

VIRGINIA
a one-minute play by David Hilder

(VIRGINIA, a woman of perhaps late middle age, stands center stage, in a one-piece swimsuit with a sash reading her name across it – sort of like a Miss America contestant circa 1982. She holds a cigarette and a lighter, but looks unsure what to do with them. A and B stand as far from her as they can be on the stage. Possibly they are far from each other, too. VIRGINIA cannot hear A or B. In fact, it's unclear what she can hear, if anything.)

Poor Old Girl. A

Just look at her. B

At war with herself. A

Can't make up her mind. B

Old or new? A

Urbane hostess or country charmer? B

To smoke or not to smoke? A

That is the question. B

And all the foolish pride. A

Yes, exactly! B

Pride in what? A

Her History. B

She should be more modest. A

B

But she can't. There's the rub.

A

Stop quoting Hamlet.

B

Sorry.

(VIRGINIA throws the lighter away, suddenly vivacious! But she can't bear to get rid of the cigarette. Perhaps she can't – it might be literally stuck to her.)

A

Maybe she can...what's it called...repurpose herself. Grow soybeans?

B

Corn for ethanol?

(VIRGINIA still struggles with trying to throw the stubborn cigarette away. She fails again and again, and ultimately decides she doesn't care. She retrieves her lighter, returns to her original position, and seems not to remember what has just happened. Once again, she can't figure out whether or not to light the cigarette.)

A

Smoking is dead in America.

B

(a correction) Dying.

A

Dying, then.

B

Yeah, but there's still China.

A

Right. If it's cool to wear Levi's...

B

...imagine how cool it is to smoke!

(Though VIRGINIA has not heard them, she seems at last to figure out what she's doing, and she lights her cigarette. She inhales deeply. On her exhale, all three sigh audibly and contently. A and B look at each other as the lights fade to black.)