

A VERY SHORT PLAY FOR EUNICE ON HER 80TH BIRTHDAY!

By Sharon F. Carey

Characters: a still woman moving

Sharon: a wondering woman

Don: a wise man. Don has a nonspeaking part in this play. He sits at the table with Eunice and Sharon. He leans back in his chair; sometimes he leans forward. He drinks tea. He smiles often, broadly, and nods knowingly—like a seer.

Place: The Back Room at 32 Halifax Street

Time: Early Evening: the Winter of 2001

At rise of curtain, three people are sitting at a round table. The lights are dim.

Eunice: Sharon, please tell us what it feels like to be you, as a child.

Sharon: Hmm...Ummm. Errr...

Eunice: Why don't you tell us a story?

Sharon: Can it be a sad story?

Eunice: You decide.

Sharon: Okay. This is a story about my Grammy and me.

Eunice: Good. Grandmothers, you know, are very powerful forces in people's lives. This will be an important story. Go ahead.

Sharon: Well, when I was quite young my father ran a big country inn and my family lived there in a small apartment. My grandmother was there too; she lived on the second floor in a dark, creepy apartment that smelled like dead mice and perfume. Every night after dinner my older sister Susie and I had to visit Grammy. It was a very scary time. Grammy was crabby, and didn't like children. She made us sit on a musty old settee with our hands folded. Every night she left her living room instructing us NOT TO TOUCH THE SILVER BOX ON THE COFFEE TABLE. Night after night Susie and I just sat and stared at that box; then one night our curiosity got the better of us and we opened it. Inside were the most delicious-looking chocolates we had ever seen, all shapes and sizes. Some had pretty flowers piped on top. Susie and I looked at the candy then at

one another. Whispering and giggling, we decided that one bit of chocolate wouldn't hurt anybody. We'd take such tiny bites, Grammy wouldn't even notice. We each took a little nibble and quickly wiped our mouths. Grammy reentered the room. She smiled and said, "You two are such good little girls. Every night I tell you not to touch the silver box and every night you obey me, which is wise because that silver box is full of poisonous candy. (pause) Good night girls. (pause) See you tomorrow."

Eunice: Ha Ha (*laughing hard*)

Sharon: Ahhh, Eunice—maybe you misunderstood some part of my story. My sister and I thought we were going to die.

Eunice: Ha Ha (*laughing harder—wiping tears from her eyes—unable to speak*)

Sharon: Ah Eunice, my sister and I stayed up all night, hugging each other, praying the poison wouldn't work.

Eunice: (*still laughing hysterically*)

Sharon: What's so funny?

Eunice: Ahhh (*taking a deep breath and letting it out*) Don't you see what your grandmother gave you?

Sharon: Emotional scars?

Eunice: No, no. Early on you learned of the dark side—of the absurdity of life. What a great lesson.

Sharon: I never thought of it that way.

Eunice: You got out of that trouble and that experience helped make you a strong, creative force that would help others—never hurt them.

Don: (*sits back, smiles, and nods*)

Sharon: Huh. Well, thanks Grammy.

Curtain

Okay, now I have to tell you what this play meant and still means to me. I had carried this nasty grandma story around with me for a long time. It always made me feel wounded and hurt, damaged even. The day I told you and Don the story (You didn't laugh quite as long or as hard as you did in the play) was the day my life changed. I really felt my world turn upside down. You freed me from something small and snively and gave me a force and freedom I can still feel. You gave me a new world that I love every day.

You and Don are the gifts. Thank you for all the wisdom and kindness you have shared so generously over the years. And now I'm going to steal your dedication:

I love you for always being who you are and for encouraging me to be the person I am.

Happy birthday, Dear Eunice. Here's hoping you live for another 80 years!