

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 gently.

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.