



# OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS

## VOLUME TWO

Edited by **CRAIG POSPISIL**



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS: VOLUME TWO  
Copyright © 2015, Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of any or all of the Plays in the volume OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS, VOLUME TWO is subject to payment of a royalty. The Plays are 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 Plays in the volume OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS: VOLUME TWO are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of any or all of the Plays 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 the Authors' representative(s) (see Appendix).

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce any or all of the Plays in the volume OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS: VOLUME TWO is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play(s) on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play(s) and in all instances in which the title(s) of the Play(s) appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play(s) and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS**

For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in these Plays, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

## INTRODUCTION

The idea behind the first volume of *OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS* was simple. More than a few of our playwrights had one-acts that were too short to be published in their own Acting Editions but were certainly worth adding to our catalogue. The plays in that collection were both comedies and dramas; some were new, and others had been written some time ago. In fact, Christopher Durang wrote *DISTRACTIONS* when he was still in college.

So, I didn't have a theme in mind when I began to collect another group of short plays. I was just looking for good plays, on varied topics, and by both emerging and established authors. But after selecting the titles that make up this second volume of *OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS*, it strikes me that all of them are about navigating the tricky waters of relationships.

In some of these plays you'll find characters struggling to get their closest friends and family to understand some very basic truths, like in Amelia Roper's *CAMBERWELL HOUSE*, where a long friendship takes a dangerous turn, and in Harry Kondoleon's *SELF-TORTURE AND STRENUOUS EXERCISE*, where two couples wrestle with the conflicting desires in their twisted marriages.

In other plays, like David Riedy's *SOMETHING FROM NOTHING*, Aurin Squire's *FREEFALLING*, and David Ives' *A SINGULAR KINDA GUY*, you'll find the drama playing out in the characters' heads rather than in a more literal space — but the underlying struggle is one of understanding and trying to be understood.

The characters in Arlene Hutton's *CLOSING COSTS* and Rob Ackerman's *YOU HAVE ARRIVED* are just meeting. Both authors explore the way modern technology can help or hinder first dates, first meetings, and first impressions.

John Patrick Shanley's *POISON*, Aoise Stratford's *THE CLOSET*, and my play, *THERE'S NO HERE HERE*, are more stylized and

fantastical than the others in the collection, featuring a powerful fortune-teller, living children's toys, and a long-dead American writer. At heart, however, these plays are about lost love.

I love short plays, and I think finding a good one is like finding a perfect gem. Reading the plays in this collection, I hope you will agree.

—Craig Pospisil  
*March 2015*  
*New York City*

## CONTENTS

<b>CAMBERWELL HOUSE</b> <i>by Amelia Roper</i> .....	7
<b>THE CLOSET</b> <i>by Aoise Stratford</i> .....	23
<b>CLOSING COSTS</b> <i>by Arlene Hutton</i> .....	33
<b>FREEFALLING</b> <i>by Aurin Squire</i> .....	45
<b>POISON</b> <i>by John Patrick Shanley</i> .....	53
<b>SELF-TORTURE AND STRENUOUS EXERCISE</b> <i>by Harry Kondoleon</i> .....	65
<b>A SINGULAR KINDA GUY</b> <i>by David Ives</i> .....	87
<b>SOMETHING FROM NOTHING</b> <i>by David Riedy</i> .....	91
<b>THERE'S NO HERE HERE</b> <i>by Craig Pospisil</i> .....	101
<b>YOU HAVE ARRIVED</b> <i>by Rob Ackerman</i> .....	111

# **CAMBERWELL HOUSE**

**BY AMELIA ROPER**

## CHARACTERS

ANNIE, age 75.

## SETTING

The inside of Annie's apartment.  
A faint smell of roses and old perfume.  
One chair, something hard.  
A table, or something like a table.  
On the table, a small house.

## NOTES

The house is Camberwell House, a small apartment block where Annie, Olive, Mr. Wu, and Mr. Avery live.

Camberwell is an inner-city suburb of Melbourne, Australia. There is no need for accents. Enjoy the voice you have.

This is not a naturalistic monologue. This is a play with puppetry, or A/V, or whatever you do best. An ideal performance space might be a living room, and not a theatre at all.

CAMBERWELL HOUSE was first produced in Melbourne, Australia, in 2008. It was directed by the playwright.

# CAMBERWELL HOUSE

*An old woman sits alone.*

ANNIE. Olive says she understood life the day she understood furniture.

It must have been when she was young, she didn't say.  
We were talking on the stairs.

People talk on stairs.

Not the sort of talk you need to clarify.

Not the sort of talk you need at all, really,

but,  
well,

it's just good to know someone's there,  
when you're seventy-five and on stairs.

*(Annie reaches into her purse and pulls out a small chair.)*

Olive says she ran into the kitchen,  
running from a boy,  
or called in by her mother.

Yes she must have been young, to have been called in by her mother,  
although, her mother, but but oh, she must have been young to  
have been running, yes, because it wasn't the war yet,  
and suddenly,

chairs.



*(Annie reaches into her purse and pulls out three more chairs.)*

Olive says she ran into the kitchen, suddenly.  
She saw her mother, her father, and a lady from the church.  
She saw them sitting, and she saw the chairs they sat on,  
and she saw the truth!

About furniture!

She saw that they did not sit down because chairs were there,  
but that the chairs had been designed, built, and bought  
out of a desire

to sit

down!

*(Annie drops the chairs into the windows, one chair in each apartment.  
The family of chairs become four individuals, living alone.)*

This discovery, like the best of discoveries, led to others.

*(Annie continues to pull furniture from her purse.)*

The table! The table had things on it! Things not bought to go on  
the table but the table bought for somewhere to put the things!  
Cupboards were the same, beds too. Cups and plates and even  
clothes-pegs. Good God! Was everything in her house in her house  
for a reason? Perhaps it was!

*(Annie shoves the rest of the furniture into the house.)*

Not that there weren't exceptions. Plates are plates, but her mother  
had some plates hanging on the wall. Why? Why is this something  
people do?

*(Annie holds up a small floral cushioned chair on the palm of her hand.)*

And her mother had a good chair where no one was allowed to sit.  
The good chair was in the good lounge where no one was allowed  
to go. Is this because they were bad? Or just not good enough?

# OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS

## VOLUME TWO

edited by Craig Pospisil

**CAMBERWELL HOUSE** by **Amelia Roper**. Elderly neighbors Annie and Olive have been friends since they were children. At twenty, they agreed to “knock each other off” if they were still alive at seventy-five. Now they are seventy-five and one of them has changed her mind. A tale of old age, murder, and ginger nut biscuits. (1 woman.) **THE CLOSET** by **Aoise Stratford**. Kevin’s dad has thrown his favorite toy, Bart Sponge, into the back of a closet. There, Bart meets a toy dinosaur and another toy he can’t even begin to identify. Does a supposedly gay toy have a chance of making it out of the closet? (2 men, 1 woman or man.) **CLOSING COSTS** by **Arlene Hutton**. After viewing four hundred apartments, has Harris finally found the right co-op, or simply the right real estate agent — Alice? Harris must decide if it’s time to trade in his artificial fish — and finally grow up. (1 man, 1 woman.) **FREEFALLING** by **Aurin Squire**. Two passengers and a stewardess on a falling plane give their moment-by-moment account of what happens when tomorrow is no longer certain. (2 men, 1 woman.) **POISON** by **John Patrick Shanley**. Kenny has seen the depths of Kelly’s self-hatred, and he’ll never date her again — unless he drinks a fortune-teller’s mysterious potion, which will kill his soul as dead as Kelly’s. Can Kelly convince him to drink the potion? Can she convince herself? (1 man, 2 women.) **SELF TORTURE AND STRENUOUS EXERCISE** by **Harry Kondoleon**. Carl tells Alvin that he’s in love with another woman. “Good for you,” says Alvin, who refuses to accept that Carl’s wife, Adel, only attempted suicide — she’s still alive. The woman Carl loves is Alvin’s wife, Beth. But right now, Beth is so drunk she can’t get up off the floor, much less run off with Carl, and Adel comes in with bandaged wrists saying Carl has been trying to kill her. These four have some issues to work out. (2 men, 2 women.) **A SINGULAR KINDA GUY** by **David Ives**. Mitch is a young guy talking to a girl in a bar. She’s nice, but he’s got this sort of confession, see. There’s something she ought to know — on the inside, he isn’t really a guy at all. He’s an Olivetti electric self-correcting typewriter. (1 man.) **SOMETHING FROM NOTHING** by **David Riedy**. A stranger’s intimate gesture on a New York subway causes a couple to reexamine their relationship, and it causes one person to get punched in the face. Told from all three characters’ wildly different perspectives. (2 men, 1 woman.) **THERE’S NO HERE HERE** by **Craig Pospisil**. Lance moves to Paris to follow his dream of becoming a writer, but his work goes badly. As does his relationship with Juliette, a beautiful Parisian. But a strangely familiar woman at their local bistro forces Lance to dig deeper into himself. (2 men, 2 women.) **YOU HAVE ARRIVED** by **Rob Ackerman**. Dan and Kristin are navigating their first date. Fortunately, the other woman with them knows the way through the confusion into Brooklyn. That would be Cyndi, the GPS system in Dan’s car. (1 man, 2 women.)

Also edited by **Craig Pospisil**

OUTSTANDING SHORT PLAYS

OUTSTANDING MEN’S

MONOLOGUES, VOLUMES 1 & 2

OUTSTANDING WOMEN’S

MONOLOGUES, VOLUMES 1 & 2

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3149-3

