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*Dramatic Publishing*

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A FULL LENGTH PLAY

# **the late great me**

BY  
DAVID ROGERS

Based on the book  
by Sandra Scoppettone



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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THE LATE GREAT ME  
*A Full Length Play*  
For Ten Men and Twelve Women  
Voices, extras as desired

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CHARACTERS

JOYCE FELL  
ELLEN  
LINDA  
PETE  
GERI PETERS  
JOAN GOLDSTEIN  
BEVERLY MAHER. . . . . *Students at Walt Whitman High*  
MARCELLE  
BOB  
CAROLYN  
B.J.  
DAVE TOWNSEND  
KATE LAINE. . . . . *A young teacher*  
GINGER. . . . . *Geri's mother*  
JACK. . . . . *Geri's brother*  
GEORGE. . . . . *Geri's father*  
POLICEMAN  
MR. DERRICK. . . . . *Shop teacher*  
YOLANDA . . . . . *A bar owner*  
BUNNY. . . . . *Dave's mother*  
HOWARD . . . . . *Dave's father*  
JOHN WILSON. . . . . *Kate's date*  
MR. STANTON . . . . . *Principal of Walt Whitman High*  
VOICES

EXTRAS including bar patrons, ambulance men, dance goers,  
and Alcoholics Anonymous members.

PLACE: *The town of Goose Bay.*

TIME: *A school term in the present.*

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ACT ONE

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After the house lights go down, the ringing of a school bell is heard. The curtain rises on an empty stage. Stage left is set as the Peters' living room, stage right as a class room. Only the classroom is lit. Two girls, JOYCE and ELLEN enter UR.

JOYCE: (Talking as they come)...and Portugal and Spain and then we went to Italy...just fabulous! And we only flew home from Greece this weekend. How was your summer?

ELLEN: (Putting on a brave front) Fantastic! I did a lot of baby sitting and broke my ankle July Fourth.  
(They sit in the two chairs furthest left in the front row and continue talking quietly. LINDA and PETE enter, hand in hand DR)

PETE: (Looking at the blackboard) Who's Ms. Kate Laine?

LINDA: Must be a new teacher this year.

PETE: Can't be any worse than the old ones.  
(They sit in the first two chairs R in the third row. GERI PETERS enters DR, alone and stands quietly looking around the room. She wears jeans and a man's shirt. Another couple enter UR and sit in remaining chairs in front row. Two more girls, JOAN GOLDSTEIN and BEVERLY MAHER enter DR behind GERI)

BEVERLY: (Talking as she enters)...so I said to him, I don't go to Crawford's Woods with a boy on a first date.

GERI: (Turns, sees them) Hi Beverly...Joan...

JOAN: (They ignore her walking upstage to second row)  
What'd he say?

BEVERLY: He said so I'll take you home, walk around the block and pick you up again. Then it'll be our second date

JOAN: So did you go?

BEVERLY: Of course not. I won't go out with a boy who brings me home that early. (They sit in two middle chairs in second row. GERI, discouraged, moves into back row, taking second chair from left as MARCELLE and BOB enter UR)

LINDA: (Seeing them) Hi Marcelle...Bob...(They go around the chairs to left and sit beside LINDA and PETE in third row. All students but GERI continue talking quietly. As MARCELLE and BOB are seating themselves, CAROLYN and BJ, two more girls, enter DR. CAROLYN is big and enthusiastic, BJ, small, serious, literal. CAROLYN immediately sees GERI)

CAROLYN: (Very excited) Geri! Geri! You'll never guess what. (She slides into back row sitting R of GERI as she talks. The GIRLS angle their chairs so that they can, more or less, face front and be heard) He talked to me. Stan Karanewski actually talked to me! Just now!

BJ: (Sitting to R of CAROLYN, not quite as excited, but truthful) He did. He talked to Carolyn. Honest. He said, "Do you know if the first bell rang?"

CAROLYN: (Annoyed) Oh BJ! What he said isn't important. It's the fact! The fact that he talked to me!

GERI: Doesn't matter, Carolyn. You're not in Stan's set. He's a jock.

CAROLYN: So?

GERI: You know as well as I. In this school, the jocks talk to the jocks, the greasers talk to the greasers, the straights and the juicers stick to themselves and that leaves the freaks to talk to each other. Like us.

BJ: Freaks are bearded ladies.

GERI: Freaks are us.

BJ: Just because Carolyn wants to be a mortician?

CAROLYN: (Defensive) It's a very good job. You can work any time, any where, and then you can take off and travel and when you find a place you like...no matter where...they always need a mortician.

BJ: Maybe Geri's right.

CAROLYN: It's better than working with animals. They bite.

GERI: We might as well face it, girls. We just don't fit in with the rest of them and this year isn't going to be any different than last year. We'll spend Saturday nights watching old movies on TV.

CAROLYN: I like old movies.

BJ: Cause half the actors are dead.

(DAVE TOWNSEND, a very attractive boy, enters UR)

DAVE: Hey! Is this room fourteen?

JOAN: (Immediately alert to a cute boy, all charm) Why, yes, it is.

BEVERLY: (The same) Come right in! (DAVE looks around the room)

CAROLYN: Who's that?

GERI: (Very impressed) He's neat looking.

BJ: He must be a new boy.

GERI: We can see he's not a new ground hog. (DAVE moves left around the chairs) He's adorable. (He hesitates at the second row)

CAROLYN: He's gonna sit next to Beverly, but I'll give eight to five he'll be eating lunch with Joan.  
(DAVE suddenly moves and stands L of fourth row)

DAVE: (To GERI) Do you like the Stones?

GERI: (Undone) Huh?

DAVE: The Stones. Do you like them?

GERI: (For the moment unable to speak, nods, then, in a high small voice, finally gets out) Yes.



DAVE: My name is Dave Townsend and I think you should know me. (He holds out his hand. GERI, undone, stares at it. CAROLYN pokes her, and GERI shakes his hand. He sits beside her) I'm new.

GERI: Yes.

DAVE: Aren't you going to tell me your name?

GERI: Yes.

DAVE: What is it? (For the moment, GERI can't remember)

CAROLYN: (Poking her, admonishing her for being impolite) For heaven's sake, Geri...

GERI: (Remembering, to DAVE) Geri! Geri Peters!

DAVE: Nice name. (He smiles, GERI groans slightly, CAROLYN pokes her again)

GERI: These are my friends, Carolyn and BJ.  
(The bell rings again and KATE LAINE, an attractive young teacher enters UR, carrying a pack of 6 by 9 program cards)

KATE: Good morning, class. I'm Kate Laine. I teach humanities and I'm your home room teacher. I'm new at Walt Whitman so I don't know your names yet, so would one of you please pass out the program cards?  
(JOAN rises, takes them from KATE) Thank you. (As JOAN distributes cards which have names on them, cannot be just given out in any order) Now, please don't

lose these cards. It'll take hours to get a new one and without it you won't know where you're supposed to be and when. If there are any problems..

MARCELLE: (Who already has hers, rises) Problem! The computer put me in Spanish one, two, three and four. (KATE gestures for her to come up. MARCELLE goes to her, they talk quietly. By now, JOAN has handed GERI her card and now makes a point of giving DAVE his)

JOAN: (All charm) You must be David Townsend. I know all the other boys.

CAROLYN: (Overhearing, acidly) I'll say.  
(JOAN, annoyed, hands out rest of cards and returns to her seat. Meanwhile, DAVE looks over to GERI's card. She turns, finding his face so close to hers, they are practically nose to nose)

DAVE: (Explaining) I just wondered if we had any classes together.

GERI: Oh. (Turning to CAROLYN) He wondered if we had classes together. (Turns back to him)

DAVE: (Looking at GERI's card) Great! We've got classes together. (He turns back to his own card, GERI turns back to CAROLYN, reporting)

GERI: Great! We've got classes together.

BJ: (Leaning over CAROLYN) Don't get your heart set on him, Geri. You know, I know and God knows by the end of the day Beverly Maher or Joan Goldstein or Joyce Fell will have him wrapped around their little

CAROLYN: BJ's right. Geri, promise me you won't let this boy break your heart.

GERI: I promise.

DAVE: (Turning back) Listen, Geri, since I just moved here, I don't know anything about the town. If you're not busy tonight, maybe you could kind of show me around? (The school bell rings)

GERI: I think I'm hearing bells.

BJ: That's the first class. (Everyone rises)

DAVE: (To GERI) Couldja?

GERI: Sure. (They start toward DR. BEVERLY gets between them)

BEVERLY: Do you know where the lunchroom is, Dave? I can show you the best table. That's where I sit.

DAVE: Thanks. I know where the lunchroom is and Geri's showing me her table.

BEVERLY: (Amazed and annoyed) Geri? (She exits DR with JOAN. CAROLYN and BJ have hung back to watch, the others, except KATE are leaving UR)

DAVE: So where do I meet you?

GERI: You know where the town library is?

DAVE: (Nods) What time?

GERI: Seven thirty? By the wall. All the kids meet there.

DAVE: Right. See you then. (Starts off DR)

GERI: (Calls after him) Hey! How will I know you?

DAVE: I'll be the one with the carrot in my ear. (He exits DR)

GERI: (To the amazed CAROLYN and BJ) Heartbreak, here I come!

(There is a blackout and the school bell rings again. During blackout, school set, chairs, blackboard, is taken off. The sound of the bell stops and, still in the blackout, we hear music, a record star of the fifties. Light come up on the PETERS' living room, stage L. Geri's mother, GINGER, is dusting the bookcase ULC, singing along with the music, half dancing. GERI enters DL carrying some school books)

GERI: (As she enters) Mom...?

GINGER: (Without turning, points to the record player) Shh! (GERI waits impatiently for the last few seconds of the record. When it stops GINGER turns off the machine and removes the record) Don't you just love Tony Bennett?

GERI: No. I think he's goopy.

GINGER: (Putting the record away in the bookcase) What do you know? What do you kids today know about anything? All you know is a lot of screaming and electric music. You don't know anything about real love songs. (She turns looking at GERI for the first time) Is that what you wore for the first day of school?

GERI: (Looking down at herself) No. Actually, I started out in a ball gown, but when I got to the corner, an old witch came out of that oak tree and waved her wand at me and this is what happened.

GINGER: Don't be fresh. The idea of wearing dirty, filthy, patched ugly jeans to school is simply beyond me. When we were in school, we dressed. Sometimes we even wore stockings. With seams.

GERI: They wore hoopskirts to school in 1865. But this is different. (She sits in chair LC)

GINGER: I know, but I just don't approve of it. Well, how was school? Did you make any new friends?

GERI: Twenty or thirty.

GINGER: You've got to make an effort, Geri. Jack says you don't make any effort. You've got to smile in the halls.

GERI: Nobody smiles in the halls. I tried it once and somebody took me to the nurse.

GINGER: Geri, for a girl like me, who lost being chosen most popular girl in her graduating class by two votes, a daughter like you is a heartbreak. When I think how Claire Cahill got those two boys to vote twice for her...

GERI: You've told me, Mother.

GINGER: You don't try. A girl should have all-round popularity. You can't lock yourself into just Carolyn and BJ. Especially those two. The mortician and the horse doctor. You don't want to be president of a lot of left over people, you know.

GERI: Where did you get that line, Mom? President of a lot of leftover people?

GINGER: Oh, it was this play I saw. The Member of the Wedding. My first year in college. Tommy Rigby took me. He was the most adorable boy. He could wiggle his ears and he made me laugh...He was really a dreamboat.

(JACK, GERI's slightly older brother, a senior, enters DL in time to hear this. He carries school books)

JACK: Mom, nobody says dreamboat anymore. It's very 1950.

GINGER: I liked 1950. Don't you think it was a more gracious time?

JACK: I wasn't there. Hi, Geri. (He drops his books on the sofa and goes off UC saying) Did you get some of that peanut butter without the lumps, Mom...

GERI: Mind if I go out tonight, Mom?

GINGER: (Shakes her head, "No") School night.

GERI: (As GINGER keeps shaking her head) Only the first night...no homework... I have a date.

GINGER: (Stops shaking her head) A date with a boy?  
(GERI nods) Why didn't you say that in the first place?

GERI: Because you always make such a fuss.

GINGER: Fuss? I don't make a fuss. (She rushes to the chair beside GERI, sitting) Oh my darling, tell me. Tell me everything.

GERI: (Having nothing to tell) Well...I have a date with a boy.

GINGER: Who is he? Where did you meet? What does he look like? Oh Geri, it's a mother's dream come true. Her daughter's first date. A moment of sharing. Tell me. Tell me.

GERI: (Shrugging) Well...I'm going to meet him at the library wall.

GINGER: (Disappointed, suspicious) Isn't he going to call for you? Aren't we going to meet him? Are you ashamed of him? Of us? When I was dating, I never would have gone out with a boy who didn't call for me.

GERI: It's different now, Mom.

GINGER: Well, what are you going to do? Where is he taking you?

GERI: (Rising, moving away) I don't know. We'll probably just hang out.

GINGER: (Displeased) Hang out? (JACK returns UC eating a piece of bread and peanut butter) Jack, your sister has a date with a boy who's taking her to hang out.

JACK: (Brotherly teasing) Terrific, Geri. I'm glad you found a live one. (He picks up his books from sofa)

GERI: Thanks a lot.

GINGER: You can drive her down to the library.

JACK: Okay tonight but if she starts going steady, you'll have to pay for my gas. (He laughs and exits UL)

GINGER: (Suddenly worried. Rises and goes to GERI) Oh, don't get serious about this boy. Promise me, Geri. Play the field like I did. That's the way to have fun. There was one night I had three different dates all in the same evening. There was Doug at seven and Jim at...

GERI: I won't get serious Mother. How could I get serious? I only met him at nine o'clock this morning.

GINGER: Stranger things have happened. (She goes to sofa, picks up GERI's books) You'll have to be home by ten. Nancy Thompson met a sailor one day and married him the next. And they're divorced now. That's what happens. (She exits UL)

GERI: (Calls after her) Mother, I promise I won't divorce anyone tonight.  
(GERI walks DL where a spot picks her up. The living room lights go off. We must understand that it is now later this evening. She speaks off L as though she were pretending to be a tour guide) And this is the famous Goose Bay beach. It comes complete with sand and water and is world reknowned for its quality of sheer boredom.  
(DAVE enters behind her. He carries a brown paper bag and has a small carrot stuck in his left ear. He looks out over the water (in the direction of the audience)



DAVE: It's got a nice full moon.

GERI: Only once a month. (She starts walking along front of stage to DR. He follows) Goose Bay also features a miniature golf course and one movie. If they get a hit it plays for ten weeks. And there's a Carvel Ice Cream stand but the chocolate machine is usually broken.

DAVE: Don't apologize. I can see it's a swinging town.

GERI: I figured you'd notice. (She stops walking DR and turns to him) How?

DAVE: (Nods) How. Squaw and brave sit now at council fire?

GERI: I mean how do you keep the carrot in?

DAVE: Gum. (He pulls it from his ear) I thought you'd never ask. (He crosses R of her and throws it off stage) Did it embarrass you?

GERI: No. You said you'd have a carrot in your ear. (DAVE sits before the rock DR) My mother would have said, "Walk from the library to the beach with a boy with a carrot in his ear! In my day any nice boy would have had a stalk of celery in his ear!"

DAVE: (Laughs. Then, seriously) What did bother you back at the library? (She doesn't answer) What those kids said?

GERI: No. (Admitting it) Yes. It was Beverly Maher saying

I finally got a date and it was with a vegetable freak. I wouldn't have minded except for the "finally." (She sits beside him)

DAVE: You shouldn't care so much what other people think.

GERI: I don't.

DAVE: Then why'd you get so red?

GERI: I didn't. (He looks at her quizzically, she adds)... think it showed. (Staring at her, DAVE takes a wine bottle from the paper bag, unscrews the top and offers it to GERI) What is it?

DAVE: Wine. It's for you. (She hesitates) Go ahead. You'll feel better.

GERI: I feel fine.

DAVE: No, you don't. You feel rotten and you're embarrassed and you're wishing for a tidal wave to swallow you up.

GERI: (Admitting it's true) How do you know?

DAVE: I've been there. (He offers her the bottle again. She takes it, then hesitates) Geri, it makes it all so easy. Those bad feelings...they just blow away like the clouds. and then it's like you see the sun. Not when it's hot, not noontime...but like...I don't know...sunset. Those streamers of red-orange color everything...and the air gets like soft around you but still it holds you up and you just float. That's it. You just float along on the air. And nothing's wrong. (He looks at her) Go on.

GERI: I never...

DAVE: Never?

GERI: (Laughs) When I was five. I finished all the glasses after a party my parents gave. They said I giggled for fifteen minutes, then threw up and passed out.

DAVE: When you were five? (She nods) Time to try again. (GERI smiles, uncertain and takes a small sip) That's not enough to fill a cavity. Take a good swig. (She does, coughs a little, then smiles at him, takes another) Hey! Not all at once. Take it easy.

GERI: (Handing it back) I'm sorry...

DAVE: No. Keep it. It's for you.

GERI: What about you?

DAVE: (Takes a pint bottle of Vodka out of the bag) The Vodka's for me. That stuff's for beginners.

GERI: How did you know I was a beginner?

DAVE: I just could tell.

GERI: How'd you know I'd want to drink? Do you want to get me drunk and then try to...

DAVE: (Breaking in) You don't have to drink. I don't care. (He reaches for the wine, but she keeps it, takes another swallow) I thought you'd like it.

GERI: Why?

DAVE: I can't explain it. Just a feeling.

GERI: Could I have been anyone?

DAVE: What do you mean?

GERI: I mean, supposing you sat down next to another girl... would you have asked her out tonight? Bought her a bottle of wine?

DAVE: I sat down next to you.

GERI: Why?

DAVE: You ask too many questions. (He takes a swig from his bottle) Ahhh..feels good. (He stares at her. She takes another drink) Would your mother really have said that about the celery?

GERI: No. (Laughs. She is beginning to get a little high, to slur her words slightly) She'd have said, In my day, we didn't go hang out with a boy. He'd've sent me an 'graved invitation and called for me and met my parents and taken me to the Cork Stub. (Correcting herself) The Stork Club. (They both laugh) She's very big with her day. Which was the fifties. The nineteen fifties. In which I think she is still living in.

DAVE: Living in the fifties?

GERI: Fifties words...dreamboat...stockings with seams... fifties records...Tony Bennett...Johnny Mathis...(She sings) It's all in the game...