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A Long Trip

By

DAN MCGEEHAN

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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A Long Trip received its world premier production at Heller Theatre Company (Tulsa, Okla.) in August 2012.

CAST:

The Woman, OlderRita M. Boyle
The Man, Older George Nelson
The Woman, Younger..... Hannah Westlund
The Man, Younger.....Bryce Davis

PRODUCTION:

Director Miriam Mills
Producer Susan Apker
Stage Manager Camie Hayes
Assistant Stage Manager..... Liz Hayes
Lighting Charlie Walter
Sound Emma Francois
Artistic Director, Heller Theatre Julie Tattershall

A Long Trip

CHARACTERS

THE MAN, OLDER: He is at least 60 years old, dressed comfortably.

THE WOMAN, OLDER: She is at least 60 years old, dressed in a housecoat or robe. She suffers from dementia, which is growing worse.

THE MAN, YOUNGER: He is the same man but in his late teens or early 20s.

THE WOMAN, YOUNGER: She is the same woman but in her late teens or early 20s.

SETTING: At home. Two chairs.

TIME: The present.

PRODUCTION NOTES

If it is so desired to have music played to open and close the show, it is best to pick music that does not convey a particular time or place. The play is intended to be as universal as possible—this is why no one has names, no place in particular is the setting, and no time is indicated other than “now” and “then.” This was done deliberately in an attempt to make each audience member individually personalize the characters they see onstage. Therefore, any music used should evoke only the mood or emotion of the piece. Perhaps a cutting from the second movement (“Son Binocle”) from Satie’s “Les Trois Valses Distinguées Du Précieux Dégoûté.” Satie indicates no time signature for the work, and it is usually played at a walking tempo. But played at a slower pace than usual, it has a marvelous bittersweet feel that works perfectly.

A Long Trip

(Daytime. Inside the house somewhere. The stage is empty except for just two plain, wooden chairs upon which sit THE MAN, OLDER and THE WOMAN, OLDER. He is gently focused on her, softly rubbing one of her hands. She is confused, struggling to focus her thoughts, and does not look at him.)

THE WOMAN, OLDER. I, I just don't remember ...

THE MAN, OLDER. Anything at all?

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Why do you keep asking? What do you want?

THE MAN, OLDER. That night. What did you do after you left? I want to know. Did you laugh or sing or ... what? I always wanted to ask. Maybe I waited too long ...

THE WOMAN, OLDER *(trying to think)*. That ... night?

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Was it ... warm?

THE MAN, OLDER *(gently)*. No, it was chilly.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh. *(Pause.)* It was March, then. Right?

THE MAN, OLDER. No, it was June.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh, I see. *(Her brow furrows.)* It's not usually chilly in June, is it?

THE MAN, OLDER. No, not usually. But it was at night, so ...

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh ... I see. *(Struggling.)* I just ... I just don't ...

THE MAN, OLDER. It was an early summer night. I didn't know you really, but I had seen you before. Many times.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. At the school?

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes, many times ... from across the room.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. And the church?

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes, yes ... but from across the room.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Always across the room?

THE MAN, OLDER. Well, I was so shy and you were so—

THE WOMAN, OLDER (*cutting him off*). And that night? That night in June?

THE MAN, OLDER. Well, it was at the church. School was out and the church was holding a dance, and I—

THE WOMAN, OLDER (*agitated*). Oh no, now I know you're wrong. My mother never let me dance. I was raised right ...

THE MAN, OLDER (*trying to calm her down*). That's right. That's right. You didn't dance.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. I don't dance. You said it was a dance.

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes, but I didn't say *you* danced. You were volunteering ...

THE WOMAN, OLDER (*calming down*). Oh!

THE MAN, OLDER. You served the punch. You know, ladling the punch into the paper cups.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh! That's different. I was not allowed to dance. (*Pause*.) Did you dance?

THE MAN, OLDER. Oh, no, no. I, I couldn't ...

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Was there someone you wanted to dance with?

THE MAN, OLDER (*looks at her hands then up to her face. Quietly*). Yes, there was.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh, that's right: you were shy. I guess you were too shy.

THE MAN, OLDER (*almost imperceptibly*). Yes.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. So what did you do?

THE MAN, OLDER. I stood and watched. From across the room.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. That doesn't sound like you had a very good evening.

THE MAN, OLDER. Oh, but I did. Standing there doing nothing was the best thing I could have done.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh, I don't see how that could be ...

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes. You see, you had to leave the dance early. The next day you were going on a long trip. It was dark out, and you didn't want to walk home alone. You wanted someone to walk with you. But everyone was having such a great time that you didn't want to spoil their fun. You needed to find someone who wasn't doing anything ...

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh! Did I?

THE MAN, OLDER. Yes, you found me. I walked you home.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Oh, how nice.

(THE MAN, YOUNGER and THE WOMAN, YOUNGER enter. They are casually dressed. They mime a conversation. THE WOMAN, OLDER watches them. They are in her mind; THE MAN, OLDER doesn't see them.)

THE MAN, OLDER. Normally, I was so tongue-tied around girls, but you were different. There was something warm—

THE MAN, YOUNGER. Inviting—

THE MAN, OLDER. And comforting about you. I found it easy to open up to you—

THE MAN, YOUNGER. To talk and not feel foolish or blush.

THE WOMAN, OLDER. What did we talk about—

THE WOMAN, YOUNGER. Anything—?

THE WOMAN, OLDER. All that time?

THE MAN, OLDER. Anything—

THE MAN, YOUNGER. And everything.

THE WOMAN, YOUNGER. Of school?

THE MAN, YOUNGER. Gym class and volleyball. Lunch and study hall. Of Mr. Robinson and the funny way he talked. Mrs. Deery and her odd hair color.

THE WOMAN, YOUNGER. Of church?

THE MAN, YOUNGER. The squeaky organ and the dirty vestibule. The Reverend Manning and his old mother. The smells, the brand new hymnals, and the broken doorknobs.

THE MAN, OLDER. We talked and talked. All the way to your house—

THE MAN, YOUNGER. Still talking.

THE WOMAN, YOUNGER. Not stopping.

THE MAN, OLDER. It was wonderful.

(THE WOMAN, OLDER stands and crosses to the younger couple.)

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Was I pretty?

THE MAN, OLDER. Oh, my, yes!

THE WOMAN, OLDER. Was I smart? Did I ... did I remember things then?

(THE MAN, OLDER stands and crosses to her.)

THE MAN, OLDER. The smartest in the class!