THE DRIVE

A Short Play

By Stephen Taft

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CHARACTERS

V.O. (Adult male – opening line only)
MAX – 76 – retired
MIRIAM – 73 – retired

PLACE

A car

TIME

The present

SYNOPSIS

Max and Miriam are taking a “spontaneous” Saturday morning drive (or is it Tuesday)? Between Rest Stops, car games and personal discoveries, it becomes apparent that patience and memory may be leading them down a long, lost, lonely, yet loving highway.

THE DRIVE

AT RISE: *Simple chairs may serve as the front seat of a car with the use of an imaginary steering wheel and driver-side door. Lights rise on MIRIAM (73) playing a game on her phone or tablet. Perhaps we can hear the music or familiar sound effects of the "game". After a couple of moments, we hear:*

V.O. (*Off right.)*
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING! GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE I KICK THE LIVING CRAP OUT OF YOU! PERVERT!

(*MIRIAM looks up from her game and sees her husband running to get in the "car". MAX gets in the car a bit out of breath, puts the car in gear and gets back on the highway*.)

MIRIAM
What was that all about?

MAX
I took a picture – with my phone.

MIRIAM
In a rest stop bathroom?

MAX
Yeah.

MIRIAM
What were you thinking? You can't do that. Is there something you're not telling me?

MAX
Maybe.

MIRIAM
What? What? (*Beat*.) Are you gay?

MAX
No!

MIRIAM
Then WHAT were you taking a picture of?

MAX
The tile.

MIRIAM

What!?

MAX

The tile. I like the tile in the bathroom.

MIRIAM

You like the tile in the bathroom?

MAX

Yeah. Our bathrooms are like a museum with its pink tile, sinks and toilets. We're stuck in the 50's. We need to update. You know I watch all the home shows. And I get interior design ideas from all kinds of places.

MIRIAM

Are you sure you're not gay?

MAX

We've been married for over 40 years. We have 3 kids. I think you'd know.

MIRIAM

That doesn't mean anything. After 35 years and 4 kids, Harold came out.

MAX

That's right. And he seems much happier these days. It's nice that he and May still get along.

MIRIAM

Better than ever it seems. I didn't know interior design was that important to you. Anyway, you can't use a camera in a restroom.

MAX

No one complains at McDonalds.

MIRIAM

You take photos at McDonalds?

MAX

Sometimes.

MIRIAM

Classy Max. Pure class.

MAX

Home Depot has nice tile too.

MIRIAM

Look at tile in the tile aisle Max. Not in the bathroom! Understand? (*Frustrated.)* Drive.

(*MIRIAM shakes her head and continues with her game for a bit. Brief pause.)*

MAX

Want to play a game?

MIRIAM

I am playing a game.

MAX

I mean between us.

MIRIAM

I suppose. (*SHE looks up*.) So, what do you want to play?

MAX

How about "I Spy".

MIRIAM

"I Spy"?

MAX

Yeah, like when the kids were . . . you know, kids. I'll start. (*MAX is looking.)* I spy something . . . green.

MIRIAM

The grass?

MAX

Nope.

MIRIAM

The trees?

MAX

Nope.

MIRIAM

Ahh! Your socks. You're wearing those ugly green socks again.

MAX

Nope.

MIRIAM

I give up.

MAX

The John Deere tractor on the bed of the truck passing us.

(*We hear the sound of truck passing*.)

MIRIAM

How was I supposed to see that? It was behind us.

MAX

Use the mirror. (*HE points to the imaginary rearview mirror and smiles.)* Your turn.

MIRIAM

(*SHE sighs and looks around. Then . . .*)

I spy . . . an idiot.

MAX

Now you look in the mirror?

MIRIAM

You're pressing it Max.

MAX

I was joking. Can't you take a joke?

MIRIAM

Of course. I married you.

MAX

Ouch, that hurt. That really hurt. (*Silence*.) You want to do something else?

MIRIAM

I just want *you* to drive.

MAX

Yes, dear. (*Beat*.) Where are we going?

MIRIAM

You tell me. It was your idea to take a drive. I have Google Maps. Just let me know where we're going, and I'll punch it in.

MAX

You haven't done it yet?

MIRIAM
No, I was waiting for *you* to tell me where we're going. You wanted to surprise me. Remember?

MAX
Right.

MIRIAM
You wanted to be spontaneous.

MAX
Ahh, spontaneous. Yes. Just wanting to keep things fresh.

MIRIAM
Are you saying I'm stale? I'm a sack of bread?

MAX
No, not you, it's just . . .

MIRIAM
What Max? Just say it.

MAX
Our lives. Retirement isn't easy. Every day is the same old, same old.

MIRIAM
Oh, really? What's the "same old, same old" to you Max?

MAX
I don't know. I can't think of anything right now.

MIRIAM
So, we do the same thing so often you can't remember. You know what's getting old Max? Your memory!

MAX
But I'm young at heart. (*Suddenly HE remembers their favorite song and does his best Durante impression.)* "Fairytales can come true it can happen to you if you're young at heart." Jimmy Durante, 1963.

MIRIAM
"Old Blue Eyes" was first in 1953.

MAX
That's right. Frank Sinatra. His version is a classic. Great movie too. Gig Young, Doris Day. Love her. Who else has recorded that song? There's been a ton of artists.

MIRIAM
I don't know Max. I don't listen to the radio these days.

MAX
Michael Buble. 1983.

MIRAM
Who?

MAX
Michael Buble. Handsome guy. Records a lot of classics. That songs been recorded more times than I can count.

MIRIAM
Are we playing another game?

MAX
Yeah, "Name That Tune."

MIRIAM
(*SHE shakes her head in disbelief. To HERSELF*.)
Out of thin air. He starts a game out of thin air. (*To MAX*.) I have a game.

MAX
What is it?

MIRIAM
It's called, "How to Kill a Spouse".

MAX
That's not a game.

MIRIAM
It could be. Let's think of all the different ways we could kill each other. First thing that pops into your head. I'll go first. (*Beat*.) Let's see . . . oh, I could turn the water heater way up in the morning so when you turned on the shower it scalds you, you fall down and hit your head. Dead. Top that.

MAX
That's the first thing that pops into your head? Sounds like you've thought about this before.

MIRIAM
(*Rather proud of her idea*.)
Nope. Just thought of it. Your turn.

MAX
(*In a French accent and with feeling*.)
OK. I am going to kill you while we are making love. With passion.

MIRIAM
You're going to kill me with boredom Max. You're 76 years old. Keep dreaming.

MAX
But you're still 25 in my eyes.

MIRIAM
Oy, you're killing me. You're really killing me.

MAX
So, I win?

MIRIAM
No, it's a draw. We live to kill another day. Now, where are we going?

MAX
(*HE thinks for a moment*. *Pointing forward*.)
That way. We're going that-a-way.

MIRIAM
And where is "that-a-way"?

MAX
I don't know, but it's Saturday. We got all the time in the world.

MIRIAM
It's Tuesday Max.

MAX
It is?

MIRIAM
Yes, it's Tuesday.

MAX
Where'd Saturday go?

MIRIAM
It "whoosh" blew away in the wind. But don't worry, we have another one coming up.

MAX
Are you sure I'm 76? I thought I was 75. Are you sure?

MIRIAM

Yes, dear. I'm sure.

MAX

How old are you?

MIRIAM

I'm whatever age you want me to be.

MAX

Now THAT'S the girl I remember.

(*HE reaches over to put his hand on HER knee. SHE slaps the top of his hand*.)

MIRIAM

You have a one-track mind.

MAX

At least this train still has an engine … and a caboose.

MIRIAM

Max, you have no caboose. It's as flat as this highway.

MAX

But the fun is in trying to find it. (*MIRIAM continues playing her game*. *Beat*.) So, what would you like to do today? Whatever you want. Your call.

MIRIAM

Of course. Put the pressure on me. Thanks. (*Beat.)* Let's see . . . today . . . we're timing Rest Stops. We're seeing if they built Rest Stops to accommodate the peeing habits of old men.

MAX

We are?

MIRIAM

Yes, we are. You read about it online and thought it would be a good thing to do today.

MAX

I did?

MIRIAM

Yes, you did. (*Not really. However, SHE sees a Rest Stop sign*.) Look, there's a Rest Stop coming up. Do you have to go?

MAX
As a matter fact, I think I do. Thanks for reminding me. What's the winner get?

MIRIAM
On the state level the winner gets a toilet and bidet with a Cyclone Flush System valued at $5,745.00.

MAX
Wow! It's like "Let's Make a Deal". What's the National winner get?

MIRIAM
Peace of mind Max. The President's infrastructure plan includes Rest Stops every 30 miles. It was the First Lady's idea. She knows what all of us wives go through.

MAX
Men can't help it. You got to go when you got to go

MIRIAM
Ever think of *not* drinking water or your favorite soft drink while we're on the road?

MAX
I get thirsty and need to hydrate. I also need to stop and stretch my legs. My hamstrings kill me when I'm driving. If there weren't rest stops the headline would read: "Husband killed by hamstrings."

MIRIAM
At least I'd be in the clear. (*Beat*.) Max.

MAX
What?

MIRIAM
Your phone. Give me your phone. I don't want you taking it into the restroom.

MAX
Here you go. I forgot.

MIRIAM
You forget a lot. Do you know that Max?

MAX
I do?

MIRIAM
Yes, you do. But I still love you.

MAX

I love you too. Where are we going?

MIRIAM

We're going home Max. We're going home. Then you can drink and pee and forget all you want.

MAX

Sounds like a plan.

(*Brief pause. HE passes the Rest Stop.)*

MIRIAM

Max, you missed the exit for the Rest Stop.

MAX

I think I can hold it.

MIRIAM

Are you sure?

MAX

Totally.

MIRIAM

Do you know *where* we're going?

MAX

Sure. We're going home.

MIRIAM

Max, home is . . . (*SHE begins to point behind HER and then slowly changes directions and points forward.)* . . . that-a-way. Yep, it's that-a-way.

(*MIRIAM reaches out, gently places her left hand on his right and smiles lovingly at MAX.)*

Lights fade.

THE END