



Vigil

Morris Panych

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Since Morris Panych's classic black comedy *Vigil* premiered in 1996, it has been produced throughout North America, the United Kingdom, and Europe, including a 2009 Off-Broadway production, which opened to rave reviews, a run as *Auntie & Me* in London and, in 2011, shows at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles and the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, where Panych directed Academy Award–winner Olympia Dukakis opposite Marco Barricelli in the lead role.

This updated edition incorporates changes to scenes and dialogue that have been part of the play's evolution over the past fifteen years, as well as a new playwright's note.

Vigil is about a man returning – after thirty years – to sit with a female relative on her deathbed. Kemp, the protagonist, is an extremely self-centered and shallow person who uses acid wit and seemingly callous indifference to cover up the profound discomfort he experiences upon finding himself part of a deathwatch. Kemp's problem is: she's not dying fast enough. Through Kemp's own errors and inattentiveness, the visit that he thinks will take a day or two stretches into a year, and he finds himself caring for his long-forgotten aunt Grace against his will. Gallows humor and Kemp's diatribes on humanity and mortality fuel this delightfully dark narrative, but it is Grace's economical contributions to the dialogue (she's a woman of few words) that give this play its weight and profundity. A play of mistaken identity, twisted circumstance and surprising turns, it is deliciously absurd, incredibly funny and poignantly tender. This is one *Vigil* worth keeping.

Cast of 1 woman and 1 man.

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