

DEAR ONE

a play in one act

by

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SYNOPSIS:

DEAR ONE is a dark tale of moonlight, mistaken identity, and hidden artifacts. Will the two young lovers find happiness? Can the old woman make things right? And what is the shocking secret that lies at the heart of it all?

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Young Woman: 17-22, slight, graceful, quick

Young Man: 17-22, handsome, impulsive, forceful

Old Woman: plays 70 or older, stern, protective

SETTING:

A chaise lounge in a small house near a forest, late 1800s. Later, an office chair suggests the present.

In the dark, the sounds of dogs barking and crashing underbrush. Low lights up on YOUNG WOMAN, who sits up on a chaise lounge sofa with a gasp, breathing hard.

YOUNG WOMAN

Help me! Help! I'm-- I'm--

She looks around, sees her surroundings.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh thank god, thank you, thank you, god...

An OLD WOMAN enters, sits by her side.

OLD WOMAN

Poor dear. It's all right, you're safe.

YOUNG WOMAN

This time was different, this time I was being chased, there were dogs--

OLD WOMAN

Sh-- shhh. You're safe now.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank god...

OLD WOMAN

Just rest here. I'll bring you something warm to drink.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is the sun up?

OLD WOMAN

Just.

YOUNG WOMAN

Then I made it. I made it through the night.

OLD WOMAN

Yes, dear.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's a miracle.

OLD WOMAN

A miracle, for sure. I'll be right back. And when you're rested, you can get dressed. He's coming today.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, yes! It's today!

She throws off a coverlet and begins to get up.

OLD WOMAN

(throws the coverlet back
over her)

After you've rested. You've got plenty of time.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes ma'am.

*Old Woman leaves. Young Woman stays put for a moment,
but then excitement overtakes her and she jumps up.
She sings while she gets dressed. Old Woman returns,
with a steaming mug and a plate with bread on it.*

OLD WOMAN

Ugh! You are impossible.

YOUNG WOMAN

No, I'm in love...

OLD WOMAN

Same thing. Here. Sit down, silly girl. You need to eat.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm too excited to eat.

OLD WOMAN

You will eat or I'll tell him you've decided to become a nun
like me.

YOUNG WOMAN

That's not funny.

OLD WOMAN

Then eat.

YOUNG WOMAN

Fine.

Young Woman sits. Eats.

OLD WOMAN

Hand me that brush.

*Young Woman does. Old Woman brushes Young Woman's
hair.*

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

What a tangle.

(pause)

When will you tell him?

YOUNG WOMAN

Must I?

Old Woman grasps her hair to turn Young Woman's face toward her. Gives her a look.

Soon. YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Today. OLD WOMAN

Before the wedding. YOUNG WOMAN

Today. OLD WOMAN

Before the wedding, I promise. YOUNG WOMAN

Old Woman tugs on her hair.

Ow! YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

He deserves to know. OLD WOMAN

And he will! He'll know within a month.
(gestures for the brush)
Give me that. YOUNG WOMAN

Do not wait. Do you hear?
(hands her the brush) OLD WOMAN

Yes! Yes, I hear! It's all under control. YOUNG WOMAN

Lights down. Bright lights up. YOUNG MAN is seated next to Young Woman, on the chaise. They are kissing.

Agh, it feels like our wedding day will never come! YOUNG MAN

I know, I feel-- YOUNG WOMAN

He kisses her.

You. Are. So. Beautiful. YOUNG MAN

She laughs.

YOUNG WOMAN

I. Am. So. Lucky!

YOUNG MAN

We both are! Let me see the ring again.

She holds out her hand. He holds it, kisses it.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Are you happy with it?

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course! The only thing--

YOUNG MAN

What. What's wrong?

YOUNG WOMAN

Nothing is wrong. I'm just afraid I'll lose it somehow. That would kill me.

YOUNG MAN

Then I will make something for you to keep it safe in.

YOUNG WOMAN

Ooh, that would be lovely.

YOUNG MAN

But don't you wear it all the time?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh... yes, of course, but you never know...

YOUNG MAN

Leave it to me.

YOUNG WOMAN

Happily.

(she inhales deeply)

Dearest, there is something I--

YOUNG MAN

(thinks of something)

Oh! I know *exactly* what I'll make! Shall I tell you? Or would you rather a surprise?

YOUNG WOMAN

Surprise me.

Lights down. Dim lights up. A faint knock at the door. Old Woman in a nightshirt carries a candle to the door.

OLD WOMAN
Hello? Is someone there? Who's there?

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
(unintelligible)

OLD WOMAN
Who is it?

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
Help... me...

Old Woman unbolts the door and opens it. Young Woman, in a long bloody nightshirt, falls into the room to the floor.

OLD WOMAN
Oh dear god! No! Here, let me help you--

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm sorry--

OLD WOMAN
Hush--

YOUNG WOMAN
You were...

OLD WOMAN
Save your strength-- Oh god, help us--

YOUNG WOMAN
I don't... have much time left...

OLD WOMAN
Don't talk--

YOUNG WOMAN
You were right...

OLD WOMAN
No more talking. Just rest. I will--
(sees under the hem of her
nightshirt, stifles a scream)
Oh god!

YOUNG WOMAN
You were right. Here.
(holds out the ring)
Give it to him. Tell him--

OLD WOMAN
No, you will live!

YOUNG WOMAN

Tell him I changed my mind. Tell him I decided... to become a nun...

OLD WOMAN

I don't understand, why--

YOUNG WOMAN

You will. You will...

She dies. The ring falls out of her palm.

OLD WOMAN

No. Oh, no.

(strokes her hair)

Oh, my dear one...

Lights down. Bright lights up. Young Man is standing in the threshold of the door.

YOUNG MAN

What do you mean, she's gone?

OLD WOMAN

I'm sorry. She's... she's not here anymore.

YOUNG MAN

But-- but--

OLD WOMAN

(closing the door)

Good luck.

YOUNG MAN

(puts foot in the door)

Wait! No! Where did she go?

OLD WOMAN

She said... she said she decided to become a nun.

YOUNG MAN

No! No, this can't be happening. We-- We were so in love, I know she wouldn't leave like that. We were getting married! In just a few days! Something isn't right.

OLD WOMAN

Life is hard, young man. All your plans... they're not real. They're just ideas, dreams. All that's real is here, now. What's real is... what you can see, or hear, or touch right now. Like what you have in your pocket.

YOUNG MAN

I have... I have this. I made it for her...

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small jewelry-holder, made of the front foot of a deer.

OLD WOMAN
(unsteady on her feet)

Where--

YOUNG MAN
Are you all right?

OLD WOMAN
Where did that come from.

YOUNG MAN
I made it.

OLD WOMAN
Tell me.

YOUNG MAN
Two nights ago, there was a full moon. I couldn't sleep. The dogs started barking, so I got up, and went to the window. The clouds covered the moon, so I could barely see an animal dart across the meadow. The barking stopped... they lost the scent. I grabbed my hunting bag and ran outside, just as the clouds cleared away and the moon lit up the landscape. It was a deer. I crept closer. She started walking, slowly... and I followed. She walked until she reached a glade, and stopped. I lifted my gun, quietly, and aimed for her head -- it's the only humane thing to do, to kill it instantly. I was about to squeeze the trigger, when she turned her head... and god help me, she seemed to look right at me. Even in the moonlight, there was something... I don't know. My heart skipped, my finger slipped, and when the shot rang out, I knew I hadn't killed her clean. She fell, and I ran over to her, pulling out my knife as I ran. When I reached her, she bolted, but I grabbed her foot. I needed it. I knew this deer would run and die somewhere, and then I'd never get what I needed...

(holds up jewelry-holder)
to make this.

OLD WOMAN
So you... you cut off her foot...

YOUNG MAN
I promised her I would make something to keep her wedding ring safe.

OLD WOMAN
I see. Now I understand.

YOUNG MAN
What. What do you understand?

She fishes in her pocket, and pulls out the ring.

OLD WOMAN
Here. She wanted you to have this.

YOUNG MAN
No... oh, no.

She tries to give him the ring.

OLD WOMAN
Take it. Take it and know that she loved you.

YOUNG MAN
No.

OLD WOMAN
Someday you may want to give it to someone else--

YOUNG MAN
No! Never. I don't want it. I don't want either of these.
(hands her the jewelry-
holder)
Keep them both. Do whatever you want with them. Sell them,
burn them, I don't care.

OLD WOMAN
But--

YOUNG MAN
I'm going to find her. I don't believe that she's really
gone.

OLD WOMAN
You must believe me.

YOUNG MAN
Didn't you say the only thing that's real is what you can
hear or touch?

OLD WOMAN
Yes, but--

YOUNG MAN
Until I hear her say she doesn't love me, or touch her cold,
still hand -- I will not believe it.

She grabs his hand and forces the deer foot into it.

OLD WOMAN
(fiercely)
Touch this. Hold this. *This* is her cold hand. *This* is what
is real.

YOUNG MAN

(jerks his hand away and
moves toward the door)

You are mad. I will find her.

OLD WOMAN

Yes, yes, of course you will.

He exits.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

Someday, you will. We all will.

She takes the foot and ring, and wraps them in a cloth hanging from her waist. She kneels, lifts a floorboard, and places the bundle down in the floor carefully.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

You're safe now.

She puts the board back down, then curls up on top of it and closes her eyes.

Lights down. Lights up. Hundreds of years have passed.

Young Woman is dressed in modern clothes and seated in an office chair. In her hand is the jewelry-holder.

YOUNG WOMAN

(on the phone)

Late 1800s, I'm thinking. It'll be perfect in our Domestic Antiquities Collection. Yep.

(pause; she touches the fur
on it)

Oh, it's real, alright. We acquired it a few weeks ago. Yeah, the wrecking guys called us when they found it. It had a ring in it. And get this! It was next to the skeleton of a girl... *with a missing foot!* I know! How awesomely creepy is that? Totally!

(pause)

Hey, on a completely different subject... do you ever have weird dreams when there's a full moon?

Blackout. Sounds of barking dogs.

END OF PLAY