

Residues

A ten minute play

by MARIA VIERA BEATTY

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RESIDUES

a 10 - minute play

Description of the action: Three women sit on a park bench.

Set: A park bench

Cast:

Amanda: a woman of “a certain age” but uncertainly hovering somewhere between 60 to 65 years of age; extremely well dressed, confident, classy.

Betty: a woman, in her late 70s, dressed rather inappropriately “too young for her age.”

Winnie: at approximately 50-55 years old, she is the youngest of the three; “nerdish,” or even could be described as “librariansque.”

RESIDUES

(Three women sit on a park bench.)

AMANDA
Can I ask you a question?

BETTY
Sure.

AMANDA
Baked potato or mashed potatoes?

WINNIE
(pops in)
Definitely mashed.

BETTY
Agreed.

AMANDA
Mountains or beach?

BETTY and WINNIE
Beach.

AMANDA
East Coast or West Coast?

WINNIE
Definitely West Coast.

BETTY
Neither. I say Kansas.

WINNIE
(to Amanda)
Haven't seen you here before.

AMANDA

Haven't been here before. You come here often?

WINNIE

Betty and I come here every day. For over a year or so. I call her Betty. Betty Amy Loid. Get it?

AMANDA

No, not really...

WINNIE

(whispering to Amanda)

Amyloid Beta Plaques in the brain... Alzheimer's disease... I have no idea what her real name is.

AMANDA

Isn't that a bit cruel?

WINNIE

No, we're best friends. She tells me all about her childhood and I teach her new words.

(She pulls a dictionary out of one pocket and a thesaurus out of another.)

I'm never caught without my dictionary or thesaurus. It's like when you have Morgellons disease except with that, you think you are infected with bugs. I'm infected with words. I'm what they call a logophile or a lexophile. Or if you think I'm too much, a logomaniac. Cool, yeah?

BETTY

My husband told me on his death bed: Don't ever give your brother any money.

WINNIE

I know, Betty, and you never did. *(to Amanda)* What's up with you?

AMANDA

I hate things. I hate babies and toddlers, noise, remodeling, religion, politics...

BETTY

(joining in)

I hate custard, mustard, spiders, blisters, mice, bees, keys...

WINNIE

...ragweed, rhubarb, bats, eels, crumbs, bums, beets...

BETTY

(to Winnie)

Why do you hate rhubarb?

WINNIE

The r-h-u thing—too similar to rheumatic, rheumatism, rheumatoid arthritis...

AMANDA

I don't fit in anymore. Like when did kale stop being a garnish on a plate and become a food? When did Google become a verb? When did it become okay to bring an emotional-support dog wearing a pink tutu into first class in an airplane?

BETTY

I always wanted a pink tutu. I always wanted to take ballet lesson but couldn't. My father was a preacher. In Kansas.

AMANDA

When did zippers change from metal to plastic? I wasn't watching.

WINNIE

However, zippers are the best invention of Western Culture. Men don't have to take down their pants to pee.

BETTY

My husband told me on his death bed: Don't ever give your brother any money.

WINNIE

I know, Betty, and you never did.

AMANDA

When did your husband pass?

BETTY

Before, when I was still myself.

AMANDA

I keep thinking about ways to kill myself. Do you think that makes me suicidal?

WINNIE

No, I think it makes you dumb.

BETTY

I remember when my aunt Charlette committed suicide. It was all very hush, hush. I was the daughter of a preacher. I used to be...

WINNIE

(whimsically)

We all used to be...

AMANDA

Is she okay? *(indicating Betty)* I mean financially. She's not homeless, is she?

WINNIE

Nah, her brother died and she got all his money.

AMANDA

Don't ya just love the randomness of destiny?

WINNIE

That sounds rather hoity toity.

AMANDA

I'd say I'm more hurly burly.

WINNIE

Loosey-goosey.

AMANDA

Helter skelter.

BETTY

I'd say Humpty Dumpty.

WINNIE

She's gone doolally again—don't you just love that word—it's British you know.

AMANDA

I've done it all: Electra complex, Oedipus Complex, inferiority complex, what's next? My greatest fear is I'll end up sitting at home with 13 cats watching the food network. I've been leading an increasingly disheveled life.

WINNIE

Sometimes you have to crash the plane and walk away.

AMANDA

Do you mean I should go ahead and kill myself?

WINNIE

No, I mean give up all the old bullshit and start fresh.

AMANDA

I can't.

BETTY

(singing lyrics from the song "Anything I can Do You Can Do Better.")

Yes, you can.

AMANDA

(getting reference and singing along)

No, I can't.

BETTY

(singing loudly and very convincingly)

Yes, you can. Yes, you can. Yes, you can. I love that song.

WINNIE

Betty, you're not yourself.

BETTY

If I'm not me than who the hell am I?

AMANDA

How old is old? When do you really know you're old? I miss having eyebrows. When I go to a public event, like a concert with lots of old people, I count how many old women dye their hair. Last event: grey hair equaled 35; dyed hair equaled 2.

(An awkward pause as Betty and Winnie exchange looks.)

AMANDA (cont.)

Note to self: 1. Eat sushi left over from last night; 2. do nails; 3. commit suicide or kill myself. *(pause)* But enough about me... *(to Winnie)* What was your childhood like?

WINNIE

Scary the whole time.

BETTY

Afraid the whole time.

AMANDA

I was embarrassed the whole time.

WINNIE

Are you homeless?

AMANDA

Yes, in a way... If home is where the heart is...

BETTY

We were homeless once. My dad was between parishes. He'd had an affair with one of the women in the parish and they got rid of him...

(Beat)

AMANDA

Want a shoulder to cry on or never let the bastards see you cry?

BETTY

Definitely want a shoulder to cry on.

WINNIE

I'll have to go with never let the bastards see you cry.

AMANDA

My old personality isn't working anymore.

WINNIE

(in agreement)

Tell me about it.

AMANDA

The world has turned out to be pretty disappointing.

WINNIE

And survival is insufficient.

AMANDA

Nietzsche?

WINNIE

Nope, Star Trek. And then there's the "reality" problem: "real reality" or "my reality?"

BETTY

Reality is what you make it, if you have the right gadgets or stuff.

AMANDA

Everybody thinks they understand the joke of reality TV, but the real joke is that there is no other reality.

WINNIE

No, the real joke is that there is no reality at all.

BETTY

You know, maybe after all Dorothy never left Kansas.

AMANDA

The most profound of life's lessons is nobody really gives a damn. Yes, your spouse, your sister, your best friend care to some degree. But when a push comes to a shove, you are on your own.

BETTY

You don't need people. They are highly unreliable.

AMANDA

People will never let you down in their ability to let you down.

WINNIE

People will never disappoint you in their ability to disappoint you.

(All three nod in agreement)

AMANDA

To be or not to be?

BETTY and WINNIE

To be.

AMANDA

Then and now or here and there?

WINNIE

Pass.

BETTY

Then and now. I do remember before, when I was still myself.

AMANDA

What if or if only?

BETTY

If only...

WINNIE

Definitely what if... For example, what if I had Stendhals' syndrome also known as the "Florence Syndrome" by the way?" That's when you go to a museum and are overwhelmed by the presence of great art. You get breathless, and panic, and faint. Cool, yeah?

AMANDA

I hate that things die: husbands, pets, a squirrel crossing the road.

BETTY

I second that emotion.

AMANDA

Well, I guess I better get going. I don't want to miss my mani-pedi.

BETTY

This was fun.

(Amanda gets up from the bench and turns
back to Betty and Winnie.)

AMANDA

How'd we get here?

WINNIE

Damned if I know.

(Lights Out)

THE END