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The Old Fart Plays

By

DEBORAH ANN PERCY
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Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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ISBN: 978-1-61959-322-0

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to acknowledge the publishers and theatre companies that brought several of these plays into print and onstage prior to the publication of this collection.

Stuck in the Middle With You appears in *Raging Thru the Dark: Drama, Poetry, Art* (Autumn 2022).

Steering Into the Skid was a semifinalist in the 2012 Minnesota Shorts Play Festival; won the 2013 MemoryCare One-Act Competition to benefit the MemoryCare Alzheimer's/dementia facility in Asheville, N.C., and was subsequently published in *The MemoryCare Plays*; and won the 2018 Town & Gown Players 5th Annual Stillwater Short Play Festival (Okla.). The play has had more than 100 readings and performances nationwide in support of dementia education and fundraising, including many by MemoryCare and The Remember Project (Minn.), and has been staged by Love Creek Productions in New York City.

A half-hour radio version of *Recalculating* was produced on WMUK-FM Kalamazoo as part of the *All Ears Theatre* radio series. A revised version was broadcast by On The Air Radio Players of Richmond, Va. A shorter stage version has been produced by Northwoods Theatre Company of Ironwood, Mich.

Continuum of Care received a staged reading by The Naples Players (Fla.) as a winner of their 2022 Readers Theatre – New Play Festival.

Come Rain or Come Shine was originally commissioned in 1999 by the Western Michigan University Alumni Association for presentation to the reunion of the class of 1949. In 2019, the play was a winner in the Heartland Theatre Company's (Ill.) New Plays from the Heartland festival.

For Ed, Karen, Amy and Andy.

Stuck in the Middle With You

CHARACTERS

JOHN: In shape but old enough that his age is a risk factor.

ALLIE: Right there with him.

ALEXA (V.O.): The all-hearing, and perhaps the hardest voice to get right.

NOTE: JOHN and ALLIE should not sound like old people.

TIME: 2020 during the pandemic.

PLACE: The living room of a modest downtown house in a smallish Michigan city.

(As the lights rise, we see JOHN and ALLIE's living room, furnished with unobtrusive good taste, but with a few whimsical touches. JOHN enters from an unseen bedroom, dramatically searching for his phone, flipping magazines around, lifting cushions. On some flat surfaces, we see facemasks.)

JOHN. Shit. *(Calling off.)* Allie? *(He kicks a footstool and exits to the bedroom.)* Allie! Allie! Allie! *(He re-enters.)* Allie!

ALLIE *(entering from the unseen kitchen with two full wine glasses)*. John? Nino? Are you calling me?

JOHN. Jesus! Yes! How could you not hear me?

ALLIE *(holding up the wine)*. Seven o'clock. On the dot. Fruit of the vine. *(Handing him a glass.)* I did hear you.

JOHN. Not the first four times you didn't.

ALLIE (*as JOHN starts to drink*). Hey, Nino. Cheers.

(He pauses, and she holds her glass up, staring at him meaningfully.)

JOHN (*raises his glass and looks her in the eyes*). Look you right in the eye. Cheers.

(They drink.)

JOHN (*cont'd*). Your family's profound knowledge of drinking customs has certainly complicated ours. So. You heard me?

ALLIE (*taking a sip of wine*). I haven't put my ears in yet.

JOHN. What's the point of hearing aids if you don't put them in?

ALLIE. I worry about losing them. When I take off my mask outside. On the rare occasions when we get outside. I've quit wearing earrings, too. Haven't you noticed?

JOHN. I've noticed how often I have to repeat myself.

ALLIE. So. What did you want?

JOHN. What? Oh. My phone.

ALLIE. You need to make a call?

JOHN. I can't find it. I need *you* to call me so I know where it is.

(ALLIE sets her glass down and starts looking around.)

ALLIE. I don't know where mine is. Help me find it.

JOHN. Jesus. You're no help. And look at you. You're all gussied up. Going somewhere?

ALLIE. Gussied is how I roll.

JOHN. I'll say. Isn't that the outfit you wore on New Year's Eve?

ALLIE. *Last* New Year's Eve. On the mall downtown, dancing among the snowflakes. No mask to worry about, ears in, crystal earrings.

JOHN (*putting his arms around her*). Gussied was how you rolled that night. Like another lifetime.

ALLIE. Another lifetime, all right. You'd run around all day in boxers and a t-shirt if you could.

JOHN. I can, actually.

ALLIE. I don't think so, buster.

JOHN. Buster?

ALLIE. Buster. John. Nino. Whatever you answer to. (*She stops looking for her phone and picks up her glass.*) How long have we been stuck here? Seems like forever.

JOHN (*à la Gerry Rafferty*). "Stuck in the middle with you." Depends on what today is. Ask Siri.

ALLIE. Siri? Really? Isn't she lost along with your phone?

JOHN. So ask Alexa.

ALEXA (*V.O.*). How can I help you?

ALLIE. Ask her yourself. I'm serious. We got home from Florida on March twelfth.

JOHN. We should have come back earlier. We talked about it.

ALLIE. We did. We looked in each other's eyes and had a serious moment.

JOHN. But we didn't do it.

ALLIE. We stood there on the balcony and turned our attention to the Gulf. Seduced by sand and surf.

JOHN. All the gifts for friends ready to go. The necklaces for the girls.

ALLIE. The shells. The scarves. The Al Kaline t-shirt for Pete.

JOHN. I said, "Should we go home early?"

ALLIE. And we said no.

JOHN. *You* said no.

ALLIE. We should have.

JOHN. That's what *I* said.

ALLIE. I don't remember it that way. Nino, we both made the choice to stay another week.

JOHN. I believe I said we should get up and leave in the morning. Maybe you didn't have your ears in.

ALLIE. Ho-ho. Maybe the surf drowned you out.

JOHN. Anyway, because we waited, we had to rush after things started to look bad.

ALLIE. A two-day drive instead of a nice leisurely four. Which meant stopping at gas stations we hadn't been to before.

JOHN. With restrooms we never want to stop at again.

ALLIE. My list of gas stations with good restrooms couldn't help.

JOHN. So I had to use the hideous ones, no matter what.

ALLIE. Especially since you ate all those mushrooms at dinner with Dick and Lori before we left.

JOHN. What can I say? You have your ears. I have a dodgy stomach, just like my grandfather. A weak stomach, he called it. That was quite a put-down in the family, you know.

ALLIE. And you and your dodgy stomach had to stop every hundred miles or so the first day.

JOHN. When you have to go, you have to go.

ALLIE. God. Don't remind me. Makes me want to take a shower right now.

JOHN (*finishing his wine, setting down the glass*). Where the fuck is my phone?

ALLIE. I'm taking my wine out onto the porch. The bottle, too. It's in the kitchen.

JOHN. And your mask?

ALLIE (*holding up a mask*). Right here. (*A beat.*) Anthony came by this morning while I was having my coffee. Outside.