The Perfect Ending

By

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - OLD PEOPLE’S HOME - DAY

Absolute silence. AMY CORNISH (80’s) gray hair, piercing intelligent blue eyes, traces of a once beautiful face still evident, lies in bed staring at the ceiling.

The room is sparsely furnished. A bedside cabinet is adorned by a lamp topped with a chintz shade. A pair of pearl earrings sit awaiting their next attachment.

Some way down the room a sideboard proudly displays a sepia photograph in a gilt-edged frame.

A young couple. As one, in love. She, stunningly beautiful. He, dashing in his naval uniform.

A slight knock, the door opens. Nurse BETH STEWART (20’s) vivacious, buxom, nurse’s outfit, one step away from every man’s fantasy enters, hands behind her back.

    BETH
    Happy birthday Amy. How are you sweetheart?

Amy’s eyes dart towards Beth. She smiles gentleliy.

    AMY
    I’m fine thank you darlin’. You O.K?

Beth beams at Amy.

    BETH
    Yes, I’m good thanks. Really excited about your party today. We’re gonna have fun.

She leans forward.

    BETH (CONT’D)
    You looking forward to it?

Before Amy can answer, Beth excitedly reveals the surprise in her left hand.

    BETH (CONT’D)
    I’ve brought you some flowers, a birthday card signed by all the staff and....

She dramatically pulls her right hand into view.
BETH (CONT’D)
Tadaaa! Some lovely slippers. You can wear these to your party if you want.

Amy lightly touches Beth’s hand.

AMY
Thank you sweetie. You’re an angel.
(beat)
Can’t remember when I last had a present.

Amy becomes emotional.

AMY (CONT’D)
Fact is, I can’t remember much of anything these days.

Beth places the gifts on the bed, takes Amy’s hand and gently strokes her forehead.

BETH
Oh Amy. Come on now. Don’t go upsetting yourself. You’re doing just fine.

Amy wipes a lone tear from her cheek.

AMY
I’m sorry. Just a silly old fool.

Beth changes the mood.

BETH
Well we can’t have you crying on your birthday can we?
(beat.)
Would you like to sit up?

AMY
Yes, yes please. Ceiling drives me crazy.

Beth smiles, eases Amy up the bed, plumps her pillows and leans her gently back on them.

BETH
Better?

AMY
Much, thank you. Now I can see the world.
BETH
Atta gal! I’ll put these flowers in water later. You want your card up here?

Without receiving confirmation Beth places the card on the bedside cabinet. Her attention is grabbed by the earrings.

BETH (CONT’D)
Wow! Look at these. They’re lovely. They for your party?

Amy eyes the pearls and smiles.

AMY
They’re for my Joe.

She then fixes Beth with a convinced look.

AMY (CONT’D)
He’s coming today. Told me last night. He’ll be here at one.

Amy points to the photograph.

AMY
That’s my Joe. A good man. He was in the navy.
(beat)
So handsome don’t you think?

Beth turns, walks over, picks up the picture.

BETH
Sure is. Very. But look at you. Heck, you should’ve been in movies.

AMY
Don’t know about that, but what with the war and all. Thinking about other things I guess. More important things.

Amy momentarily becomes distant.

AMY (CONT’D)
S’funny how time slips by.

Beth replaces the photograph and walks back to Amy, studying her watch.
BETH
You’re still beautiful Amy.

AMY
For my age maybe.
(beat)
Still got all my teeth though.

Amy proudly displays her slightly yellowing teeth.

AMY (CONT’D)
Well, almost all.

Beth smiles again checking her watch again.

BETH
Haven’t got long. Nurse Toni’s coming up soon and we’ll get you in your chair. Like me to brush your hair?

AMY
Would you? I have a problem doing that now, same as walking. Can’t seem to get my legs working.

Amy points to the sideboard.
The brush is in there.
(beat)
I think you’ll find some lipstick and stuff too. Got to make myself look pretty for my Joe. He likes me to look pretty.

Beth returns to the sideboard finds the brush, makeup and a mirror.

BETH
Got ’em.

She walks to the bed.

BETH (CONT’D)
You O.K. with the makeup?

AMY
I’m fine. It’s the brushing that’s a pain in the ass.

Beth stifles a laugh at the nonchalant cussing, hands the makeup and mirror to Amy and starts brushing her hair.

Amy is very adept at making herself up. Years of practice, that part of her memory kicking in spontaneously.
She looks in the mirror, checking herself out, pouting, regressing, briefly the girl in the photograph.

    AMY
    You have a man?

Beth stiffens slightly. Stops brushing, then continues with renewed vigor.

    BETH
    Er, no. Divorced.

    AMY
    Recent?

    BETH
    Quite.

    AMY
    Still raw?

Beth swallows before answering.

    BETH
    Very!

Amy stops posing and looks sadly at Beth.

    AMY
    So sorry darlin’.
    (beat)
    Wanna talk? We’ve got some time before my Joe gets here.

Beth is uncomfortable.

    BETH
    Not much to say really. He was no good. Cheated on me. So, we split and I moved out here.
    (beat)
    Trying to run from memories I guess.

Amy giggles a little. Beth looks at her confused.

    AMY
    Sorry sweetheart. Not laughing at you. Just the irony.

Beth shakes her head, still confused.
AMY (CONT’D)
You’re running from memories and my memory’s running from me.

Beth now sees the funny side of the comment.

BETH
Jeez. What a pair huh?
(beat)
But it must be wonderful to be so much in love with one man.
(beat)
I really envy you.
(beat)
Let’s get your earrings on sweetie.

As Beth locks the earrings in place Amy responds.

AMY
Yes it is wonderful. But you. You have your youth, your health.
(beat)
What I wouldn’t give for.....

The door swings open. Nurse TONI PETERS (30’s) slightly plump, kind features marches in, on her own parade. She nods and smiles at Beth.

TONI
My, Amy. How beautiful you look.

Amy preens herself.

AMY
Got to. My Joe’s coming. He’ll be here at one.

Toni throws Beth a knowing look. She checks her watch.

TONI
O.K. cutie, but if he’s not here by one, me and Beth will take you down. Everybody’s there already.
(beat)
Irene’s promised to sing for you and we’ve got you a special birthday cake.

Amy fixes Toni with a stare.

AMY
My Joe’ll be here. He’ll take me.
Toni beckons for Beth to join her in the far corner of the room. Beth obliges. They talk in hushed tones, backs towards Amy.

TONI
How you doin’ hon? Second week right?

BETH
Yeah. S’gone so quick. Everyone’s been so kind. I love it!
(beat)
And being this busy is taking my mind off...well you know.

TONI
That’s good then.
(beat)
So how’s Amy doing?

BETH
She’s lovely. A real lady. Likes to talk about lots of things, especially her Joe. She can’t wait to see him. Must say, I’m a bit jealous!

Toni pulls Beth closer.

TONI
Amy’s suffering from dementia. Joe was killed at Pearl Harbor. Been dead over sixty years.

Beth’s eyebrows knit in disbelief.

BETH
Are you sure? She seems so lucid. So intelligent.

TONI
’Slike that sometimes. Kinda selective memory. I guess the painful ones are the first to go.

As Amy speaks the two nurses automatically listen in, not turning.

AMY (O/S)
Aahh. My darling Joe. I told them you’d come.
(whispering)
I don’t think they believed me, but now you’re here.
(beat)
How handsome you look, uniform and all.

Toni smiles sympathetically.

TONI
(to Beth)
See what I mean. She still thinks he’s alive, poor baby.

She checks her watch.

TONI (CONT’D)
’Kay. Gotta go.

Beth grabs Toni’s arm.

BETH
Give her a little more time. At least let her finish her conversation.

Toni considers.

TONI
You’re right. Don’t spoil her day, poor thing. What’s a few minutes anyways?

AMY (O/S)
Thank you my precious. I did try to make myself pretty for you.

Beth wells up. Toni squeezes her hand

TONI
Sad huh?

AMY (CONT’D,O/S)
Yes of course we can go now. Would you take my hand?
(beat)
O.K. my darling one. Let’s go.

Absolute silence.

Beth and Toni slowly turn to look at Amy.

She lays, eyes closed, smiling sweetly, content. Finally at rest, with her Joe, clutching their photograph to her breast.
TONI
Amy?

BETH
Oh my God. Joe did come for her!

FADE OUT:

THE END.