

WHEN SUMMER DIES OF SHAME

a one act drama

by James Chalmers

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Introduction

This is a 20 minute One Act Play for three players - two speaking parts (female) and one non speaking part (male). *See details below for character ages.*

Back Story

A bloody Civil War has been raging in the fictitious country of Carthinia. One of the many atrocities committed during the war was Colonel Ivan Karovitch's rape of a young Carthinian girl, the murder of her boyfriend and her parents. The rape victim takes refuge in a convent where she gives birth to a daughter Natalie. When just a few months old Natalie is adopted by an English couple and brought to the UK.

Ivan flees to the UK and begins a new life here. He marries and runs a flower shop with his English wife revealing nothing of his past to her. They have a daughter Jessica. When Jessica's mother dies, her father Ivan comes to live at Jessica's house in an annex. Ivan retires and spends his days tending his allotment and the garden.

Natalie visits Carthinia and finds her birth mother who tells her about the rape and that she must track Ivan down and ensure he's brought to justice. Natalie is focussed on the crime and is oblivious to the implications of her existence being a result of the rape. Natalie enlists the help of a journalist and Ivan's army photograph and details of his crimes appear in an edition of the Guardian. Ivan sees the article and suffers a seizure and is taken to hospital. They can't find anything physically wrong with him but it is decided he is unable to look after himself and he is put into a nursing home.

Natalie who is a trained nurse and already working in a care home, traces Ivan through Jessica's Facebook page, and she then takes up a vacancy at the nursing home where Ivan is being looked after

Setting and Scene sequence

The play is set in Ivan's room in the nursing home. An armchair is the sole item on an otherwise bare stage. Entrances/exits are to Stage Left and Stage Right. Left is the door into the room. Right is patio doors out to a balcony.

The play opens with a short introductory scene - set in the present - three weeks after Ivan has committed suicide. We then flashback to the day before Ivan's suicide and the story of the events leading up to his death unfolds. In the final scene we are back in the present and this is when the increasingly confrontational relationship between Natalie and Jessica reaches its climax.

The Characters

It is important that the ages of the actors match the story. The play was written with the two females being in their late twenties/early thirties - although this can be varied to suit actor availability. Natalie is older than Jessica. Ivan will be late fifties up to seventy - but again this can be changed to suit available actors. It must however be believable that Ivan is their father.

NOTE *Although the play has been written with two girls as the main Characters, there is no reason why one or both of these may be taken by a male actors and the script altered accordingly.*

NATALIE Very determined character. Sharp tongued. Also devious through her determination. Shows little signs of emotion until the end when she finally admits to Jessica and herself that she allowed her own father to die (Ivan). During Scene 1 and its continuation - Scene 5 - Jessica has had the results of a DNA test and is aware that Ivan was her father. This is however after Ivan's death. Jessica is in total denial that she allowed her own father to die and was instrumental in his death.

Two costumes for the different time settings (1 & 2) - both nursing uniform. Alternatively she could have the one uniform and wear a cardigan over it.

JESSICA Totally devoted to her father. She thinks the world of him. Angered by Natalie forcing a DNA test on her father. Refuses to believe Natalie has come after the right man - her father wasn't capable of doing what he's being accused of.

Two costumes (A & B) for the different time settings - or one costume with a coat worn over it. Includes a handbag.

IVAN This is a non speaking part. Ivan spends most of his time on stage in a wheelchair.

Costumes - dressing gown worn over normal day clothes - the latter for a brief flashback scene that describes how he fell ill.

Properties

Armchair

Wheelchair

DNA test bottle with cotton bud swab

Guardian newspaper. Mug or cup of tea

Bowl containing food which can be fed to Ivan. Spoon

LIGHTS 1, FADE IN LIGHTS AND/OR OPEN TABS

SOUND 1 Distant rumbles of thunder and the sound of rain - then
fade out

SCENE ONE

NURSING HOME IVAN'S ROOM (THE PRESENT)

*(Jessica Costume A. Natalie uniform No 1 - both waiting
in Left Wing)*

ENTER LEFT JESSICA and NATALIE

(Jessica and Natalie are arguing as they enter)

NATALIE I'll give you a hand.

JESSICA Just get out of my way - I can manage by myself. I'm
surprised to find you're still around.

NATALIE Why shouldn't I be?

JESSICA Because my father's dead - and he was the only reason
why you came to work in this particular nursing home.

Jessica goes to the chair and runs her hand over the back

JESSICA This was his favourite chair - I had it brought here to
make him feel more at home.

NATALIE Well it needs to go - along with all his other things.
There's a new resident waiting to move in.

JESSICA What about the DNA test - have you had the results back
yet?

NATALIE I got the letter this morning as it happens - but
apparently the sample was contaminated.

JESSICA Well that's rich isn't it? You were desperate to prove he was your father - now you're not interested. You put him through all that trauma for nothing.

NATALIE There's no point worrying about it now - because he's dead.

JESSICA Yes - he's dead - and it was your fault.

LIGHTS 2 FADE TO BLACK OUT

STAGE POSITIONS TAKEN DURING BLACK OUT -

NATALIE - GOES OFF STAGE (LEFT WING) (UNIFORM No 2)

IVAN - COMES ON STAGE IN WHEELCHAIR

JESSICA - IS ON STAGE - COSTUME CHANGE (COSTUME B)

SOUND 2 - *Fade in summer sounds - fade out as lights fade in*

LIGHTS 3 FADE IN LIGHTS

SCENE TWO

NURSING HOME IVAN'S ROOM (THREE WEEKS AGO)

Ivan is sitting in his wheelchair. Jessica is kneeling in front of him - feeding him from a bowl with a spoon

JESSICA Come on Dad - try to eat a bit more.

Ivan refuses to take any more

JESSICA Oh well at least you've eaten something. I wish you could tell me what's wrong. The doctor said it's not your heart and you've not had a stroke. Dad can you understand me - do you know who I am?

(Stands up. Indicating the bowl and spoon)

I'll take these back to the kitchen, then I'll have to get back to work.

Jessica gives Ivan's hand and affectionate squeeze - she then moves to stage left to exit

EXIT LEFT JESSICA

Ivan sits quietly - moving only his head a little.

There is fear in his eyes.

ENTER LEFT NATALIE

Natalie checks there is no one else in the room. She goes over to Ivan. Stands behind Ivan to speak to him over his shoulder

NATALIE So Ivan Karovitch - it's no good pretending you can't hear what I'm saying, or you don't understand. That won't save you. They'll be here for you soon.

Natalie takes a DNA sample bottle from her pocket. She looks around to check that no one has come into the room

NATALIE Now - let's get this done. Open your mouth.

Ivan keeps his mouth tightly closed as Natalie removes the sample stick from the bottle

NATALIE I said open your mouth.

Ivan turns his head away. Natalie grabs Ivan's jaw and forces open his mouth.

ENTER LEFT JESSICA

Natalie hears Jessica come into the room. Natalie hurriedly puts the bottle back into her pocket and stands up to face Jessica.

JESSICA What are you doing?

NATALIE Just carrying out a routine check.

JESSICA I haven't seen you before?

NATALIE I started work here two days ago. Who are you?

JESSICA *(Lays her hand on Ivan's shoulder)*

I'm Jessica Karovitch - this is my Dad

NATALIE That's an unusual name.

JESSICA My dad comes from Carthinia.

NATALIE Does he understand English?

JESSICA Oh course he does - he's been here over thirty years.

It's just that right now he can't speak, and I don't even know if he understands what I'm saying to him. The hospital did all kinds of tests, but they couldn't find out what was wrong.

NATALIE He's comfortable here and he's being well looked after.

JESSICA He's completely lost his appetite though - so I've been bringing in his favourite meals to try to tempt him to eat a bit more.

NATALIE I think he could do with being out in the fresh air.
That might help. Shall I wheel him out onto the
balcony?

JESSICA (*Getting behind the wheel chair*)
It's alright - I'll do it.

*Jessica hangs her bag on the wheelchair - then pushes Ivan
towards stage right*

EXIT RIGHT JESSICA (with IVAN)

Natalie paces the floor thoughtfully

ENTER RIGHT JESSICA

JESSICA Have you come across a case like this before?

NATALIE It's not unknown amongst the elderly.

JESSICA Dad's not that old and he was as fit as a fiddle a month
ago - it's a complete mystery.

NATALIE Did he work?

JESSICA He was in the army in Carthina. When he came to the UK
he met my mum and they ran a flower shop together. When
she died - he was devastated and it took him a while to
get over it. He carried on running the flower shop
until he retired a couple of years ago - and he's been
really enjoying his retirement - keeping busy with his
allotment and doing the garden.

NATALIE So has he been living on his own?

JESSICA No not really. After mum died he moved into an annex at my house, but he was very independent and liked doing things for himself.

NATALIE So what happened? Did you just find him like this?

JESSICA He'd gone to a Church meeting on the Thursday night. I didn't know he'd taken ill until the morning, when I looked in as usual before I went to work.

(SCENE THREE)

(IVAN'S LIVING ROOM)

SCENE 2 MERGES INTO SCENE 3 WITHOUT A BLACK OUT

THIS IS A FLASH BACK TO IVAN'S DESCENT INTO A VEGETATIVE STATE. JESSICA AND NATALIE REMAIN ON STAGE TO ONE SIDE OF THE ACTION

ENTER RIGHT IVAN (With a cup of tea and a Guardian newspaper)

Ivan sits in the chair and reads the Guardian - while the dialogue continues

JESSICA He was a creature of habit - he liked his routines. He'd come home, make a cup of tea then sit in his favourite chair and read the Guardian.

NATALIE Oh - they've been giving him the Mail. I'll make sure he gets a Guardian tomorrow.

JESSICA Thanks for that - he's always liked a serious paper. When he came to this country he couldn't speak a word of English, but he made a point of learning the language

properly, rather than just getting by. He used to say - if you're fortunate enough to be adopted by a country like Great Britain - then it's only right you understand what the language means.

Ivan suffers a seizure while reading the paper

JESSICA I found him in the morning, looking like a dummy in a waxworks. His eyes were open and he was just staring straight ahead. I got the fright of my life - I thought he was dead. I called an ambulance. They thought he'd had a seizure - but whatever it was - he's still not recovered from it.

LIGHTS 4 FADE OUT TO BLACK OUT

IVAN LEAVES STAGE IN BLACK OUT (TO RIGHT WING)

JESSICA AND NATALIE REMAIN ON STAGE.

SOUND 3 *Sounds of summer - fade out as lights fade in*

LIGHTS 5 FADE IN LIGHTS

SCENE 4 (*Picks up from end of Scene 2*)

NURSING HOME IVAN'S ROOM (THREE WEEKS AGO)

(Natalie & Jessica resume stage positions as at end of Scene 2

NATALIE Did he talk much about his own country?

JESSICA Not really - apart from the fact that he'd fought in the civil war. I think he just wanted to forget about what he'd left behind.

NATALIE It was a terrible war. Brother against brother. Father against son. One side wanting to keep the dictator.

The other side wanting to put their man in his place.

There were thousands of deaths. All for what?

JESSICA How come you know so much about it?

NATALIE I was born there.

JESSICA Really? In Carthina?

NATALIE Yes - but I was adopted by an English couple when I was a few months old. I've been trying to trace my parents and find out more about where I came from.

JESSICA And how far have you got?

NATALIE I went out there last year and found my mother - apparently she was just a girl when she got pregnant with me and she wasn't married. She took refuge in a convent and that's where I was born. She's still there - in the convent. A lay worker who does the laundry and that kind of thing.

JESSICA And what about your father?

NATALIE I'm still looking for him.

JESSICA What a coincidence that you should end up looking after someone who comes from the same country.

(Looks at her watch)

I've got to go back to the office. They've been very understanding - but I still can't spend as much time here as I would like.

NATALIE I'll keep an eye on him. There's nothing to worry about.

JESSICA Do you think he should come in now?

NATALIE No - he's OK. It's nice and warm out there.

Jessica moves to stage right

EXIT RIGHT JESSICA

JESSICA *(Heard off stage)*

I'm going back to the office dad. I'll see you
tomorrow. Bye.

ENTER RIGHT JESSICA

JESSICA I might see you tomorrow.

EXIT LEFT JESSICA

Natalie waits - until Jessica has gone.

*Natalie moves towards stage right - and pauses to look off
stage (to the balcony)*

Natalie takes the DNA test bottle from her pocket

NATALIE *(Speaking to Ivan off stage)*

Ok Karovitch - this time we're going to get it right.

EXIT RIGHT NATALIE

ENTER LEFT JESSICA

Jessica moves quickly towards stage right

JESSICA *(Shouting to Jessica who is off stage)*

What the hell are you doing?

Jessica doesn't quite go off stage (right) she drags

Natalie on stage (from balcony)

ENTER RIGHT NATALIE (being pulled on stage by Jessica)

Natalie puts the test swab in the bottle and puts the bottle back in her pocket

Jessica let's go of Natalie

NATALIE I thought you were going back to work.

JESSICA I was - but I left my bag. What's that in your pocket?

NATALIE Nothing.

Jessica is angry. She tries to get the bottle from Natalie's pocket. Natalie pushes her away.

JESSICA What is it? What have you done? I knew you were up to something. What's going on?

NATALIE It was just a little test.

JESSICA What kind of test?

NATALIE If you must know - a DNA test.

JESSICA A DNA test? In a nursing home? Why?

NATALIE I told you I'm still looking for my father.

JESSICA What! You can't be serious. Are you suggesting my dad is your father?

NATALIE Yes. And the DNA test will tell me - one way or the other.

JESSICA How dare you force him to have a test when he can't agree to it. And you went behind my back. What makes you think he's your father anyway?

JESSICA His name.

JESSICA That's not much to go on.

NATALIE I've been doing lots of research. I narrowed things down to the village he came from. Karovitch in fact isn't a very common name in Carthina.