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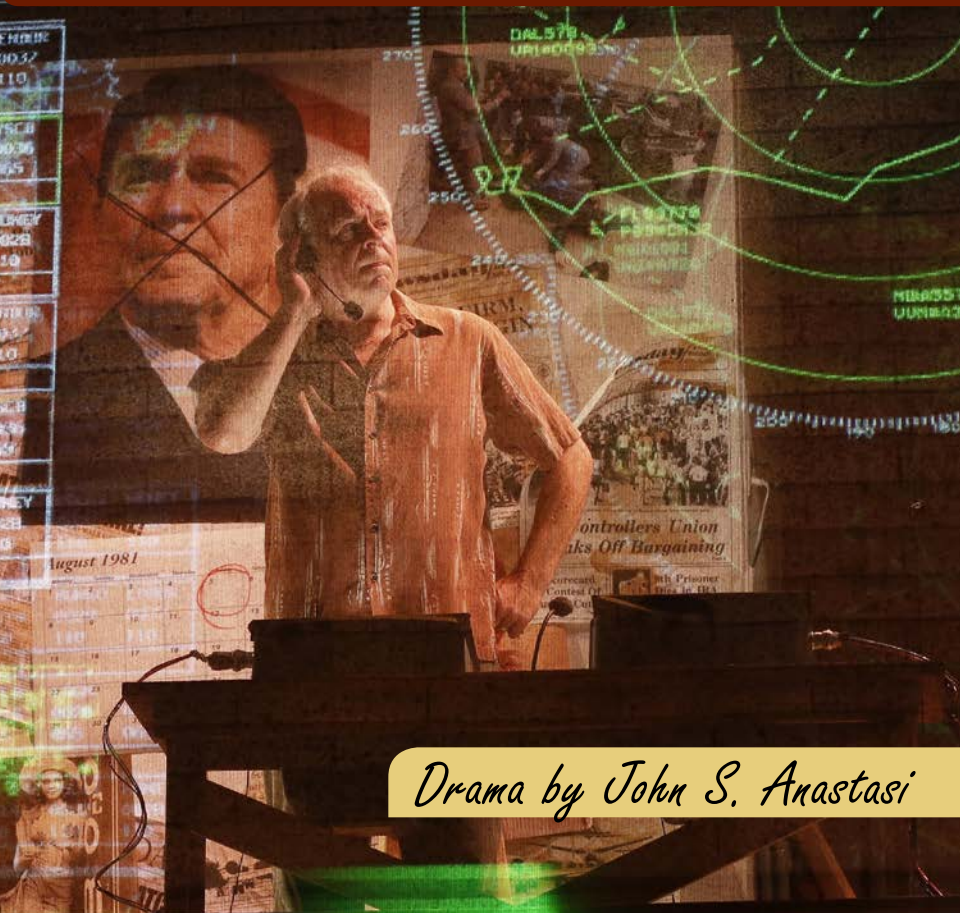
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Dramatic Publishing

I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan



Drama by John S. Anastasi

I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan

Drama. By John. S. Anastasi. Cast: 2m., 2w. This play explores the very real, very personal ramifications of the firing of more than 11,000 air traffic controllers in 1981 by President Reagan, an event that is characterized as one of the most important events in U.S. history. When it comes to air traffic, Ray Deluso, a highly decorated Vietnam veteran, has everything under control. But on the ground, his life is a struggle after a rebellious, life-altering political decision in the early '80s, which he felt was in the best interest and welfare of his country. Twenty years later, he is unable to accept the consequences of that decision and the overwhelming feelings of betrayal by friends as well as the country he fought for—which threatens to destroy him as well as the two most important people in his life: his wife and daughter. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: IF2.*

Cover: Produced by the Beckett Theatre at Theatre Row, New York City, featuring PJ Benjamin. Photo: Carol Rosegg. Cover design: John Sergel.

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I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan

By

JOHN S. ANASTASI



Dramatic Publishing Company

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I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan premiered off-Broadway at the Beckett Theatre at Theatre Row in New York City.

Cast:

Ray PJ Benjamin
Jane Patricia Richardson
Buzz Robert Emmet Lunney
Tess Danielle Faitelson
Understudies Catherine Marotta,
Darin Kelly, Sarah Baskin

Production:

Director Charles Abbott
Production Stage Manager Christine Catti
Stage Manager Cyrille Blackburn
Production Manager Melanie Armer
General Manager Cesa Entertainment
Scenic Design Craig Napoliello
Costume Design Kristy Leigh Hall
Lightening Design Jeff Kroger
Sound Design Jason Crystal
Projection Design David Bengali
Makeup Rob Greene, J. Jared Janas
Fight Director Rick Sordelet
Casting Directors MKA Casting
Marketing Pekoe Group Advertising
Public Relations Richard Hillman
Executive Producer Jeff Britton
Producers Jeff Bennett, John Howard Swan

I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan

CHARACTERS

RAY DELUSO: At the start of the play, he is a vibrant 37-year-old air traffic controller. In scene 2 and for the remainder of the play, he is a 60-year-old contractor, worn down by life.

JANE DELUSO: Attractive, early 30s at the start of the play, progressing to late 50s by scene 2. Elementary school teacher. Wife of Ray.

TESS DELUSO: 26-year-old daughter of Jane and Ray.

BUZZ ADAMS: 36 years old in the first scene. In scene 2 and for the remainder of the play, he is in his late 50s. Friend of the Deluso's. Well built and attractive.

OFFSTAGE VOICES (V.O.): Recordings, announcer, pilots in Ray's mind, etc.

TIME & PLACE

With the exception of the first scene, the story is portrayed over several weeks in June 2004. The action takes place in three rooms in the home of Ray and Jane Deluso on Long Island, N.Y.

The home is primarily one level with a single set of stairs leading to an unfinished attic.

SCENES

Act I:

Scene 1: August 4, 1981.

Scene 2: June 5, 2004.

Scene 3: Two weeks later.

Scene 4: Five weeks later.

Act II:

Scene 1: The next day.

Scene 2: A few days later.

I Forgive You, Ronald Reagan

ACT I

SCENE 1

(As the house lights dim to black, the date August 3, 1981, is projected.)

(Then, a 1981 ABC news program is seen.)

ANNOUNCER *(V.O.)*. From ABC, this is *World News Tonight* ...

SAM DONALDSON *(projected)*. “Four hours after the strike began, President Reagan, described by aides as very angry and very determined, served notice on the air traffic controllers that they had better return to work quickly or else.”

RONALD REAGAN *(projected)*. “Congress passed a law forbidding strikes by government employees against the public safety. It is for this reason that I must tell those who fail to report for duty this morning they are in violation of the law and if they do not report for work within 48 hours, they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated.”

(Projection of August 4, 1981. The lights come up on the conservatively decorated, modest home of the Deluso's. Displayed in a prominent position is a framed Medal of Honor. On the mantle are several framed photographs of the Deluso family, including RAY and JANE's engagement and wedding and TESS as a child, among others.)

Children's toys and playpen are evident.

RAY DELUSO and BUZZ ADAMS stand in the living room with PATCO [Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization] picket signs in hand.

Stacks of flyers and strike paraphernalia lie around the room.)

RAY. I'm going to have a fucking stroke!

BUZZ. Ray, relax!

RAY. I can't. Can you believe that some of the same guys we've worked with for 15 years are talking about crossing that line. They're turning against us.

BUZZ. You could cut the tension with a knife out there.

RAY. We got to stay together. You know what it means if we don't! One guy crosses, we suffer. A hundred go back and we lose!

BUZZ (*overlapping*). Half of them have their mortgages tied to federal loans. They could lose their homes.

RAY (*overlapping*). Not gonna happen!

BUZZ (*overlapping*). And we're not just talking fired; the government is threatening jail sentences.

RAY (*overlapping*). No one's going to jail. (*Works on pamphlets and picket signs.*)

BUZZ. You don't know that.

RAY. I got the whole thing figured out. We will win this!

BUZZ. I don't know. Everybody's looking at each other, wondering who's going to stay out ... who's crossing that line tomorrow.

RAY. I know who the scabs are. I can see it in their eyes.

(JANE DELUSO enters.)

JANE. Ray, did you start the barbecue? (*Beat.*) Hi, Buzz.

RAY. Just walked in one minute ago.

JANE. The other strikers will be here in a half hour. They've been out there all day. They'll be hungry and—

RAY (*overlapping*). Food is the last thing on their minds. It's the cause they're fighting—

JANE (*overlapping*). Ray!

RAY. Honey, the grill will be ready and the damn burgers burnt before they turn in the driveway. (*To BUZZ.*) We can't lose! (*Including JANE.*) We'll be all right. Just stay off that phone!

(*RAY exits.*)

JANE (*humorously stating the obvious*). He's just a little tense.

BUZZ. We're all on edge.

JANE. Ray's way beyond the edge! It's not blood that flows through his veins, it's jet fuel!

BUZZ (*gets a beer from the fridge*). How you holding up? You got a lot riding on the next 24 hours too.

JANE. I'm excited and freaked at the same time. Once this is over, I'll finally be out of the classroom! More time with Tess. And Ray. More money to remodel this kitchen. Have another baby. Maybe two babies. I'm running out of time.

(*RAY enters.*)

RAY. Coals are lit!

JANE. Ray, don't forget about Friday afternoon.

RAY. What's Friday?

JANE. Happy hour after work. Everyone is bringing their mates. I want to show off my husband.

RAY. You know how I love when you show me off.

(*JANE exits with barbecue utensils and food. BUZZ crosses to the window and stares out.*)

RAY (*cont'd*). You look like you lost your best friend.

BUZZ. I can't get tomorrow morning off my mind.

RAY. Reagan's not going to fire 13,000 controllers. Besides, we got every union in the country backing us.

BUZZ. You mean watching us, don't you?

RAY. What are you talking about?

BUZZ. When push comes to shove are they still going to support us? Reagan is saying he'll replace us.

RAY. With who? You know it will take years to train them. And what kind of guys you think they're going to get? Mistakes are going to happen if Reagan gets his way. Hey, look at me. You've known me all your life. I've never steered you wrong. We're looking at a couple of tough days, but then it will be business as usual except it's going to be much better for you, for me, for all of us.

BUZZ. You know what? My best friend is right here.

(They hug. JANE enters and opens the refrigerator.)

JANE. Do you think you two lovers can break it up long enough to help me with the food?

(BUZZ runs over and helps JANE.)

BUZZ. Anything for the lady of the house.

JANE. My knight in shining armor ... Thank you, Buzzy.

(The phone rings. RAY races for it. JANE picks it up.)

JANE (*cont'd, on phone*). Hello? Hi, Dad.

RAY (*overlapping*). Tell him to keep off the line. The union could be—

JANE (*overlapping*). Is Tess OK? Please don't let her eat a lot of ice cream. Yes, Ray saw it. We're not worried. The president is just trying to scare us.

RAY. God! He doesn't get it. *(To JANE.)* Tell him to bug off. It's none of his damn business.

JANE *(on phone)*. Dad, Ray says he really appreciates your concern—but in his heart he knows he's doing the right thing—

RAY. He is so dense—

JANE *(on phone)*. Yes. I recorded it. Yes, I'll make him watch it again. OK. Bye, Dad.

RAY. Jesus, he's unrelenting.

JANE. And you're not? God, I married my father!

RAY. When Reagan was trying to get elected, he swore he would back us. Now he's done a complete one-eighty.

BUZZ. Our union screwed up. We never should have backed a damn Republican candidate.

RAY. He's a fucking hypocrite. When he was president of the Screen Actors Guild, he led that union in it's first strike ever. Actors he supports, guys that keep the country flying he wants to flush down the toilet.

BUZZ *(after a beat)*. I better go and help Mary bring the deserts over. She should be done with them by now.

RAY. Take my car, buddy.

BUZZ. No, I want to walk.

RAY. Buzz, take the damn car!

BUZZ. I'll be fine!

RAY. Buzz—

BUZZ. I need to walk!! Is that OK? I just want to walk! *(Exits.)*

JANE. He's scared. Are you sure you're doing the right thing?

RAY. I believe the union.

JANE. They could be wrong. You signed a contract you wouldn't strike.

RAY. The union has attorneys. Smart guys. They know what's legal and what's not.

JANE (*overlapping*). But Reagan says—

RAY. Who are you going to believe? The best lawyers in the country or a B actor who took second billing to a monkey?

JANE. Dad says you'll be banned from any federal job for life. You could lose the pension—

RAY. Jane, this is not the time to do this. I need you today!

JANE. I know you do, but this job has never been just about a paycheck. Why risk losing it?

RAY. There's too much at stake. The lives of everyone that walks down the jetway into those planes. They deserve to have competent people protecting them, as if they were our own families up there. Not guys so burned out that they're dangerous on the job or killing themselves. No! It stops now!

(JANE kisses him.)

JANE. I'm so proud of you.

RAY. Thank you.

(RAY gently holds her. He hums "Once Upon a Time," from All American by Strouse and Adams.)

JANE. I'm going to finish setting the table. You better get out there and flip those burgers before they do burn.

(JANE exits. RAY turns on the TV/VCR.)

RONALD REAGAN (*V.O.*). If they do not report for work within 48 hours, they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated.

(RAY rewinds the VCR.)

RONALD REAGAN (*cont'd, V.O.*). If they do not report for work within 48 hours, they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated.

(The lights fade to black. The sound of a tape fast forwarding is heard, followed by a projection: 23 years later. Then, June 5, 2004, is projected. A projection of a CBS news broadcast is seen.)

DAN RATHER *(projection)*. “Ronald Reagan, the cold war crusader, whose sunny optimism made a nation believe it was ‘Morning in America,’ dies at 93. The nation prepares to honor and remember the 40th president of the United States of America.

Good evening. Former president Ronald Reagan died of pneumonia this afternoon at his home in California. His death brings to a close a remarkable life that bridged the worlds of entertainment, politics and statesmanship. We begin our coverage tonight with correspondent Jerry Bowen in Los Angeles.”

JERRY BOWEN *(projection)*. “Word of Mr. Reagan’s rapidly failing health had been rumored for several days, and as reporters stood vigil at the gates of the Reagan home in Los Angeles it was confirmed the 40th president of the United States had died after a nearly decade long battle with Alzheimer’s disease.”

(Projection: June 6, 2004.)

SCENE 2

(The Deluso home. Twenty-three years later. Little has changed in the placement of furniture, but everything is faded and/or covered. On the mantle are photographs of RAY as a young man, engagement and wedding pictures, JANE’s mother and an 8 x 10 head shot of TESS at 18. Late morning.

As the lights come up, RAY enters the front door on crutches. He looks older than his stated age of 60 and wears a brace on his leg. He waves the June 5, 2004, copy of USA Today.)

RAY (*loudly*). Burn in hell you son-of-a-bitch!

(JANE enters the house with a little less spring in her walk. She has some gray hair but is still very attractive.)

JANE. Lower your voice! The whole neighborhood can hear you.

RAY. Let them hear! The only one that'll care is "Bonzo the Chimp."

JANE. Can you make it to the couch?

RAY. Just call me "FDR."

(RAY lands on the couch. JANE adjusts his pillows.)

RAY (*cont'd*). Jane, honey. Do we need all these lights on?

(JANE turns off the overhead light and puts on the small table lamp.)

RAY (*cont'd*). Can you believe those idiot reporters?

JANE. Just because they have a different opinion than you, doesn't make them idiots.

RAY. You bet it does. Believe me, Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator," was a great fraud. It's been 24 hours since that SOB died, and they're actually considering putting his face on the 20 dollar bill. Reagan's face belongs on food stamps. Not money!

JANE. Stop! The man is dead. Let him rest in peace.

RAY. He had Alzheimer's. He probably doesn't even know he's dead! This is the happiest I've been in 23 years!

JANE. I'm glad you're happy, Ray. I really am. I just want you to be careful.

RAY. What's that supposed to mean?

JANE. It means you've been doing pretty good the last few years, and I'd rather not go back to 1993.

RAY. My Pilgrim Psych Center days are over.

JANE (*under her breath*). Worse time of my life.

RAY. Excuse me? You weren't the one locked in the rubber room.

JANE. I'm sorry.

RAY. I know what I put you through, and I don't want to talk about that. This is a liberating day! (*Singing.*) "Ding dong the Reagan is dead, the Reagan is dead, Reagan is dead!" Long live Ray Deluso! (*Accidentally bangs his leg.*) Jesus!

JANE. You're supposed to be taking it easy.

RAY. My leg hurts more now than it did before the surgery.

JANE. It's only been a few days.

RAY. I need to feel better. I have a lot of work to do. Connelly's decking, Marotta's roof, Goldstein's basement—

(*JANE takes his hand.*)

JANE. It'll all still be there when you're ready. Do you think you'll be OK? (*Rises.*)

RAY. Why do you say that like you're leaving?

JANE. I am. I told you this morning.

RAY. You did not!

JANE. I did.

RAY. You're always doing that. You think you tell me things when you don't.

JANE. You never listen to me.

RAY. It's only my second day home. You should have asked for a substitute.

JANE. I have no more days coming to me. I can't lose this job.

RAY. Right, because you're the only breadwinner now.

JANE. I didn't say that.

RAY. You didn't have to. I hear the quiet murmuring every morning. (*Imitating JANE.*) "I'm almost 60. I'm still teaching these frickin' kids. Why am I not enjoying myself?"

JANE. I am not almost 60!

RAY. So you don't deny the latter?

JANE. I made you a sandwich. It's in the fridge. Can you get it or do you want me to leave it next to you?

RAY. I can get it.

JANE. Fine. Your pills are on the counter. Don't forget to take them. I don't want to be wiping your ass when you have a stroke.

RAY. I should be so lucky. (*Beat.*) What time will you be home?

JANE. Around six.

RAY. The school closes at three.

JANE. I'm tutoring. Remember?

RAY. Tutoring's only an hour. Who are you meeting after that?

JANE. No one.

RAY. Buzz?

JANE. No, but so what if I was? He's ... our friend.

RAY. I know you know better than that.

JANE. He did save your life. I think that earns him the title.

RAY. I have the worst luck. Twelve hundred guys in that battalion and Buzz Adams has to be the one to save me.

JANE. Be happy. It's not like you see him anymore.

RAY. I'd be even happier if you didn't see him.

JANE. I'm a modern woman, Ray. I'm capable of choosing who I see. He's been lonely since Mary died.

RAY. It's been 10 years. He should have remarried.

JANE. He and I have talked about it. No one else could fill that void.

RAY. Well, he can't have my wife.

JANE. He doesn't want your wife.

RAY. The correct answer is, "My wife doesn't want him." It truly pisses me off you know these intimate details of his life. You know more about what he feels than you do about me.