

ASSISTED LIVING

BY DEIRDRE O'CONNOR



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

ASSISTED LIVING
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ASSISTED LIVING received its world premiere at the Profiles Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, on November 10, 2011. It was directed by Joe Jahraus; the set design was by David Ferguson; the costume design was by Erica Griese; the lighting design was by Bekki Lambrecht; and the sound design and original music were by Jeffrey Levin. The cast was as follows:

ANNE Stacy Stoltz
LEVI Jordan Stacey
JIMMY Layne Manzer
CHRISTINA Shannon Hollander

CHARACTERS

ANNE

LEVI

CHRISTINA

JIMMY

PLACE

The Kellys' house, Jimmy's car and a hospital waiting room
near Boston, Massachusetts.

ASSISTED LIVING

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The kitchen of an old Victorian home. From the peeling wallpaper and the faded curtains it is clear that the home was once quite lovely but has long since fallen into a state of disrepair. A curtain rod has fallen off one of the windows and is laid out across the kitchen table next to a pile of old newspapers and a baby monitor.

Anne, late 30s, stands in the doorway on the phone as Levi, late 20s, stands nervously by the table.

ANNE. I'll just be one minute.

LEVI. Sure. Sure. Should I just sit — *(He points to the table.)*

ANNE. Yeah. There. Anywhere. *(He takes a seat. Re: the phone.)*

He's not picking up. Which is good. Probably. It probably means he's on his way. I probably don't even need to leave a messa — *(Into phone.)* Hey, it's me. Just wondering where you are. I'm at the house and you are not, so ... yeah. I'm just sitting here with the first guy. Applicant, so ... So I hope you're on your way. *(She hangs up.)* I have no idea what happened to him.

LEVI. It's fine, really. We can wait for your husband if —

ANNE. Brother. He's my brother.

LEVI. Oh.

ANNE. And actually, I'm on my lunch hour so ...

LEVI. Right, well, not waiting is ... Is also good. With me.

ANNE. Good. We can do this without him. I mean I'm sure he'll

probably stumble in any minute or — *(She checks her watch.)* We can do this without him. *(Anne moves the baby monitor and the papers from the table and places them on the counter.)*

LEVI. OK. You must really have your hands full here. I didn't know you had a baby on top of everything.

ANNE. Excuse me? *(He points to the baby monitor.)*

LEVI. The baby monitor? I didn't know you ... That's great. How old?

ANNE. Uh ... Seventy-eight, actually.

LEVI. What?

ANNE. It's for my mother. The baby — the monitor. So I can hear her if she —

LEVI. Oh. Sorry.

ANNE. It's fine.

LEVI. I just thought — *(Horrible phlegmy coughing is heard over the baby monitor.)*

MOTHER. *(Offstage.)* Anne?

ANNE. *(To Levi.)* One second. *(Anne goes to the door. Shouting.)* I'm busy, Mom.

MOTHER. *(Offstage.)* Where's my tea?

ANNE. *(Shouting.)* Wanda? Would you get my mother some — *(Another voice comes over the baby monitor.)*

WANDA. *(Offstage.)* She's got her tea right there. You've got your tea right there.

ANNE. Thank you.

MOTHER. *(Offstage.)* Well, that's too hot. She made it too hot. What is she trying to do to me? She knows I don't like it that hot.

WANDA. *(Offstage.)* "She?" You know I'm sitting right here. I don't know who you're calling "she" when I'm sitting right here.

ANNE. *(Shouting.)* Just let it cool off, Mom. OK? *(To Levi.)* I'm so sorry.

LEVI. That's OK.

ANNE. *(Indicating the monitor.)* They're hilarious together, aren't they? It's nice how they've ... bonded.

LEVI. Yeah.

ANNE. We're really ... we're sorry to see her go. Wanda. *(Anne sits next to Levi at the table.)* So it's ... *(She scans the resume.)* Levy?

LEVI. Levi. Like the jeans.

ANNE. Oh.

LEVI. Yeah, my mom was ... I don't know. Trying to be different.

Unfortunately. (*She spells it out phonetically.*)

ANNE. (*To herself.*) Lee ... vie.

LEVI. I really like your home. Did I say that already?

ANNE. No.

LEVI. I really like it.

ANNE. Thank you.

LEVI. A lot of these old places, you know, people put so much work into them that they just ... you know ... lose all their *personality*. But you didn't ... ruin it. With ... updates. Or ... renovations. It's more classic, you know? (*Levi fingers the stray curtain nervously.*) I think my grandma had these curtains. (*Anne snatches the curtain out of his hand.*)

ANNE. Let me just get that out of your way.

LEVI. Sure. (*Anne moves the curtain to the counter.*)

ANNE. So, you've been with the agency for ...

LEVI. A year. I've been there for almost a year. Working with a lot of patients in a temp — Temporary capacity.

ANNE. Temporary?

LEVI. Yes. But I'm now looking for a permanent ... Situation. For my skill set. Which is nursing. Obviously. (*Anne looks back at the resume.*)

ANNE. This doesn't say when you finished school.

LEVI. Oh, that was two — two years ago. About.

ANNE. OK. You should put that on here. FYI.

LEVI. Oh, yeah. Sorry.

ANNE. No need to be sorry. (*Anne makes a note.*)

LEVI. What are you writing?

ANNE. Just notes.

LEVI. OK. (*Pause.*) I'm not really good at the whole resume thing. You know?

ANNE. Oh.

LEVI. But — But *home* care. I mean, that's really my ... my specialty. (*He smiles awkwardly.*)

ANNE. What did you do in between school and the agency?

LEVI. Uhm ... Between work and school I was ... pursuing ... employment opportunities. Somewhat unsuccessfully. Unfortunately.

ANNE. Oh.

LEVI. I mean, I did some ... odd ... odd jobs, but ... no home care. Per se. (*Anne makes a note.*) Uh ... since I joined the agency I've been working ... almost all the time. And no complaints so far,

so ... so you can write that down, too. (*Anne nods kindly.*) So, I'd be taking care of ...

ANNE. My mom. My mother.

LEVI. Oh.

ANNE. Wanda has worked with her until recent ... events but ... My mother has ... progressed. And Wanda is ... not able to commit to the ... increased workload.

LEVI. OK. I can do workload. That's something I can ... I can commit to.

ANNE. Good.

LEVI. And you live here, with your mother.

ANNE. Yes. I guess I do.

LEVI. And your brother?

ANNE. No. No my brother lives in Alston.

LEVI. Oh.

ANNE. We share the ... the distribution of ... responsibilities. For my mother. (*She glances at the phone.*) In theory.

LEVI. OK. (*The baby monitor squawks. A fit of horrible phlegmy coughing is heard.*)

MOTHER. (*Offstage.*) Anne?

ANNE. And we have the monitor in case she —

MOTHER. (*Offstage.*) Anne?

ANNE. (*Shouting into the other room.*) Wanda, would you see what she wants, please? (*To Levi.*) In case she needs anything. (*More coughing.*)

MOTHER. (*Offstage.*) Oh Jesus!

LEVI. Do you need to —

ANNE. No. No. (*Shouting.*) Wanda? (*No answer. To Levi.*) One moment. (*Anne gets up and walks over to the doorway. With a deliberate sense of calm.*) Mom? I'm with a guest right now. Remember?

MOTHER. Is it Jimmy?

ANNE. No.

MOTHER. Well, tell him to come up here.

ANNE. It's not Jimmy. Do you need something? (*More coughing is heard.*)

MOTHER. Where's Jimmy?

ANNE. Do you need something, Mom?

LEVI. You know, if you need to —

ANNE. No.

LEVI. Go up there.

ANNE. I don't.

LEVI. OK.

MOTHER. Anne?

ANNE. (*Shouting.*) Wanda? Would you see what my mother needs, please?! (*The intercom squawks.*)

WANDA. I'm in the room with her.

ANNE. (*Sweetly.*) Thank you, Wanda.

WANDA. I been in the room with her the whole time. Can I help it if I'm sitting in the room with her and she keeps calling you as if — (*Anne turns the volume down on the intercom.*)

ANNE. Why don't we just turn that down so it doesn't disturb us. That's better.

LEVI. She sounds terrible.

ANNE. Yeah.

LEVI. I mean the cough. Not ... not her personality. I get along really well with old people. A lot of time, underneath it all? They're just like ... sweet old grandmas, you know?

ANNE. Uh ... So your experience is mostly with nice — nice patients?

LEVI. Uh ... Mostly. Yeah. I mean, who *isn't* nice? Underneath it all. (*Anne makes a note while Levi looks on nervously.*) Mostly they just want to talk a lot and I like to talk so ... It's a good situation all around.

ANNE. Do you have any schedule conflicts with days?

LEVI. Days? No. No conflict with days.

ANNE. And maybe the occasional night — evening?

LEVI. You like to go out?

ANNE. Uh ... No. I mean, yes, I like to go out. No, I don't ... *often* ... Do you have any conflicts?

LEVI. I could do evenings. I don't go out so much anymore. Not that I went out *so* much before. Not like I'm some drunk or something, just ... OK, technically yes, I am an alcoholic. But ... I haven't had a drink in ... Almost a year, actually. You know. I think I've got my sobriety chip on me here somewhere. (*He searches for the chip. Anne makes a note.*) You keep writing.

ANNE. I'm sorry?

LEVI. No, just, you only make a note when I say the bad stuff, but I feel like ... I've said some good stuff, too. Only ... you haven't written any of that down.

ANNE. I'm just going to put the pen down now.

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2M, 2W

Anne Kelly needs help. She's pushing forty and still lives with her mother. Her deadbeat brother won't return her calls, and the ancient family home seems to be falling down around her. When a younger man with a troubled past comes into her life, Anne begins to see the upside of not always being the grown-up. ASSISTED LIVING is a funny and surprising look at the struggle to discover where our families end, and we begin.

"A closely observed, character-driven, fully realized and profoundly moving little drama ... It's a kind, affectionate and wholly believable drama about everyday struggles, but also a remarkable proficient mystery that, despite its simple setting and quiet tone, never lets you guess where it's going or what secrets or past sins its characters may soon reveal."

—The Chicago Tribune

"With ASSISTED LIVING, this New York-based writer only confirms her unique gift for capturing the quirks of human behavior and the stresses of contemporary life: the abiding sense of loneliness and quiet desperation, the little lies that become necessities, the disappointing responses of family and friends, the elusiveness of romance, the character flaws that can't quite be erased. Keenly observant, yet empathetic, O'Connor has a most winning way of combining truth, humor and heart."

—The Chicago Sun Times

"The vagaries of family are sharply delineated in Deirdre O'Connor's affecting new play."

—Time Out Chicago

"A stunning look at how our lives can be affected by those we live with a rely on."

—Around the Town Chicago

"The dilemma of responsibility for an aging family versus personal needs is vividly dramatized in this suspenseful play. It sure is worthy seeing."

—Chicago Critic

ISBN 978-0-8222-2787-8



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