

THE ONES WHO STAY
A drama in one act

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CHARACTERS

Stacy	The older of the two cast members
Rich	The younger one
Stranger	Open to director's choice*

**Because this person only makes a brief appearance, it could easily be played by a member of the stage crew.*

This is a play about connections. The director should not feel limited to casting a man and a woman in these roles.

SETTING

A hospital waiting room somewhere in the Midwest

SCENE 1

Lights up on a hospital waiting room.

(RICH, wearing a winter jacket, sits in a chair, leafing through a magazine, a copy of US Weekly, People, or Self. You know the kind. He takes an occasional sip of bad coffee.)

(STACY enters, also in winter gear, looks around for a moment, and takes the seat almost next to Rich. Between them is the small end table that holds the pile of magazines on it. She sets down her tote bag and a travel mug. She and Rich exchange perfunctory sympathetic smiles and go about their business.)

(Stacy settles into her chair and takes out an iPad and earbuds. She starts to watch a show, her body angled so that Rich can see most of the screen if he looks. She drinks her coffee. They sit this way for a few moments. Rich sets the magazine down. He leafs through the pile again. Stacy's screen catches his eye. Stacy turns and looks.)

STACY

Can I help you?

RICH

What? Oh. No, I just saw your screen and, uh ... sorry.

STACY

No problem.

(She smiles and resumes watching. Rich sits back in his chair. He looks around the room. He pulls out his cell phone. It's dead. He catches himself watching Stacy's screen again.)

STACY

(Removing an earbud.) Hi.

RICH

Hi. I'm so sorry. I just ...

STACY

Forgot to bring something to do, huh?

RICH

Yeah. I didn't think about it, I guess. Is that Humphrey Bogart?

STACY

It is. Treasure of the Sierra Madre. You ever see it?

RICH

No. It's one of those on "the list." I've never gotten around to it.

STACY

It's on Netflix now.

RICH

Yeah, I'll check it out.

(Stacy returns her earbud and resumes watching the movie. Rich leans back in his chair. Stacy pauses her movie and reaches into her bag. She pulls out a couple magazines, an Entertainment Weekly and a Vanity Fair.)

STACY

Hey. You're welcome to read one of these if you want.

RICH

Really? Thanks. I'm just ... unprepared I guess. Is this the one with the Scorsese interview?

STACY

Yes! The first half is really interesting.

RICH

The first half?

STACY

There's nothing in it I didn't already know. He mostly talks DiCaprio and their new movie

RICH

No good "Bobby" stories?

STACY

Nope. But he does share a dandy about Joe Pesci.

RICH

Thanks again.

STACY

Enjoy.

(Stacy goes back to her movie. Rich delves into the magazine.)

Lights out.

SCENE 2

(One week later. Rich is seated, holding the Vanity Fair magazine from the last scene, and reading a book. He sips from another cup of bad coffee.)

(Stacy enters, again with her tote bag. She takes the seat next to Rich.)

STACY

Hi.

RICH

Hi. Hey, here's your Vanity Fair back. Thanks again.

STACY

Oh, no problem. Thanks for bringing it back.

RICH

Of course.

STACY

Trust me, if the tables were turned, you wouldn't have your magazine back today. I'm terrible about returning things.

RICH

Well, thanks anyway. You were right about the Joe Pesci story.

STACY

Right? So weird.

RICH

Did you know he made an album?

STACY

What? A real one?

RICH

Yeah!

STACY

Singing?

RICH

I suppose it's singing.

STACY

Hah!

RICH

It's called Vincent LaGuardia Gambini Sings The Blues.

STACY

No way. Is it a joke?

RICH

It's kind of played like a joke, but there are a few serious songs couched in there. It's like he knew people would be having conversations like this if he put out an album, so he played along with the joke, but was secretly hoping they'd react more like, 'wow, he really can sing.'

STACY

Like Bruce Willis. Respect Yourself is actually an okay album.

RICH

Vincent LaGuardia Gambini Sings The Blues ... is not. And I know. I own it.

STACY

How did you procure this gem?

RICH

I won it in a white elephant game at my office Christmas party. I keep it mostly as a conversation piece.

STACY

I'm Stacy, by the way.

RICH

I'm Rich.

STACY

It's nice to meet you. I mean, I wish I didn't have to meet you. I um ... sorry ...

RICH

No, I know what you mean ...

STACY

Sorry. My little boy is going through a sleep thing lately, which means I'm also going through a sleep thing lately.

RICH

No worries. So ...

STACY

Is this whole thing new to you?

RICH

Yeah. Last week was my first.

STACY

I kind of figured.

RICH

I didn't bring anything because I kind of figured I'd be ... in there. You know?

STACY

Believe me. I know. Can I ask who you're here with?

RICH

My dad. His lungs.

STACY

I'm sorry. How advanced?

RICH

Not too far, actually. But he's gotta come here once a week for the next year.

STACY

At least they caught it early.

RICH

He wants someone here, but wants to be alone in there. "At least I can get some goddamn peace and quiet," he says. What about you? I mean, can I ask ...?

STACY

Sure. It's my husband. Brain tumor. We'll be coming at least through spring.

RICH

I'm sorry. Is the outlook ... okay?

STACY

They don't really know yet. It's not shrinking, but it's not getting bigger. He's functioning, as well as he can, anyway.

RICH

I'm sorry.

STACY

Thanks.

(Rich resumes his book. Stacy takes out her iPad and gets ready to watch something. It's not working.)

(cont'd) Crap. I charged it last night. *(Looks in her bag.)* And no charger. Dammit.

RICH

Might be a long-shot, but ask the nurses. I bet people leave them behind all the time.

STACY

Ah. Worth a try, right?

(Stacy walks offstage. She returns a moment later, victorious.)

Good call! Nurse Micky Dolenz has a whole stash of them.

RICH

What?

STACY

Oh, are you too young to get that?

RICH

Oh no. The Monkees. I just ...

STACY

Look.

(Rich looks back toward the desk. He laughs quietly.)

See?

RICH

Oh my God.

STACY

It's afro-Micky. In Winnie the Pooh scrubs.

RICH

I can't un-see it now. It's uncanny.

STACY

Right? It's all I could think of the first time I came here. I kept staring.

RICH

Who was your favorite?

STACY

Guess.

RICH

Micky?

STACY

Micky. So I'm a little conflicted.

RICH

Maybe he has a sister.

STACY

I hope I never find out. We need these little mysteries in life.

RICH

I guess.

(They both go back to their distractions. Rich is smiling, amused.)

(Lights out.)

SCENE 3

(Two weeks later, Rich and Stacy are seated in their usual spots. Rich has an unopened book on his lap. Stacy has her iPad, but it is on her lap, closed.)

RICH

You've got to be kidding.

STACY

I promise you I'm not.

RICH

You were in Battlefield Earth.

STACY

God as my witness.

RICH

Who did you play?

STACY

Alien 32.

RICH

So you were an extra.

STACY

Background actor, thank you very much.

RICH

What was that like?

STACY

There really wasn't much to tell. I was on set for 14 hours, shot two scenes, and you can see me for two seconds in the film.

RICH

Did you convert to Scientology?

STACY

No. But I did make eye contact for two seconds with Travolta. My heart stopped. Scientologist or not, he's John Travolta!

RICH

And Battlefield Earth didn't catapult you to fame?

STACY

Not quite. So you said you had a brush with greatness.

RICH

Yeah. I interned for the weekly lottery game show.

STACY

Megabucks Saturday Night?

RICH

You've seen it?

STACY

Of course! What did you do?

RICH

Mostly, I ran errands for the host and producers, fetched coffee. Once, the teleprompter was out and I had to handwrite a bunch of cue cards. That was exciting. Especially when the host/

STACY

/Sherman Duckett.

RICH

Right, Sherman Duckett. He yelled at me once for holding his cue card too low.

(Stacy's cell phone rings.)

STACY

Oh, Sherman. Excuse me. I have to take this. *(She answers.)* Hi Glo. How's it going? Aw, is he okay? Sure, sure. Look on the top shelf of the linen closet. There should be a box of Star Wars band-aids. You see 'em? Well, Tyler kept getting into them. I know. You got 'em? *(Pause.)* Oh, you know. There's nothing really new. I'm just here in the waiting room. I would be, but he doesn't ... yeah. He is. *(Pause.)* I know, Glo. You doing okay? He can see you cry. It's okay. Tyler knows, he knows Daddy isn't well. *(Pause.)* Of course. You too. I'll see you when we get home.

(Stacy hangs up and sits a moment.)

My mother-in-law.

(Rich nods.)

So. How's your dad?

RICH

He's weak. The chemo ruins his appetite. He's kind of a grouch anyway, but now he's just a

(*cont'd*) tired and skinny one. But it doesn't look like the tumor is really spreading, so that's something.

STACY

Yeah.

RICH

I was in a panic earlier today. I forgot my girlfriend needed the car for a shoot today. And the old man's car is in the shop. I thought "Shit. How am I going to get him here? And I can't ask him for help because I'll never hear the end of it. At the last minute, right before I figured I'd have to take him on the bus, which would have been hell, my girlfriend found someone to carpool with.

STACY

Is your girlfriend a photographer?

RICH

What? Oh, no. She's a ... a model.

STACY

A model. Wow.

RICH

Yeah. She works a lot in Chicago. Last year she worked a show in New York.

STACY

Good for her. That's not an easy career to break into. I mean, so I hear.

RICH

She started when she was a teenager. She's really into fashion and stuff. Things have really taken off for her in the last few years though.

STACY

That's good.

RICH

Yeah.

STACY

I don't know how to talk about modeling.

RICH

Oh, god. I don't either. I try to be interested. I am! I am interested. It's just ...

STACY

It's foreign for most of us.

RICH

Yeah. Good thing she and I are both hockey fans.

STACY

Good thing.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 4

(The following week. Stacy waits in her usual spot, sipping a cup of coffee. Another cup waits on the end table, near Rich's chair. She checks the time on her phone, disappointed.)

(A STRANGER comes and sits in the chair usually occupied by Rich. The stranger and Stacy exchange polite smiles.)

(Stacy checks the time again.)

STACY

Would you like some coffee? I have an extra.

STRANGER

Oh how nice. Thank you.

(Stacy smiles, but she is obviously sad that Rich isn't there. She opens her iPad and plugs in her earbuds.)

(Lights out.)

SCENE 5

(A week later. Rich and Stacy should enter in lightweight jackets, indicating that spring is on the way.)

(Rich is in his usual spot. He waits with two cups of coffee, and occasionally blows his nose. He has a cold. Stacy enters. She's happy to see him, but is not quite herself today.)

STACY

This is amazing. I didn't have time to get coffee. How did you know?

RICH

(Shrugs.) I'm a stalker.

STACY

Me? That's a pretty dull pastime. Thanks for the coffee.

RICH

No sweat. I thought you said a couple weeks ago that this was a busy day for you. Figured I'd get you some in case you didn't have time. Besides, I owe you so many coffees.

STACY

You remembered that.

RICH

Yeah. I wasn't here last week because I got the cold from hell. It's still hanging on.

STACY

I wondered. I hope you feel better soon.

(Stacy begins removing yarn and knitting needles from her bag.)

RICH

What's that?

STACY

I'm taking up knitting.

RICH

I see. So this is a new hobby?

STACY

Yeah, I need something to do with my hands. And to do something that will, I don't know, result in something.

RICH

What are you working on there? A scarf?

(Stacy holds up a very uneven start to a scarf.)

STACY

Sure. We'll go with scarf.

RICH

Good luck.

(Stacy struggles to get started on her knitting. Rich sips his coffee and looks on.)

STACY

(Muttering) Oh, come on. Knit one. I had this last night. Loop here. Through...here. Why isn't this right?

(She keeps at it. She growls in frustration once or twice.)

Okay, I think I have it now.

(Rich realizes he's staring and starts tinkering with his phone.)

Oh my god. Come. On. Knit one....and loop. Okay. Finally.

I'm only doing this so I don't start smoking again.

RICH

How long has it been?

STACY

Five years? I hadn't even thought about it in ages. I just, I've been wanting to smoke again.

RICH

Five years is great. I was a pack a day until we found out about my dad. I stopped the next day.

STACY

How do you feel?

RICH

I still crave them, but it's not as bad. I notice the smell of other smokers a lot more now though.

(Stacy stops knitting.)

STACY

Oh, come on! Freakin' 80 year old ladies do this!

(Stacy clumsily throws down the knitting gear and tries to stuff it back in her bag. She jabs herself with a needle.)

RICH

You okay?

STACY

God! *(Looking around)* Sorry. Ow.

(Stacy removes her sweater to look at her arm. We see a large bruise. Rich notices it too and isn't sure what to say. She realizes he sees it.)

RICH

That's um ... some needle. What happened?

STACY

I tripped.

(Rich looks at her.)

I fell down the stairs. I walked into a wall.

(Rich looks away.)

I slammed it in a door.

My ... husband has been having episodes. He has these bursts of emotion, and it's not always rational. We knew that might happen. I only wish it hadn't happened in front of our son.

RICH

I'm sorry.

STACY

(Shrugs) Thanks. This is what they mean by "for worse."

(A long quiet moment passes. Rich hands her the coffee.)

RICH

You'll never guess what I started watching the other day.

STACY

Battlefield Earth.

RICH

No. Treasure of the Sierra Madre.

STACY

You did. What'd you think?

RICH

What I saw was really good. I caught it somewhere in the middle. Humphrey Bogart was worried that some new guy was going to steal his gold.

STACY

Did you get to the "no badges" part?

RICH

The what?

STACY

You know the famous misquoted line, right?

RICH

Oh. We don't need no stinking badges? I thought it was from Saturday Night Live.

STACY

Nope. They were spoofing it. In the actual scene, a group of bandits try to convince the gold diggers that they're federals, but when Bogart asks for their badges, they say...well, something close.

RICH

Huh. My dad was watching it. Then he fell asleep and my mom put her cooking shows on.

STACY

She's entitled. I'm sure she's got a lot on her plate too.

RICH

Yeah. And my dad won't let her come here. She watched both her parents die. He acts like he doesn't want her here because she nags him all the time, but it's totally not true. He's just ... protecting her.

STACY

Any news?

RICH

Not really. He hates the chemo. The guy's only 62. Six months ago he was still out chopping wood. Now it takes him two minutes to cross the living room.

STACY

Do you have siblings?

RICH

Yeah, but my brothers live out of town. My girlfriend helps out when she can.

(They sip their coffees in comfortable silence for a moment. Then Stacy takes out her iPad and earbuds.)

STACY

You want to watch something?

RICH

Yeah. I do.

(Stacy gets the iPad ready. She puts in one earbud and hands it to Rich. He puts in the earbud.)

STACY

For the love of God, let's pick something funny.

(They turn their attention to the iPad screen.)

SCENE 6

(A week later. Spring. Rich and Stacy are in their usual spots, laughing.)

STACY

So then he's wandering around the Korean grocery store. Nobody bats an eye. Nobody seems to care that a monkey is handling all the produce and climbing the shelves of the freezer. And he's getting agitated that he's not finding whatever it is he's looking for.

RICH

It is New York.

STACY

I actually think it's Boston. But anyway, soon the grocery store is a shambles and there is not one consequence for Curious George and the moron in yellow who owns him. As usual. It's maddening. But Tyler freaking loves it so that's what I watch every morning while I drink my coffee.

RICH

I wonder if this is how my parents felt about Sesame Street.

STACY

Probably not. Sesame Street is awesome. I wish my son still wanted to watch it. They throw the parents a bone by doing parodies of Mad Men and Law and Order that are hilarious.

RICH

Oscar was always my favorite.

STACY

Cookie's still mine. Kills me. They sometimes show retro ones and the best ... I make my son watch it sometimes ... *(imitating Cookie Monster)* ... "I lost me cookie at the disco ... I lost me cookie in the boogie music ... "

RICH

Wow.

(Rich looks over to the nurse's station and stops, giving a "who me?" look.)

Excuse me, Stacy.

(He exits.)

(Lights out briefly, then back up. Stacy is sitting alone. Rich enters.)

STACY

Are you okay?

RICH

He's stopping.

STACY

What?

RICH

He's done. He doesn't want to do it anymore. He's done.

STACY

Can you ... ?

RICH

His mind's made up.

STACY

I'm sorry.

(Rich looks at her.)

RICH

I have to go. We have to pick up his prescriptions by five.

(He starts to exit, then stops.)

Bye, Stacy.

(He exits.)

(Lights out on Stacy.)

SCENE 7

(Lights up on the waiting room. It is a few weeks later, almost summer.)

Stacy enters and sits in a different chair this time. She settles in with her usual cup of coffee, looks at her old seat for a moment, then takes out her knitting.)

(She has progressed and the “scarf” is sloppy but longer. We see that her technique has improved slightly as she begins to knit.)

NURSE

(Offstage) Excuse me. Excuse me!

(Stacy looks up.)

Are you “Stacy”?

STACY

Yes. Is everything okay?

NURSE

Oh, yes. You have a package up here.

STACY

A package?

NURSE

Yes. The gentleman you used to sit by. He left it for you.

(Stacy walks toward the nurse’s station and comes back with a plain gift bag. She opens it and takes out a copy of “Treasure of the Sierra Madre,” the novel. She removes a note and reads it.)

(Rich enters another part of the stage. He speaks as Stacy reads.)

RICH

Stacy. I’m pretty sure you said you’d never read the book, so here it is. Maybe this will help you pass the time when you finish your scarf. Sorry I left in such a hurry. I was in shock and I just couldn’t deal with saying goodbye. You know, I’ve met people under better circumstances, but you made it easier. I actually started to look forward to Wednesdays. Thanks for bringing some fun to a really shit time. I wish all good things for you. Rich.

STACY

(To Nurse) Thank you.

(Lights out. End of play.)