

Ducks at Thirty-Five Thousand and Other Plays

Including
Flamboyant Man in the Rain
Bush Rats in the Elephant Grass
and
Frozen Waffles on the Interstate

by
Richard T. Young

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ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

All four of these plays involve a woman and man who are strangers to each other until happenstance causes them to meet in a confined space. Through self-disclosure their lives touch and perhaps change. Each play uses the stage "gimmick" of being able to hear the characters' thoughts as well as their spoken words. Although the themes are on the serious side there is much humor.

In "Ducks at Thirty-Five Thousand," a young man who is planning a suicide and a young woman who is planning an abortion meet on an airliner. As they talk he finally reveals his plan. Her reaction surprises them both.

In "Flamboyant Man in the Rain," a cartoon show writer who is getting bad reviews and an about-to-be-fired hairdresser are in the same taxi cab in the middle of a rainstorm. After initial humorous hostilities toward each other they realize their plights may have much in common.

In "Bush Rats in the Elephant Grass," an inner-city school teacher and a yuppie find themselves trapped on an elevator overnight. The teacher enters the elevator knowing that she has a life-changing decision to make; the yuppie leaves the elevator having made one.

In "Frozen Waffles on the Interstate" a lady truck driver picks up a blind Vietnam vet. Both their lives seem to be in a holding pattern and they challenge each other to make changes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast from 2 m 2 w up to 8 m 8 w.)

Ducks at Thirty-Five Thousand (Pg. 5)

PHILIP – Mid-twenties.

ANGIE – Mid- twenties.

PHILIP'S THOUGHT

ANGIE'S THOUGHT

Flamboyant Man in the Rain (Pg. 19)

JOE – Mid-thirties, give or take five years.

SALLY - Early twenties.

JOE'S THOUGHT

SALLY'S THOUGHT

Bush Rats in the Elephant Grass (Pg. 36)

KRISTA – Mid-twenties.

KENT – Mid-twenties.

KRISTA'S THOUGHT

KENT'S THOUGHT

Frozen Waffles on the Interstate (Pg. 53)

LIZ - Late twenties.

GARY - Early twenties.

LIZ'S THOUGHT

GARY'S THOUGHT

PRODUCTION NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The cast can be as numerous as sixteen or as small as four. It's possible to do the play with a cast of two and produce the "thoughts" via tape, but I think you would lose a great deal of impact in the process. I think it is best if the "thoughts" are seen in silhouette only. They should move, and react normally but their faces should be in the dark.

The set should remain simple. The first production used real airplane, taxi and truck seats. A steering wheel mounted on a black column was used in the truck cab scene, but nothing else was for the other vehicles. If appropriate seats can't be acquired, three black wooden chairs would do. The elevator scene is played in empty space.

Mime is very important to the action. Non-existing windows are rolled down, doors are opened etc. Precision is the key. All in-hand props should be real.

The profanity, although mild and appropriate, should be considered carefully before it is included. It may be cut, or replaced with more mild expletives at the discretion of the director.

In "Frozen Waffles on the Interstate" Gary's thought says "shit" once. It is obviously not a swear, but a description of the real stuff. However; some audiences will be offended and the director may replace the word with "manure" or "dung" if needed. Also in the same scene the word "rape" is used several times. "Attack" may be substituted if it seems wise to do so.

The scenes are presented in the order in which they were written, and first produced. I toyed with the idea of switching them around, but no other combination seemed to fit.

Ducks at Thirty-Five Thousand

(Darkness. There are the sounds of a big city business district. LIGHTS fade up on PHILIP. He is in his early twenties. Not handsome, but not homely either. He wears a business suit that doesn't quite fit him right. He stands in a pool of light.)

PHILIP: I don't understand. I thought you were interested in my play. Your letter talks about a contract. That's why I'm here...I did try to call, but your secretary never...Out of time? But I just got here...I mean I waited out there for two hours, can't you just...I can rewrite it again if that's the...no, no I don't understand.

(LIGHTS on PHILIP fade out and a light on ANGIE fades up. Angie is pretty, but with one oddity, say a crooked smile, or a large nose. She too speaks from a pool of light.)

ANGIE: Are you sure? Can't you run the test again? I know it has been positive twice, but...but we were so careful. I can't be, I just can't. I'm not ready yet, we aren't married...I...could you...is there some place I could go to...fix it? No, no, not here.

(LIGHTS up on PHILIP. He has an overcoat on and carries a travel bag. Upstage and to the side, PHILIP'S THOUGHT appears in dim LIGHT that comes from almost directly above him.)

PHILIP'S THOUGHT: So where's the taxi? The first time in my life I can afford a taxi and here I stand...I'll go somewhere... I won't even quit. Monday will come and I just won't be there. Let them see if they can keep the accounts without me. New York...No, San Francisco...why not...I can put the flight on the company card. I'd love to see his face when the bill comes...San Francisco...but not off the bridge. Everyone goes off the bridge...

(LIGHTS go down on PHILIP and up again on ANGIE. ANGIE'S THOUGHT also appears upstage and to the side.)

ANGIE'S THOUGHT: It's my body...my life. The thing is only the size of a walnut. If Michael doesn't want it then why should I...If he doesn't want me then...there's a clinic in San Francisco...a year from now I won't even think about it.

(LIGHTS fade out on ANGIE, and we hear the sounds of a busy, big city airport. Sound fades and light comes up on three tourist-class airplane seats. Angie is seated in the aisle seat, a magazine on her lap. Just upstage of the seats and to each side are PHILIP'S THOUGHT and ANGIE'S THOUGHT. PHILIP enters. He is very nervous. He stops at the row of seats. Looks at his boarding pass, which he takes a moment to find, as he is carrying several bags and a camera. He looks at the row of seats and then his ticket again.)

PHILIP: Excuse me. *(ANGIE looks up.)* Ah...

ANGIE: Yes.

PHILIP: Ah...I think I'm in the window seat...there.

ANGIE: Oh.

PHILIP: Well, your legs are...ah...in the way.

ANGIE: Oh, excuse me.

(SHE pulls her legs in and HE squeezes by.)

PHILIP'S THOUGHT: Her legs are beautiful, that's what they are. All of her is beautiful. So why didn't I say so. Tell her she has nice legs. I have --

PHILIP: Nothing to lose.

ANGIE: Pardon!

PHILIP: I...ah...just...I might have lost something here...I...
(Looks around on the floor.)

ANGIE: What was it? *(Begins to look too.)*

End of Freeview

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