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# **The Old Fart Plays**

By

DEBORAH ANN PERCY  
and ARNOLD JOHNSTON

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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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.

# The Old Fart Plays

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For Ed, Karen, Amy and Andy.

# Recalculating

## CHARACTERS

LIBBY. 50s to 60s but looks younger and dresses stylishly.

BETH: 50s to 60s. Also looks younger and stylish, but she is not quite in LIBBY's league, as her sensible shoes signal.

GPS (V.O.): A female voice with the inflections and elisions of computerized speech.

PHONE OPERATOR (V.O.): A female voice.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.): A female voice.

GROMEK (V.O.): A male voice with a Russian accent. He is a gangster.

TRAFFIC COP: Mid-30s.

CASTING NOTE: The three female voices may be triple-cast, and GROMEK and the TRAFFIC COP may be doubled.

TIME: The present, early evening.

PLACE: LIBBY and BETH's expensive car with a GPS device installed on the dashboard.

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*(As the lights rise, LIBBY watches BETH load a flat rectangular crate into the trunk of the car.)*

LIBBY. Be careful. It's fragile.

BETH. I *am* being careful. I also want to get this thing stowed as quickly as I can. We don't want anyone noticing.

LIBBY. It's a wooden crate. We're in a motel parking lot. There's no more natural place to be packing something in the trunk of a car. Don't pinch your fingers.

BETH. Fine. I'm still nervous.

*(She covers the crate with a blanket and closes the trunk. Then she gets into the car's driver's seat and LIBBY the passenger seat. BETH buckles her seatbelt.)*

BETH *(cont'd)*. What time is it?

LIBBY. We won't be late. Don't worry.

BETH. I *am* worried. You should be, too.

LIBBY. Today will secure our future.

BETH. Our old age. Our retirement.

LIBBY. "Retirement." I don't like that word. I prefer "sabbatical." But don't think I'm not worried, too. I mean, how did we get into this?

BETH. By opening an art gallery just before a major recession.

LIBBY. A beautiful gallery with old wood floors. Right in the heart of the city. Walgreen's on the corner. Deli just blocks away. Apartment upstairs.

BETH. And with a heart-stopping lease to match.

LIBBY. But with a good commercial track record. And our good reputations. Reputations that won't last much longer if the wrong person opens that crate in the trunk.

BETH. Reputations that started to crumble when we fell so far in the hole we let ourselves get involved with Kellner.

LIBBY. Our reputations were what attracted him.

BETH. The smell of blood's what attracted him. *Our* blood.

LIBBY. And money.

BETH. But not ours.

LIBBY. Other people's money. And we don't want to spend our sabbatical living in a refrigerator box.

BETH. Blood and money. The things that attract predators like Kellner.

LIBBY. And Gromek.

BETH. And Gromek. This goes way beyond shipping a few pieces of questionable provenance. A few paintings that might not stand up to x-rays. Or even illegal Russian icons.

LIBBY. We didn't actually know if they were illegal.

BETH. We're actually physically involved in this. And we're art historians, not paleontologists. What do we know about prehistoric fossils?

LIBBY. It's way too late for second thoughts. Besides, this commission will solve all our problems. Just remember that. And a velociraptor is tiny. More portable than a tyrannosaurus skull. And the bill of lading doesn't say "smuggled fossil." It says "Russian icon."

BETH. Why don't I feel better? Here we are. Two little old ladies, ready for a quiet life with a quiet understated gallery and a comfy apartment. Instead, we're in an episode of *Law and Order*.

LIBBY. We're hardly little old ladies. Toughen up, Butch.

BETH (*a beat*). We should get going. Don't forget to buckle up.

LIBBY (*not buckling up*). Aye aye, Cap'n.

BETH. There's no need to be a smart aleck. The last thing in the world we need today is for some overzealous cop to stop us for a minor traffic offense.

LIBBY. Beth, the only time cops ever ticket you for a seatbelt offense is if they stop you for something more serious.

BETH. Libby, give me a break. I'm nervous.

LIBBY. Aye aye, Cap'n. You're the boss.

BETH (*trying to be patient*). All right, matey. So. What's the address on Cheshire?

LIBBY. Do you really think we need the GPS?

BETH. I do. One wrong turn, and we're late. Now we have to pick up Kellner on the way. Another way of manipulating us.

LIBBY. Beth, the man doesn't drive.

BETH. He could take the el.

LIBBY. Right. Kellner with his cigar on the el. That decision's already made. I think I can get us there.

BETH. Like you got us to the dinner meeting last night?

LIBBY. It was dark then. Now the sun's still shining.

BETH. We need to activate Libby on the Dash.

LIBBY. You trust her more than me? Libby on her Butt?

BETH. She has a better record of getting us from here to there than you on your butt, attractive as your butt may be. And given the cost of leasing this overpriced chariot, we ought to get our money's worth out of it.

LIBBY. Especially considering how far behind we are on the payments. Look, Beth. We have plenty of time.

BETH. We *had* plenty of time before you decided to change your clothes.

LIBBY. What I had on looked dowdy. At my age, dowdy is right around the corner.

BETH. You'll never look dowdy. What *is* the street number of the restaurant?

LIBBY. I think we can find it. And Kellner's corner is on the way. There are only about five major turns. And I'll recognize it when I see it.

BETH. Five? Major? Are you going to tell me the number, or do I have to pull my briefcase from the back seat and look it up?

LIBBY. It's here. Right here. (*She starts rummaging in her purse.*) I put it in the little zipper pocket. Calm down, kiddo. Just remember that commission. Our bottom line. Our last big job.