

Dearie
a short play

Sandra Perlman

2 w.

On a Sunday afternoon an elderly woman shares her life secret with the nurse who cares for her.

CHARACTERS

NURSIE.....Nurse in retirement home

FLORENCE....Elderly woman

TIME

Present

SETTING

The atrium of a nursing home

AT RISE:

An elderly woman in a robe sits
staring in a shaft of sunlight when
her Nurse comes and breaks into the
light.

NURSIE
And how are we today, dearie?

FLORENCE
We, or me?

NURSIE
We're looking so much better, don't you think?

FLORENCE
Better than what? Is that what you think?

NURSIE
We're looking so much better all the time.

FLORENCE
My watch is broken.
See. No face at all.

NURSIE
Would we like a walk in the sun now dearie?
Would we like a nice long walk in the sun?

FLORENCE
I would like to walk, not ride, but the tide is too strong
for anything so long as a walk in the sun.

NURSIE
A nice warm bath would do us both some good.

(NURSIE brings in a white bowl of water. Slowly
she begins to wash FLORENCE's feet.)

See, if you close your eyes you can hear the sound of the
ocean.

FLORENCE
But the tide is too strong and my shoes are already wet.

(NURSIE takes a big book out of her bag and sits
down next to FLORENCE)

NURSIE
Better yet, let's read ourselves a story.
(NURSIE (cont'd)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(NURSIE begins reading nonsense syllables "Da-DAH-Da-DAH Da-DAH" in a singsong speech pattern like a nursery rhyme throughout FLORENCE's speech)

FLORENCE

I heard the story on my watch face yesterday.
I heard the story on the face of time.
There is no story I have not heard
though my voice is weak and my eyes are blind.

NURSIE

Better yet, let's tell a story about ourselves. "Once upon a time when the bears were three"... (pause) Once upon a time Florence, when the bears were three? Damn it Florence once upon a time when the bears were three what happened?

FLORENCE

The little girl ate the porridge.

NURSIE

Excellent. Now can you remember what happened next?

FLORENCE

They ate the little girl and forgot her name.

NURSIE

Florence!

FLORENCE

...and forgot her name.

NURSIE

Well personally I am shocked.

FLORENCE

So was she.

NURSIE

That's not the nice story we all know at all.

FLORENCE

But it's true.

NURSIE

Tell us the nice story we all want to remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLORENCE

The boy was in blue and his face was all gone.
The boy was in brown and his face was all blue.
The boy was dead and no one remembered his name.

NURSIE

No, no, no, Florence that story is not the nice story we all want to remember.

FLORENCE

But it's true.

NURSIE

Come, come, you know the truth is not what we want to remember at all. Especially on Sunday.

(NURSIE takes out a camera)

Even our Lord needs a day of rest.

FLORENCE

There will be no rest today. No way.

NURSIE

Let's give us a big smile! Click! Click! Click! And some food to keep our strength up.

FLORENCE

Fix the smile on my face if you want one.

NURSIE

A big smile and a piece of pie will do the trick.

FLORENCE

My strength is up and my face is turning inside out.

NURSIE

Your guests will be arriving soon.
Just one more smile, Florence. Please?
Click! Click! Click!

FLORENCE

Fix the smile on my face and pull the plug I say.

NURSIE

But we're looking so much better all the time.

FLORENCE

Time? For what? Time to go. Pull the plug I say. If you love me pull the plug.

NURSIE

Of course I love you Florence. We all love you. Now fix your smile, here, here, your guests will be arriving soon.
Click! Click! Click!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FLORENCE

No boy in the ditch anymore.

NURSIE

Some flowers will brighten this room. And your mood.

FLORENCE

Not the boy with the lunchbox full of peanut butter and jelly.

NURSIE

Some flowers for color.

FLORENCE

No husband flatiron face in the tomb next to mine.
Only the boy and the ditch and the death and the time.

NURSIE

It's Sunday and your guests will be arriving soon.
Click! Click! Click!

FLORENCE

Too late. Three days too late.

NURSIE

We're looking so much better all the time. Smile!

FLORENCE

My watch is broken and the tide is in.

NURSIE

Click.

FLORENCE

Listen to me. Just once listen to me to the end.
Then pull the plug and watch my face run out.
It's too late for smiles or Click! Click! Click!
No Sunday visitors to watch me say good-bye.
Time stopped when the boy's breath ran out.
Time ended when I let him go alone.
So listen to my story and don't tell me tales of
children or wolves or the danger out there.
It wasn't the wolf who split the boy in two.
I saw the boy in the ditch and the one who left him.
I remember the frost on his lips and the blue of his eyes.
I was there but I didn't scream out.
I didn't do anything and that is my sin.
I have lived with my silence long enough.
I confess to the crime by the man called John who
killed the son we called Ben.
I didn't do anything then and that is the sin
and the sum of my life.
I have lived with the silence of his death

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FLORENCE

ten times longer than he walked the earth.
Now I am tired. I want to sleep without red eyes.
I pray the boy sleeps soundly in God's sweet arms
and hope John waits in hell to hold mine.
I was afraid of him once. But that's no excuse.
I didn't make the boy afraid.
And that's no excuse.
If the dead can judge the living then let them all
raise their hands now.
If you love me turn the other cheek and let me dance away.
If you hate me, pull the plug quickly and be done. Now.
CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

BLACK OUT

END OF PLAY