



NO TOMORROW

By Richard Smithson

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A Play
by
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CHARACTERS

Anita: A care assistant aged 30 to 50

James: An elderly resident

Heather: An elderly resident.

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SCENE: The day room of a residential home for the elderly. A small table with an upright armchair next to it.

On the opposite side of the table is a wheelchair, in which James is seated. He is bent over and motionless, as if sleeping.

Anita, a care assistant enters. Anita habitually shouts because most of the residents are deaf.

Anita: [Shouting] Tea? Tea or coffee?

James: [Startled] Tea please.

Anita sets off, but is stopped by James.

James: No, what time is it?

Anita: Half past nine.

James: At night?

Anita: No, in the morning.

James: Tea then.

Anita: 'Tea then' what?

James: Just tea.

Anita: [Correcting him.] "Just tea," thank you. [Exit]

James: Don't mention it.

Heather enters, using a walking frame. She surveys the room, then notices James.

Heather: May I join you?

James: Please do.

Heather sits.

James: Have we met?

Heather: I don't think so. You're new here, aren't you?

James: As good as. I'm James.

Heather: I'm here by mistake. My daughter's coming to collect me later. There's been a mix-up. A temporary.....oh, what's it called?

James: Bollocks.

Heather: Yes, probably.

James: What's your name, if you don't mind my asking?
 Heather: It's Heather.
 James: Really? What a coincidence. Heather was the name of ... of one of my...
 Heather: No, don't tell me, let me guess. Your name is James.
 James: [*Surprised.*] Yes, it is. You mentioned a daughter...
 Heather: I don't think I did.
 James: But you do have a daughter don't you?
 Heather: Yes, of course I do. It was she who put me in here. I was getting to be a burden.
 James: I was getting to be a burden to my wife, that's why she put me in here.

Anita enters with a mug of tea, placing it on the table. Heather takes it, just as James reaches for it.

Heather: Thank you so much my dear. [*Drinks.*]
 Anita: [*To James.*] There. It costs nowt to be polite. [*Exit*]
 James: I was going to say something. What was it? I'm afraid I might have a touch of dementia. Most of us have.
 Heather: If you think you have, you probably haven't. If you had, you wouldn't know about it. I certainly haven't.
 James: They call it Outsider's disease. I've always been a bit of an outsider though.
 Heather: People with dementia begin to lose their inhibitions apparently. You're not losing yours are you?
 James: I don't know. I often lose things. The thread, for example. I'm often losing that. What would I want with thread anyway? [*Pause*] What were we talking about?
 Heather: Inhibitions.
 James: Funny you should mention that. My wife used to have lots of inhibitions, but she managed to keep them under strict control. Except when she got drunk. The tighter she got the less loose she became. I shouldn't have told you that. It was our secret.
 Heather: Shall I tell you my secret?
 James: If you like.
 Heather: You mustn't tell anyone.
 James: Don't worry. Your secret's safe with me. In fact I've forgotten what it was already.
 Heather: That's because I haven't told you yet.
 James: I promise I won't remember it.
 Heather: Very well. My husband, James...
 James: Yes?
 Heather: My husband James used to think I was very inhibited – about sex you know.
 James: Oh yes? Weren't you?
 Heather: No, not at all. I just didn't fancy him that much.

James: I see. Did you have relationships with other men?

Heather: Oh, I was never unfaithful. But I used to enjoy striking up conversations with strange men.

James: And didn't one thing lead to another?

Heather: It hasn't so far.

James: But it might.

Heather: I suppose so.

James: What about my room three o'clock this afternoon?

Heather: I can't. My daughter's visiting then.

James: Now you mention it, so's mine. Another time perhaps.

Heather: Perhaps.

James: I always thought women were supposed to find older men attractive. It hasn't happened to me yet.

Heather: Of course when we were first married we were at it hammer and tongs. Like.. like..

James: Cats and dogs?

Heather: No.

James: Like hell and high water?

Heather: No, nothing like that.

James: Like nothing on earth?

Heather: No.

James: Well I give up.

Heather: Now I remember, we were at it like nobody's business.

James: No it isn't. We'll say no more about it. What would your husband think?

Heather: My husband had a very annoying way of walking.

James: Well I don't. I have a very annoying way of not walking. *[A thin high laugh.]*

Heather: He used to not understand things I said on purpose to annoy me.

James: *[Baffled.]* Really?

Heather: Yes. If we woke early in the morning he would look at his watch. I'd say, "What is it?" meaning what's the time, obviously. Do you know what he'd say?

James: It's a watch.

Heather: Infuriating. And if I looked at my clock first he wouldn't ask the time, he'd just say, "Is it tomorrow yet?"

James: I love you.

Heather makes a dismissive gesture.

Heather: Do you ever get the feeling that you're experiencing something that's happened before? The French have a word for it.

James: Yes. That fat actor. It's on the slip of my tongue. What's his name?

Heather: Who?

James: Depardieu. No I don't.

Heather: You don't what?

James: I don't full stop.

Heather: [*Flaring up.*] "I don't full stop!" What the hell is that supposed to mean?

James: Nothing. Forget about it. Talk about something else. Your children perhaps.

Heather: My daughter is in soft furnishings.

James: [*Surprised.*] Really? What's her name?

Heather: Sarah.

James: Well, well, well.

Heather: It's not an unusual name.

James: No, but I also have a daughter called Helen in soft furnishings.

Heather: I said Sarah.

James: So did I.

Heather: No, you said Helen.

James: Helen, Sarah, what's the difference?

Heather: They're different names.

James: Up to a point I suppose. Anyway, my daughter was called Sarah. I had a son, too.

Heather: Anthony.

James: Yes, that's right. How did you know his name?

Heather: Well he was my son. I was there at his christening.

James: But how did you know my son was called Anthony?

Heather: I must have guessed, I suppose.

James: It's amazing how much we have in common.

Heather: But I can't stay here talking like like there's ...

James: No, don't go. We're getting on so well. Like a house on fire. You seem familiar somehow. Perhaps you were an old flame of mine.

Heather: I'm going out. [*She slowly stands up, with a great effort.*]

Anita enters

Anita: Time for your bath James.

James: What, again? I've only just had one, haven't I?

Anita: Yes, but you're supposed to have two a week and today's the end of the week. It's regulations.

James: I'm going for my bath.

Heather: Oh well. Goodbye James. Same time tomorrow? [*Exit*]

James: [*Looking at his watch, stunned.*] Is it? Damn, I forgot to tell her I loved her.

Anita: Let's give you that bath.

James: But I haven't had yesterdays' yet.

Anita: Well you can have it tomorrow instead. [*She starts to wheel him out.*]

James: I love you, by the way.

Anita: And I love you too.

James: [*Suddenly recalling.*] Like there's no tomorrow.

They exit.

CURTAIN