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The Old Fart Plays

By

DEBORAH ANN PERCY
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Dramatic Publishing Company

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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.

The Old Fart Plays

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For Ed, Karen, Amy and Andy.

Steering Into the Skid

CHARACTERS

AMANDA: Early 60s.

TIM: Late 60s.

TIME: The span of a year in the present, more or less.

PLACE: A midsize SUV.

PRODUCTION NOTE: The actors may mime action and using props, except for the New Year's noisemaker, which is indispensable. Costume changes, too, may be suggested by one or two seasonally appropriate pieces. The action should be fluid, rendering blackouts between scenes unnecessary.

(As the lights rise, AMANDA and TIM are standing outside their SUV. The time is just after one a.m. on the year's first day.)

AMANDA & TIM *(to the audience)*. January.

(AMANDA sits and watches from the front passenger seat as TIM brushes snow from the windshield. She wears a New Year's hat on her head at a jaunty angle. She finally opens the door and blows a party noisemaker at him.)

AMANDA. Tim. That's good enough. Home is only six blocks away. And you've already cleared the side mirrors once.

TIM. I'm almost done. Close the door. You're letting the heat out.

AMANDA. What heat? You haven't even turned on the engine.

TIM. I have to see to drive.

AMANDA. It's freezing.

TIM. Of course it's freezing. Shut the door.

(She does. After a beat, he gets in on the driver's side and throws the scraper on the rear seat. She blows the noisemaker at him again.)

AMANDA. I don't know why you have to be so picky about a little snow on the car.

TIM. It's illegal not to clean your windows. And you know how many drunks are on the road at this time on New Year's Day. Too drunk to clear their windows. They may as well be driving around in igloos.

AMANDA. Igloos don't have windows.

TIM. Exactly.

AMANDA. Why can't you start the car before all the obsessive snow removal?

TIM. If the windows heat up, the snow turns into ice. *(A beat. He turns on the ignition.)* So much for another Lyle and Libby New Year's Eve party.

AMANDA. Libby told me she's had enough of sex. She says she's too old, and she's done with it.

TIM *(driving away)*. Too old? Is there such a thing?

AMANDA. Not from where I sit. She says Lyle keeps harping on it to irritate her.

TIM. Lyle, Lyle, the crocodile. And the woman with the curly red hair. Was she sitting on Lyle's lap all night just to irritate Libby, too?

AMANDA. Rita? You can bet neither the color nor the curls ever occurred in nature. I'm glad we don't have far to go. I'm ready to call it a night. A morning.

TIM. It's not even one o'clock. The new year's barely started.

AMANDA. I'm tired anyway. And full. Champagne. Filet.
And I can still taste the cilantro in those nasty meatballs.

TIM. I'm not tired. We used to stay up a lot later than this.
(*Admonishing her.*) Let's not get old.

AMANDA. It's really snowing. Be careful.

TIM. I am being careful.

AMANDA. Tim! Here's our street! Here! Here!

TIM (*turning the steering wheel*). I saw it. You startled me. I could've gone into a skid. You're lucky I know how to steer into them.

AMANDA. You almost missed it, buster.

TIM. I saw it.

AMANDA. You're just upset because you didn't want to leave the party.

TIM. We used to see the sun come up on January first. Remember?

AMANDA. I remember the hangovers.

TIM (*sourly*). Happy New Year.

AMANDA. I'll sit on your lap.

TIM. Promises, promises.

(She blows the noisemaker at him again. They stand to signal the end of the scene.)

AMANDA & TIM (*to the audience*). February.

(TIM sits in the driver's seat, AMANDA in the passenger's. As he mimes driving, AMANDA loosens her coat.)

TIM (*tapping the dash*). Look. Just outside Atlanta, and it's already sixty-eight degrees.

AMANDA. It's rush hour. Are we taking the ring road?

TIM. I say straight through. Shoot the rapids.

AMANDA. Atlanta traffic is crazy. How about the ring road?

TIM. How about a snack? A handful of Oat Squares.

AMANDA. Not till you're done shooting the rapids.

TIM. There's a big interchange coming up. Which way do we go?

AMANDA. Left, I think.

TIM. Right here?

AMANDA. Right. No! Go left, right here!

TIM (*wrenching on the wheel*). Good grief, Mandy. First you say left. Then you say right.

AMANDA. I meant you were right—we go left.

(They fall silent for a moment or two.)

AMANDA (*cont'd*). Maybe we need a GPS.

TIM. I have all the maps in my head.

AMANDA. Says the man who took us on the unplanned detour through Nashville.

TIM. Says the woman who has an answer for everything.

AMANDA. If we had a GPS, we'd both have an answer for everything.

(They stand to signal the end of the scene.)

AMANDA & TIM (*to the audience*). March.

(AMANDA sits in the passenger seat, watching as TIM finishes scraping the window. He gets in and hooks his seatbelt.)

AMANDA. Meticulous as always.

TIM. We should've stayed in Florida for another month. We could've gone to see the Tigers in Lakeland. They have hitting, pitching and fielding this season.