio and go.

ALEXANDRIA. Are you gonna write in your diary now?

ALICE. I may.

ALEXANDRIA. What do you write in it? Lies?

ALICE. Alexandria, you're not a brat sister so stop trying so hard to act like one.

ALEXANDRIA. How come you're so skinny now? You were fat a couple of months ago.

ALICE. I'm not skinny and I was never fat.

ALEXANDRIA. Are you trying to get a boyfriend?

ALICE (smiling). I don't like boys.

ALEXANDRIA. I don't either. Tim says you're trying to get a boyfriend. Tim says --

ALICE. You shouldn't listen so much to Timothy. He's just using you to bug his big sister.

ALEXANDRIA. Tim says boys are flies and you're trying to turn into a honey pot. (Laughing, ALICE chases ALEXANDRIA and catches her.) I'm sorry, Alice!

ALICE. You are not. Take the radio and go. (ALEXANDRIA opens the box and removes the radio.) And be careful of it, Alex. I don't care if it doesn't work well.

ALEXANDRIA (doing salaam). Yes, your worshipful. I don't know why you're worried about this old radio. You just got a new stereo.

ALICE. I like old things. Now, please go so I can write my lies.

(ALEXANDRIA exits. ALICE puts on headphones and begins to write in her diary. She only gets a sentence or two down before her mother, HELEN ABERDEEN, knocks on the door. She is in her early thirties, slender, and several inches taller than ALICE. The headphones prevent ALICE from hearing the knock. MOTHER enters.)

MOTHER. Oh, sorry, I can come back later.

ALICE (removing the headphones). Hi, Mom, what did you say?

MOTHER. I'm leaving.

ALICE (laughing). So soon? You're not interrupting me. What do you want?

MOTHER (picking up a magazine off the floor). Are you still feeling depressed?

ALICE. I'm trying to be positive, Mom.

MOTHER. You are? How hard?

ALICE. Real hard. I smile. I put my hair up. I go out the door and act friendly and show spirit but it doesn't work.

MOTHER. Did you hear yourself? You said you *act* friendly. You have to *be* friendly.

ALICE. I have a friendly mother, a friendly father, a friendly sister and brother -- and there's me, a mean little animal who sits in a dark room and growls.

MOTHER. If you feel mean, it's only because of your attitude. Your attitude --

ALICE. -- "determines your altitude."

MOTHER. Do I repeat myself *that* much? But it's true. When you're optimistic, you rise above day-to-day problems and --

ALICE. Mom, please don't pick up after me.

MOTHER. If you didn't let that fall there, no one would have to pick it up.

ALICE. And please don't dust. Please, Mother, sit down with me.

MOTHER. Look, I'm picking up and dusting because it *needs* it.

ALICE. But can't you sit and talk sometimes for a minute?

MOTHER. You act like I never talk with you. Alice, that isn't true at all.

ALICE. I know it's not. You talk to me.

MOTHER. Well . . .

ALICE. I love you. (Slight pause, then ALICE begins to cry.)

MOTHER. Alice! What's the *matter* with you?

ALICE. I don't know. I don't know what's the matter with me. (MOTHER holds ALICE in her arms and comforts her.)

MOTHER. Now, now. I think you lost weight too fast. You've been starving yourself and getting run down. Now, now. I love you, Alice.

ALICE. Do you really?

MOTHER. Of course I do. I love you very, very much.

ALICE. You never say so. I have to drag it out of you.

MOTHER. I'm sorry. I'll try to say it more. It seems I'm always so busy.

ALICE. I make you work. I leave stuff all over. I'll stop. I promise.

TIM (offstage). Mom! Mom!

MOTHER. I'm in Alice's room! That boy is going to walk right on my waxed kitchen floor!

(TIM enters.)

TIM. I didn't walk on your waxed kitchen floor.

MOTHER. No one said you did.

TIM. You were thinking it.

MOTHER. You blame me?

TIM. Mom, guess what?

MOTHER. The Atomic Energy Commission just made you an offer.

TIM. Come on, don't make fun. At the science club meeting, I got the word that my exhibit won first prize this summer.

(MOTHER and TIM see ALICE put the headphones back on. They assume she can't hear.)

MOTHER. Really? That's wonderful! I know how hard you worked on that exhibit all year. But then, you *are* an A student. (ALICE adjusts the headphones and overhears.)

TIM. How come Alice only gets C's?

MOTHER. Why this sudden interest in your sister's academic record?

TIM. I don't like it when Alice calls me dumb.

MOTHER. If you hadn't made fun of her plumpness, I'm sure she would never have said anything unpleasant to you.

TIM. I'm going to my room.

MOTHER. See if you can't do a little positive thinking in there.

TIM. I'll work on it. (MOTHER and TIM exit. ALICE kicks a pillow on the floor and locks up her diary.)

(FATHER enters.)

FATHER. I just thought I'd look in, Alice. (ALICE makes room

for FATHER on the bed.) You're so much thinner now. I can't get over it. You're so pretty. Not that you weren't always pretty.

ALICE (unbelieving). Am I pretty, Dad? Really?

FATHER. Of course you are. I'm sure it took a lot of will power to lose that much weight. I'm proud of you -- I mean, not because of the weight so much but because of the will power.

ALICE. More than twelve globby pounds of lumpy lard. Mom thinks I overdid it -- that I lost it too fast.

FATHER. Do *you* feel all right? That's what's important.

ALICE. I'm kind of nervous lately. I'm having trouble sleeping. I wish I could sleep. Maybe Mom is right that I dieted too much.

FATHER. That's possible, I guess.

ALICE. Dad, I'm sorry about the C's all year.

FATHER. Hey, what is this?

ALICE. You're a professor. It's awful to have a daughter who's a mental blob.

FATHER. Now hold it right there.

ALICE (taking Father's hand). I'm sorry. I'll try harder. I'll try to overcome my lack of brains with hard work.

FATHER. You don't have any lack of brains.

ALICE. Then why don't I get better grades?

FATHER. As I said before, it's probably the way you apply yourself.

ALICE. I use all those study habits you showed me.

FATHER. Or, as I *also* said, other things may be bothering you and interfering with your concentration.

ALICE (fondling his hand). I don't want to let you down.

FATHER. You're not letting me down.

ALICE. I bet the other profs at the university brag about their kids. "My son who's going to be a doctor." "My daughter who's brilliant at music theory." Then Professor Aberdeen says, "My daughter who's a dummy."

FATHER. Please, Alice, it hurts to hear you go on like that.

ALICE. Do you love me?

FATHER. Of course I love you.

ALICE (kissing his hand). Even though I'm not perfect?

FATHER. Especially since you're not perfect. Here -- I brought you something.

ALICE. What? Chocolate-covered peanuts! My favorite! But, Daddy, you know I'm on a diet.

FATHER. Cheat a little. Be a little imperfect.

ALICE. I'll only eat six. Six wonderful, delicious, mouth-watering, delectable, heavenly chocolate-covered peanuts. (FATHER chuckles and eats some with ALICE.) Are you sure my grades don't bother you? I mean, a person can't go to college with C's. How would it look for a professor's daughter not to be accepted at a college?

FATHER. We'll face that when the time comes. Why are you wrinkling up your forehead?

ALICE. I'm sending ESP signals to the telephone to make it ring.

FATHER. Who's supposed to call?

ALICE. A certain person.

FATHER. Oh. How do you like the stereo?

ALICE. It's wonderful, Daddy. I listen to it all the time. At night when I can't sleep, I put the headphones on and listen to music.

FATHER. You've been having sleeping problems for a while now.

ALICE. A couple of months.

FATHER. Maybe we should have you see the doctor.

(MOTHER enters. The telephone rings.)

ALICE. I'll get it! (ALICE flies from the room and almost bumps into MOTHER. She talks offstage into the telephone.)

Oh, hello, Jill . . . Yes, I *think* Beth mentioned that you might call. How are you? (As FATHER and MOTHER speak, Alice's voice becomes a murmur in background.)

FATHER. You're right. She's upset. She's been trying to become a new person all at once.

MOTHER (getting Alice's nightgown). She needs rest. It's not too early to go to bed.

FATHER. She doesn't sleep.

MOTHER. How can a teenager have insomnia?

FATHER. Helen, I'm going to give her a sleeping pill.

MOTHER. But --

FATHER. Just tonight.

MOTHER. But that's a prescription drug.

FATHER. It won't hurt her. It's just for tonight. If she keeps on having trouble sleeping, I'll have her see a doctor.

MOTHER. Well, all right. (FATHER exits to Alice's bathroom.)

ALICE (offstage). Good-bye, Jill. It sounds like fun.

(ALICE enters.)

MOTHER. Who was that?

ALICE. Jill Peters.

MOTHER. *The* Jill Peters? The Miss Everything?

ALICE. The same.

MOTHER. What did she want?

ALICE. For me to go to a party. This weekend! In three days already!

MOTHER. She invited you?

ALICE. How else could I go?

MOTHER. Well, well, well.

(FATHER enters with a red bottle.)

FATHER. Here, Alice, take this. It'll help you sleep tonight.

ALICE. But that's from the danger bottle.

MOTHER. Just for tonight. We think you need to sleep.

ALICE. I do. Thank you, I --

MOTHER. Here's your nightgown. Get ready for bed.

ALICE. At nine-thirty?

FATHER. Go on, go to bed early for once. (ALICE exits to the bathroom. She puts on a different blouse for Scene Two. She dons a floor-length nightgown for the end of the present scene.)

MOTHER. I'll just turn down her bed.

FATHER. Honey, I set it up with the insulator.

MOTHER. Really?

FATHER. I told them they could do it over the weekend. I'm sorry I didn't check with you first.

MOTHER. I wish you had, Doug.

FATHER. Helen, I had to decide quickly. Because of a cancellation, the insulator suddenly had this weekend free. You know how much more cheaply the house can be insulated during the summer. They'll work Saturday and Sunday straight through.

MOTHER. And what are we supposed to do?

FATHER. Go to my parents'. We have a standing invitation. Dad's not feeling well. I'd like to see him. I think the children should see their grandparents, too.

MOTHER. It sounds like a good idea.

FATHER. You're not too put out that I didn't talk it over with you first?

MOTHER. Considering -- I guess not. But Alice is supposed to go to a party this weekend.

FATHER. I'll talk to her tomorrow.

MOTHER (crossing). I'll get Tim and Alexandria ready for bed. (She pauses at the door.) Promise me you won't give another sleeping pill to Alice.

FATHER. I promise.

MOTHER. Unless, of course, the doctor prescribes them. Which isn't very likely at her age.

(MOTHER exits. FATHER sits on Alice's bed, opens the strong-box, removes the diary and muses. ALICE enters.)

ALICE. That's my diary, Dad.

FATHER. I wasn't going to read it.

ALICE. I'm not accusing you, Daddy.

FATHER. You're such a serious girl, putting your thoughts down on paper.

ALICE. I try to have *fun*, too.

FATHER. I wasn't being critical. Did you take the pill?

ALICE. Yes. Why do you keep the danger bottles in *my* bathroom?

FATHER. To make it less likely that Alexandria accidentally takes any of those pills. (FATHER exits to bathroom and puts the bottle of pills back.)

(FATHER re-enters.)

FATHER. Hop in bed and settle down. You'll start feeling drowsy in a few minutes. And no putting on the headphones tonight.

ALICE. I won't. Goodnight, Daddy. (She impulsively reaches up and kisses his cheek.)

FATHER. Goodnight, Alice. You're doing real well. Keep it up. (FATHER exits. ALICE finds her small flashlight, sits up in bed with her back to the door and surreptitiously reads aloud from her diary.)

ALICE. "I guess I just can't be secure no matter what happens. I sometimes wish I were going with someone; then I'd always know I had a date and I'd have someone I could really talk to but, confidentially, no one has ever been that interested in me. I wish I were popular and beautiful and wealthy and talented." (She writes.) Am I some kind of a throwback? A misfit? A mistake? (ALICE puts her diary and flashlight away. She settles down in bed, lying on her back with one arm stretched out beyond the bed.)

BLACKOUT

(Note: The blackout here is optional. The action may simply flow continuously to the next scene.)

Scene Two

LIGHTS: MOTHER and ALICE are talking in Alice's room. During the blackout, ALICE has pulled off her nightgown. The costume for this scene was underneath.)

MOTHER. I hope we're doing the right thing.

ALICE. Mother, I'll meet the insulator in the morning when they come and give him the house keys. Take the bus and meet you at Grandfather's house. I wish you wouldn't make such a big deal out of it.

MOTHER. Does that party tonight mean that much to you?

ALICE. No, it doesn't mean *that* much to me. I just want to have some fun. My life is boring, boring, boring. (A horn honks.)

MOTHER. They're waiting. All right. Make sure you get on the right bus.

ALICE. There's only *one*.

MOTHER. Don't stay out too late. You didn't eat today. *Eat!*

ALICE. I will, Mom. 'Bye.

MOTHER. Good-bye, Alice. (MOTHER exits. ALICE picks up a pen and speaks to it.)

ALICE. I think I'll write with you, Mr. Magoo, because you're the one who has the fun. (She writes.) Thank God today isn't another sock-in-the-belly day. I'm going to have fun! (ALICE has a mood change.) Oh, dear God, help me be accepted. Help me belong. Don't let me be a social outcast. (ALICE nervously puts the diary away and jumps up and does a couple of twirls. The front bell rings. She rushes to the door, opens it and speaks offstage.) Hi! Hi! Come on in! (Murmurs and "hi's" are heard offstage.)

(JILL enters.)

JILL. We waited until your parents' car turned the corner down the street. Are you sure it's okay?

(ALICE, CHRIS, JOE, BILL and JAN enter.)

ALICE. It's okay, Jill.

(GLORIA enters and speaks from the doorway.)

GLORIA. Kitchen that way? (ALICE nods. GLORIA exits to the kitchen.)

JOE. Jill's parents finked. They decided it was too hot for the symphony and stayed home.

BILL. Can't have any fun with the old folks hanging around. JOE (starting a routine). What's the younger generation coming to, hey?

BILL. Coming to? I think it just went. Down the drain.

JOE. Does it rain in your drain?

BILL. Yeah, it does. And it gives me a pain to see it rain in my drain which backs water up in my main. (Obligatory laughter from the others. ALICE joins in.)

JAN. Funny, funny guys, hey, Alice?

ALICE. Yes.

JAN. I'm Jan Fujara and this is Joe.

JOE. Joe Life-O Driggs.

ALICE (cheerily). Life-O?

JOE. Life-O-the-party. Group: laugh! (Everyone laughs on cue. ALICE hesitantly joins in. JAN exits for the kitchen.)

BILL. I'm Bill Thompson and this is Chris Vetrano.

ALICE. Hi, Chris.

CHRIS. Hi.

JILL. Is that your stereo?

ALICE. Yes, it's new.

(GLORIA enters.)

JOE. Looks neat.

ALICE. Sit wherever you like. There's lots of cushions.

BILL. I'll take this. (He sits in a bean-bag chair. JILL sits on the floor, cross-legged, cool.)

GLORIA. Here, thirsty boy. (She hands JOE a Coke.)