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*Dramatic Publishing*



# **ELECTRIC CITY SUITE**

A Collection of Six Radio Plays

By  
ED SIMPSON



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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These are for Cydney...for showing me the magic.

### **Acknowledgments...**

I'm grateful to The Electric Theater Company and the talented actors, designers, technicians, and musicians who helped make *Electric City Suite*...well – “electric.” Special thanks to Liz Feller, Rich Grunn, John Beck, Will Chamberlain, and ETC's Board and sponsors. My love and gratitude to Molly for inspiring “Daddy/Dad.” Grateful thanks to my extended family of friends and artists who continue to inspire and support me including David Tabish, Brian Jones, Geoff Gould, Duane Noch, Kristin Curtis, and, of course, the citizens of Scranton, PA for their warmth, hospitality, strength, and inspiration.

Finally...I am especially indebted to my collaborators and friends, David Zarko and Don Wildman, whose vision, talent, trust, and friendship are a true blessing.

### **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the Author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the Author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

The plays which comprise *Electric City Suite* were commissioned and first performed by the Electric Theatre Company between March 2005 and May 2007. The original cast and staff for each play follows:

*The Amazing Goldin...and the Regeneration of the Punjabs* was first produced on March 12, 2005 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman, with sound effects performed by Arthur Miller, original music by Elizabeth Feller, and stage management by Holly Hallet with the following cast:

Danny McBride . . . . .	Heather Stuart
Henry Biddle . . . . .	Robin Roy
Tommy . . . . .	Tommy D'Amour
Stanley . . . . .	Jeff Wills
Dotty . . . . .	Mary Jo Bowes
Helen . . . . .	Mary Ellen Dziadosz
Horace Goldin . . . . .	Geoff Gould

*Orbiting Scranton* was first produced on May 4, 2007 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman and Peggy Scott, with sound effects performed by Richard Grunn, original music by Elizabeth Feller, and stage management by Laurie Camlet with the following cast:

Betsy Dennehy . . . . .	Maura Malloy
Patrick "Bolts" Dennehy . . . . .	Heather Stuart
Dan McBride . . . . .	Duane Noch

*Mixed Nuts and Bolts* was first produced on May 4, 2007 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman and Peggy Scott, with sound effects performed by Richard Grunn, original music by Elizabeth Feller, and stage management by Laurie Camlet with the following cast:

Jimmy . . . . .	James M. Langan
Mabel . . . . .	Agnes Cummings
Mike . . . . .	Ed Chemaly
Don Polosky . . . . .	Geoff Gould
Bolts Dennehy . . . . .	Duane Noch

*Paris of the Lackawanna* was first produced on March 19, 2005 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman, with sound effects performed by Arthur Miller, original music by Elizabeth Feller and Arthur Miller, and stage management by Holly Hallet with the following cast:

Bolts Dennehy . . . . .	Duane Noch
Don Polosky . . . . .	Geoff Gould
Maggie Polosky . . . . .	Robin Roy

*A Journey Standing Still* was first produced on November 4, 2005 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman, with sound effects performed by Arthur Miller, original music by Elizabeth Feller and Arthur Miller, and stage management by Laurie Camlet with the following cast:

Donna . . . . .	Heather Stuart
Maxine Stofko . . . . .	Page Clements
Louise Carney . . . . .	Agnes Cummings

*First Dance in Your Dreams* was first produced on May 4, 2006 by the Electric Theatre Company, David Zarko, artistic director, under the direction of Don Wildman, with sound effects performed by Arthur Miller, original music by Elizabeth Feller, and stage management by Laurie Camlet with the following cast:

Bolts Dennehy . . . . .	Duane Noch
Don Polosky . . . . .	Geoff Gould
Maxine Stofko . . . . .	Agnes Cummings
Mr. Binkley . . . . .	Conor McGuigan

**Electric City Suite**  
**Episode 2**

“Orbiting Scranton”



**Cast of Characters**  
(in order of appearance)

BETSY DENNEHY . . . . . 32. Warm, funny but with some hard edges. A telephone operator who's raising her son alone.

"PADDY" DENNEHY . . . . . 12. A chubby, sensitive, lonely little boy.  
Called "Bolts" by his grandfather.

DAN MCBRIDE . . . . . 55. Betsy's father and a former coal miner who's dying a slow, early death from black lung disease. Approaching his death with characteristic strength and good humor.

**Scene Breakdown**

Scene 1 - A residential street in Scranton, Pa.

Scene 2 - The small home of Dan McBride.

It's the morning in Scranton, PA on February 20, 1962, the day Col. John Glenn will blast off to become the first American in orbit. Betsy Dennehy has just dropped off her 12 year-old son Patrick - who prefers to be called "Bolts" - at her father's apartment on her way to work. Dan McBride is a former coal-miner who is slowly dying from black lung.

BOLTS: Thanks! (QUICKLY.) Grandpa, can I watch cartoons?

DAN: Channel 9, TOM AND JERRY.

**SOUND: BOLTS RUNNING INTO THE LIVING ROOM.**

BOLTS: I know!

DAN: Boy, you're right - he's pretty sick.

BETSY: He woke up this morning complaining about his stomach, he felt a little warm, I thought maybe he'd picked up a bug but...I don't know. I'm beginning to think he's got a case of "the hookies." He's havin' a rough time at school.

DAN: Sorta figured.

BETSY: They're talkin' about holding him back, Pop. If things don't improve his teacher says they're gonna flunk him. I mean...she says he doesn't pay attention, he says reading "confuses" him and that he's stupid. His only friend in class moved to Jersey and these little snots on the playground have been calling him "Fatty Patty."

DAN: Jeez - that's making *my* stomach hurt.

BETSY: God... On top of that, all the kids are teasing him about his daddy being a guest of the state of Pennsylvania.

DAN: Poor kid. How'd that get out?

BETSY: Who knows? You know kids, the snots - all it takes is one person to hear something and then...

BETSY SIGHS LOUDLY.

**SOUND: BETSY WALKING INTO THE KITCHEN.**

BETSY: Listen, you have anything I could grab? Toast? Bagel? Anything? I ran out without breakfast.

**SOUND: DAN FOLLOWING HER INTO THE KITCHEN.**

DAN: Got a bag of those little powdered donuts from Wegman's yesterday. Help yourself.

**SOUND: BAG OPENING.**

BETSY: I have maybe five minutes before I gotta hit the bricks and I'm starving! (SHE TAKES A BITE OF DONUT AND TALKS WITH HER MOUTH FULL.) By the time I got Paddy moving I didn't have time to eat. (ANOTHER BITE.) Bus pulls up, we're not at the corner so he didn't even come to a stop... (ANOTHER BITE.) Had to chase him halfway down the block. God these are good. (ANOTHER BITE.) Don't let Paddy near 'em.

DAN: Don't think that's gonna be a worry. You ate everything but the bag.

BETSY: Need some milk...

DAN: Look, sit, sit, sit. You got a coupla minutes. Let me get the milk.

**SOUND: OPENING REFRIGERATOR.**

DAN: So how's the telephone operator racket?

BETSY: (WRYLY.) Picking up.

DAN: Har-dee-har. Good one.

**SOUND: CLOSING REFRIGERATOR.**

DAN: You know, I called the operator the other day.

BETSY: That so?

DAN: Sounded a bit like you.

**SOUND: CABINET BEING OPENED, GLASS ON THE COUNTER.**

BETSY: How about that.

DAN: Was it?

BETSY: No.

**SOUND: MILK POURING.**

DAN: Would you tell me if it was?

BETSY: No.

DAN: So it might've been you.

BETSY: It might've been.

DAN: Sounded like you.

BETSY: Pop. I told you - I can't talk to you when I'm at work even if you got through to me...which you didn't. They listen in sometimes, they'd know, I'd get fired.

DAN: Fine, fine.

A BEAT.

BETSY: So why'd you call?

DAN: Just thought I'd give it a shot, call Information, maybe get my only daughter who I hadn't heard from in awhile on the other end.

BETSY: Ah, for cryin' out loud -

DAN: I was feeling lucky - kinda like fishin'.

BETSY: You're not gonna guilt me. I don't have time.

DAN: You don't have time for guilt? Boy - some Catholic you turned out to be!  
Where did I go wrong?

THEY LAUGH BUT DAN'S LAUGH TURNS INTO A COUGH. A BEAT.

BETSY: So, how do you feel?

DAN: Fit as a fiddle and ready for love.

BETSY: You look tired, Pop.

DAN: So? So do you.

BETSY: I'm beat but I got a 12-year-old, no car, and a husband I only see on visiting days - what's *your* excuse?

DAN: Retirement!

DAN COUGHS A DEEP, HACKING COUGH. AFTER A BEAT.

BETSY: You go to the doctor yesterday?

DAN: Yeah.

BETSY: What'd he say about that cough?

DAN: Ahhh... Let me tell you about young Dr. Snyder -

BETSY: Pop -

DAN: His name's "Skip." Did you know that? Dr. Skip Snyder? He hasn't even started to shave yet and he thinks he can tell me what I can and cannot do. I would like to know just when he got so smart.

BETSY: When he went to med school, c'mon! He's a good doctor.

DAN: (BEGRUDGINGLY.) Yeah, yeah, right, so I hear.

BETSY: What did he say?

DAN: He said I've got the lungs of a newborn...who smokes four packs a day.

BETSY: Pop, please.

DAN: Ah, you know. No different. No worse, no better.

BETSY: (A WORRIED SIGH.) What did he say? What's causing it?

A BEAT. DAN SIGHS.

DAN: Bets, what's wrong with me is I'm a worn out old man.

BETSY: You're only 55!

DAN: Yeah, but coming from a family of coal miners, I'm like Methuselah!

BETSY: I'm not gonna listen to this -

DAN: I've lived longer than any man in the history of my family! Let me enjoy my achievement in peace.

BETSY: Quit joking.

DAN: Why? Look, we both know what this is. Even "Skippy the Doctor" knows.

A BEAT.

BETSY: (WITH A SIGH.) Yeah.

DAN: Bets, it's what you pay for the life. My grandpa, two uncles, they all had this. My old man - hell, my old man lost his arm *and* got this. It's like the family curse. You work in the mine, you breathe. You work enough and breathe enough? Your lungs get shot. That's it. It's the cost of doin' business, of puttin' food on the table, of makin' a life for you and your mother. (A BEAT.) Hey, look, today, I'm feelin' OK, OK? Besides, the doc tells me I got maybe as much as another coupla years - maybe more if I eat my Wheaties.

BETSY: Yeah, well...just don't give up, OK?

DAN: I'm not givin' up nothin'.

BETSY: 'Cause I hate it when you talk like you're giving up.

DAN: What did I just say?

BETSY: Well...don't!

DAN: You know, you remind me of your mother.

BETSY: I do, huh?

DAN: Yeah - she used to try to push me around too.

BETSY LAUGHS.

**SOUND: TV ANNOUNCER WITH NEWS REPORT ON JOHN GLENN.**

BETSY: Holy cow - don't want to chase another bus. Gotta go.

DAN: So go, go. Maybe I'll call Information again just to hear you say "Number plea-uhs."

**SOUND: BETSY GETTING OUT OF CHAIR.**

BETSY: I told you - you can't guilt me!

**SOUND: BETSY KISSES DAN.**

BETSY: Watch what he eats. And, listen - talk to him if you get the chance. Always makes him feel better to listen to your nonsense.

DAN: Always makes me feel better talking my nonsense.

**SOUND: BETSY WALKING INTO THE LIVING ROOM.**

**SOUND: JOHN GLENN NEWS REPORT.**

BETSY: Gotta scoot, sweetie. Feel better, all right?

BOLTS: Cartoons aren't on.

BETSY: Oh. Right. John Glenn.

BOLTS: Boy...

BETSY: Well...you can watch the blast-off with Grandpa.

DAN: Hey - there you go! Oh, s'gonna be some history, boy. I been looking forward to this for weeks. I mean, first by-God American to fly around the world in a

spaceship? Holy cow! Big things, Bolts, big things. Something you'll remember - no kidding - the rest of your life.

BOLTS: (POUTING.) Wanted to see *Tom and Jerry*.

DAN: Yeah, well - me too. But you can't stop progress!

BETSY: (UNDER HER BREATH.) Good luck, Pop.

DAN: Ah, we'll be OK.

**SOUND: BETSY OPENING THE DOOR.**

BETSY: Thanks again. I'll pick him up around six. (CALLING OUT.) Be good!

**SOUND: BETSY WALKING OUT DOOR.**

DAN: (CALLING OUT.) We will.

**SOUND: CLOSING OF DOOR.**

DAN: OK!

**SOUND: DAN WALKING BACK INTO LIVING ROOM.**

DAN: So now that your mom's outta the way we'll break out the good stuff. Come with me!

BOLTS: Where?

DAN: Kitchen.

**SOUND: DAN AND BOLTS WALKING INTO KITCHEN.**

DAN: Gonna be some magic in - what? - they're sayin' about thirty minutes. Gotta be up and at 'em!

**SOUND: OPENING CABINET.**

DAN: Little Ovaltine - whaddya say?

BOLTS: (WITH A SIGH.) No, thank you.



DAN: Come on - pick you up, stand you straight.

BOLTS: All right.

DAN: Sure. Glass, little milk, here - hand me that spoon there, kiddo - and...one, two.

**SOUND: STIRRING THE MILK.**

DAN: Directions say one heaping spoonful but I double it up. Figure, you know, why not live a little? Huh?

BOLTS: Yeah.

DAN: Am I right?

BOLTS: Yeah.

**SOUND: STIRRING THE MILK.**

DAN: Besides, it tastes better that way, dudn't it? Take a sip of *that* you know you got something on the other end.

BOLTS: Momma won't let me make it that way.

DAN: No - really?

BOLTS: Says it'll make me fatter.

DAN: Oh. Well, you know. I'm thinkin' every once in a while, right?

BOLTS: Right.

DAN: Right is right.

**SOUND: STIRRING OF MILK IN GLASS.**

**SOUND: TV ANNOUNCER TALKING ABOUT JOHN GLENN.**

DAN: So...big things today, huh?

BOLTS: I don't know.

DAN: You don't know?

BOLTS: I mean, I guess. We've been talking about it in school so...

DAN: Then there you go!

BOLTS: (WITH A SIGH.) Miss Miller's bringing a TV in class today so we could watch the blast-off.

DAN: TV in school?

BOLTS: Uh-huh.

DAN: Huh. Well, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, that's for sure.

BOLTS: (DISAPPOINTED.) I know.

DAN: Well, you can still watch it here with me, y'know.

BOLTS: Yeah, but she was also gonna bring cookies.

DAN: Bet she didn't have Ovaltine though, does she?

BOLTS: No.

DAN: See? Count your blessings.

BOLTS: OK.

**SOUND: STIRRING OF MILK.**

DAN: You ever hear that before? That saying? "Count your blessings"?

BOLTS: Uh-huh. I heard it at church. Father Bob.

DAN: Yeah?

BOLTS: I came up with four. Four blessings.

DAN: Four, huh? (WITH A CHUCKLE.) Well, now you got five. Ovaltine with your grandpa watching John Glenn. Number five!

**SOUND: FINISHING STIRRING. CLINKING OF SPOON ON GLASS.**

DAN: Okie-doke... Double shot of Ovaltine. Drink up. I won't squeal on you.

BOLTS: Thanks, Grandpa. (HE SIPS.)

DAN: Good?

BOLTS: Uh-huh.

A BEAT AS BOLTS DRINKS.

DAN: Chasin' away that stomach bug, idn't it?

BOLTS: (BUSTED.) I guess...

DAN: Thought it would.

BOLTS: Wish I didn't ever haveta go back to school.

DAN: Kids're givin' you the business, huh?

A BEAT.

BOLTS: (WITH A SIGH.) Yes, sir.

DAN: Why's that, you suppose?

BOLTS: I'm fat.

DAN: Oh. You are?

BOLTS: Yes.

DAN: Huh. Well, you got some meat on you, no question of *that*.

BOLTS: I don't like being fat.

DAN: I don't like being old but... "I yam what I yam."

BOLTS: (WITH A LAUGH.) Popeye.

A BEAT AS THEY BOTH LAUGH.

DAN: Who's givin' you the business?

BOLTS: I don't know. Everybody. The big kids.

DAN: Big kids, huh?

BOLTS: The eighth-graders.

DAN: Oh, well, eighth-graders. Lemme tell you about eighth-graders. There are no worse human beings on the planet. Eighth-graders have been terrorizing little kids since probably, I'm thinkin', 1892.

BOLTS: Nuh-uh.

DAN: Absolutely! Ever since October 7, 1892. It was, I believe, a Thursday. They know this for a fact.

BOLTS: Grandpa -

DAN: Take it from me - I know whereof I speak.

BOLTS: How do you know?

DAN: Big kids used to give me the business all the time - only for me it was because I was small.

BOLTS: *You?*

DAN: Oh, I was a real runt. When I was maybe, I'm thinkin', 10, the big kids actually picked me up and hung me by my belt on a coat hook behind this closet door at school.

BOLTS: (ENJOYING HIMSELF.) Really?

DAN: Closed the door, left me in there, dangling in the dark.

BOLTS: How long did you stay in there?

DAN: Till I grew big enough to get myself down. Coupla years.

BOLTS: (WITH A LAUGH.) Come on, Grandpa. How long?

DAN: Long enough.

BOLTS: Boy. Bet you were mad.

DAN: Oh sure.

BOLTS: Did you get even?

DAN: Are you kidding? I was small and there was four of 'em... Of course I did.

BOLTS: What did you do?

DAN: Bit 'em on the knees!

BOLTS: Nuh-uh!

DAN: I was like a flea! I was so small and fast, they never knew what hit 'em.

THEY LAUGH. ONCE AGAIN, DAN'S LAUGHTER TURNS INTO COUGHING.

BOLTS: Grandpa?

DAN: I'm all right. Just need to sit down for a second.

**SOUND: CHAIR SLIDING OUT. DAN SITTING.**

DAN'S COUGHING SUBSIDES.

DAN: Whew...musta sucked something down the wrong pipe. I'll be all right. Just let me...

A BEAT AS DAN WORKS TO CATCH HIS BREATH.

BOLTS: Are you sick, Grandpa?

DAN: Right now?

BOLTS: Are you?

A BEAT.

DAN: Why you askin' me that?

BOLTS: Mom says.

DAN: To you?

BOLTS: Un-uh. Heard her talking to Vicki.

DAN: Vicki, huh?

BOLTS: Yeah.

DAN: Who's Vicki?

BOLTS: She lives upstairs. She has big yellow hair and Momma says she smokes too much.

DAN: Oh - *that* Vicki.

BOLTS: She came down the other night to borrow the *TV Guide* and have some coffee. They were talking real low but I could hear.

DAN: You got big ears.

BOLTS: (WORRIED.) I do?

DAN: Just an expression. Don't worry. Your ears are fine. What I mean is you need to be careful listenin' to private conversations that don't concern you.

BOLTS: I know.

DAN: You hear me?

BOLTS: Yes, sir. (BEAT.) So are you?

A BEAT.

DAN: Just got this cough s'all.

BOLTS: 'Cause of the mines? S'what Momma says.

DAN: Well - I spent a lotta years working down there a mile or so, breathing in all that stuff, so, yeah.

BOLTS: Hmmm...

DAN: Listen, OK? I want you to promise me something, all right?

BOLTS: I guess.

DAN: I'm serious.

BOLTS: OK.

DAN: Stay outta the mines.

BOLTS: Oh.

DAN: Our whole family - every man goin' back probably forever, ever since the first McBride came over - we spent our lives hidden away, underground. Don't do like me, all right? Be the first from our family to work somewhere you can feel the sun and the wind. Stay outta the mines.

BOLTS: (IN A MISERABLE TORRENT.) But Miss Miller told me in reading class that if I didn't do better in school the only place I could get a job is the mines. And when all the kids heard that, they said I'm too fat to work in a mine, that I'd just get stuck. And then one of the kids said that probably the only job I could get was making license plates with my daddy in the prison.

DAN: (SOFTLY.) Oh.

A BEAT.

BOLTS: He's stupid! I hate him! I hate him so much. I don't know why he... Why did he have to do that, Grandpa?

DAN: I don't know, Bolts. I'm pretty mad at him too.

**SOUND: WALTER CRONKITE ON THE TV IN THE B.G.**

DAN: It's hard sometimes, idn't it?

BOLTS: (QUIETLY.) Yes, sir.

A BEAT.

DAN: All right. Desperate times calls for desperate measures.

BOLTS: What?

DAN: (CONSPIRATORIAL.) Can I trust you?

BOLTS: I...I guess.

DAN: Good. Come with me - we haven't much time.