

The Day They Kidnapped Blanche

Ann Barham Pugh and Katy Dacus





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THE DAY THEY KIDNAPPED BLANCHE

One-act Comedy in Three Scenes

by

Ann Barham Pugh and Katy Dacus

CAST

BLANCHE: A fun-loving 70 year-old retired English teacher turned amateur actress.

SOL FENKELSTEIN: A bitter 75 year-old widowed retirement home resident estranged from his only son.

MRS SLOAN: A snobbish 70 year-old widowed retirement home resident, who views theatre folk with disdain.

DEVON: A sharp middle-aged FBI Agent.

BRENT: A personable 30-50 year-old community theatre director.

RUBY: A crafty 50 year-old retirement home social director.

BILLY: A dim-witted aide employed by social worker.

Setting: *October afternoon outside Senior Citizen Community Theatre facing a park*

Marquee at theatre entrance reads:

"USED CAR FOR SALE"

MATINEE SOLD OUT--EVENING TICKETS AT BOX OFFICE

At Rise: BLANCHE, a bright handsome 70-year-old retired teacher and amateur actress, bounces from theatre into the afternoon sun. Agile, fun-loving and athletic in pants, tailored shirt and dark flats, she slings a yellow bike helmet and a knapsack bearing 'YWCA Swim Team' logo. Laughingly, she scurries to her tandem bike Stage Right. BRENT, A 30-50 year-old stage director following her with a marquee notice, is a teaser. They are devoted buddies in spite of their age difference. Their show-biz bantering makes them oblivious to DEVON, a sinister-looking stranger on park bench Stage Left. In trench coat and hat that shadows his face, he eavesdrops while pretending to read a newspaper.

BRENT: *(calls)* What's your hurry, Blanche? I've got Hollywood on hold.

BLANCHE: *(shrugs)* Neil Simon again? What a pest he is!

BRENT: Shall I say what I always do--Spielberg has first priority?

BLANCHE: *(laughs)* Don't forget ABC wants me for the Farrah Fawcett role in the geriatric revival of "Charley's Angels."

BRENT: You should consider Simon's offer. He's begging you to star in his latest zinger *(nudges her meaningfully)* "The Last of the Red Hot Grannies" *(makes click-click sound)*

BLANCHE: Hush your mouth! I'm far too young to play a grandmother role. *(imitates age-sensitive star)* I'm not a day over thirty-eight. Uh--forty-eight? *(both laugh)* I'll play any part so long as it doesn't promote porno or Polident. These *(indicates teeth)* are my own, and if you don't believe it-

BRENT: I believe! *(accusingly)* I saw on the call board that you're throwing the cast party.

BLANCHE: *(flippant)* You expected an engraved invitation?

BRENT: You know what I mean. Let someone else do the party.

BLANCHE: Why?

BRENT: You take on too much. Always do more than your share.

RUBY: I do exactly what I want to do. When did a little work ever hurt anyone?

BRENT: But, Blanche--

BLANCHE: *(cuts him off gently)* Brent, dear, I've told you I intend to have the gang over tomorrow night. *(pats BRENT on the cheek)* Not to worry. It's taken care of. Lasagna's made and in the freezer. Sarah's doing salad. Cliff and Sam are bringing beer, which you, dear boy, will ice down in my bathtub. Simple.

BRENT: You're something else!

BLANCHE: Yes, like what? A bossy old teacher? *(puts on bike helmet)*

BRENT: You're one classy lady. I adore you, but we must stop meeting like this.

BLANCHE: It's sheer madness. You know how gossipy show folks are. *(throws him a kiss)* Gotta run!

BRENT: Why bike all that distance when I can have a sandwich sent in, and you can put your feet up and relax before tonight's show?

BLANCHE: Who's tired? I promised Ruthie I'd drop off that stagecraft book. And who wants a soggy sandwich when you can have homemade soup at home? Besides, I need the exercise.

BRENT: Remember you have a show tonight. Don't pick up a date on your way home, okay? *(looks at bike)*

BRENT: You're impossible! See you at the half hour. *(inserts marquee notice, exits into theatre)*

(BLANCHE kicks kick-stand up ready to go)

DEVON: *(drops newspaper on bench, blocks Blanche)* Blanche Sherwin? Are you Mrs. Sherwin? Can I talk to you?

BLANCHE: *(politely corrects his grammar)* May I? May I talk to you?

DEVON: *(politely, confused)* May I?

BLANCHE: You may. You may take one giant step.

DEVON: What?

BLANCHE: The game 'May I'. Remember, it helped kids remember proper grammar. Whatever happened to proper grammar? Was it thrown out with good manners, Mr.--?

DEVON: Oh, I'm sorry. Devon. Steve Devon. *(offers hand)*

BLANCHE: *(shakes hand)* Half of your generation are.

DEVON: Are what?

BLANCHE: Named Steve. The other half are Mike. Most popular names of your generation. I've one of each. If you have a sister, she's Karen or Sharon.

DEVON: *(nods)* Twins. Karen and Sharon. *(points to bench)* Can we sit here a minute?

BLANCHE: *(with reminding nudge)* May we sit. *(sits)* I was an English teacher.

DEVON: Yes, I knew that. *(sits)* A good one, too, I bet. You're one hell of an actress, Mrs. Sherwin. I saw your show three times.

BLANCHE: You did? Honestly?

DEVON: Yes. And I wanted to meet you. You were great in it.

BLANCHE: It may interest you to know that role was written for a man. Brent, our director, felt it was so universal that it could easily be a woman. After all, loneliness is not sexually discriminating, is it? Anyhow, thanks to Carlino, it works for an actress. He writes beautifully. Such sensitivity, such understanding of the elderly.

DEVON: *(studies her)* Who does?

BLANCHE: Carlino, the playwright. Lewis John Carlino. He wrote "Used Car For Sale" and "The Great Santini." Perhaps you saw the film? Won an Academy Award. *(confused by DEVON's watching her but not replying)* You did say you saw our play?

DEVON: Three times.

BLANCHE: That's what I thought you said, but--

DEVON: *(interrupts)* Frankly I'm more interested in you than in the play or the author.

BLANCHE: Oh, really? I'm flattered of course, but a bit confused. Are you for real? You're too mature for a stage-door Johnny. *(beat)* You're not kinky are you? Never mind, at my age almost any approach is *(beat)* interesting. Now if you'll excuse me, Mr. Devon, *(makes effort to ride off)* I must be going.

DEVON: *(blocks BLANCHE again)* You bike here for every performance? You must be in good health.

BLANCHE: *(flatly)* I'm blessed with good genes. *(tries to dismiss him and ride off, but Devon grabs bike handle bars)* I beg your pardon!

DEVON: I don't mean to alarm you. I have something to discuss with you. Are you familiar with the retirement homes in this area?

BLANCHE: What are you doing? Drumming up new residents? I'm not ready for that. Deliver me from some pip squeak social director that thinks wearing silly hats and tooting kazoos is everyone's idea of a big time. Hell's bells, if he can't clear up his acne, he's not ready to handle the elderly.

DEVON: Wish that was the biggest problem for the elderly.

BLANCHE: Yes, you're quite right. I read about a place up state that can't even keep track of their residents. Two wandered off and have not been heard from. *(begins to peddle off)*

DEVON: Maybe they didn't wander off. Maybe they were taken away. *(BLANCHE stops, turns around)* Who knows, they could be in another state. Perhaps dead.

BLANCHE: How horrible! Poor souls. It's so tragic for their families. Was one of them a relative of yours?

DEVON: No families. No close friends. Both were totally alone in the world. But somebody knew how to get their money.

BLANCHE: Goodness, how dreadful! I'm sorry, Mr. Devon, but I need to go. I've an errand to run, and I must eat supper before tonight's performance. *(tries to leave)*

DEVON: Are you physically strong, Mrs. Sherwin?

BLANCHE: *(testy)* Yes, for my age! Why are you asking these questions? You sound like a detective in that old TV series. You're too neat for Columbo. *(beat)* Are you with the government?

DEVON: Exactly. *(pulls FBI badge from inside coat pocket, shows it to her)* FBI.

BLANCHE: *(almost haughty)* Are you investigating me? *(beat, then curiously)* What have I done?

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!