



ALZHEIMER'S
BY
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Extract
A SMITH SCRIPT

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Alzheimer's

A One Act Play

Rose's husband has Alzheimer's disease. She loves him dearly but is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with him and her own turbulent emotions

Simple black set, two chairs and small occasional table.

Characters:

Frank: suffering from late stage Alzheimer's disease

Rose: his wife

(Music Chopin's Raindrop Prelude just before curtain up. Black set with an armchair centre stage, occasional table to the right of it and a hard backed chair to the left. Spot slowly up to illuminate the armchair containing an elderly man Frank, unshaven, wearing pyjama bottoms, one slipper and a cardigan wrongly buttoned. He is wearing a

Guinness flat cap. He stares blankly ahead. Music slowly down to silence. Spot on Frank slowly down whilst lights to full stage slowly up. Enter stage right Rose, Frank's wife a little younger than her husband, well groomed, well dressed. She is carrying a shopping bag)

Rose: Frank! I told you to wait for me **(Frank turns his head to the sound of her voice)** I told you I would only be half an hour. I can't leave you for a moment can I. What are we going to do with you.

(Puts bag down and goes to him)

Rose: Look at you. What do you look like? Let's sort this out shall we? You haven't done it quite right have you love. All thumbs hmm? Not easy when your fingers won't go where you want them to is it. Never mind, we'll soon sort it out. It's not the first time is it. I'm sure it won't be the last.

(Proceeds to unbutton and lovingly re button his cardigan, talking as she does so)

Rose: Remember where we bought this love? Blackpool, one of those little shops on the sea front. The first holiday we had alone together after Julie was old enough to look out for herself. Thought it was never going to happen didn't we. Thought she was going to be living with us forever. Still, she found herself a fella didn't she; he's alright, Robert isn't he? Bit dominating perhaps, what do you think hmmm? Just wish we could see a bit more of her

(Looks into the distance as she remembers)

Rose: That hotel in Blackpool, do you remember love? The Imperial wasn't it? Romantic. Very romantic. The four poster bed, spent more time in that than on the sea front. **(Chuckles)** Like a second honeymoon wasn't it, not that we had much of a first honeymoon, what with money being so tight. All those illuminations; the fairground, candyfloss, cockles, snuggling together under the umbrella not caring a damn about the rain. Laughing in its face. **(Turns back to her husband)** look at you, you don't need your hat on, it's not raining now. Shall we take it off?

(Attempts to take the cap off, Frank slams his hand to his head, holding the cap on and at the same time doubling over so that his head is almost on his knees)

Rose: *Alright love!* You can leave it on. It's ok, I won't take it off. It's a lovely cap and I know you like it. Got it at the Guinness factory didn't we. On that trip to Dublin. I love Dublin and the Irish don't you? Begosh and begorra

(Frank starts to rock to and fro Rose holds him and rocks back and forth with him)

Rose: It's alright, I didn't mean it. Come on Frankie, it's ok, it's ok. Come on love sit up for me. Please. Come on darling, you're heavy for me now. Please Frank help me, sit back.

(She attempts to sit him up. He struggles with her and becomes very agitated finally throwing out an arm and knocking her quite violently to the floor.)

Rose: Frank! Why do you do that? God knows I'm trying to help you. Nobody else seems to want to.

(She gets herself up and kneels down in front of him, gently lifts his face in her hands and looks him in the eyes)

Rose: Frank? There was no need for that. It's me, Rosie, your little Rosie. Remember me? Your sweetheart?

(Kisses him on the head. He stops rocking and slowly sits up, watching Rose all the time. In a rare moment of comprehension he puts out a hand and touches her cheek. She covers his hand with her own)

Rosie: That's it! That's right darling, it's me, Rosie, your little Rosie. Look at me darling, Frankie please, look at me!

(His hand drops away and he slumps back into the armchair. Rose puts her head into her hands momentarily, before standing)

Rose: You were there then weren't you? That was my old Frankie wasn't it? **(She gently touches his cheek)** You must be hungry; I'll get you some breakfast, find your other slipper and some socks. We don't want you to be cold now do we?

(Exits stage right taking her shopping bag. Frank rocks for a bit and looks around wringing his hands. He tries to lift his leg without the slipper so that he can see it because it is cold and he cannot understand why. As he does so he inches closer and closer to the edge of the armchair until he slides off and falls to the floor his hat falls off. He cries out in fear. Rose runs in from stage right)

Rose: What's wrong! Oh Frankie, Frankie. What are you trying to do? God Frankie, why are you doing this to me? What am I to do with you?

(Helps him back onto the chair with great difficulty as he is unable to help himself much. She talks as she is struggling with him)

Rose: You must be careful love. We don't want any broken bones now do we? When you get old like us bones are easily broken then what would we do? Hmm? You'd have to go to hospital and you wouldn't like that now would you? Your Rosie couldn't help you there. It would be the nurses. Still, perhaps you'd like that, nice young nurses. You always had an eye for a uniform didn't you? **(Having got him back on the chair she picks up his cap and replaces it on his head)** There, let's keep the rain off. Now then, let's get you some breakfast shall we? Your favourite, cornflakes. Remember you used to eat two bowls sometimes? The kids used to call you Mr. Kellogg! Now you just sit there and I'll bring it to you. Don't move now Frankie, promise me.

(Exits stage right. Frank looks around the room, his right hand starts tapping his knee involuntarily as he becomes more and more nervous. He starts to rock to and fro. Rose

enters stage right with a tray containing a bowl of cornflakes, a cloth, a spoon, one slipper and a pair of socks)

Rose: It's alright sweetheart, it's alright. I'm back now with your cornflakes

(Puts the slipper, socks and cornflakes on the occasional table, picks up the cloth and gently, lovingly puts it around Frank's neck)

Rose: There we are sweetie, don't want to mess that lovely cardigan up do we now? Not all the way from Blackpool hmmm?

(Picks up the cornflakes, spoon, sits in the hard chair and commences feeding Frank with the spoon. Throughout, he constantly dribbles and spits the food out. Rose talks to him all the time)

Rose: Maybe Julie will come visit today hmmm? Be nice to see her won't it; been so long since she came. Still, she's a good girl. I know we've had our ups and downs but don't all mothers and daughters? Please don't dribble love, come on open your mouth a bit wider.

You'd think she would pop into see us though wouldn't you though. Do you remember the doll's house? The one we bought her for Christmas and you spent most of Christmas Eve trying to figure out how to put it together? We did laugh didn't we!

Still, maybe she'll pop in today? What do you think? Should I give her a ring in a minute?

Come on Frankie, open your mouth, you must eat darling though God knows why; there's nothing left upstairs to tell you to enjoy it.

Try not to dribble love.

(She reaches out to wipe his mouth with a corner of the cloth. Frank suddenly flails out his arm and knocks the bowl of cornflakes out of Rose's hands onto the floor. She jumps up, wiping herself down)

Rose: Frank! Don't do that, there's no need for that. Now look at the mess you've made on the floor. I have to clean it up you know, there's nobody else, only me.

(Stands with her head in her hands for a few moments. There is a muffled sob before she looks at him again)

Rose: It's like looking after a child. I'm going to get a mop and bucket so you just sit still.

(Rose exits stage right, Frank gazes around in bewilderment and starts to hum tunelessly to himself. Rose returns stage right with a mop and bucket)

Rose: Are you singing Frankie, you used to sing to me. Do you remember? You and your guitar.

(Starts to mop up the mess)

Rose: Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, the Seekers. You used to sing so well. Bonfire nights; fireworks, baked potatoes, wine by the boxful you and your guitar. Sing-a-longs 'til the early hours; all the neighbours. The children. Those were lovely times, lovely times.

(She stops and looks at him)

Rose: Now look at you. A little boy again. Not the little boy I knew and loved though. What happened my darling? Why you? Why me? Why us?

(Recommences mopping, Frank watches her, a glimmer of understanding in his eyes)

Rose: How can life be so cruel, to take away so much. So much love and goodness. If there is a God, he's a strange one.

Frank: Rosie?

(Rose drops the mop and turns to him)

Rose: Frank? Frankie?

Frank: Rosie?

(She goes to him in a rush, kneels before him and takes his hands)

Rose: (Rambling a bit in her excitement) Frankie, Frankie! Yes it's me, Rosie, little Rosie. You remember? We used to hold hands, just like this **(holds his hands up)**. Wherever we were, you held my hand. Frankie? Frankie? Do you remember?

(Frank looks around, blankly, then shakes his hands quite violently eventually pushing Rose to the floor. She puts her head in her hands for a moment then looks up at him)

Rose: Frankie please don't, don't leave me again. You were there weren't you? Just then, my old Frankie back. I saw it in your eyes. Your beautiful blue eyes. That's what I saw when I first met you, your eyes, so beautiful, so very beautiful.

(She stands, picks up the mop and recommences mopping the floor)

Rose: They were jealous, all those other girls when you chose me to take to the school prom. Little old Rosie, little plain Rose **(She stops mopping and leans on the mop, reminiscing)** so proud hanging on to your arm, on top of the world. I never thought I could be so happy. Procol Harum, A Whiter Shade of Pale. **(Dances with the mop)** Dancing in close, feeling your arms around me, your breath on my neck, the smell of you, Frankie's smell. And your eyes, your beautiful blue eyes.

(Stops momentarily remembering, and then recommences mopping)

Rose: I loved you from the start Frank Winston, from the start. And you loved me, I know you did. Did you love me on that first night? I thought my heart would burst you know. Did you love me then Frank?

(She stops again and looks at him)

Rose: Do you love me now? Frankie? Do you still love me? Can you still love me?

(Starts to mop again)

Rose: Where are you now Frank? Who has you now?

(She exits stage right with mop and bucket. Frank sits as a statue, absolutely still until she returns stage right)

Rose: Let's put your socks on my love, don't want your feet to get cold do we.

(She retrieves the socks and one slipper from the occasional table and sits at his feet, taking his left foot in her hand. She gently caresses it)

Rose: And my! Could these feet dance. **(Commences to put on his left sock whilst talking)** Remember the ballroom Frankie? The waltz, the Foxtrot? Whirling round the room, heads held high, showing off. We were good Frankie boy, bloody good. We showed them all didn't we boy? **(Puts his left foot down and picks up his right for the other sock, gently stroking it first)** The cha cha cha Frankie, at our Julie's wedding. We cha cha chaed all night, we cha cha chaed until we were exhausted! It was wonderful, just wonderful. **(Completes putting on his socks)** There, that should keep your feet warm, let's put on your slippers back on.