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# **Plays on Principle: Ten 10-Minute Plays**

By

PAT MONTLEY

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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*Plays on Principle* (which originally included seven of the ten plays here) was premiered at the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore in 2019 as part of a bicentennial celebration. The production was funded by a Creativity Grant awarded to the playwright by the Maryland State Arts Council.

**CAST:**

Christine Demuth	Michelle Lee
Chris Edwards	Richard Peck
Flinn Leigh Eng	Vernon Rey
Melissa Feliciano	Molly Ruhlman
Layla Hodge	Owen Sahnnow
Timothy Johnson	Sally Wall

**PRODUCTION:**

Director .....	Pat Montley
Set, Sound & Lighting Designer .....	Daryl Beard
Stage Managers .....	Naomi Berkenbilt, Javier Jaramillo
Set Crew .....	Jim Houston, Scott Macleod, Richard Peck, Owen Sahnnow

For Sally  
my best critic  
and dearest

# The Cutting

## CHARACTERS

FATHER: 70s-80s, any race; infirm.

DAUGHTER: 40s-50s, any race; his caretaker.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A room in their home.

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### **Question: Who gets to say which human life has worth?**

*(At lights up, FATHER is sitting on a chair or stool next to a walker with a tray containing a collection of pills on it. He deals with waves of nausea.)*

FATHER. Call Kevorkian!

DAUGHTER *(offstage)*. He's ... not available.

FATHER. Did you put me on the waiting list?

DAUGHTER *(offstage)*. Sure.

*(DAUGHTER enters with a barber's cape and scissors.)*

DAUGHTER *(cont'd)*. Have you ever considered maybe I don't want you dead?

FATHER. Because of the money?

DAUGHTER. What?

FATHER. My pension check.

DAUGHTER (*hands him the scissors to hold while she puts the cape around his shoulders*). I was paying the mortgage before you moved in.

FATHER. Then why?

DAUGHTER. Maybe we're not finished.

FATHER. Not finished what?

DAUGHTER (*starts tying the cape at his neck*). I don't know.

FATHER (*pulling the cape away*). No more haircuts! What's the point? I don't care what I look like. I just want to—

DAUGHTER (*putting the cape back on*). Well, I'm the one who has to look at you.

*(She reaches for the scissors, but he won't let them go.)*

FATHER. I should've had the operation.

DAUGHTER. With a ninety percent chance of ending up dead?

FATHER. It would be better than this.

DAUGHTER. I know you're depressed, but—

FATHER. It can't go on like this.

DAUGHTER. Dad ...

FATHER. Feeling so nauseated all the time.

DAUGHTER. But then you have some good days too.

FATHER. And now ... last night ...

DAUGHTER. Everybody's entitled to wet the bed once in a while. I've done it myself.

FATHER. I knew I had to go. I just couldn't get up. I mean the walker was right there. But I didn't have the strength—I was too slow. And by the time I ... it was too late.

DAUGHTER. It'll be better now, with the commode in your room. Don't fret about it. That's the first time since you've been here.

FATHER. But not the last.

*(Beat. She reaches for the scissors again. He releases them.)*

FATHER *(cont'd)*. It's going to get worse, you know.

*(Beat.)*

DAUGHTER. I know.

*(She starts cutting his hair.)*

FATHER. *Then* what? A nursing home? With some underpaid foreigner desperate for work cleaning up my shit. Nobody should have to do that. It ain't ... fair, ain't ... right. I don't want that.

DAUGHTER. Me either.

*(She cuts in silence.)*

FATHER. How big is it?

DAUGHTER *(feeling a spot on his head)*. Same as before. You know that from last week's CAT scan.

FATHER. Then why am I getting weaker and weaker if it's not growing.

DAUGHTER. Because you haven't had any real exercise in three years. Because the cells around the tumor are dead or damaged. Because you're exhausted from having seizures.

FATHER. And I don't understand that either. This Dilantin stuff is supposed to stop the seizures.

DAUGHTER. Only if you take the full dosage.

FATHER. But the more I take ... it makes me sick to my stomach. And dizzy. I stagger around like some ... can't get my words out right.