

It's Over, Over There

A Ten Minute Play

By Alan S. Austin

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Arizona Performing Arts
2641 E. Beekman Place,
Phoenix, AZ. 85016

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Man, 72

Woman, 77

THE SCENE

The garden of a large house which has been converted into the Paradise Elderly Resort and is referred to as In There. Man and Woman also refer to The Centre which combines a medical facility for intensive care with social facilities.

THE TIME

Mid morning, Late Spring, Present Day

(Man enters using a cane and carrying a gardening magazine. There is a park bench D.C. He sits with relief and looks approvingly at the garden, glances at his watch and frowns. He puts on his reading glasses, opens his magazine and reads for a few seconds and shakes his head. He looks around at the garden again, frowns and goes back to reading. Finally, he puts down the magazine and glasses when he is distracted by something.)

MAN

Ah... the flowering cherry.

(He gets up and exits S.R.. Woman enters S.L. wearing a hat and carrying a purse. She sees the magazine, glasses and cane, shrugs her shoulders and shakes her head. Man returns.)

MAN (CONT'D)

There you are.

WOMAN

How observant of you. Yours? Ah, Gardening Weekly. Must be.

MAN

I was wondering where you were.

WOMAN

I am always where I am. It's a metaphysical thing.

MAN

You weren't here yesterday. We agreed to read Shakespeare's sonnets together. I waited til noon.

WOMAN

Didn't you have anything better to do?

MAN

I was concerned about you.

WOMAN

I am past the age for anyone to be concerned about me.

(She moves his magazine, hands him his glasses and sits.)

Here. You'd better put these away before you lose them.

MAN

(He sits)

You seem upset.

WOMAN

Every day I face a bunch of aging morons In There who babble about their diseases, smell of urine and insist on telling me about their ninety first grandchild. Of course I'm upset.

MAN

It's just part of getting old.

WOMAN

The sharpness of your mind never ceases to amaze me. Speaking of which, how did you do on your last Alzheimer's test?

MAN

I refused to answer the questions in case I incriminated myself.

(He laughs but she just stares at the ground.)

You take everything too seriously. It's bad for your heart.

WOMAN

At my age everything is bad for me.

MAN

You're only seventy seven.

WOMAN

The average lifespan of a woman is 78. I don't have long.

MAN

Have you taken your pills?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

You should take them. I was worried when you didn't show up yesterday and thought you might have found another boyfriend.

WOMAN

Boyfriend?

MAN

I saw you talking to that younger, taller man the other day.

WOMAN

Why are men so suspicious? The man you saw me with is a religious bore. He keeps trying to convert me.

MAN

An optimist.

WOMAN

I told him he could stuff heaven and hell up his...

MAN

Believing in an afterlife keeps some people alive.

WOMAN

Good use of irony. Religion is a vast concoction of fabrications invented to pretend we never die.

MAN

It has done more good than harm.

WOMAN

Now you sound like my father in his pulpit. I told him a week before he died that if he was so certain about an afterlife, he should come back and tell me about it. So far not a word.

MAN

You are a cantankerous old woman.

WOMAN

I was a high school principal. I learned to take no prisoners.

MAN

I'm glad I wasn't one of your pupils.

WOMAN

My girls learned respect.

MAN

Which is why you ought to take your pills.

WOMAN

Huh?

MAN

To show respect for the doctors by doing what you're told.

WOMAN

Okay. Okay. I'll take them. Do you have your...?

MAN

Medicine?

WOMAN

I need something to wash them down with.

MAN

Tell me where you were yesterday.

WOMAN

That's blackmail.

MAN

Which at our age is perfectly acceptable.

WOMAN

Don't be a spoilsport.

(He pulls out a flask which he teases her with.)

MAN

Now *tell me*.

WOMAN

Stop waving it around. They'll see you.

MAN

Where were you?

WOMAN

I had to go to The Centre.

MAN

What for? To practice your striptease for the Christmas concert?

WOMAN

To see my doctor.

(He gives her the flask)

I was worried I was pregnant.

MAN

What? An immaculate conception? And I thought you didn't believe in religion.

WOMAN

I once did it on the top of the Eiffel Tower you know.

(She takes pills out of her bag and washes them down with a swig.)

It takes about five minutes. The effects of the pills. What would we do without opium and alcohol?

MAN

Face reality I suppose.

(pause)

The daffodils are past their best but the tulips are coming up as well as the hyacinths. Beautiful smell. The flowering cherry should be out by next week. Look. Over there.

WOMAN

What's that pretty yellow flower?

MAN

Forsythia.

WOMAN

And what's that tree?

MAN

Malus floribunda. The crab apple tree.

WOMAN

Amazing how you know all the names.

MAN

I told you, I was a gardener. Didn't do my spine much good.

WOMAN

It's such a beautiful morning. I'll be sorry to give this up.

MAN

Give it up? What do you mean?

WOMAN

(turns away from MAN)

They're going to move me.

MAN

What? Where are they moving you to?

WOMAN

It's because of that damned nurse In There. She's a bitch and a half. Someone ought to tell her to use a deodorant.

MAN

Tell me where you're going and I'll come with you.

WOMAN

They're moving me to The Centre. I know this sounds awful but every time I go there I think of concentration camps. "Take off your clothes. You're going to have a nice shower." Then they gas you.

MAN

What are you talking about? It's a recreation centre. You play bridge there every Wednesday and last week they bused us down there to listen to the Children's Choir.

WOMAN

And connected to the recreation center by swinging doors and a hallway is the medical wing where they send you when they think you're about to ...

MAN

There are plenty of other options we can check into it. Besides, I'm sick of this place. Most of the inmates are like sticks of rhubarb.

WOMAN

Stiff and sour?

MAN

Yup.

WOMAN

I *have* to move to The Centre.

MAN

I'm sure it's just temporary. Look at you. Hardly a wrinkle... pink cheeks... you look sixty!

WOMAN

That's the gin you idiot. What's that? I saw something move. Is it a snake?

(Pointing off stage left)

MAN

(He gets up, looks and sits again)

Too early in the season. It's just a stick. Wind must have caught it.

WOMAN

Scared me to death. I hate snakes. Now, where were we? Oh yes... my head.

MAN

I admit the inside of it is a bit of a mystery but the outside is nice and the new hat is very chic.

WOMAN

No... my little problem.

MAN

Oh yes, your little problem, the one you won't tell me about.

WOMAN

It's not such a little problem anymore. It's skin cancer, basal cell. I left it, well, I didn't actually leave it. Well, I did the second time. I thought it would just go away and it did for short periods when I was in my forties.

MAN

The doctors can cure that. I spent fifty years in the sun and I've had more lumps cut out of me than a piece of swiss cheese.

WOMAN

I use to be beautiful. Men flocked around me like fireflies. When I walked down the beach, you could hear those heartbeats quicken.

MAN

I'm sure you were really something!

WOMAN

Were? It was those long summers at the beach house. I should have worn a hat. When they first diagnosed it, they gave me some awful cobalt treatment. When it came back the second time, I just ignored it. What did it matter? Five years? Ten years? When they finally caught it and cut it out, they used a pig skin graft. Do you know what it's like walking around with half a pound of bacon covering your head? Unfortunately, the cancer got through to the bone. So here I am... a woman with a hole in her head.

MAN

But you still enjoy life and take care good of yourself. Why do they want to move you?

WOMAN

Because the bitch of a nurse In There is frightened that when she changes the bandages and has to stare through the hole at my brain, she'll burst a blood vessel.

MAN

Hers or yours? Sorry. I'll come with you. One of my ex's told me I had a hole in my head after working as a grave digger.

WOMAN

Only married couples are allowed to go to The Centre together.

MAN

What if I drill a hole in my head? Then again, it would be easier to marry you. I'll need to find my latest divorce papers.

WOMAN

I'm going to die you idiot.

MAN

Yes... but not today.

WOMAN

I'm too old to get married.

MAN

What does age have to do with it? I know, you want romance. Every woman needs romance.

WOMAN

You're the expert! How many times have you been married?

MAN

That is not important. Let's see. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

WOMAN

I'd rather you didn't. Summer days gave me skin cancer.

MAN

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or NONE, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs...

WOMAN

Not only am I without leaves but the boughs are rotten and about to fall off.

MAN

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie

WOMAN

As the *death bed* whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

MAN

(He kneels.)

Fain would you not marry me to never part?
Could you but love my fledgling aged heart?

WOMAN

I don't remember which sonnet that's from.

MAN

It isn't. I wrote it myself. You can't get a better proposal
than that. Well?

WOMAN

Well what?

MAN

Wilt thou, cranky old woman with a hole in her head, take me,
Adam, the old gardener with not much in his head at all, to
be your lawfully wedded husband?

WOMAN

No!

MAN

To have and to hold?

WOMAN

Certainly not.

MAN

Till death do us part.

WOMAN

If I were to agree, that's a subjunctive by the way, it'll be
a short marriage. no church wedding and no sex.

MAN

We'll see about that. Let's have a cup of tea and a drop of
medicine to celebrate. Come on sweetheart.

WOMAN

Don't call me sweetheart. I was a principal.

MAN

(He salutes.)

Sorry. Whatever you say. Can I call you Eve?

WOMAN

Yes. Just remember, it's over... over there. The rest as Mr. Hamlet put it so nicely as he popped his clogs... is silence.

(They both rise. He grabs his cane and magazine and offers his arm. She hesitates, adjusts her hat puts her arm through his and he whistles the Wedding March as they exit.)