

Nobody Wants My Old Organs

by

Heldor Schäfer

with the company of players of Target Theatre

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©2004 by Victoria Target Theatre Society
1728 Douglas Street
Victoria, BC
Canada V8W 2G7

target@islandnet.com
www.islandnet.com/target

Tel.: 250-477-6054

Characters

MOLLY	Clara's mother
CLARA	Molly's daughter
GLADYS	golf ball collector
MARCEL	golfer, Rodney's friend
RODNEY	golfer, Marcel's friend
YVONNE	golfer, doctor, Marcel's ex-wife
ED	refreshment stand vendor
SAMANTHA	clubhouse bartender
ALICE	clubhouse patron

Act I

The setting: A park bench along a trail on the periphery of a public golf course, near the thirteenth green.

1

Enter Clara and Molly walking on the trail.

MOLLY

Lovely out here, isn't it?

CLARA

Uh-huh.

MOLLY

It's been ages. A mother and a daughter ought to stay in touch.

CLARA

We always invite you over at Christmas.

MOLLY

Yes, but—

CLARA

And on your birthday.

MOLLY

Hm.

CLARA

And I check in on you almost every week.

MOLLY

Phone calls don't count.

CLARA

Mother, don't do this. Don't try and lay another guilt trip on me, okay?

MOLLY

We used to have real conversations when Dad was still around. We'd walk and talk for hours.

CLARA

That was another lifetime. "Come on, girls, let's get some fresh air... some exercise." God, how I hated it when he started like that.

MOLLY

He only wanted the best for us. Do things as a family.

CLARA

Well, that was then. Now what's *your* reason for dragging me out here? Must be important—all that secrecy on the phone—rendezvous at the golf club.

MOLLY

It's free parking... And we can walk around the whole golf course.

CLARA

You didn't join up, did you?

MOLLY

You don't have to be a member; it's a public trail. We can walk and talk without having to whack a silly little ball around. I go for a walk almost every day now. Get the old body back in shape... You want to sit down?

CLARA

I thought you wanted to walk.

MOLLY

Look, there's a refreshment stand.

CLARA

What happened to "getting into shape"?

2

Enter Ed. He opens the refreshment stand.

MOLLY

Clara, I wanted to talk to you about something that—

CLARA

(To Ed.)

Excuse me.

ED

Yes, ma'am?

CLARA

We won't get hit by any stray balls here?

ED

I hope not.

CLARA

But you're not certain.

ED

If I'm wrong, there's always plenty of lawyers playing this course...
and doctors.

CLARA

Just what we need—a smart ass.

MOLLY

Relax, Clara.

ED

Besides, this is the thirteenth green—lucky number.

MOLLY

Clara, I... I have made a decision.

CLARA

Uh-huh?

MOLLY

About something that's really important to me.

CLARA

Let me guess. You'll join a religious commune and give away all
your money.

MOLLY

Clara, please!

CLARA

Sorry, but I just had a flashback—the time you wanted to go to
Calcutta and join Mother Theresa.

MOLLY

You know I came down with the chicken pox...

CLARA

Uh-huh.

MOLLY

Besides, that was thirty-three years ago, when you left us... left home.

CLARA

I was nineteen then. Did you expect me to stay forever?

MOLLY

(Pause.)

I'm going to be an organ donor.

CLARA

You're what?!

MOLLY

Donate my organs.

CLARA

Are you doing this to get back at me?

MOLLY

Clara, why does everything I do have to have something to do with you?

CLARA

Because it usually does.

MOLLY

This is something I want to do.

ED

(Cheerfully.)

Care for anything from the "bar"?

MOLLY

You give blood.

CLARA

That's totally different.

ED

Coffee? Juice?

MOLLY

Let them use my organs—my heart, my liver, lungs, kidney—

ED

Donuts! Hot dogs!

CLARA

Will you shut up! I can't hear myself think!

MOLLY

Excuse my daughter, sir, she's a bit agitated.

CLARA

Mother, I'm not agitated!

MOLLY

I can always tell, when you call me "Mother."

ED

No worries, ma'am. I get that every day—people cussing at me when things don't go their way. They miss a putt and it's because I make too much noise unwrapping the sandwiches or pouring coffee. People always blame somebody else when they mess up.

MOLLY

Well, we won't do that. In fact, why don't you pour us a couple of cups right now. I think my daughter could use one.

CLARA

Are you finished with him?

MOLLY

Yes.

CLARA

Mother, you don't think these things through. You get these ideas in your head and you go run with it like there's no tomorrow.

MOLLY

What is there to think about? I'll be dead and someone can live with the things I don't need. You can have my fine china; let somebody else have something else of mine. I don't need any of it.

CLARA

I don't want your bloody china!

MOLLY

I should have gone to Calcutta.

CLARA

You would have felt pretty guilty with Dad getting sick all of a sudden.

MOLLY

I mean after. After he died. I should have gone then. Could have helped a lot of people.

CLARA

You helped him.

MOLLY

You know how many people can use organs and other parts from one body? More than fifty. Fifty people who've got something wrong with them can benefit from my body when I'm dead.

CLARA

This is getting morbid. *(To Ed.)* I think I'll have a hot dog.

ED

What do you want on it?

CLARA

Everything.

ED

Mustard?

CLARA

Mustard, mayo, ketchup, onions, dills, lettuce, tomato, the works.

3

Enter Gladys carrying a big, empty net bag.

GLADYS

Hi, Ed.

ED

Hullo, Glad, how's business?

GLADYS

I'm just getting underway.

ED

So am I.

CLARA

Mom, I hope you are kidding about this... this organ thing.

MOLLY
No I'm dead serious.

GLADYS
Somebody die?

MOLLY
I beg your pardon?

GLADYS
That's what happens when you get old. Friends dropping like flies.
And before you turn your head you know more dead people than
live ones.

CLARA
Nobody died.

GLADYS
Glad to hear it.

CLARA
But my mother here, she figures that—

MOLLY
Clara!

ED
Here's your hot dog, ma'am.

GLADYS
Nice to meet you. Name is Gladys, but my friends call me Glad.
Probably on account of my sunny disposition.

ED
At this point in the conversation you're supposed to say,
"Glad to meet you... Glad."

GLADYS
That's old Ed—a real wisecracker.

MOLLY
I'm Molly.

CLARA
Gladys, what's your take on organ transplants?

GLADYS
What are you talking about—you don't plant an organ, you play it.

CLARA

No, donating your heart or your lungs or your—
(*To Molly.*)

What else do they take out?

GLADYS

You must be joking, if I gave my heart away, I'd be six feet under...
or in love.

MOLLY

Wouldn't you allow doctors to use your organs after you're dead—
for someone who needs them?

GLADYS

Naw, I say when your parts have given up the ghost, then your
time has come. Take the hint, accept what's happening to you, and
move on.

MOLLY

But suppose it's family. Your daughter, for example, is very sick
with diabetes and she needs a... a something or other...

ED

A kidney transplant.

GLADYS

Ha! The daughter took off when she was sixteen and I haven't
heard from her since.

MOLLY

Yes, I know how you feel there. Same thing happened—

CLARA

No you don't! It wasn't the same at all!

MOLLY

Gladys, what about seeing a little child sick? Wouldn't you want to
help by giving her one of your organs?

ED

You're going to be dead anyway; may as well let someone who
needs it—

GLADYS

Like I told you, you've got to die of something, so why steal from
somebody else?

ED

Gladys, you're hopeless!

GLADYS

Damn right it's hopeless.

MOLLY

Here is a pamphlet; it'll help clear up the misconceptions you obviously have. And if you change your mind, there's a donor form inside. All you do is fill it out and send it in.

CLARA

So now you're recruiting people, too?

GLADYS

Yeah, Molly, what's in it for you?

MOLLY

Maybe there are some things you do just because you can make a difference. Maybe I feel for all those people who have a wonky liver or kidneys or a heart that's doesn't pump on all cylinders anymore, people who are waiting for somebody to save their life.

GLADYS

You mean they're waiting for you to kick the bucket so they can grab a spare part for themselves.

MOLLY

Listen, in this province about one hundred and fifty people die every year waiting for one of those spare parts. They never make it. And you know why? Because the rest of us—people like you and me and my daughter here—we don't do what it takes to help. There have been surveys that found ninety percent of all people say they would give an organ to someone who needs it. That's nine out of ten in favour! We have the best of intentions, except we never get around to signing one of those bloody donor forms.

GLADYS

How do we know they're not going to jump the gun and start taking something out before you're dead?

MOLLY

Give me a break!

CLARA

She's right. What if you're in hospital, and they're trying to decide

whether or not to give you some form of treatment, and they know you're an organ donor, and there's somebody on the next floor waiting for a lung or a heart or—

MOLLY

You've been reading too many Stephen King novels. They don't go around collecting organs from people who are still alive.

GLADYS

I bet they're gonna try—especially at our age. They'll think, "If we don't pluck 'em soon they'll be past their due date. So better make it quick."

MOLLY

Come on, you have to believe just a little in the integrity of our medical system here. We're not living in the dark ages, or some out-of-the-way country—

CLARA

Mother, she does have a point.

MOLLY

She's paranoid—thinking someone is going to come along and take out her bits and pieces while she's collecting golf balls.

GLADYS

I guess you haven't heard about this fellow—travelling salesman. Meets this dish of a woman in a pub. They hit it off. Next thing he knows he wakes up in a motel in a bath tub full of ice cubes. Looks up and sees something written in lipstick on the mirror. It reads, "Thanks for the kidney." When he feels around, there are stitches that cover a cut, yea long... right about here.

ED

Is that for real?

MOLLY

You don't believe that?!

GLADYS

Seen it myself—in the papers at the supermarket checkout. Front page.

ED

Must be true then.

GLADYS

Even had a picture of his scar.

MOLLY

Good grief!

GLADYS

Yeah, that woman stole his heart and his kidney all in one fell swoop.

Clara has a hard time controlling her laughter.

MOLLY

That isn't funny. It's pathetic—people actually believing in such—

GLADYS

What I think is that the doctors had better put on their thinking caps and find a better way to cure things without carving bits and pieces out of us.

CLARA

I'll drink to that!

ED

Well, I have to get a few more supplies...

GLADYS

Yeah, I've got to get on, too; life don't live itself!

(Exits.)

MOLLY

I didn't know there still are people like that around.

ED

Yeah, Gladys she's got a unique outlook on life.

(Exits.)

MOLLY

It sounded rather silly to me... and selfish.

4

MARCEL

(Enters carrying a golf putter.)

Good morning, ladies.

MOLLY

Hello.

CLARA

Hi.

MARCEL

Don't ever take up this game.

CLARA

Bad day?

MARCEL

No, not at all. I'm doing fine. New record for me. Seventy-two.

CLARA

Is that good?

MOLLY

Are you kidding? It's great! Seventy-two! That's par for the course, as the saying goes... Isn't it?

MARCEL

Well, it would be; but that's my score so far. Five more holes.

RODNEY

(Enters.)

Hey, Marcel, what's the rush?

MARCEL

First one at the green gets to rest the longest.

Enter Yvonne.

RODNEY

Go ahead, Yvonne.

YVONNE

(Gets ready to putt.)

Okay, Marcel, catch me if you can.

MARCEL

To Yvonne everything is a contest.

YVONNE

(Makes her putt.)

Ooh. That one pulled a little too much.

MARCEL

(Sarcastic.)

Nice job, Yvonne. From the rough to the rougher.

YVONNE

I told you I'm out of practice.

MARCEL

Could have used a scalpel, the way you slice that ball.

CLARA

Did he say scalpel?

MOLLY

Who? I wasn't listening.

CLARA

Maybe they're getting ready for your organs.

MOLLY

Don't be ridiculous!

MARCEL

Pardon?

MOLLY

Not you. I was talking to my daughter.

MARCEL

That's your daughter? No way. You don't look old enough to have a daughter of—let me guess—forty, forty-one?

MOLLY

Oh you.

(Shows Clara her donor form.)

Here I've filled this out.

CLARA

What's that?

MOLLY

My organ donor form.

CLARA

You are serious about this, aren't you?

MOLLY

Do you know how few people donate their organs in this country? Just fourteen organ transplants per million. It's incredible! That isn't even one out of all the people walking around this entire golf course. Not one person that you'll see on this golf course is going to give up an organ. Not one of them.

CLARA

And so you have to.

YVONNE

(To Molly.)

You're going to be an organ donor?

MOLLY

(Guarded.)

Yes.

YVONNE

That's wonderful!

CLARA

Well, I wouldn't hold my breath.

RODNEY

Marcel, you're up.

Marcel crosses to his ball. He takes his time.

MOLLY

Clara, I'm not doing it now. But they can have anything they want when I'm gone.

CLARA

What do you mean, "gone"?

MOLLY

As in dead and gone.

CLARA

That's ridiculous.

MOLLY

Why? They won't do me any good then.

CLARA

Or anybody else. You're seventy-three now. Nobody will want your old organs.

RODNEY

Okay, Marcel, give it your best shot... for a change.

MARCEL

What's the rush? No one else behind us.

RODNEY

Just because it's seniors day, you don't have to play like you're a hundred and five.

MARCEL

Yeah, that'll be my score the way things are going today.

YVONNE

Actually, it isn't so much your age that's important.

MARCEL

Says who?

YVONNE

You concentrate on your game, partner. I was talking to the lady here.

MOLLY

Molly.

YVONNE

Yvonne.

(They shake hands.)

The age of the donor doesn't matter as much as what shape your organs are in.

MOLLY

See?

YVONNE

There have been some pretty old donors.

CLARA

Really. How old is old?

YVONNE

How about ninety-two?

MOLLY

Seriously?

YVONNE

That's the oldest liver transplant in this country so far—from a ninety-two-year-old man.

CLARA

How come you know all that?

MARCEL
My wife is a surgeon.

YVONNE
Ex!

CLARA
Ex-wife or ex-surgeon?

YVONNE
Both.

RODNEY
But as you can see they're still the best of friends. Except they won't be for much longer if Marcel doesn't hit that ball before supper time.

MARCEL
Okay, okay.

CLARA
(To Yonne.)
Well, you may know your medicine, but you don't know my mother.

Marcel makes the putt.

YVONNE
I think it's a beautiful, selfless act.

RODNEY
Yeah, nice one, Marcel. Straight down the—

MARCEL
Get in there... Argh!

RODNEY
Tough luck, Marcel.

YVONNE
There would be less suffering in the world if more people did what your mother is doing.

CLARA
I'm sorry, but all I hear is another idea of what she's going to do next, and nothing ever comes of it.

(To Molly.)

What was it last year? The Foster Parents Plan? And the year before that it was Amnesty International.

MOLLY

I didn't have time to write all those letters.

CLARA

And if you should actually get around to enlist, or whatever they have you do—

MOLLY

You make it sound like the army. All you do is fill out this form that says you want to donate your organs.

YVONNE

And bone and tissue.

CLARA

What, they're going to peel off her skin too? That's gross!

YVONNE

You're not going to get scalped. Donated skin is as thin as a sunburn peel when it's removed. In fact, skin grafts are the most life-saving transplants of them all.

MARCEL

Yvonne is on her soap box again.

RODNEY

Leave her be. I know people who are damn lucky that we can do all that stuff nowadays.

MARCEL

Oh, right, you used to be a fire chief, didn't you?

RODNEY

Some of the things I've seen in my days were not pretty. If it wasn't for skin grafts, I tell you... Well, here we go.

(He addresses his putt.)

YVONNE

There is other kind of tissue too. How about donated heart valves to help infants with birth defects. And tendons and ligaments to repair damage to the knee and the shoulder...

MARCEL

(To Rodney.)

I don't want to put you off your swing, but...

RODNEY

But what?

MARCEL

You look a bit uncomfortable. The way you're standing there—you look a bit pinched. Maybe you need a few of those tendons and ligaments.

RODNEY

Watch this... and eat your heart out. *(Makes his putt.)* There.

YVONNE

Look at that.

MARCEL

Straight in! See that, Yvonne? That's how it's done.

RODNEY

Yvonne—all that stuff about filling out a form and registering... It used to be you just put a sticker on your driver's license to say you want to be an organ donor.

YVONNE

I'm afraid that isn't enough any longer. The system has become more complex these last few years.

RODNEY

Someone in government needed more paper to shuffle around?

YVONNE

It is actually quite efficient. They'll input your health number—it's all computerized now of course—and they can see immediately if you have registered as a donor.

RODNEY

They don't waste any time, do they?

YVONNE

Can't afford to. When you're dead, your organs can only survive a short time—the kidneys nine hours, and the heart only three hours.

CLARA

Don't the relatives have any say in all this?

YVONNE

Sad story is, if you didn't register as a donor, then somebody will have to ask the family. A lot of nurses and doctors are reluctant to do that, when your loved one has just died.

CLARA

Not that I can blame them.

YVONNE

That's why it's so important to communicate, to tell your family what your wishes are. You don't just send in the form and forget about it.

MOLLY

(To Clara.)

There, you see?

CLARA

Yeah, and as soon as you've registered—if you ever get around to it—you'll think of something else, like donating your entire body to science or... or—

YVONNE

Yes, that's one of the options. There at the bottom—

CLARA

No way!

MOLLY

Well, how else are they going to make any progress in medical science?

CLARA

And who is they? A bunch of students practising? Cutting up corpses?

Enter Ed.

YVONNE

You decide what's to be done with your body. You can even write down which specific organs may or may not be taken.

RODNEY

(Sings.)

Take back your heart/I ordered liver;/Make that with onions/if you are the giver...