



# THE OUTGOING TIDE

BY **BRUCE GRAHAM**



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



THE OUTGOING TIDE  
Copyright © 2013, Bruce Graham

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of THE OUTGOING TIDE is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for THE OUTGOING TIDE are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Bret Adams, Ltd., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. Attn: Alexis Williams.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce THE OUTGOING TIDE is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The following acknowledgments must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play:

THE OUTGOING TIDE  
was originally produced by  
Northlight Theatre, Chicago, Illinois  
(BJ Jones, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Evans, Executive Director)

New York premiere produced by The Delaware Theatre Company,  
(Bud Martin, Executive Director)  
at 59E59 Theatres, November 2012.

*For B.J. Jones  
and with thanks to Tim Evans and Candace Corr*

THE OUTGOING TIDE was presented by the Delaware Theatre Company at 59E59 Theaters in New York City, opening on November 20, 2012. It was directed by Bud Martin; the assistant director was Larry McKenna; the set design was by Dirk Durossette; the costume design was by Wade Laboissonniere; the lighting design was by James Leitner; the sound design was by David O'Connor; the original music was by Patrick Lamborn; the stage manager was Marguerite Price; and the assistant stage manager was Caitlin Lyons. The cast was as follows:

GUNNER ..... Peter Strauss  
JACK ..... Ian Lithgow  
PEG ..... Michael Learned

THE OUTGOING TIDE was presented by the Philadelphia Theatre Company (Sara Garonzik, Producing Artistic Director; Shira Beckerman, Managing Director) at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre in Philadelphia, opening on March 23, 2012. It was directed by James J. Christy; the set design was by David Gordon; the costume design was by Pamela Scofield; the lighting design was by R. Lee Kennedy; the sound design was by Bart Fassbender; the original music was by Robert Maggio; the production stage manager was Amanda Robbins-Butcher; the assistant stage manager was Danielle Commini; and the production dramaturg was Carrie Chapter. The cast was as follows:

GUNNER ..... Richard Poe  
JACK ..... Anthony Lawton  
PEG ..... Robin Moseley

THE OUTGOING TIDE was originally commissioned as the recipient of the annual Selma Melvoin Playwriting Award, administered by Northlight Theatre, Chicago, Illinois. It opened at Northlight Theatre on May 22, 2011. The production was directed by BJ Jones; the set design was by Brian Sidney Bembridge; the costume design was by Rachel Laritz; the lighting design was by JR Lederle, the sound design was by Andrew Hansen; and the production stage manager was Rita Vreeland. The cast was as follows:

GUNNER ..... John Mahoney  
JACK ..... Thomas J. Cox  
PEG ..... Rondi Reed

## **CHARACTERS**

GUNNER

JACK

PEG

## **PLACE**

The Concannon home on the Chesapeake.

## **TIME**

Autumn.

# THE OUTGOING TIDE

## ACT ONE

*The Concannon home on the shore of the Chesapeake. It is not meant to be a totally realistic representation as it will turn into other things during the course of the play.*

*Different levels. The stage floor is the beach. The others represent a dock, a porch, and the inside of the home. Characters do not have to be held to reality with speaking to each other; they can speak while moving in and out of various areas and times.*

*This is a very rustic area. It faces west and gets great sunsets. It is autumn.*

*A light rises on Jack, 49. Nothing notable about him; a pleasant-looking man who — at the moment — seems a bit resigned to whatever might be happening in his life. He looks a bit out of place. His clothes and shoes are more suited to an office cubicle than beach walking.*

*At the edge of the beach stands Gunner. Gunner's in his early 70s but still a vibrant-looking guy. He wears the world's oldest, most comfortable fishing clothes and sits in an aluminum chair on the beach. His fishing rod sits in a holder next to a small cooler.*

*Although Jack is very polite, we get the feeling he'd rather be somewhere else at the moment. His conversation seems perfunctory most of the time, as if going through the motions.*

GUNNER. See the nice part of bein' up this end of the bay is the

water stays warm longer. You can still fish this time'a the year. You go about a mile south — to the canal there — forget about it. Too deep — too cold. Up here we got 'nother week or two. You fish?  
JACK. No.

GUNNER. Don't buy your bait at Wal-Mart. Crap. Crawlers're dead half the time. Get your bait —

JACK. I don't fish.

GUNNER. — at the shack down the end of the marina.

JACK. I don't fish. (*A beat.*)

GUNNER. Then why the hell you wanta live here?

JACK. (*Shrugging.*) Well, I guess I —

GUNNER. Water. That's all ya got here. No nightclubs or anything.

JACK. I know ... (*Jack picks up a couple of small stones to skip on the water. He will be silently disappointed with each throw.*)

GUNNER. Red Lobster. That's their idea of a restaurant 'round here. They don't even melt the butter right. Go figure. (*Watching Jack skip rocks.*) You're not too good at that, are you?

JACK. Guess not.

GUNNER. (*Grabbing a stone.*) My kid couldn't do it either. Spend half the summer out here practicin'. Think his record was two skips.

JACK. That so.

GUNNER. Got funny wrists, I guess. All inna wrist. (*Gunner skips one with ease. They both watch as it skims across the water.*) Five. Not bad. What kinda boat you got?

JACK. I don't have a —

GUNNER. No boat?

JACK. No, I —

GUNNER. Gonna get one?

JACK. Not planning on it. (*A beat.*)

GUNNER. You are gonna be really bored, my friend. Got kids?

JACK. Three.

GUNNER. They're gonna hate it here you don't have a boat.

JACK. They're —

GUNNER. But for God's sake don't get 'em a jet ski. They are the biggest pains in the ass. Wish I could find a piece'a piano wire 'bout a mile long — stretch it across at neck height. Settle their hash.

JACK. They're pretty much grown. All but the youngest — out of the house.

GUNNER. My kid hated it down here. Just our summer place



then. Couldn't wait to get home.

JACK. Really.

GUNNER. Hated to fish. Take that back. Didn't mind fishin'. He hated puttin' a crawler onna hook. It'd start ta wiggle, ya know, and he'd start ta cry. Baited his hook for him till he was like ten then I told him he was on his own. He's ... not what you'd call "outdoorsy." He's a cook. Sorry, "chef." He's not gay though. Lotta those chefs're gay but he's not. Married. Owns a restaurant.

JACK. (*Suddenly interested.*) Really? A restaurant?

GUNNER. That's a tough racket. Thirty-eight percent of restaurants go outta business the first year, ya know.

JACK. That so?

GUNNER. Thirty-eight percent. (*Jack skips another stone — then reacts in pain, grabbing his neck.*)

JACK. Damn it ...

GUNNER. You okay?

JACK. Got a ... pinched nerve in my neck. Couple months ago. I keep thinking it's all better.

GUNNER. You need an ice pack?

JACK. No thanks —

GUNNER. Heating pad?

JACK. No, I —

GUNNER. Aspirin, ibuprofen, Ben-Gay, Aspercream? I'm old, I got everything in there.

JACK. I'm okay.

GUNNER. How'd you do that? (*A beat, as if Jack is reluctant to answer. Finally:*)

JACK. I ... stood up.

GUNNER. Stood up?

JACK. I got up from the dinner table to take my plate to the sink and ... it hit me. (*Gunner processes this.*)

GUNNER. Stood up. Okay ... (*Gunner inspects his line. The bait has been stripped.*) Well, it's a nice bay here. I love tidal water. Makes ya think. Moon. Winds. Gotta take things into account. And with a tide you never know what you're gonna find onna beach. Every day, a little different. (*Pointing to the beach.*) All this dead stuff here. Leaves and everything. Tide tonight'll clean it right out. Never know it was here. (*Observing Jack.*) You a city guy?

JACK. Suburbs.

GUNNER. Well, you'll notice stuff down here ya never noticed

before. Philly my whole life. Too many other things ta worry about. Don't pay attention, ya get hit by a bus. Down here, onna water — you start payin' attention to different stuff. (*Reaching for bait.*) It's nice ...

JACK. What're you using?

GUNNER. Pepperoni. Old pepperoni. Last New Year's or some-thin'. Got hair on it.

JACK. They bite on that?

GUNNER. Catfish'll bite on anything. My buddy Salvy one time — he caught one onna sliver of soap. Unbelievable. Luckily I saw it 'cause Salvy was the biggest liar ya ever wanta meet. You like Jello?

JACK. Uhh ... sure. I guess.

GUNNER. Hate Jello. Never saw the point. (*He casts.*) Come on ... nice fat cat. (*The sound of geese comes from above. Both men look up for a moment, watching them.*)

JACK. Headin' south.

GUNNER. Rather them than me. Hate the south. You watch *Cops*? (*Although Jack answers, he's focussed on the geese.*)

JACK. Sometimes.

GUNNER. They gotta channel here shows it twenty-four hours a day. Almost always inna South. Man, those people're dumb. And they never wear shirts. Wanta get locked up? Go around without a shirt. (*The geese become louder as they watch.*)

JACK. That is so ... amazing. (*Off Gunner's look.*) The way they just get into that ... formation. Knowing where they're going. Knowing when to leave. (*The sound of the geese fades.*)

GUNNER. Lot smarter than a lotta people I know, that's for sure. Your wife like it here?

JACK. Uhhh, well — I'm sort of in the process of a divorce.

GUNNER. Sorry to hear it.

JACK. (*Avoiding.*) Well, you know ...

GUNNER. Readin' an article the other day about divorce. Some college in Denver did a study. Divorce rates out there and Tampa Bay, Miami and Phoenix all dropped. (*Very significant.*) After ... they got a Major League Baseball franchise. That is a fact. The minute they got baseball, people stayed married.

JACK. Really?

GUNNER. But these eggheads can't figure out why. I'm a high-school dropout and I got it clocked. Hundred and sixty-two games. On average say, four hours — with the pre- and post-game shows.

*(Figuring quickly in his head.)* That's 648 hours which — if you divide by twenty-four hours a day ... *(Figures again.)* Comes to almost twenty-seven days. Twenty-seven days you can put on the TV or radio and ignore your wife. Common sense. My wife hates it here.

JACK. Sorry to hear that. *(Unknown to them, Peg enters from around the house and stands above them. Late 60s but an energetic, good-looking woman who is dressed for gardening. Neither man notices her as she listens with interest.)*

GUNNER. Used to love it when it was just a summer place but now we're here all the time — see, we always lived in Philly. Business there. Nothin' big — twenty-two trucks. Sold that, moved down here. Son lives out inna suburbs and all my friends — Jesus, old guys. They sit in McDonald's every morning for three hours drinkin' coffee and talkin' about their doctor's appointments. Why you gettin' divorced? *(Peg leans forward to listen.)*

JACK. Oh ... you know. Lotta things ... I guess. Who knows?

GUNNER. Which house is yours? *(Before Jack can react, Peg speaks up.)*

PEG. This one. *(Surprised, they both look up to see her.)* That's Jack, Gunner. You're talking to Jack. *(She lets out a frustrated sigh and exits. The men stand in silence for a moment. Gunner looks confused, then regroups as Jack heads into the house.)*

GUNNER. Who's that broad? *(Lights fade on Gunner.)*

PEG. Now do you see what I mean?

JACK. God, that was weird. We were talking — everything seems fine and then he ... I mean, it took me a minute —

PEG. I know.

JACK. He starts telling me all this stuff I already know and I —

PEG. It's happening so quickly.

JACK. I see that —

PEG. Worse, every day. Wait till he starts repeating himself. "Can we have pancakes tomorrow? Can we have pancakes tomorrow? Peg, tomorrow can we have pancakes? Peg, know what'd be good? Pancakes." And each time I tell him, "Yes, Gunner, we can have pancakes tomorrow," and five minutes later he's back about the pancakes and ... and ... the other day I — oh God, Jack, I snapped. I lost it. "Pancakes! I know, I know — you told me twenty ... stinkin' times so far today!" *(She lets out a sigh.)* I felt ... awful. The look on his face. It's not his fault. I have to keep telling myself

# THE OUTGOING TIDE

by Bruce Graham

2M, 1W

In a summer cottage on Chesapeake Bay, Gunner has hatched an unorthodox plan to secure his family's future but meets with resistance from his wife and son, who have plans of their own. As winter approaches, the three must quickly find common ground and come to an understanding — before the tide goes out. This drama hums with dark humor and powerful emotion.

*“... this drama brings sensitive observation and minor-key humor to painful situations that many of us will recognize from our own families ... its poignant conclusion will have resonance for many in the audience.”*

—**The New York Times**

*“... superb ... tightly focused piece about a family of three ... Graham zeroes in on recognizable truths.”*

—**The Chicago Tribune**

*“The characters are well-drawn, the dialogue is pungent ... The script's frequent time shifts from present to past and back again are handled with a telling simplicity ... may well flood your emotions with its emotional truth.”*

—**BackStage**

## Also by Bruce Graham

ACCORDING TO GOLDMAN  
ANY GIVEN MONDAY  
BELMONT AVENUE SOCIAL CLUB  
MOON OVER THE BREWERY  
and many others

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN 978-0-8222-2942-1



9 780822 229421