



THE OLD FRIENDS

BY HORTON FOOTE



DRAMATISTS
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THE OLD FRIENDS received its world premiere at the Pershing Square Signature Center in New York City, on September 12, 2013, presented by Signature Theatre (James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director). It was directed by Michael Wilson; the set design was by Jeff Cowie; the costume design was by David C. Woolard; the lighting design was by Rui Rita; the original music and sound design were by John Gromada; and the production stage manager was Cole P. Bonenberger. The cast was as follows:

GERTRUDE HAYHURST SYLVESTER RATLIFF ... Betty Buckley
JULIA PRICE Veanne Cox
SIBYL BORDEN Hallie Foote
ALBERT PRICE Adam LeFevre
TOM UNDERWOOD Sean Lyons
HATTIE Novella Nelson
CATHERINE Melle Powers
HOWARD RATLIFF Cotter Smith
MAMIE BORDEN Lois Smith

CHARACTERS

GERTRUDE HAYHURST SYLVESTER RATLIFF

JULIA PRICE

SIBYL BORDEN

ALBERT PRICE

TOM UNDERWOOD

HATTIE

CATHERINE

HOWARD RATLIFF

MAMIE BORDEN

PLACE

Harrison, TX

TIME

1960s

THE OLD FRIENDS

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The sitting room of the Borden-Price home. It is informally furnished.

Julia and Albert Price are in the room. Julia is in her early 50s and does everything she can to make herself look young and attractive. She is given to wearing a good deal of make-up and dressing in vivid colors, but in reality achieves only a certain expensive, hard effect.

Albert is four years older than Julia and makes no attempt to hide his age. He is a large man, over-fed, over-indulged, with a petulant, sulky manner about him. He is making cocktails for them as Julia looks out the window, humming absent-mindedly to herself.

Mamie Borden, 80, Julia's mother, comes into the room. She is small and wizened and has worked hard all her life; she now seems spent and purposeless. She wanders in unnoticed by the other two.

Albert pours a drink for Julia and hands it to her. She lights a cigarette. Mamie stands, watching her.

MAMIE. It's five o'clock. *(Julia glances perfunctorily at the diamond watch on her arm. Mamie walks about, hoping they will comment. They*

go on sipping their drinks as if she weren't there.) Why aren't Sibyl and Hugo here? *(They still say nothing — if they have an opinion.)* They should have been here at a quarter of four. *(A pause. Mamie again waits for an answer, but gets none.)* Albert, was that a safe driver you got to meet them at the airport? *(Again no answer.)* Albert ... *(Still no answer.)* Albert ...

JULIA. *(Snapping at her.)* My God, Mama! It was Vernon. He's driven you to Houston a million times.

MAMIE. Don't bite my head off. I'd forgotten if you told me. *(A pause. She sighs.)* I was always accused of arranging that match. Well, I did, in a way, I certainly always liked Sibyl, and when she and Howard Ratliff broke their engagement, and Hugo told me he was going to ask her to marry him. I told him it would be the smartest thing he ever did. He always consulted me in those days. The only time he went against my wishes was when he went into the oil business. "Stay here with your friends and family," was my advice to him. But no, he had to go running around the world looking for oil. He was going to end up richer than Standard Oil, Magnolia, and Texaco, all put together. *(Gertrude Hayhurst Sylvester Ratliff, 54, enters. She is expensively dressed and is a heavy and constant drinker, always a little drunk. She tends to talk very loudly.)*

GERTRUDE. Hey!

JULIA. Hello, Gertrude.

GERTRUDE. Having a little drink? Give me one, honey. Vodka anything, just as long as it's vodka. I just finished deciding on Gaynor's tombstone. Oh, it's depressed me so.

MAMIE. Who did you get it from, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE. Matthew, Miss Mamie. I got the most expensive they had.

MAMIE. Did you have something put on it?

GERTRUDE. Yes, ma'am. *(Opens her purse, takes out a paper, and reads.)* "An honest man is the noblest work of God." *(Puts the paper away, snaps the purse shut, and reaches for the drink Albert has silently and morosely fixed for her.)* This time last year, Gaynor and I were packing for our New York trip. I had decided on all the plays I wanted to see and he had sent for my tickets and we had our reservations at the Waldorf.

MAMIE. How long were you and Gaynor married, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE. I am not going to tell you, because then you'll start guessing how old I am.

MAMIE. I know how old you are.

GERTRUDE. Well, don't tell a soul. I want to forget all about it. Even though I do have a birthday coming up in ten days. *(She has finished her drink and hands Albert the glass.)* Give me another one, honey. *(Albert takes the glass and fills it.)* Are you all going to Mae Evans' cocktail party?

JULIA. Uh huh.

GERTRUDE. So am I. I asked Howard to come by here and get me. I told him last night since we were kin to each other by marriage, he just had to help me keep my spirits up. Don't you think so? *(No one says they do or don't.)* I do. I said to him last night that I think he ought to take me to New York for my birthday to see the plays like Gaynor did when he was alive.

JULIA. Is he going to?

GERTRUDE. He's worried that people will gossip about us. Albert ... *(Albert looks up at her.)* Why don't you take Julia and you all come and go to New York with us day after tomorrow to see the plays? I'll treat. The crops are all in. You could chaperone me and Howard, and people wouldn't gossip. We could all have a lot of laughs.

ALBERT. You don't have to pay for us.

GERTRUDE. I know that, but I want to. I want it to be my party — my birthday party.

JULIA. Oh, I'd love that. Let's go, Albert.

ALBERT. Suits me. *(From the hall, we hear a man's voice call, "Anybody home?")*

JULIA. *(Calling.)* Come on in, Howard. *(Howard Ratliff enters. He is a handsome man about Julia's age.)*

GERTRUDE. I have good news for you, Howard. Julia and Albert are going to New York with us for my birthday.

HOWARD. Who said I was going?

JULIA. Aw, don't be an old poor sport. *(Goes to him.)* You beautiful spoiled thing. You make Gertrude happy and take her to New York. Albert and I will go along and chaperone and see that you two behave yourselves, won't we Albert?

ALBERT. Sure.

HOWARD. *(Laughing.)* All right, if that's what you all want to do, it's OK with me.

JULIA. Isn't that wonderful! We'll have such fun. We always have a wonderful time when we're with Gertrude and Howard. Don't we

Albert? I think that trip we took to New Orleans with you all was the best time we ever had. I want to go dancing every night.

GERTRUDE. Howard needs to rest, you know.

HOWARD. (*Laughing.*) Aw, come on, Gertrude.

GERTRUDE. You do. Why, he's up at five every morning going to the farms, seeing everything's going well.

HOWARD. That's just an act to get your sympathy.

GERTRUDE. You know what's he's doing now? Clearing that land he and Gaynor bought together.

ALBERT. Are you going to divide it?

GERTRUDE. Howard wants to, but I don't see any sense to it. It's all in the family anyway. We've got more land to farm than we know what to do with.

JULIA. I never thought I'd see him take to farming. Albert thinks he'll do more with your farms than even Gaynor did, Gertrude.

HOWARD. I think that's a little exaggerated, Miss Julia, don't you?

JULIA. You be quiet. I'm gonna brag on you.

GERTRUDE. Look at him — he's blushing. Old Howard's blushing. Isn't that cute? Now I'm gonna brag on you and make you blush some more. (*Puts her arm around him.*) Old Gaynor thought everything was going to stop the day he wasn't here to tend to it. Lord knows it hasn't stopped. Nothing's stopped.

JULIA. Albert says Howard's not only gonna have those farms running better, but he's gonna make more money than Gaynor.

GERTRUDE. (*Withdrawing her arm.*) One thing you can't take away from Gaynor is he knew how to make money, didn't he, Albert?

ALBERT. He did.

GERTRUDE. He was a fine old money-maker.

ALBERT. He was, and Howard's just taking care of what Gaynor made.

GERTRUDE. And my papa made. Don't give Gaynor all the credit. My papa was the original maker ... just like Julia's and your papa. (*Goes to Howard.*) The rest of you boys are just caretakers, right?

HOWARD. Why, sure, that's what I am. Just a caretaker out looking for a good time.

JULIA. Isn't he cute? (*Kisses him.*) You cute thing.

GERTRUDE. (*To Julia.*) Cut that out, please. He belongs to me.

HOWARD. I'm everybody's friend, Gertrude. I'm good old Howard, remember?

GERTRUDE. (*Interrupting.*) Gaynor never thought his little brother Howard would have a dime, though. I remember when

Sibyl Leighton was running for Beauty Queen that time in high school. Old Howard bought \$300 worth of votes. Gaynor just shook his head and said, "He'll never have a dime to his name."

MAMIE. Sibyl and Hugo should have been here by now. I'm worried to death.

JULIA. (*Glares at her mother and changes the subject.*) What plays you all want to see?

GERTRUDE. Just hits. I've got them all written down at home. Gaynor hated plays. He took me, but he'd just go to sleep.

JULIA. I want to shop.

GERTRUDE. Without me ... I despise shopping. I'm just going to see plays, and I tell you right now I just want to see light things and musicals.

JULIA. I thought you wanted to see hits.

GERTRUDE. I do. But I don't want to see any depressing hits. (*Turns to Howard.*) Do you?

HOWARD. Whatever you want to do is all right with me.

JULIA. Well, I'm gonna go shopping. And I'm going to go to night clubs and not worry about my figure and eat all the rich food I want and stay up late and sleep as long as I want to in the morning.

ALBERT. Hell, why go to New York for that. You do all that here.

JULIA. But we'll be doing it together in New York. (*Puts her arm around Howard.*)

HOWARD. Come on, drink up. Let's go to the party. I feel like a party.

JULIA. Albert and I can't go until Hugo and Sibyl get here. They should have been here by now.

GERTRUDE. Well, we'll go on and meet you there.

JULIA. Wait a little longer ... Howard wants to see them, don't you?

HOWARD. Yes, I'd like to see them.

GERTRUDE. Maybe they'll want to go to the party with us.

MAMIE. I'm sure they'll be too tired for that.

GERTRUDE. Don't they like to party?

MAMIE. I wouldn't know.

GERTRUDE. I didn't see them when they were here last. How long since they were here?

JULIA. Nine years.

HOWARD. No, it's eight years. It was eight last summer.

MAMIE. Howard's right. It's eight years. I thought they should have stayed here then.

THE OLD FRIENDS

by Horton Foote

3M, 6W

Matriarch Mamie Borden and the remaining members of two longtime Texas farming families await a visit from Mamie's son Hugo and his wife, Sybil. When Sybil arrives, alone, with alarming news, old friends must confront the issues surrounding legacy, loyalty, and the meaning of happiness that have hounded them for generations. *THE OLD FRIENDS* is an absorbing and vital chapter in Foote's beloved and distinctly American body of work.

"... a precise and clear-eyed study in the arrogance of the entitled rich ... ruthlessly well observed. You realize that in Harrison, being rich means never having to say you're sorry ... Mamie is trying to find the road that connects the past to the present, as if that might make her world seem steadier. That path runs through all of Foote's plays, receding and coming into focus, and always a lonely highway." —**The New York Times**

"... endearing monsters ... Foote's unforgiving character study of Julia is matched and outclassed by his even nastier portrait of her 'friend' and nemesis ... It's impossible to look away." —**Variety**

"From beyond the grave, crafty Horton Foote just keeps on evolving ... this is Foote as unapologetic potboiler, half-Chekhov, half-Dallas, and great goopy gobs of grim Subthun' fun." —**New York Magazine**

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