

# THE LAST TRIP

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

By Mike Willis

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**SYNOPSIS:** An elderly couple with terminal health problems embark on a last trip together. A heartfelt look at the power of true love.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 2 WOMEN)

JACK (m).....An older man, 65-85. Jack appears fine physically, but is in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease. He experiences only brief moments when he remembers people and events. Jack can become frustrated with his memory loss, which causes nervousness and short bursts of anger. (95 lines)

ELIZABETH/LIZ (f) .....An older lady, 60-80. Liz is Jack's wife. She is Jack's caregiver, a duty she performs steadfastly despite the fact that She has terminal cancer and only a short time to live. Liz takes a number of pain medications and it is obvious that she experiences a lot of discomfort. Liz can be quite stubborn. Liz wears a bandanna on her head to hide the hair loss from her chemotherapy. (109 lines)

SUSAN (f) .....Jack and Liz's daughter, 25-50. She cares deeply for her parents and their serious health problems have her frightened. Susan is just as stubborn as her mother. (67 lines)

## SCENE

A bare-stage that serves as the family kitchen, the back yard, and the rim of the Grand Canyon.

**TIME:** The present.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*The Last Trip* is easily staged on a bare stage with the use of a table with two chairs along with two old lawn chairs. If more detailed staging is desired, a portion of the stage can be a raised. This raised area is where the backyard and Grand Canyon scenes are played. The kitchen scene is then played on the lower level.

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

*The Last Trip* was a winner in the Village Playhouse of Wauwatossa's Twenty-Sixth Annual Play Writing Competition. It premiered at the Boulevard Theatre in Milwaukee, WI on June 3, 2011 with the following cast:

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| JACK .....     | Lloyd Dreger   |
| LIZ .....      | Mary Krauss    |
| SUSAN .....    | Pamela Stein   |
| Director ..... | Mary Breitrick |

SCENE 1

**SETTING:**

*The stage is bare with the exception of two old aluminum folding lawn chairs down-stage right and a small table with two chairs slightly stage left of center stage. The lawn chairs are the old vinyl webbed type and the webbing is in bad shape.*

**AT RISE:**

*JACK is seated in one of the old lawn chairs DR. HE is dressed in an old flannel shirt and jeans and could use a shave. JACK rocks slightly back and forth, but otherwise stares straight ahead. LIZ is packing clothes in a small suitcase that is sitting on the table CS. SHE is also dressed in jeans and a flannel shirt and wears a bandanna on HER head. LIZ moves slowly around the table, carefully folding the clothes before SHE places them in the suitcase. It is obvious that it is painful for HER to move. SHE takes a pill bottle from HER purse, which is sitting on one of the chairs. After shaking a pill into HER hand, SHE pops it in HER mouth without the aid of water.*

**SUSAN:** *(Calling from off stage.)* Mom? Mom...where are you?

**LIZ:** In the kitchen, dear.

*SUSAN enters. SHE is an attractive young woman. SUSAN is dressed in a business suit and has the appearance of being quite successful. SHE sees HER mother packing and crosses to HER.*

**SUSAN:** Mom, what are you doing?

**LIZ:** That's a silly question. What does it look like I'm doing? I'm packing.

**SUSAN:** What for?

**LIZ:** Our trip. Your father and I are taking a little trip, just like in the old days.

**SUSAN:** *(Shocked.)* You can't go on a trip! You're in no condition to go anywhere, and Dad certainly isn't.

**LIZ:** And our conditions aren't going to get any better. So before they get any worse, it's time for your father and me to take one last trip.

**SUSAN:** What does Dr. Sims say?

**LIZ:** I don't know. I haven't spoken to him.

**SUSAN:** You haven't spoken to him? Mom, you had an appointment to see him yesterday!

**LIZ:** I cancelled.

**SUSAN:** (*Disbelieving.*) You cancelled?

**LIZ:** Yes, dear, I cancelled. It's a waste of time and money.

**SUSAN:** But you don't have to pay for it. It's covered by Medicare.

**LIZ:** That may be, but someone has to pay for it. I suppose it's the taxpayers, or maybe the doctors just charge those with private health insurance more so as to cover what they have to write off treating Medicare patients. Anyway, dear, someone pays. You should know by now that there is no such thing as a free lunch.

**SUSAN:** You and Dad earned your health benefits.

**LIZ:** That may be, but it's still no reason to waste them.

**SUSAN:** Waste them? Mom, you and Dad are really sick. You aren't wasting any...

**LIZ:** Your father and I are on borrowed time. Susan, you need to come to terms with the fact that your father and I aren't going to be around much longer.

**SUSAN:** But the doctor said...

**LIZ:** The doctor said that I could expect two to three more months, tops. And that was with increased radiation treatments and upping my meds. I'm so juiced up now, I don't know where I'm at half the time. Now I know what your father must feel like.

**SUSAN:** But...

**LIZ:** But, nothing! I don't want to spend the last few months of my life delirious and puking my guts out. End of discussion.

**SUSAN:** How can you be so selfish?

**LIZ:** Selfish!?

**SUSAN:** Yes, selfish. How can you deprive me and the kids and Dad of a few more months?

**LIZ:** (*Quietly.*) Susie, your father seldom remembers my name anymore. I am sure that he would approve.

**SUSAN:** How can you be so sure?

**LIZ:** I never told you this, but when your father found out he had Alzheimer's, he thought of suicide.

**SUSAN:** *Suicide?* How do you know that? Did he tell you?

**LIZ:** No, he didn't tell me. I found a note he had written.

**SUSAN:** So you don't know if he would actually have gone through with it.

**LIZ:** I feel he would have. The note was very specific.

**SUSAN:** But he never went ahead with it.

**LIZ:** That's because I confronted him with the note and begged him not to. (*LIZ crosses CS and looks over where JACK is sitting.*) There are times now when I regret ever having spoken to him regarding that note.

**SUSAN:** Mom!

**LIZ:** Look at him out there. Do you know where he thinks he is right now?

**SUSAN:** Mom...

**LIZ:** The Grand Canyon. Here's a seventy-five-year-old man, sitting in a backyard in small-town Iowa, and he thinks he's looking out over the rim of the Grand Canyon. When there's a heavy rain and the drainage ditch out there floods, he thinks it's the Colorado River.

**SUSAN:** So what? If that's what makes him happy, then...

**LIZ:** It doesn't make him happy. During the few moments when he comes back to reality, he realizes his mistake and it depresses him. He gets nervous when he can't remember things, and then he gets angry. I hate seeing him like this. He was always my strength.

**SUSAN:** And now you're his.

**LIZ:** That's why I'm taking him on this trip. I want him to look at the real Grand Canyon, not some drainage ditch in a backyard in the middle of Iowa. And I want to be sitting there right next to him when he sees it.

**SUSAN:** You're going to the Grand Canyon?

**LIZ:** We're going to the Grand Canyon...your dad and me.

**SUSAN:** And just how do you plan on getting there?

**LIZ:** I've already got the van loaded. All I have left to pack is this bag and those two old lawn chairs out back.

**SUSAN:** You can't drive all the way to the Grand Canyon! You never drive over two miles...and that's to the doctor's office.

**LIZ:** That doesn't mean that I can't drive farther and to somewhere else...like the Grand Canyon.

**SUSAN:** The Grand Canyon is over one thousand miles from here.

**LIZ:** Twelve hundred.

**SUSAN:** Twelve hundred, Mom?

**LIZ:** I just had the oil changed in the van, and the mechanic said it was in tip-top shape. So there is no reason it won't make it to the Grand Canyon.

**SUSAN:** I'm not worried about the van, Mother.

**LIZ:** And you shouldn't be worried about me and your father, either. (Softer.) Your dad and I have had a good life. We have no regrets. Now, why don't you run out and say hello to your father while I finish packing.

**SUSAN:** Mom...

**LIZ:** Susie, please...

**SUSAN:** He doesn't recognize me anymore. Last time, he thought I was his sister, Aunt Maureen.

**LIZ:** I know. Yesterday, he thought I was his grandmother. He wanted me to bake him some oatmeal cookies. He loved his grandmother's oatmeal cookies.

**SUSAN:** What did you do?

**LIZ:** What did I do? Why, I came into the house and baked up a batch of oatmeal cookies.

**SUSAN:** You didn't?

**LIZ:** (Smiling.) He loved them, too. Good thing I found his grandmother's old recipe. Now, run out and say hello.

**SUSAN:** He's getting worse, isn't he?

**LIZ:** Much worse, dear, it won't be long now...for either of us. But enough of that, we're glad you're here...now, go say hi to your dad.

*SUSAN crosses to JACK. LIZ takes the pill bottle out of HER purse and pops another pill in HER mouth, then grabs the suitcase and HER purse and exits.*

**SUSAN:** Hi, Dad. (JACK turns slightly to face SUSAN, but doesn't say anything.) Dad, do you know who I am?

**JACK:** Maureen?

**SUSAN:** No, Dad. It's me, Susan, your daughter Susan.

**JACK:** Susan's in school today. I hope she doesn't miss the bus again.

**SUSAN:** I'm sure she won't miss the bus, Dad.

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**JACK:** You know my Susie?

**SUSAN:** Yes, I know her.

**JACK:** She's smart. I don't know why she can't find her bus.

**SUSAN:** I'm sure she'll find it all right today.

**JACK:** I hope so.

**SUSAN:** Do you mind if I sit down?

**JACK:** Be careful you don't get too close to the edge.

**SUSAN:** The edge?

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