

TWO OLD WOMEN

By Marjorie Conn

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama editor JANET COLSON writes:*

Guess what? Turns out hook-up culture for the older set can be just as superficial and disappointing as it for everyone else, but in Marjorie Conn's short play, Two Old Women, there may be a silver lining to a global pandemic after all. In this bittersweet dramedy, we get a bird's eye view of the two old women negotiating their relationship while masked up and 6' feet apart on a park bench. And just because the characters are old doesn't mean they don't have plenty of spirit and sass. This is a feisty conversation that swiftly moves through the life cycle of an open relationship; it's about confusion, connection, commitment – and regret. Everything in this seemingly breezy fare is weighted by the backdrop of the pandemic and the age of the characters. These women thought they knew how to live their lives to the fullest under ordinary circumstances, but did they? All it takes is a little coronavirus to make them reexamine their social distance and find out that "friends with benefits" might be an oxymoron.

Note - the open air setting of Two Old Women means we could potentially see the play in a current (or future!) pandemic without even installing Zoom and begs an art-imitates life question about the fate of theatre itself: How long can we afford to wait? Maybe we don't have to.

Ella

What is the first thing you'll do when this isolation is over?

March

I don't want this isolation to be over.

Ella

What?

March

Just what I said Ella! I don't want this isolation to be over.

(Spacing is playwright's own) Eds.

Two Old Women
By Marjorie Conn

- Synopsis: 2 women sitting 6 feet apart wearing masks are talking on separate park benches
- Setting: Any place where there might be a couple of benches or even 2 chairs outdoors
- Time: July or August 2020
- Characters: Ella – 70 +
March – 70 + but slightly younger than Ella

Ella

What is the first thing you'll do when this isolation is over?

March

I don't want this isolation to be over.

Ella

What?

March

Just what I said Ella! I don't want this isolation to be over.

Ella

Damn. I still can't hear you. My hearing isn't what it used to be. And now having to wear a mask and sitting 6 feet apart is not helping. It sounded like you said that you don't want this isolation to be over. But I am sure I am not hearing you correctly. Can you speak louder?

March

(yelling). I said I don't want this isolation to be over.

Ella

I still can't understand you. I asked you what is the first thing you'll do when this isolation is over.

March

And I answered you and you heard me correctly.

Ella

What! Why?

March

It's complicated. Let me ask you the same question. What is the first thing you'll do when this isolation is over?

Ella

First thing is to see my grandchildren. And the second thing is invite you to my apartment, have drinks on my roof, and then finally seduce you.

March

That's a switcheroo. We've been friends, what is it now, almost 2 years?

Ella

I can't remember. But it was at the LGBTQ+ picnic.

March

Right. At Roosevelt Island.

Ella

Governor's Island.

March

I get those 2 islands mixed up all the time.

Ella

Roosevelt Island is where people live and Governor's Island is where people play.

March

I can never remember. But we did play. At least I did. I rented that surrey bike. I tried to get someone, anyone, at the picnic to pedal with me and there were no takers.

Ella

Hey March, I didn't know you then and I don't know why I didn't take you up on your offer. I kind of wish I had.

March

I didn't know anybody except the person in charge. But I thought these picnics were to meet people. That's why I was surprised nobody wanted to pedal the surrey with me and believe me, just me pedaling was not easy. I had planned to take it out for an hour but I returned it after 30 minutes. But I'm not complaining. I had fun. And I was quite happy that we at least exchanged cards.

Ella

So what do you think about the second thing I want to do once this nightmare is over.

March

Remember December around Christmas? We went to a women' dance and it was so crowded that we just sat in the corner on 2 chairs and made out.

Ella

That was just kissing.

March

French kissing.

Ella

I don't remember.

March

Well I do. So then I invited you over just after Christmas intending to seduce you. I had eggnog with bourbon and cheese and crackers and other snacks. Don't you remember that?

Ella

Yes I do. And your multitude of animals were all over me. One cat gave me a love bite. Another one tried to kiss me on the lips. And one dog was literally trying to eat the cheese right out of my mouth and the other one was trying to get up on the couch and was scratching my legs.

March

Yeah, that was unfortunate. But if we had made it to my bed, I could have locked them all out. You know, these railroad apartments don't have doors between the rooms except my tiny bedroom at the very end. The caboose so to speak. I put in a sliding door.

Ella

I know but your bed is on the floor and I just had my 87th birthday. How do you do it? You're only a few years younger than me. Oh, and I can't thank you enough for my birthday present. Yummy! Crystal vodka in a glass rainbow skull. A collector's item.

March

I knew it was the perfect gift. And since I couldn't take you out to a restaurant for your birthday because of this fucking pandemic which would have been my first choice, I had to go with option 2. You know that famous actor . . . Now what is his name . . . It's on the tip of my tongue.

Ella

What movies has he been in?

March

Some like Ghost Clusters.

Ella

You're getting as forgetful as me.

March

Maybe worse since now I can't remember what month it is, let alone the date. Finally got the courage to go out to see my doctor and I was a week early and he was on vacation.

Ella

I'm glad we're meeting today.

March

Only my third time out in 5 months. Ya know, I'm thinking of changing my name.

Ella

Why? March is a lovely name. The beginning of spring.

March

Yeah. And also the beginning of the isolation in New York.

Ella

What would you change it to?

March

I don't know. Maybe Winter reminding me of all the lovely things I did this winter, which most likely will never happen again. All the parties and concerts and dances and together times and the hugging and kissing . . .

Ella

So tell me more about my birthday gift and the famous actor whose name you don't remember.

March

The vodka is filtered through crystals.

Ella

Really! So what does that do?

March

Beats me. But the skull shaped rainbow colored bottle made it a must buy. And that bottle was only available during June for Pride month. And any little thing giving us pleasure during this time of corona is a plus.

Ella

Agreed and this pandemic has made me realize I want a lover. You. And I am so sorry in the 2 years we have known each other that I didn't invite you to my place.

March

Yeah. I was wondering about that.

Ella

If we ever get this virus under control then I will invite you over and wine you and dine you.

March

I like that but there is a complication which I haven't mentioned to you because it never came up in conversation. I don't think you heard me when I said I don't want this isolation to end. You see just at the time my failed seduction attempt with you happened, I met this other woman. Much younger than me and we started hanging

out. We both agreed that we would be friends with benefits and have an open relationship cause she really wants to meet a woman her age or younger.

Ella

What's friends with benefits?

March

Right. I actually had to look it up on the Internet cause I never heard that expression before. It's a friend that you have sex with without a romantic relationship or commitment. And so even though I was having sex with her, I still wanted to have sex with you. And I was planning on it. I was hoping you would invite me to your petless place. But then this nightmare began and I couldn't be with anybody. So my new friend and I both isolated for more than a month from early March to mid-April. Didn't see a soul or go out at all so when neither of us got sick even though we were both exposed to a friend who tested positive . . .

Ella

You were exposed?

March

Yup. At a mbira class.

Ella

What's that?

March

A mbira is a little thumb piano from Africa. I only went to one class and then this damn nightmare began and we found out a few weeks later that one woman in the class tested positive. Her mother died of this dreaded disease, which is why the daughter was tested. And the strange thing is I did have a raging headache and a sore throat, which were the exact same symptoms that the person in the class had.

Ella

Did you get tested?

March

Like my name, this was in March and testing wasn't available.

Ella

What about your new friend? Did she get sick?

March

Not in March but oddly enough she had a terrible flu the first week in February so who knows what kind of a flu she had. So then when neither of us had symptoms for over a month, we thought it was safe to see each other. And now we've made a commitment.

Ella

Is that where you go on weekends?

March

Yup.

Ella

Damn! I shouldn't have been so uptight about the animals.

March

So that's why I kind of don't want this isolation to be over cause I like being in this new relationship. And because of this damn pandemic, friends with benefits is off the table. So for the time being we have made a commitment to each other. But if this pandemic is ever over, she and I may go back to an open relationship and then the first thing I'd like to do is be with you.

Ella

It's a date.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *What inspired this play is that a friend asked me what was the first thing I'd do when we are all "safe" again. LOL*

But I began to think of my life now and decided to write a play based on my life now as a stepping stone with lots of poetic license. I titled it Two Old Women to confront ageism. Just because we are in our 70's and 80's doesn't mean that we are not sexual beings.

Yes, our hearing isn't what it used to be and sometimes we are forgetful, but we are horny.

The issues and themes I wanted to explore is just that. People of my age are vibrant beings. I have a medical doctor who cannot believe that I am sexually active. What does this say?

I also wanted to address how our lives, all of our lives regardless of age, have been impacted by this deadly virus.

Two Old Women is "hot off the press" and has never been performed and even though I despise zoom with a passion, it suddenly and surprisingly occurs to me that this play would actually work on zoom because there is

no action, no stage directions that need to be read and to see the actors in separate little boxes would work because in the play they are supposedly 6 feet apart wearing masks.

Stylistic influences? Hard to say. Maybe just influences such as Rod Serling, Samuel Beckett, Shirley Jackson, Charles Ludlam, Lois Smith, Susan Glaspell.

AUTHOR BIO:

MarjorieConn(Actor/Playwright/Storyteller/Ventriloquist) made her acting debut with the late, greyt Ethyl Eichelberger as his leading man playing Aegisthus to his Klytemnestra with her lover, the late, incomparable Katy Dierlam as Electra. She was given an award by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for her contributions to theatre in Provincetown, MA. Marjorie is most known for her portrayal of Lizzie Borden (ax murderess) and Lorena Hickok (Eleanor Roosevelt's lover). These plays which she wrote are published in LOST LESBIAN LIVES. She founded the Provincetown Fringe Festival in 1994, which relocated to Asbury Park, NJ in 2007. One of her stories is scheduled for publication in WMN Zine: *Show Me What You Got*. Currently she is a full-time New Yorker living in Hell's Kitchen with a plethora of rescue animals.