

**THE
FATHER**
A TRAGIC FARCE

BY FLORIAN ZELLER

TRANSLATED BY
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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Le Père
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THE FATHER was originally produced on Broadway by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) by special arrangement with Theatre Royal Bath, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on March 22, 2016. It was directed by Doug Hughes; the scenic design was by Scott Pask; the costume design was by Catherine Zuber; the lighting design was by Donald Holder; the original music and sound design was by Fitz Patton; the illusion consultant was Jim Steinmeyer; the production stage manager was James FitzSimmons; and the stage manager was Katherine Wallace. The cast was as follows:

ANDRÉ Frank Langella
ANNE Kathryn Erbe
LAURA Hannah Cabell
PIERRE Brian Avers
MAN Charles Borland
WOMAN Kathleen McNenny

Le Père in its original French production was first presented at the Théâtre Hébertot, Paris, on September 30, 2012. It was directed by Ladislav Chollat and starred Robert Hirsch and Isabelle Gélinas. This production was revived on January 17, 2015.

CHARACTERS

ANDRÉ

ANNE

LAURA

PIERRE

MAN

WOMAN

THE FATHER

One

André's apartment.

ANNE. So? What happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing.

ANNE. Dad.

ANDRÉ. What?

ANNE. Tell me.

ANDRÉ. I just did. Nothing happened.

ANNE. Nothing happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing at all. Just you bursting in on me as if something had happened, something... But nothing happened. Nothing at all.

ANNE. Nothing happened?

ANDRÉ. Nothing.

ANNE. She just called me.

ANDRÉ. So? What does that prove?

ANNE. She left in tears.

ANDRÉ. Who?

ANNE. You can't go on behaving like this.

ANDRÉ. It's my apartment, isn't it? I mean, this is incredible. I've no idea who she is, this woman. I never asked her for anything.

ANNE. She's there to help you.

ANDRÉ. To help me do what? I don't need her.
I don't need anyone.

ANNE. She told me you'd called her a little bitch. And all kinds of other things.

ANDRÉ. Me?

ANNE. Yes.

ANDRÉ. Could be. I don't remember.

ANNE. She was in tears.

ANDRÉ. What, just because I called her...

ANNE. No. Because you... Apparently you...

ANDRÉ. Me?

ANNE. Yes. With a curtain rod.

ANDRÉ. With a curtain rod... What is this nonsense?

ANNE. That's what she told me. She told me you threatened her. Physically.

ANDRÉ. This woman is raving mad, Anne. With a curtain rod... Can you see me doing that? I mean... Obviously she has no idea what she's talking about. Physically? With a... No, best if she does leave, believe me. She's raving mad. Best if she does leave. Believe me. Especially as...

ANNE. As what?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Listen... If you must know, I suspect she was...

ANNE. She was?

ANDRÉ. She was...

ANNE. She was what?

ANDRÉ. (*Whispering.*) I didn't want to tell you, but I suspect she was...

ANNE. (*Impatiently.*) She was what, Dad?

ANDRÉ. She was stealing from me.

ANNE. Isabelle? Of course not. What are you talking about?

ANDRÉ. I'm telling you. She stole my watch.

ANNE. Your watch?

ANDRÉ. Yes.

ANNE. Isn't it more likely you just lost it?

ANDRÉ. No, no, no. I already had my suspicions. So I set a trap for her. I left my watch somewhere, out in the open, to see if she'd take it.

ANNE. Where? Where did you leave it?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Somewhere. Can't remember. All I know is it's now nowhere to be found. Nowhere to be found. I can't find it, there's your proof. That girl stole it from me. I know it. So yes, maybe I called her a... Like you say. It's possible. Maybe I got a bit annoyed. All right. If you like. But, really, Anne, a curtain rod, come on... raving mad, I'm telling you.

Anne sits down. She looks winded.

What's the matter?

ANNE. I don't know what to do.

ANDRÉ. About what?

ANNE. We have to talk, Dad.

ANDRÉ. That's what we're doing, isn't it?

ANNE. I mean, seriously.

Pause.

This is the third one you've...

ANDRÉ. I said, I don't need her! I don't need her or anyone else! I can manage very well on my own!

ANNE. She wasn't easy to find, you know. It's not that easy. I thought she was really good. A lot of good qualities. She... And now she doesn't want to work here anymore.

ANDRÉ. You're not listening to what I'm telling you. That girl stole my watch! My watch, Anne! I've had that watch for years. For ever! It's of sentimental value. It's... I'm not going to live with a thief.

ANNE. (*Exhaustedly.*) Have you looked in the kitchen cupboard?

ANDRÉ. What?

ANNE. In the kitchen cupboard. Behind the microwave. Where you hide your valuables.

Pause.

ANDRÉ. (*Horrified.*) How do you know?

ANNE. What?

ANDRÉ. How do you know?

ANNE. I just know, that's all. Have you looked there for your watch?

ANDRÉ. Mm? Yes. I...I think so.

He frowns.

ANNE. Dad, you have to understand I can't come every day. It's...

ANDRÉ. Who's asking you to?

ANNE. It's the way it is. I can't leave you on your own.

ANDRÉ. What are you talking about? You're just being insulting.

ANNE. No, it's not insulting. You have to accept the idea that you need someone. If only to do your shopping. Not to mention...the other stuff. I'm not going to be able to do it anymore.

ANDRÉ. Have you been in my cupboard?

ANNE. What?

ANDRÉ. Anne. Tell me the truth. Have you been in my cupboard?

ANNE. No.

ANDRÉ. Then how do you know that... I mean... That I sometimes... With my valuables... When I... Yes. How do you know?

ANNE. I can't remember. I must have opened it by accident.

André looks appalled. He hurries off towards the kitchen.

Where are you going?

He exits.

I didn't touch anything, Dad. Don't worry. Can you hear me? Dad? I didn't touch anything. (*Almost to herself.*) We can't go on like this. We just can't. Not like this... It's impossible... Why can't you understand?

He comes back. He's holding his watch.

You found it?

ANDRÉ. Found what?

ANNE. Your watch.

ANDRÉ. Oh. Yes.

ANNE. You realise Isabelle had nothing to do with it.

ANDRÉ. Only because I hid it. Luckily. Just in time. Otherwise I'd be here talking to you with no means of knowing what time it was. It's five o'clock, if you're interested. Myself, I am interested. Pardon me for living. I need to know exactly where I am during the day. I've always had this watch, you know. If I were to lose it, I'd never recover.

ANNE. Have you taken your pills?

ANDRÉ. Yes. But why are you... You keep looking at me as if there was something wrong. Everything's fine, Anne. The world is turning. You've always been like that. A worrier. Even when there's no reason. You're like your mother. Your mother was like that. Always scared. Always looking for reasons to be scared. But that's not the way the world works. All right, fine... You'll tell me there's also a kind of... That the shadows are closing in. But mostly, *no*. You see what I'm saying? That's what you have to understand. Now your sister, she's always been much more... Much less... She doesn't keep worrying about everything. I mean, she leaves me be. Where is she, by the way?

ANNE. I'm going to have to move, Dad.

ANDRÉ. Move, you mean...

ANNE. Live somewhere else.

ANDRÉ. Right. Why not. Sounds good.

ANNE. I'm going to have to leave Paris.

ANDRÉ. Really? Why?

ANNE. We talked about this. Do you remember?

Brief pause.

ANDRÉ. Is that why you're so set on this nurse living with me? Is that the reason, Anne?

Brief pause.

Well, obviously it is. The rats are leaving the ship.

ANNE. I won't be here, Dad. You need to understand that.

ANDRÉ. You're leaving?

Pause.

But when? I mean...why?

ANNE. I've met somebody.

ANDRÉ. You?

ANNE. Yes.

ANDRÉ. You mean...a man?

ANNE. Yes.

ANDRÉ. Really?

THE FATHER A TRAGIC FARCE

by Florian Zeller
translated by Christopher Hampton

3M, 3W

Now 80 years old, André was once a tap dancer. He lives with his daughter, Anne, and her husband, Antoine. Or was André an engineer, whose daughter Anne lives in London with her new lover, Pierre? The thing is, he is still wearing his pyjamas, and he can't find his watch. He is starting to wonder if he's losing control.

"...harrowing...an exceedingly ingenious premise..."

—The New York Times

"...hugely rewarding...a play that constantly confounds expectations and works almost like a thriller, with a sinister Pinteresque edge...full of guile, particularly in the way it toys with time, yet is also simplicity itself, and is never tricky. [THE FATHER] constantly makes you question the truth and the nature of reality. ...an astonishingly unguarded play about the cruelties of love and the limits of patience, and the way child-parent relationships become inverted as old age creeps up and mugs us."

—The Guardian (UK)

"...a super-smart, finally heart-breaking play...[an] unqualified triumph..."

—The Daily Telegraph (UK)

"...devastating and disorienting... THE FATHER is one of those plays that makes your brain hum with the unique potential of theatre..."

—The Independent (London)

Also translated by Christopher Hampton

'ART'

GOD OF CARNAGE

THE UNEXPECTED MAN

and others

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