

SHELBY'S SONG

By Renee C. Rebman

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Something's wrong with Shelby. She has been feeling depressed and seeing her grandmother in constant pain has upset her even more. Kids at school are beginning to say Shelby is a little screwy and whisper behind her back. Finally, Shelby decides to steal two bottles of her grandmother's pain pills and commit suicide. In the meantime, Grandma found where Shelby hid her pills and confronts her. In an incredibly dramatic moment, Grandma admits to Shelby that her age and illness have caused her to consider overdosing on the pills herself. Horrified, Shelby realizes she has her whole life before her. A strong play which focuses on the problem of suicide not only of teens, but of the elderly as well.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 M, 3 W)

SHELBY MITCHELL: A high school student.

BRICE MITCHELL: Shelby's brother.

JANET MITCHELL: Her mother.

JOE MITCHELL: Her father.

GRANDMA LYNN: Her grandmother.

CRAIG MILTON: Brice's friend.

PLACE: The living room of the Mitchell's house.

TIME: The present.

PROPS

GRANDMA: Knitting, small bag, glass of water, 2 pill bottles.

JANET: Bottle of pills, glass of water.

SHELBY: Book, blanket.

BRICE: Two cans of coke.

SETTING

The living room of the Mitchell's house. A couch is DSC with an easy chair on SR side. On SL side is an old rocking chair with a TV tray beside it cluttered with books, knitting and a small picture album. The rocker is beside a window. Only entrance to the room is SR as though the living room were off a main hallway that leads to all other rooms in the house. It is not necessary to have a full set. The play was designed to be easily staged and appropriate for touring.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: GRANDMA LYNN is seated in the rocker humming to herself. She fiddles with her knitting then stuffs it back into a small bag. She puts her hand to her head as if she has a headache and rocks a little faster, becoming agitated.)

GRANDMA: *(Calling out)* Where's my medicine? Isn't it time for my medicine? Janet! Shelby!

(BRICE enters quickly followed by CRAIG.)

BRICE: Shhh, Grandma. You don't have to yell.

GRANDMA: Where's your mother?

BRICE: I don't know. I just got home from school.

CRAIG: Hello, Grandma Lynn.

GRANDMA: Who are you? Brice, who is he? Where's your mother? I want Janet.

BRICE: That's Craig, my friend. He's been here before. You remember him, don't you? *(SHE shakes her head stubbornly.)* I'll go look for Mom. She's probably out in the backyard. *(HE exits.)*

GRANDMA: What are you staring at?

CRAIG: Uh, nothing...feeling OK today, Grandma Lynn?

GRANDMA: Stop calling me that! I'm not your grandmother.

CRAIG: I'm sorry.

GRANDMA: Young people today have no manners. I won't stand for it, I tell you. *(Calling out)* Brice, come back here this instant! Brice!

CRAIG: Maybe I better wait in the hall.

(SHELBY enters and goes quickly to her GRANDMOTHER'S side.)

SHELBY: What's wrong, Grandma?

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GRANDMA: I want my pills, Shelby, right now. Brice went looking for your mom and left me with this impertinent fool. He's gotten me all upset.

SHELBY: What did you say to her?

CRAIG: Nothing!

SHELBY: Don't try and tell me that.

CRAIG: She's acting funny. I think she really needs her medicine or something, I don't know.

SHELBY: No, you don't know—so why don't you just shut your mouth!

CRAIG: Look, you don't have to talk to me like that.

SHELBY: I'll never understand why Brice hangs around you, Craig. You're mean, you like to make fun of people. You better not make fun of my grandmother!

CRAIG: I wasn't! You're crazy, Shelby.

(BRICE enters.)

BRICE: What's going on?

GRANDMA: Where's your mother? Where's Janet?

BRICE: At the neighbors. She's coming right back. *(To SHELBY)* What's the problem, sis?

SHELBY: The problem is your friend is a jerk.

CRAIG: Hey, lay off!

SHELBY: I don't appreciate you coming in here and upsetting my grandmother.

CRAIG: I didn't do anything.

BRICE: Grandma was already upset.

SHELBY: I can't believe it! You're actually sticking up for this idiot.

BRICE: Get a hold of yourself. You've been acting weird lately, you're always looking for trouble.

(JANET enters.)

GRANDMA: Janet! I need my medicine. Why did you leave me?

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JANET: I was just next door.

SHELBY: Why did you leave her if it was time for her medicine? You shouldn't have done that, Mom.

JANET: It isn't time yet, not for another twenty minutes.

SHELBY: But she doesn't feel well!

JANET: *(To GRANDMA)* You can wait, can't you?

SHELBY: Mom!

JANET: I was talking to your grandmother. Stay out of it, Shelby.

BRICE: She's acting like a real pain, Mom. She was crappy to Craig.

CRAIG: Hey, leave me out of this.

SHELBY: That would be easier to do if you weren't here!

JANET: Shelby! Sit down...now. We need to talk, young lady. *(SHELBY sits.)* Brice, Craig—why don't you guys go outside and let me handle this?

BRICE: OK, Mom. *(To SHELBY as HE and CRAIG exit.)* I hope you get it good.

SHELBY: Creep.

JANET: Shelby, please. Now, about the medicine...

GRANDMA: It's time, Janet, I know it is. I don't care what the clock says. My legs are hurting. The arthritis is flaring up something awful today. Why weren't the pills on my table here? Why did you take them away?

JANET: Because you lost them before, remember? Joe and I thought it would be best if we were in charge of the pills from now on.

GRANDMA: *(Upset)* I never lost those pills! Joe was wrong. That fool son of mine is trying to make like his old mom is senile. I'm not senile. Forgetting things every once in awhile doesn't make a person senile.

JANET: It's all right, don't get upset. I'll go and get your pills now. *(To Shelby)* You're not off the hook. We do have to talk. I don't like the way you've been acting around here lately.

SHELBY: Mom, you don't understand...

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JANET: Don't use that old excuse. I have to take care of your grandmother right now, but this isn't over. I have so much to deal with, Shelby. I wish you'd be more of a help instead of adding to my problems. *(SHE exits.)*

SHELBY: It's no use, she doesn't even try to listen.

GRANDMA: We're a couple of misfits, Shelby...I confess I don't like being referred to as a problem. It's hell getting old. No one really wants you around.

SHELBY: *(To HERSELF)* You don't have to be old to have that problem.

GRANDMA: What's that?

SHELBY: Nothing...Look, Grandma, I know you didn't lose those pills.

GRANDMA: Of course I didn't.

SHELBY: I want you to know I believe you.

GRANDMA: Thanks, honey.

SHELBY: Grandma, I...

GRANDMA: What is it?

SHELBY: Nothing.

GRANDMA: You have been acting funny lately. Maybe it's just me. I wish it were over. I wish I could just die. There's no point hanging around in my condition. I'm useless.

SHELBY: Don't say that. *(Crossing to window, changing the subject)* Look at all the birds by the feeder, Grandma. You love watching the birds. Do you hear them singing?

GRANDMA: Not anymore. They use to cheer me, and put a song in my heart. But the song isn't there anymore. I don't hear it. I don't feel it. I guess I sound senile all right. Not making much sense to you, I imagine.

SHELBY: You make sense, a lot of sense. *(SHE puts her arms around HER.)* I do understand...Sometimes I don't hear the birds either.

GRANDMA: If anything ever happens to me, remember I love you.

SHELBY: What's going to happen?

GRANDMA: You never know.

End of Freeview

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