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IN OTHER WORDS

by Matthew Seager

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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This script went to print during rehearsals, and may differ from
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IN OTHER WORDS was first presented at The Hope Theatre from 28 February to 18 March 2017 with the following cast and creatives:

ARTHUR Matthew Seager
JANE Celeste Dodwell

Producer – Matthew Seager/ Stephanie Withers/ Euan Tyre for Off the Middle
Director – Paul Brotherston
Designer – Paul Brotherston
Assistant Director – Euan Tyre
Stage Manager – Stephanie Withers
Lighting Designer – William Alder
Sound Designer – Iida Aino
Dance Instructor – Romaine Etwaroo

The UK Tour of *In Other Words* ran from 7th February 2019 with the following cast and creatives:

ARTHUR Matthew Seager
JANE Angela Hardie

Producer – Tom Dixon for Off the Middle
Director – Paul Brotherston
Designer – Paul Brotherston
Technical Manager – Fergus Waldron
Lighting Designer – William Alder
Sound Designer – Iida Aino
Dance Instructor – Romaine Etwaroo

In Other Words opened at the Arcola Theatre on 5th September with the following cast and creatives:

ARTHUR Matthew Seager
JANE Lianne Harvey

Producer – Tom Dixon and Matthew seager for TBC Productions.
Director – Andy Routledge
Technical Manager – Fergus Waldron
Lighting Designer – William Alder
Sound Designer – Iida Aino
Dance Instructor – Holly France

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As part of a module in my last year at the University of Leeds I was facilitating ten weeks of sensory stimulation workshops in a care home, Berkeley Court. We would work with residents suffering from dementia on different sensory exercises to see if any had a positive effect in terms of stimulating memories or general well-being. We decided to end each session by playing music. What we experienced was profoundly moving and, in many ways, life-changing for me. Some residents who seemed completely cognitively unaware, distressed and unable to communicate coherently would stand and sing every word to a song they recognised from their childhood or young adult life. The resulting transformation in their mood or ability to remember and communicate was often astounding. It was equally both heartbreaking and beautiful, and resonated with me as a story that needed to be told. Our attempt is *In Other Words*.

There are many charities and organisations doing amazing work to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Music for Dementia and Playlist for Life connect most closely with the topics explored in this play. The benefits of Social Prescribing and music based therapeutic activities is unquestionable and scientifically proven to drastically decrease the need for antipsychotic medication for those living with dementia. The work of these charities holds this belief at its core and I'm eternally grateful both for their support and the work they do to help those living with dementia and their families.

Matthew Seager, 2023

PRODUCTION NOTES

As stated by the Alzheimer's Association, it can be understood that there are seven stages of dementia, with the first being "no impairment" and the last "very severe decline". *In Other Words* loosely follows these criteria.

There are three "states" in this story to be aware of:

State 1: *Narrator state.* This is the world from which Arthur and Jane tell the story. They can jump into other states, but this is our base, the world they inhabit when addressing the audience. They are ageless, timeless versions of themselves. We are in their space. They are able to react to the flashbacks the audience have just seen, and can talk to them directly. We have previously called them "ghost characters" in rehearsal, which is by no means prescriptive but could be useful. Mostly they are relaxed, playful and totally connected when operating in this state.

State 2: *Flashback state.* We replay a scene from Arthur and Jane's life. They can snap back out into State 1 if they want to address the action or talk to the audience, but when in State 2 the fourth wall is up. Actors are expected to use their physicality, along with props, costume and other devices, to portray Arthur and Jane from the ages of around 30 to 80 years old.

State 3: *Dementia state.* These are unpleasant and increasingly disorientating moments in each stage/scene, designed to allow us to step inside Arthur's mind as his Alzheimer's worsens. We used sound and lighting to show Arthur's internal distress, confusion and distraction (including a Shotgun Condenser Microphone to distort the voice live). This increases in volume and abrasiveness as it appears during each scene, at particular moments when Arthur is seemingly becoming unreasonable or less responsive. This sound in each state would be based in the same "white noise" effect, but different, and a direct reaction to the environment Arthur is in at the time. For example, if he is in the street, the sound would be exaggerated with footsteps, the sound of cars, and voices. It is an attempt for us to experience what he is going through, and to allow us to make the connection between what is happening in reality, and how we are seeing him react.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to Stephanie Withers, Euan Tyre, Arts Council England, Fiona Bell and the Bath and NE Somerset Dementia Action Alliance, Sarah Metcalfe and all at Music for Dementia, Berkeley Court care home, University of Leeds, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The Arches, Andy Lowndes, Sarah Metcalfe and all at Playlist for Life, The Alzheimer's Society, The Lyric Hammersmith, Laura Harling, The Dot Collective, The Hope Theatre, Geoffrey Owen, Christ Church & St Stephen Battersea, Eddy Hull, Clare Marcie, Samuel French Publishing and everyone else who has supported Off the Middle's productions.

CHARACTERS

ARTHUR

JANE

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Any specific reference to nationality can be edited to fit the actor playing the role.

Choice of music within the play is changeable subject to consultation with the publishers and author.

Actors of any age are able to play Arthur and Jane.

/ indicates interruption from the next character.

– indicates a self-interruption.

... indicates hesitation or a trailing off of thought.

For Mum, Dad, Lucy, Candy and Christa

*(As the audience enter, **ARTHUR** and **JANE** are in the space. Casual and connected. **ARTHUR** sits and **JANE** moves around. They untie **ARTHUR**'s shoes and lay them by his chair. Eventually, **JANE** places two wine glasses at upstage and downstage corners of the carpeted space.)*

*(On clearance, **ARTHUR** tosses **JANE** her cardigan.)*

*(A song in the style of "That's Life" plays.)**

*(**ARTHUR** and **JANE** age before our eyes. They become old. As **JANE** turns to see **ARTHUR**, the music cuts out and is replaced by a ticking clock.)*

JANE *(as much to herself as to **ARTHUR**)* Right. Shoes.

*(**JANE** walks over to **ARTHUR** and begins to put his shoes on him.)*

Come on, just let me... That's it... I just need to do this so that we can get you ready...

*(She struggles with this for a while. It's tough but familiar. After some time **ARTHUR** coughs and begins to strain and this evidently panics **JANE**.)*

It's OK – don't worry. We'll stop. Please don't... It's OK. Please.

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(**JANE** lowers her head onto **ARTHUR**'s knee, exhausted. A song in the style of "Somewhere Beyond The Sea"* begins to play at the back of our hearing. **ARTHUR** becomes young again and comforts **JANE**. He invites her to dance. They stand. He takes her cardigan off and they begin to dance together.)

(The dance ends with a dip/flourish, they spin off and pick up the glasses from the corner of the space. The music drifts into the background as if playing at a party. **ARTHUR** and **JANE** bump into one another holding drinks.)

State 2:

ARTHUR Oh shit!

JANE Ah! ...Oh my God... (*wiping the drink off her*)

ARTHUR I am so, so sorry!

I can't believe it. I was just on my way to the bar to get a drink and...

Oh my God, you're covered.

JANE Yep.

ARTHUR What were you drinking?

JANE /Red

ARTHUR Oh God, that's going to stain, isn't it?

JANE Yes, I know.

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ARTHUR I don't know what to say. I am so sorry, this was totally my fault/ I wasn't looking where I was going and -

JANE Well, obviously!

ARTHUR Sorry?

JANE Obviously it was your fault.

ARTHUR Oh of course, of course obviously, sorry.

I'm such an idiot!

Look, I'm really, really, really sorry.

(A moment. We snap into State 1 - the music is gone, lighting changes. ARTHUR is addressing the audience.)

So I know what you're thinking...that didn't start well.

JANE No, well you could say that.

ARTHUR And I can admit, you know, it certainly *looks* that way.

JANE *(exasperated)* Oh please, not this again.

ARTHUR But, no, I've said it before and I'll say it again. If I hadn't been so "clumsy", then you probably would have walked straight out that door, wouldn't you? So really it was a good thing, wasn't it? A perfectly calculated and masterfully executed romantic plan.

JANE Christ.

ARTHUR And that was it, you know. I knew. Straight away.

JANE Oh, shut up!

ARTHUR I did know! I mean, I don't know if you can know, you know...immediately. But now, looking back...now I know I knew, you know?

JANE What *are* you talking about.

ARTHUR I mean that I...

Oh I don't know.

(They snap immediately back into flashback, adopting the same pose as before.)

State 2:

Let me get you a cloth, or a...a tissue or something?

JANE No, it's OK, I've got one, I think. *(pulls a tissue from her bra)*

ARTHUR Oh, OK.

Oh, but that's not enough tissue. I mean, for the amount of urmm...

I mean, you'll probably need some more tissue...

I'll just get you some more/ tissue

JANE Don't. It's fine.

ARTHUR OK. Sorry, OK.

Another drink then? Please, at least let me buy you another drink?

JANE Honestly, it's fine. No need.

ARTHUR Come on. I feel absolutely terrible.

Please, It's the least I can do.

(Pause.)

JANE OK then. Yes, fine.

ARTHUR Great, yes. Brilliant. What were you drinking?

(JANE gestures to her top which, although it has nothing on it, to them is 'obviously' covered in red wine.)

Red wine! Red wine, of course. My fault. Red wine.

JANE You can stop saying it's your fault if you like.

ARTHUR Sorry, sorry. You're right.

JANE And sorry.

ARTHUR Right, yes of course. Sorr – I will.

JANE So English of you.

ARTHUR It is, isn't it? I hate that.

JANE Mmmmm.

ARTHUR Are you not, urm, are you not from England then?
Because you're accent, sounds like you are...

JANE No, I am. I'm from Peterborough.

ARTHUR /Oh

JANE I just think our constant need to over apologise for things
we can't change is possibly our most annoying national
pastime.

ARTHUR ...yea, I agree.

Peterborough, though, that's...cool.

JANE Is it?

ARTHUR Yea! Because Peterborough's, urm, Peterborough's got
the.. well its got the/urm.

JANE You've never been to Peterborough have you?

ARTHUR No I don't actually know where it is.

JANE And who are you?

ARTHUR Yes of course. *(he holds out his hand)* Arthur.

JANE *(takes it)* Jane.

ARTHUR Hi.

JANE Hi.

Wine?

ARTHUR Mmm? Oh, wine, wine! Shit, sorry, sorry!

Well, no, I'm...I'm not sorry, because you told me to stop
saying sorry. I mean, of course I am sorry, I'm just not saying
it...apart from now I am.

(Pause. ARTHUR pulls his hand from hers.)

Sweaty hands...

Me, not you.

(Snap out of flashback.)

State 1:

Jesus, was it really that bad? Can I just take this opportunity to say I do not remember it being that bad.

JANE Oh, but it really was.

ARTHUR It really was, wasn't it?

JANE I thought it was all part of the plan?

ARTHUR Well, yeah, of course it was. Just ideally with a bit less..sweating.

Still, it worked though, didn't it?

JANE I suppose it did, somehow.

ARTHUR You see Jane kissed me about two hours later.

JANE We kissed each other.

ARTHUR Yeah "OK", we kissed each other.

JANE We did!

ARTHUR Well, I mean, you went ninety, I went ten.

JANE God you're annoying.

(They fall back into the chairs, snapping into flashback.

JANE *is wearing ARTHUR's jacket, which he gave her to cover up the wine stain. It is later in the same evening. They are getting on. ARTHUR has seemingly recovered from his previous awkwardness and is more confident.)*

(JANE is laughing.)

State 2:

JANE My sister would KILL me if I did that!

ARTHUR Well mine did try actually. Yea, you see this scar? She picked up this huge rock out of the sea and threw it at my head.

JANE Huge rock? I thought you said she was only eight?

ARTHUR Well, yea ok, small pebble.

JANE Right.

ARTHUR But there was blood everywhere. It was actually very traumatic.

JANE Well, it sounds like you deserved it.

ARTHUR Oh come on, don't tell me that's not funny.

JANE Yea, OK it's funny, I'll give you that.

(JANE laughs again.)

ARTHUR Also, I think I've done it.

JANE Done what?

ARTHUR Yea, I've definitely figured it out.

JANE What? you've lost me.

ARTHUR The number of drinks I needed to buy for you to forgive me and forget about the... *(he gestures to her top)* incident.

JANE The incident... I like it.

ARTHUR Thanks.

JANE Mysterious.

ARTHUR Yes, well, that's me.

JANE Oh, is it really?

ARTHUR Yeah. Can't you tell?

JANE No comment. And I hadn't forgotten.

ARTHUR Yes you had.

JANE No I hadn't. I was...temporarily distracted.

ARTHUR I'll take it.

JANE And it's only because you said the jacket covers it.

ARTHUR I said it looks like part of the top. It's...stylish, you know. I know about these things.

JANE Stylish *and* mysterious.

(They laugh.)

Well, you're wrong then. About the number of drinks.

ARTHUR Am I?

JANE Yes. It's one more.

ARTHUR Then I'm forgiven?

JANE Then you're forgiven.

ARTHUR Deal.

(ARTHUR offers his hand to shake on it and JANE puts her empty glass in it. ARTHUR gets up and walks towards the bar.)

JANE Be careful carrying those.

ARTHUR I promise.

JANE *(Mockingly doing an impression of ARTHUR)* Sweaty hands!

ARTHUR *(embarrassed)* Very funny.

(He laughs. She laughs.)

(Definitely a moment.)

(A song in the style of “Fly Me To The Moon”^{*} has come on in the background. They finish laughing and share a moment in silence, enough for us to hear the song and enjoy it.)

First will...you, I mean, do you want to...urmm...

It's just...I love this song, you know, and it feels a lot like I want to ask/ so I was just –

JANE Ah God, me too!

ARTHUR What?

JANE Love this song.

ARTHUR Oh, great! Yeah it's...it's great, isn't it?

Do you want to dance with me?

JANE ...Absolutely

ARTHUR Oh...right...good...

*(They dance – they enjoy the song. **ARTHUR** spins her as a bit of a joke. When they re-embrace they are closer. The music begins to get louder as **JANE** moves closer to kiss **ARTHUR**. Just as they are about to kiss they snap out of flashback.)*

State 1:

I told you! I told you. You went nintey, and I went ten!

JANE Oh my – you are unbelievable.

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ARTHUR And actually, it was then. That's when I knew. Not earlier, not when I said it earlier. It was then...that moment.

JANE Yeah OK. Me too.

(They kiss.)

ARTHUR I think that sometimes you really can just be in the right place, at the right time, you know.

(To audience) And that song, at a moment like that...

(To her) We didn't stand a chance.

(They embrace and spin out in a dance move with extension. Background music snaps in. JANE is putting on earrings, ARTHUR is reading the paper.)*

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