

BLANCHE IN A WHEELCHAIR

By Aaron Leventman

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I wanted to write a play that addressed my partner's health crisis and subsequent disability, the importance of our long-term connection, and our path towards emotional survival. After working for the Town of Provincetown in MA during the legalization of gay marriage, the issue for same sex couples of whether or not to wed was very much a part of our lives since we are a couple who chose not to get married (yet). This therefore became a part of the plot. Having written and produced LGBTQ+ themed theatre for many years, I was concerned about lack of older and disabled characters I was seeing in contemporary plays. I wanted to create a story that gave these underrepresented characters a voice with a narrative that addressed serious themes through humor, pathos and camp.*

Previous Productions:

9/19 Theatre Walk, Santa Fe, NM

Dir. Duchess Dale

8/19 Samuel French Off-Off Broadway One Act Play Festival

NYC, NY, Dir. Steve Mazzoccone,

FINALIST FOR BEST PLAY

7/18 Secret Theatre One Act Play Festival, LIC/NY,

Dir. Steve Mazzoccone

FINALIST FOR BEST PLAY

BLANCHE IN A WHEELCHAIR
A Short Play by Aaron Leventman

Characters:

Ted: Late 60s

Danny: Late 60s

Jeremy: Late 20s to early 30s

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Synopsis:

Ted is bitter from his recent physical disability. Danny, his partner, tries to cheer him up by proposing to him on their anniversary at Ted's physical rehab. Can love heal all wounds?

SETTING: THE PARK OUTSIDE OF A REHAB

AT RISE: Danny and Ted sit on a park bench. A wheel chair sits on the side closest to Ted.

DANNY

At least you can sit outside here. It's an improvement from the neuro ward.

TED

Which felt like a remake of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

DANNY

We're having chicken supreme for dinner, catered specially for us.

TED

What is that exactly?

DANNY

I don't know. It sounds like something they'd serve at a luncheon for women with done-up hair.

TED

Have you seen who stays at this place? That's kind of what it is. Only without the hair-dos. Actually, without hair at all.

DANNY

Well, you'll be home soon. I just put the ramp in.

TED

And that's supposed to be enticing?

DANNY

After being here for 2 months you're starting to wear out your welcome.

TED

I still haven't learned how to cook in my chair.

DANNY

I'll cook for a while.

TED

Your cooking will kill us both.

DANNY

Thanks.

TED

Speaking of death...

DANNY

Please don't.

TED

I had a dream last night that I was back running my company. But when I went to open the security gate there was a big sign outside that said "Tomorrow you will die."

DANNY

Your office was in the worst part of Chicago. That probably really happened.

TED

And now I'm spending my fortune on a physical rehab.

DANNY

Come on. It's a special day. We only celebrate our 24th anniversary once and I'm going to get you to smile today if it's the last thing I do.

TED

Good luck with that.

DANNY

Why?

(pause)

TED

I have some bad news.

DANNY

What? Angelina and Brad aren't getting back together after all?

TED

I'm serious.

DANNY

What is it, then?

(Jeremy approaches the bench.)

JEREMY

Well, who are these handsome gentleman?

DANNY

Hello, Jeremy.

TED

What are you doing here?

DANNY

I'm giving us a break from the lackluster kitchen staff and asked Jeremy to make our Anniversary dinner.

JEREMY

And look how handsome. You both look like Zac Efron on a date with Channing Tatum.

TED

Who?

(Danny rolls his eyes.)

JEREMY

So how are you feeling, Ted?

TED

Not bad for an old cripple.

JEREMY

What happened? Car accident?

TED

Auto-immune disorder that affects my walking.
It's called guillain-barré.

DANNY

It's also the name of a forgotten film by Jean-Luc Goddard.

JEREMY

Who?

(Ted and Danny both roll their eyes)

TED

They took all of my blood out of my body to get rid of the bad antibodies. It felt like a bad vampire movie.

DANNY

But look how well he's doing. He went from being paralyzed to getting in and out of his chair. And he'll get even better over time.

(Ted looks over at Danny.)

TED

Listen to you, Miss Pollyanna.

JEREMY

We'll hope for a speedy recovery, then.

(Jeremy winks at Danny before he leaves. Ted looks at them suspiciously.)

DANNY

Thanks, Jeremy.

(Jeremy walks away.)

TED

"Thanks, Jeremy?" He's so goddamn peppy. And did he just wink at you?

DANNY

He winks at everyone and you were that way once if I remember correctly.

TED

No, I wasn't. And just because he used to be your client at that talent agency doesn't mean you have to flirt.

DANNY

I wasn't flirting.

TED

And you obviously didn't help him with his acting career if you're hiring him to cater on a weekday. And who winks anymore, anyway? What is this? The 1940s?

DANNY

You're in a mood. Still doing the bitter thing, are we?

TED

I have reason to be.

DANNY

He's just trying to be charming.

TED

And not succeeding. If he winks at you again I'm leaving.

DANNY

You can't leave. You're in a wheelchair.

TED

God fucking dammit, you're right. I'm stuck with you, aren't I?

DANNY

And I with you. Besides, Jeremy said that the chocolate mousse we're having for dessert is to die for.

TED

Such an old lady's dessert. I might as well order the cottage cheese plate and fruit cup.

DANNY

Wouldn't that be appropriate.

TED

I hope Lucy is okay being left alone right after you took her to the vet. Did you take her out before you left?

DANNY

She just went out an hour ago.

TED

But she always drinks more water because on her medication. Is she still licking her woowoo nonstop?

DANNY

Not lately.

TED

If she pees on the Persian rug again you're getting it cleaned.

DANNY

She misses her other Daddy.

TED

She has you.

DANNY

But she still sits by the door every night waiting for you to come home.

TED

She's just scamming us to get more treats. Did you remember to clean under the mat under her water bowl like I asked?

DANNY

No.

TED

Two months of dirt! You'll have to get Maxwell to come in and clean.

DANNY

Maxwell just married a Trump supporter and moved to San Diego.

TED

Great. The world is changing along with our personal lives. You'll have to get Patricia to come back. Hopefully she won't eat everything out of our refrigerator while she's cleaning the kitchen like last time.

DANNY

Don't worry. The refrigerator's empty. You haven't exactly been around to make home cooked meals.

TED

You know, we really didn't have to do this today. We didn't do anything for our last anniversary. And our 24th isn't such a significant year to celebrate.

DANNY

And who says 24 years isn't a significant year to celebrate? Each year is more significant than the last. 24 is more significant than 23. 23 is more significant than 22...

TED

Yes, I get it. You have a tendency to overstate your point.

DANNY

Speaking of celebrating, Nick and Frederick invited us to their Halloween party.

TED

Great. A bunch of gay yuppies talking about their second homes in San Miguel De Allende.

DANNY

No one uses the word yuppies anymore. And going to a party wouldn't kill you.

TED

Going to THEIR party might.

DANNY

Costumes are required. And we can finally live out your fantasy of going as Blanche and Rose from the *Golden Girls*.

TED

Only if I get to be Blanche. And now it'll be Blanche in a wheelchair.

DANNY

Do you really want to be thought of as a shut-in?

TED

Better than being seen as a cripple. Then have to tell people the whole story again of what happened to me. If I could walk around with a sign explaining the whole miasma I would.

DANNY

Didn't you say you had something to tell me?

TED

(pause) Nick and Frederick? I thought Frederick's partner's name was Mark?

DANNY

That was his last partner. Frederick left when Mark's health started to decline. Couldn't take the heat. Can't exactly blame him.

TED

What do you mean by that?

DANNY

On, nothing. Now what were you going to tell me?

TED

I think I'll wait on that.

DANNY

Do you need to go to the bathroom before we eat?

TED

I don't need to be walked. Like Lucy, I just went an hour ago.

DANNY

Go anyway to wash your hands. The bathroom is right over there. There's a flu going around and you can't afford to get sick.

TED

I already am sick and why do you want me to go to the bathroom? So you and Jeremy can have a quick tryst while I'm rolling around in my chair?

DANNY

Enough. Now go before it's time for dinner. (pause)
Why aren't you using your walker?

(Ted doesn't answer but instead transfers from the bench to his chair. Danny gets up to help him but Ted puts his hand up as if to say "Leave me alone. I can do this." And he does, although with much difficulty. Danny looks worried. Ted wheels himself to the bathroom. Danny gestures to Jeremy who is offstage.)

DANNY

Okay. Get ready.

(Jeremy runs onstage in anticipation.)

DANNY

When I wave my hand, that's your cue to start.

(Jeremy nods his head.)

JEREMY

Your dinner is all set-up in the cafeteria.

DANNY

I told you I wanted us to eat al fresco.

JEREMY

Oh, dear.

(Ted starts to wheel himself back in.)

DANNY

It's too late now.

(Jeremy leaves.)

TED

What did he want now?

DANNY

Why are you back already?

TED

The guy in the other stall is having trouble with this morning's breakfast burrito or so it sounded.

DANNY

I'll wheel you to the one on the other side of the gift shop.

TED

I don't have to go that badly.

DANNY

The last time you said that you ruined a perfectly good pair of jeans from Banana Republic.

TED

These were only from the Gap so not to worry.

(Jeremy comes back over.
Ted eyes him suspiciously.
Jeremy looks afraid.)

JEREMY

Dinner is almost served. We have a special appetizer for you both on this special day. Chips with guacamole.

TED

Sour cream gives me the runs.

JEREMY

Then no guacamole for you.

TED

This is a rehab for Christ's Sake with sick people. You should know better than to serve us guacamole.

(Jeremy starts to walk away dejected.)

DANNY

Jeremy, we might as well do this now or this isn't going to happen.

JEREMY

Are you sure?

DANNY

I'm sure.

TED

What the hell is going on?!

(Jeremy gets scared and runs away.)

DANNY

Look, you fucking pain in the ass. Will you stop complaining for once and listen for a minute? Most of the time I want to throw you out the window but for the last 24 years no one has meant more to me and to be quite honest I can't imagine life without you. So even though I want to throttle you most of the time I think we should get married. And I don't want to hear your reasons for why we're paying into a heterosexual normality. Oh, and I fucking love you by the way so stop being so goddamn stubborn and say yes.

TED

I'M being stubborn?! You probably want to get married because you think I'm dying and want to make sure that you legally get your share of the fortunes.

DANNY

What fortunes? I hate to tell you but your African sculpture is a reproduction and not worth what you think it is. I found out on Antiques Roadshow.

TED

Well in that case, I fucking love you, too.

DANNY

Yeah, well why don't you say it every once in a while? You think you can play the sick card forever? And this affected both of us, not just you.

TED

I know you had to give up your job as a sleazy talent agent just to take care of me and I feel guilty about it every second of the day.

DANNY

Then maybe this will help.

(Danny grabs Ted, pulls him towards him, and gives him a passionate but angry kiss.)

TED

Stop it! You're turning me on a little and I'm in no condition to do anything about it.

DANNY

Why not?

(Danny tries to grope Ted. Ted tries to hold on to the bench but they both fall on the floor instead.)

TED

Now look what you made us do.

DANNY

Fuck! I threw my back out.

(Danny tries to get up but can't.)

TED

Now you know how it feels.

DANNY

It's the blind leading the blind.

TED

More like the blond leading the blond.

DANNY

(calls to Jeremy offstage) Jeremy! Help us!

(No response.)

DANNY

Well, it's not how I planned this, but...

(Danny pulls a jewelry box out of his coat pocket, opens it, then takes a ring out. Ted is clearly touched.)

TED

At least you didn't put it on my chocolate mousse and I swallow

it by accident like in the movies.

DANNY

Do you remember that package you sent me on our first Valentine's Day together?

TED

No

DANNY

You sent it to my office and kept bugging my receptionist to see if I got it.

TED

Serves her right for never answering the phone on the first ring.

DANNY

So you do remember.

TED

I don't remember much anymore. But I remember that.

DANNY

You sent a care package with a bunch of chocolates and there was a card inside that you wrote in. It was the first time that you used the L-Word.

TED

Lesbian?

DANNY

Stop it. We had only been together 2 months. But we already knew.

TED

And now you'll soon be serving me a rat for dinner.

DANNY

The Baby Jane references are going to start to get old, fast.

(Danny grabs hold of the bench with his right arm and waves his left arm in the air to try and pull himself up. Jeremy thinking it's

his cue, enters, and
starts to sing *Oh
Promise Me.*)

TED

That's what this whole charade was all about? So Jeremy could sing *Oh Promise Me* at our engagement in a rehab?

DANNY

He needed a gig. (to Jeremy) Jeremy, stop singing and help us!

(Jeremy can't hear
him over himself
and keeps singing).

DANNY

You should be grateful I didn't propose to you in front of everyone at dinner like I was going to.

TED

Then you should be lucky I'm saying yes.

DANNY

You're saying yes?

(As Jeremy sings louder,
Ted covers his ears.)

TED

I wish I could make a dramatic exit.

DANNY

(speaks in his best Bette Davis which isn't good at all.)
"But you can't Blanche. You can't."

TED

That's not even the line. (to Jeremy) Jeremy! Stop! No offense but you're no Karen Carpenter.

(Jeremy gets offended and leaves.)

DANNY

Jeremy, don't go! We've fallen and we can't get up!

(Ted starts to smile.)

DANNY

Is that what I think it is? Do I see your mouth just starting to curve into a smile?

TED

It's just gas.

DANNY

Does that mean I finally cheered you up? That you're glad we did this?

(Ted suddenly gets a concerned look on his face.
He starts to panic.)

DANNY

You look like you just swallowed a frog.

TED

I just came back to reality. I have to tell you something.

DANNY

We're back to that again?

TED

Remember how Dr. Nelson said that 5% can get a reoccurrence? Well, I'm in that 5%.

(pause)

DANNY

How do you know?

TED

It's happening again. (pause) That tingling feeling came back in my right leg like the first time you took me to the emergency room. The other day I used my crutches to get back to my room from physical therapy. Then three hours later I couldn't stand up at all. I could tell from the look on the nurses faces that they think it's getting worse, that my body is saying "no." Dr. Nelson is starting the plasma treatments again tomorrow.

DANNY

And that's why you're back in your chair.

TED

How can we be so unlucky?

DANNY

You're saying that on our anniversary?

TED

You know what I mean. I can't go through this all over again. And now I might not make it out of the chair.

DANNY

You don't know that. There's no reason you can't get better from this, again. And we'll deal with whatever we have to deal with.

TED

I'm sorry. I can't come home right now. And if you want to rescind your marriage proposal I'll understand.

DANNY

Stop being silly. I'll just move in here. Plenty of room. And the chair by your bed isn't too shabby to sleep in. Could use a new cushion, but...

TED

Talk about being silly. Do you have any idea what you're in for? Carrying me up the stairs? Early evenings in because I'm too tired to go out at night. And the days of the disco parties are long over.

DANNY

Honey, they've been long over for decades. Disco sucks, remember? (pause) Did you really think I was going to ditch you?

TED

Look at Nick and Frederick.

DANNY

Did you really think I was serious? I was kidding when I said "can you blame him?"

TED

Maybe some things aren't funny.

DANNY

You're right. (pause) I'm sorry.

TED

I know you are but you have no idea what it's like for me.

DANNY

I get that.

TED

I'll need you like never before.

DANNY

Don't you think I don't need you as well?

(Ted finally breaks out into a full smile.
Danny starts to sing Close to You to Ted.
Ted resists at first, then quickly sings
along in harmony.)

LIGHTS OUT

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Aaron Leventman attended Columbia University's Graduate School for film where his thesis screenplay was given a professional reading at the Union Square Theatre in Manhattan. He moved to Santa Fe from Provincetown after his involvement as a writer/director/actor with the Provincetown Theatre Company. When living in Santa Fe, he performed with most of the local theatre companies in productions of True West, Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, For the Love of Three Oranges, Macbeth, I Never Sang for my Father, Opus, and many original plays. He's also appeared in industrials, commercials, short films, and features. Aaron's plays have been performed all over the country, many of which are published and available on Amazon.com. He recently co-produced an evening of his own short works titled Almost Adultsthat met with tremendous acclaim including the Mayor declaring LGBT Theatre Day in Santa Fe, NM on opening night. Aaron is also a film instructor at Santa Fe Community College, a film festival curator, and has a private writing coach practice. <https://aleventman.wixsite.com/writingcoach>*

PUBLICATIONS

5/14	THE BOY Secret Theatre's Publication of Best of the Fest., LIC/NY
9/13	SECOND YEAR ITCH Black Box Theatre Publishing, Kentucky
9/13	THE VALUE OF EMPTY BOXES Black Box Theatre Publishing, Kentucky
8/05	LATE REUNION JAC Publishing, Boston/MA