

# The First Fireworks

a short play

by

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**Cast**

**HELEN**

**DAWN**

**Setting**

A park bench.

**Time**

New Year's Eve.

**The First Fireworks.**

New Year's Eve. Close to midnight. A bench on a hillside.

**DAWN**, a frail woman in her sixties enters, wearing a white hospital gown. Her feet are bare. She slowly makes her way to the bench. She sits on the bench, panting heavily. Pause.

**HELEN**, a well-dressed woman in her late thirties enters.

HELEN: Mum ? Mum !

SHE GOES TO **DAWN**.

HELEN: What are you doing ? Dad's going out of his mind.

DAWN: He'll be alright.

HELEN: The whole hospital's turned upside down. Everybody's looking for you.

DAWN: But you're the only one who found me.

PAUSE.

HELEN: How did you get up here ?

DAWN: There's a hole in the fence.

HELEN: I know but how did you get up here ? The steps almost killed me.

DAWN: I'm not sure.

HELEN: It's a good spot. Wonder more people don't get up here.

DAWN: They don't know about the hole.

PAUSE.

DAWN: Shouldn't you be at your party ?

HELEN: I was until Dad called and told me you'd vanished.

DAWN: He will be annoyed.

HELEN: Dad ?

DAWN: No. What's his name ?

HELEN: You know his name.

DAWN: Do I ? What is it again ? Gordon, Gormond –

HELEN: Garan.

DAWN: That's right – Garan. Sounds like some kind of rash. "Oh no. I've got a nasty case of Garan on my arse."

HELEN: Mum, he's my husband.

DAWN: More fool you. I always liked that other one. Simon. He was –

HELEN: Wet.

DAWN: Considerate. He was always so nice to me.

HELEN: Probably fancied you.

DAWN: Me ? Really ?

HELEN: Really.

DAWN: But I'm twice his age.

HELEN: Trust me.

DAWN: Garan reminds me too much of someone else.

HELEN: Who ?

DAWN: My husband.

HELEN: Dad's alright.

DAWN: You try being married to him for forty years.

PAUSE.

HELEN: Come on, we better get you back.

DAWN: I'm not going back.

HELEN: Don't be silly Mum. Come on.

DAWN: Helen – I'm not going back. I hate that awful room full of all that stuff. People keep ringing me and saying "What can I bring you?" I say, "Don't bring me anything!" I don't want any more things.

**DAWN TAPS THE BENCH ALONG SIDE HER. HELEN SITS.**

DAWN: Beautiful clothes. They look very expensive.

HELEN: They are. So I guess Gormond is good for one thing.

DAWN: (TAPPING HELEN'S STOMACH) Maybe two.

DAWN: How did you work it out where I was?

HELEN: It wasn't hard. New Year's Eve. Where else would you be?

DAWN: My chair. My view. Surprised you remembered where it was.

HELEN: Come on Mum, it hasn't been that long.

DAWN: Five years.

HELEN: Five? Really.

**DAWN NODS. PAUSE.**

HELEN: I still remember when you first brought me here. I was eight years old.

DAWN: Long time ago.

HELEN: Twenty years. (PAUSE) I remember it like yesterday. We got here just as the sun was going down. My little legs got tired so you had to carry me up the last fifty steps. And I kept asking: "What is it Mum? Why are we here?" And you just smiled and said: "We're going to my chair. The best view in the city."

DAWN: I remember.

HELEN: And I kept asking: “But what are we going to see ?” And you wouldn’t answer. You just put your finger over my lips and said:

DAWN: “You’ll see my love.”

HELEN: And then when it got dark you pointed to the sky and said “Look” and suddenly the sky was full of light. Huge explosions of colour. Orange, pink, blue, green. And noise. Terrible noise. I had to cover my ears the explosions were so loud. I’ll never forget it. Looking up at that clear night sky, the colour and the stars. The muffled explosions ringing in my ear. It was my first fireworks.

DAWN: You never forget your first fireworks.

HELEN: Did you ever bring Dad here ?

**DAWN SHAKES HER HEAD.**

DAWN: No matter how much I loved your father I needed to keep something to myself. And this was mine. My chair and my fireworks.

HELEN: But you brought me here.

DAWN: Back then when I thought of you - it wasn’t like we were two people. We were the same person so it made sense to bring you. I knew it would mean the same for you as it did to me. Maybe I thought you needed to see it.

HELEN: Do you still think that ? We’re one person.

DAWN: Sometimes. (PAUSE) I knew you’d come. I wanted it to be just the two of us. Me and you. Our twentieth anniversary fireworks.

HELEN: It’s not fair to Dad. He should be here too.

DAWN: I’ve said my goodbyes to him. And besides forty year’s of being a wife, thirty years of being a mother. About time to just be me.

HELEN: Mum –

DAWN: This is my last fireworks Helen. And I wanted to share them with you. If I can’t play favourites now, then when can I. Can I tell you something ?

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: Big secret. Biggest secret ever. Never told before.

HELEN: Tell me.

DAWN: Not even your father knows.

HELEN: Cross my heart and hope to die.

DAWN: Before you were a born - I always wanted a boy.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My own little Tiger Tim. My Percy Piddler.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: But once you came out – once I saw the child you were, the woman you were growing into – I got down on my hand and knees and thanked God for sending me such a gift. I have been so lucky to have you as my daughter.

**DAWN PRESSES HER EAR TO HELEN'S STOMACH.**

DAWN: Promise me something ?

HELEN: What ?

DAWN: That you'll bring her one day to watch the fireworks. And tell her about me.

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: What was, what is and what is about to be. Three generations of Pringles.

HELEN: Our name is Heath.

DAWN: My husband's name is Heath.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My name is Pringle. And so is yours. Helen Pringle Heath.

HELEN: It's actually Rogers now.

DAWN: But you're still a Pringle. You are continuing in a long line of proud, strong Pringle women. (PAUSER) I remember when we almost lost you. About a month before you were due.

HELEN: Don't remind me. I still get goose bumps.

DAWN: I woke up in the middle of the night. Blood everywhere. Neil rushed me to the hospital. I was haemorrhaging. Seemed you were just too big for me to keep inside. They thought they were going to lose you. And me. Had to get you out – right away.

HELEN: Christ.

DAWN: And they did.

HELEN: Lucky for me.

DAWN: Your father sat beside my bed all night. Holding my hand. I think that's why I made it through the night. Hung in so long. Just looking up at his eyes. I knew he wouldn't be able to bear losing me. So I pulled through. I survived. Like my mother before me and her mother before. We're survivors. Just like you. That's why I never had any more children.

HELEN: I feel like I should say sorry.

DAWN: Why? We already had the most wonderful child you could hope for. A beautiful baby girl. How could we begrudge God that.

**HELEN WIPES AWAY A TEAR.**

DAWN: Don't be sad my daughter. I've had a good life. People who loved me. A husband who worshipped me. A daughter. I had a home. I had a family.

HELEN: I'm going to miss you.

DAWN: And I'm going to miss you. Just don't be so successful in your work you forget to be a good Mum. And if Gormond ever starts rooting around – tell him to piss off.

HELEN: Thanks for the advice.

DAWN: Your welcome.

**DAWN LOOKS AT HELEN. SHE TAKES HELEN'S FACE IN HER HANDS AND STROKES HER HAIR.**

DAWN: Twenty years. It all goes by so ... fast.

**HELEN SMILES. DAWN LIES DOWN ON THE BENCH. SHE PUTS HER HEAD ON HELEN'S LAP.**

DAWN: I'm just going to lie down for a little while. Wake me up when they start.

HELEN: Mum ...

DAWN: Quiet now. No more words. No ... more ... words.

**DAWN CLOSSES HER EYES. PAUSE. WE HEAR A DISTANT EXPLOSION.**

**FIREWORKS EXPLODE OVER HEARD, SHOWERING THEM IN BRIGHT BURSTS OF COLOUR.**

HELEN: Mum ... It's starting. (**DAWN DOES NOT RESPOND.**) It's starting.

**BUT DAWN DOES NOT MOVE. HELEN WATCHES THE FIREWORKS.**

**FADE.**