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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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remember me

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*For Elmer Mannheim—
who showed us you really can get better with age.*

*And for my Mom—
who is constantly proving
you need to be a little naughty once in awhile
to stay young.*

remember me

DRAMA. This poignant collection of three short plays reveals the isolation, alienation, and fear that haunt six individuals. In **pigeons**, the emotional divide between a daughter and her aging mother is made painfully evident when the two encounter an injured mourning dove while window-shopping. In **family honor**, a frustrated war veteran urges his grandson, JJ, to uphold the family's honor by joining the Army, but JJ sees no honor in risking his life for family or country. And in **remember me**, two lonely nursing-home residents befriend each other and find comfort in knowing that though they have been forgotten by family and friends, they will remember one another.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

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pigeons

(2 F)

LIZZIE: Elderly woman, uses a cane and walks slowly. She never loses her patience.

VICTORIA: Lizzie's daughter. Her concern is sincere but she is a busy person who struggles to find time for her mother; type-A personality, but tries not to be impatient around Lizzie.

family honor

(2 M)

JACKSON: Elderly war veteran.

JJ: 18-25, grandson.

remember me

(1M, 1F)

LEO: Elderly, has trouble remembering.

MAGGIE: Elderly, easily confused.

remember me

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setting

pigeons: Bright, spring morning. On a sidewalk in an upscale shopping district of a large city.

family honor: JJ's bedroom and adjoining hallway, noon.
Bedroom has a bed and a door that leads into the hallway.

remember me: Nursing home.

props

family honor: Letter, watch.

remember me: 2 wheelchairs.

remember me

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pigeons

*"Catch it?
But it's gone."*

—Lizzie

pigeons

(AT RISE: Victoria enters. She pauses to window-shop. Lizzie enters, a few steps behind Victoria. Lizzie pauses to catch her breath, then continues, and stops right behind Victoria, almost bumping into her.)

LIZZIE: Ah, what a wonderfully beautiful and glorious spring day it is. I could just fly away, I feel so good.

VICTORIA: It may be wonderful for you, Mom, but personally, I've sort of lost touch with how to tell it's spring here in the city. There aren't any flowers. No buds on the trees—I do wish you'd come live upstate with us where it's really spring and you can take off your shoes. Wouldn't you like to go barefoot just once in your life?

LIZZIE: But I need orthopedic shoes just to stand up.

VICTORIA: Mother, we'd love to have you.

LIZZIE: Nah. You can take the girl out of the city, but you can't take the city out of the girl.

VICTORIA: Worked for me. It would be so much easier all the way around...whenever you call in such a panic like this, I mean, not that I mind or anything. No, no, no. I don't mean what that sounds like.

LIZZIE: I'm sorry, dear, but I was scared what the doctor was going to tell me. They're so secretive, you know. You can't ever get them to tell you a thing over the phone.

VICTORIA: That's true. Yes, they are very secretive. But you don't have to scare me like you did. Besides which, and I'm not saying this to put you off or anything, but I want you to realize I had to take a sick day to come down here.

(Lizzie walks on.)

LIZZIE: Well, I thought I was sick. So a sick day is appropriate. The doctor wouldn't tell me over the phone, you know.

VICTORIA: But you weren't. You weren't sick at all.

(Lizzie stops walking.)

LIZZIE: And isn't that the most marvelous thing? Don't you just love it when you think you're going to die and then you find out you're not?

VICTORIA: Die? Isn't that just a bit extreme? I mean, if that were true, if you were dying, I mean, you ought to be glad they don't tell you a thing like that over the phone.

LIZZIE: Oh my! I didn't think of that. Can you just imagine?

VICTORIA: You know what I think? I think maybe that's exactly what you were doing. Imagining. With no one but yourself to talk to all day long, I should think your imagination can get the better of you.

LIZZIE: So what's wrong with a little imagining? Now your father...there was an imagination!

VICTORIA: Especially when he was drinking.

LIZZIE: That'll be enough of that!

VICTORIA: Lizzie...Mom...I just wish—

LIZZIE: He gave up drinking when he had to. The poor dear. How he did love a social cocktail now and then!

VICTORIA: Social?

LIZZIE: We both did. And the stories he could tell!

VICTORIA: I'm just asking you to please think a little before you call me next time. Just a little. Not all the time. But once in awhile.

LIZZIE: We both had stories.

VICTORIA: Just every so often, if you'd think about me and my life.

(Lizzie walks on.)

LIZZIE: Whatever makes you happy, dear.

VICTORIA: Oh, geez. It's not for me. It's the school. They sort of frown on teachers taking sick days when they know you're not sick, but that's what I had to do since I've already used up all my vacation days coming down here three times last month.

LIZZIE: He missed you so, those last few months.

VICTORIA: That's not fair. You know I'd have been down more often if I could.

LIZZIE: We both did.

VICTORIA: The school...it's different in the fall, in the beginning of the year, when the kids are new and—

(Lizzie abruptly stops walking. She looks up and points.)

LIZZIE: Look at that!

VICTORIA: Lizzie! Please, don't stop like that. I almost bumped into you and knocked you down. And with your bones as brittle as they are—

LIZZIE: Such an unusual pigeon!

(Victoria walks on.)

VICTORIA: Ugh. Pigeons! They're such a nuisance.

LIZZIE: It's hurt.

(Victoria stops a few paces in front of Lizzie.)

VICTORIA: Hurt? Didn't some place in Italy put a bounty on pigeons not too long ago? I believe it was Venice. Pigeons were ruining all the statues. Maybe we could take a lesson from them. Come on, Mom. We don't have all day. I don't have all day, that is.

(Lizzie walks closer to get a better look at the bird.)

LIZZIE: You know what? I don't think that's a pigeon at all. It's gray. I believe it might be a dove. A mourning dove. Sometimes I hear them cooing outside my window at night...on the ledge. They're a comfort.

(Victoria walks back to Lizzie.)

VICTORIA: Oh, all right. Show me the dove. *(Looks up.)*

Where are you looking? I don't see it.

LIZZIE: Right there. On that ledge.

VICTORIA: Which ledge? There must be hundreds of ledges on this building alone.

LIZZIE: Right there. Over that doorway. The one with the revolving door. Maybe it's nesting.

VICTORIA: Point. Show me.

LIZZIE: Nope. It's not nesting. Look at it. The poor thing can't fly.

VICTORIA: Probably ate too much...the piggy little things.

LIZZIE: Something's wrong with it. Look how it's just hobbling around. Maybe it flew against a window. I've read about them doing that...birds in the city.

VICTORIA: Mom, I'd love to debate the merits of city life, but I really do have to get back and —

LIZZIE: I bet it's broken a wing.

(Victoria watches Lizzie with a look of tender concern.)

VICTORIA: No. You know what? I do not have to get back all that quickly. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. While we're out, since I'm already here, why don't we do a little shopping?

LIZZIE: What if it falls off the ledge?

VICTORIA: Falls off the — catch it.

LIZZIE: Catch it?

[End of Freeview]

remember me

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family honor

*“Why, ya gotta put
your head up sometime,
don’t ya?”*

– Johnny Jackson

family honor

(AT RISE: Johnny Jackson is standing in the hallway outside JJ's bedroom door. It is noon and JJ is still in bed asleep. Jackson knocks lightly on the door.)

JACKSON: *(Through the door.)* JJ? *(Knocks a little louder.)* Hey, young fella. Rise and shine. *(Pounds on the door, shouts.)* Get up, already!

JJ: Huh? What? Who's that?

JACKSON: *(Sweetly.)* Rise and shine.

JJ: That you, Grandpa?

(Jackson snaps to attention, salutes door.)

JACKSON: Sir, yes, sir. Captain Jonathan Jackson reporting for duty. Yes, sir. Heh, heh. Johnnie Jack is back.

JJ: Uh-huhhhh... *(Fades to snoring.)*

(Jackson rattles the door handle.)

JACKSON: Come on, now. Got some news for ya.

JJ: What? What's that?

(Jackson waves letter about.)

JACKSON: Sorry to wake ya up like this, but a letter's come for ya.

(Groggy, JJ gets up from bed, opens the door, and shields his eyes from the light.)

JJ: You woke me up for a letter?

(Jackson stands at attention, salutes.)

JACKSON: Mail call!

(JJ squints at his watch.)

JJ: Geez, Gramps, it's not even noon yet.

JACKSON: Rough night, eh? I feel for ya.

(JJ leans his head against the door frame.)

JJ: Car broke down.

JACKSON: Battery again?

JJ: No idea.

JACKSON: Suppose ya want me to have another look at it.

Wish ya'd watch me working on it for once. Learn something about yer own durn car.

JJ: I left it at work. I walked home.

JACKSON: In the rain?

JJ: Yeah. In the rain.

JACKSON: You walked home in that downpour? Now, don't you go getting sick on me, ya hear?

JJ: I can take care of myself.

JACKSON: Well, I guess sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

JJ: And sometimes a man's gotta sleep.

(JJ tries to close the door. Jackson puts his foot in the door to try to hold it open. JJ manages to close the door. He goes back to bed.)

JACKSON: *(Aside.)* Not yet, ya don't. *(Pause. Shouts through the door.)* Hey! You in there! You awake?

JJ: Uh-huhhhh...

(JJ starts snoring. Jackson pushes the door hard and then pulls it open. He enters the bedroom and approaches the bed.)

JACKSON: Wake up, already.

(Jackson pinches JJ's nose.)

JJ: Ouch! Hey! What's the big idea?

JACKSON: I told ya. Mail call. *(Squints, turns the letter over and over, examining it. Proudly.)* Looks to me like you been drafted.

JJ: Drafted?

JACKSON: Yep. Official as can be.

JJ: Drafted?

JACKSON: Official as can be.

JJ: You can't be serious?

JACKSON: Serious as a sneak attack. Even had to sign for it. Proudly, too, I might add. Mighty proudly. Army's calling on ya, Johnny.

JJ: What could they want with me?

JACKSON: Heh, heh. Ya should have joined up when ya had the chance. Like I always tell ya you should do. Strike while the advantage is yours. Ya still got a choice, ya know, if you're fast enough. Sign up now before they do the assigning.

JJ: Why would I do that?

JACKSON: Why? *(Aside.)* He asks, why? *(To JJ.)* Why, to serve your country! That's why.

JJ: Come on, Gramps. Stop playing around. I gotta go back to sleep.

(JJ gets up from bed, ushers Jackson out the door, and tries to close the door again, but Jackson blocks the door with his foot.)

JACKSON: No. You don't gotta go back to sleep. You got a letter is what ya got. Ya gotta serve your country is what ya gotta go do.

JJ: Why are you always trying to get me to go in the Army?

JACKSON: Not me this time. It's them. And they don't just try. They get what they're after. Otherwise...listen, Johnny,

what have ya got otherwise? Crackpot minimum-wage job?
No schoolin'? No money for nothing? Sleeping till noon.

JJ: What do you want from me? I'm working, aren't I?

JACKSON: Bah. You're young. That's all. Nothing wrong
with being young that a little aging won't cure. Put on a
uniform. It'll make a man of ya. Do ya some aging real
quick. Do yourself some good. Do the country some good.
Nobody loses.

JJ: Oh yeah. Sure. And what if I get shot at?

JACKSON: Shot at? What? Shot at? Why, ya keep yer helmet
on and yer head down. Then ya get a bead on 'em and shoot
back!

JJ: Oh sure. And how am I supposed to get a bead on 'em
with my head down?

JACKSON: Why, you gotta put your head up some time,
don't ya?

JJ: That's when they shoot at ya.

JACKSON: You're scarin' me, boy.

JJ: I'm scaring you?

JACKSON: You think too much fer a boy yer age.

JJ: Oh, I'm a boy, am I? Old enough to die but not old enough
to think?

JACKSON: Anybody's old enough to die.

JJ: Now you're scaring me!

JACKSON: But are ya old enough to live? *(Pause.)* To live a
man's life, that is?

[End of Freeview]

remember me

17

remember me

*"If anything happens,
will you please remember me?"*

—Leo

remember me

(AT RISE: A nursing home. Leo is seated in a wheelchair and facing the audience. Maggie enters. She is also in a wheelchair.)

MAGGIE: Oh my, my, my. I think I'm in the wrong place again. This is such a big facility. So easy to get lost in.

LEO: Do I know you?

MAGGIE: What? Do you know me?

LEO: You seem familiar, but I can't recall if we've ever met. I don't know if I know you or not.

MAGGIE: And why would you or anyone else want to know me?

LEO: I don't know about you specifically, but everyone is worth knowing, if you take time to find out. All it takes is a little time.

(Maggie examines her hands and arms. She pulls at her shirt.)

MAGGIE: Time? Look at what time does to a person. Look at me. I look at myself and hardly even know who I am anymore. A person changes so much. All these embarrassing things just start happening to you that nobody ever tells you about. Or things stop happening to you. Or worse, happen when you don't want them to. You know what I'm talking about!

(Leo wheels closer.)

LEO: *(Leans in.)* Here. Let me see. I mean, let me try to see. My eyes aren't so good as they once were. *(He reaches over, and takes her hands in his. He examines her hands and arms. Pause. She secretly enjoys his touch. He touches her shirt.)* Maybe I can help—

(Maggie "recovers" her "dignity" and slaps Leo's hands away. She wheels away from him.)

MAGGIE: Maybe you can *not*!

LEO: Oh, geez. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean anything by it. I was just searching for clues to help me remember. I'm afraid my memory's starting to slip.

MAGGIE: Seems to me it's your manners are what's doing most of the slipping! Please don't confuse me anymore than I am. *(Pause. She straightens her clothing.)* Clues to what? What's there to remember?

LEO: Well, I don't know. That's what I'm trying to find out. Am I supposed to know you?

MAGGIE: If you're not supposed to know me, then you shouldn't have any clues to be searching for on my person like that, thank you very much. But if you did know me, if you *do* know me...what would you expect to find anyway?

LEO: Well, I couldn't tell you.

MAGGIE: You really do have a bad memory, don't you? Well, isn't that just great! You can't remember, and I get confused. I'm already confused! I'm confused whether I should believe you or not.

LEO: How long have you been here? You do live here, don't you?

(Maggie looks over her shoulder, suspiciously.)

MAGGIE: Geez! Would that make a difference...how long I've been here? Would that make a difference whether I should trust you or not? Have you got a reputation around here I should know about?

LEO: What are you so afraid of?

(Maggie wheels closer to him.)

MAGGIE: Promise not to tell?

LEO: Tell? Most likely I probably won't even remember!

(Maggie backs away.)

MAGGIE: Then why should I tell you?

LEO: Because I want to know. And maybe I will remember. I remember some things.

MAGGIE: Why is that? Why should I tell you? Just because you want to know?

LEO: Isn't that good enough? I mean, you do live here, don't you? We could become friends.

MAGGIE: If we do become friends, will you remember?

LEO: Maybe I can help you with what you're afraid of.

MAGGIE: Oh, you think so, do you?

LEO: Maybe. I'd like to try.

MAGGIE: People.

LEO: People?

MAGGIE: People are what I'm afraid of. Don't tell any people that I'm here.

LEO: What people? Who? Who shouldn't I tell?

MAGGIE: So far, I think you're the only one who knows I'm here.

LEO: I am?

MAGGIE: So far. Yes, you are. I've been wheeling around this place all afternoon and no one has said a word to me other than you.

LEO: Don't you get visitors?

MAGGIE: Visitors? Me? Are you kidding? I gave up a life of adventure, romance, excitement, fortune and fame to have a family, and do they come visit me, you ask? Do they even so much as call? Where are they? They're out adventuring, romancing—you name it. They're out doing it.

LEO: Sometimes I feel like that, too. I don't remember anyone coming to visit me in a long, long time.

MAGGIE: You're lucky you don't remember. Because they probably don't. And if you don't remember, then there's nobody to let you down.

LEO: Sundays it's especially bad.

MAGGIE: Geez, Sundays! Sundays are the hardest days for me, too.

LEO: Sundays are like summer vacation except without the vacation.

MAGGIE: Without the summer, either.

LEO: I can't remember the last time anyone came to visit me.

MAGGIE: Look at us. Why would anyone bother?

(He wheels around, facing away from her.)

LEO: No. You don't understand. I can't remember. I want to remember, but I just can't!

MAGGIE: They just stopped coming. They stopped when I got old.

LEO: Then you're not new?

MAGGIE: Well, there you have it. I gave myself away, didn't I? I guess that means I'm starting to trust you. Heaven help me. No, I'm not new here at this facility, just lost. I have no idea where I am or where I'm supposed to be.

(Leo wheels back toward her.)

LEO: You mean you've been forgotten, too.

MAGGIE: Well, in a manner of speaking.

LEO: Then you know what it's like.

MAGGIE: They used to come all the time. Then it was a week between times, then a couple of weeks there that they got busy with the grandhouse and granddog and—

LEO: Grandhouse?

MAGGIE: They never gave me any grandchildren. So instead of grandchildren, it's the grandhouse. The house was mine.

I gave it up when I got old. Gave it to them. You should have seen them fighting over it.

LEO: Granddog? The dog was yours, too?

MAGGIE: Well, they told me he had to stay with the house. He always acted like he owned the place. I tried to bring him here, but they said no howler hounds allowed. That's what we call beagles. Howler hounds. And you should have heard that hound a-howling, too, the day I left. You'd a thought he knew I was leaving him there for good. With them.

LEO: Dogs are too much work.

MAGGIE: Work? If you've ever had any children, children are a lot harder to take care of than dogs. If you have ever taken care of children, especially your own children, then you were perfectly capable of having a dog instead. Let me tell you something about that howler hound. He never let me down.

LEO: Did I say I didn't have dogs?

MAGGIE: Didn't you? I thought you did. Nothing's too hard to take care of, if you love them.

LEO: I don't remember exactly what I said.

MAGGIE: I intentionally never remember anything exactly. It's better that way. If you get things all confused to begin with, and then if they correct you—and they always do—at our age, they are *always* correcting us—so if you just act confused, they let you go and you won't get into an argument. You are so very lucky, my friend. You don't have to try to forget. It's your natural condition.

(Leo looks like he's about to cry.)

LEO: What were we talking about? I get so forgetful.

MAGGIE: Now, now. It's all right. We all do. We all get confused a little.

LEO: But you don't understand. Sometimes I forget recent things and never remember them!

MAGGIE: I'm trying to understand. Really I am. It's not my fault. The doctor says it's my condition. Personally? I think it's psychological. I'm a sicko.

LEO: (*Showing a little anger from frustration.*) Being understanding isn't the same as understanding.

MAGGIE: Please don't make fun of me. I make enough fun of myself.

LEO: See. You don't understand. You don't. Nobody understands.

MAGGIE: Are you deliberately trying to confuse me?

LEO: Oh, why bother! What's there to remember? Who cares anyway? What's there to live for?

MAGGIE: Well, I don't know. Everybody's got to have his own reasons.

LEO: I'm not so bad with old-time things, but recent things may as well never happened.

MAGGIE: If I had that kind of memory problem, you know what I'd do? I would look at everything with new eyes, like I was new at everything. And you know what? That's the best way to be because anything not new, anyone old, is evidently not worth remembering...except to each other.

LEO: You're talking about us?

MAGGIE: Sure. Why not? You think I will ever forget your kindness to me today? You know what? Let me tell you a little secret. I've been lost down this hallway three times today. Three times! And every time I've been here, everywhere I've been, nobody has said "boo" to me, but you. You've talked kindly with me each time. You've tried to help me.

LEO: And I don't remember! I am so sorry.

MAGGIE: Doesn't bother me a bit. Quite the opposite. It tickles me no end to keep making your acquaintance.

LEO: Now look who's making fun of whom.

MAGGIE: Nah. Maybe I'm not lost at all. Maybe that's why I keep finding my way down this hallway of yours. Every moment's a new possibility with you. A new adventure.

remember me

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I'm free of family now, you know. After all these years. All these long laboring years of stability and...love.

[End of Freeview]