

ROYAL

A drama in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

Five porcelain figurines come to life on a quiet shelf to recapture the fading memories of the elderly woman who collected them. Together, these unlikely protectors stand as a unified front to safeguard her past. It's a moving tribute to memory and legacy, proving that love survives even when the mind begins to fracture.

SETTING

A grand wooden shelf spans the stage. Five glamorous Royal Doulton style figurines stand perfectly still upon their pedestals. They are dressed in breathtaking ball gowns.

RUNNING TIME

30-35 minutes

CHARACTERS

(5 females)

BRIDE.....devoted, romantic, sentimental
MAID OF HONOR.....fluttering, eccentric, scattered
DUCHESS.....practical, maternal, protective
NOBLEWOMAN.....dignified, majestic, pretentious
FLOWER GIRL.....optimistic, cheerful, sweet

A sixth character, DORIS, is entirely offstage for the duration of the play. She's an invisible presence suggested through ambient sound effects, which are underlined.

(AT RISE: The lights are dim. A grand wooden shelf spans the stage. Five glamorous Royal Doulton style figurines stand perfectly still upon their pedestals. They are dressed in breathtaking ball gowns.)

(OFFSTAGE: The sound of wind rustles through a window. Wind chimes softly ring. There's a shuffle of slippers on a hardwood floor. A frustrated sigh. The clatter of keys being dropped, picked up, and dropped again. A door clicks shut.)

(A warm light rises, beautifully illuminating the shelf. The figurines instantly break their porcelain poses, stretching their limbs with elegant movements. DUCHESS, quite practical, looks forward into the dark and whispers urgently.)

DUCHESS

The fog is thick tonight. She forgot where she put the keys again. She didn't even recognize her own reflection in the hallway mirror.

(NOBLEWOMAN, quite full of herself, strikes a majestic pose.)

NOBLEWOMAN

Oh, please. She recognized it. She simply chose to ignore it. If I looked that unpressed, I would pretend I didn't know myself either.

(BRIDE, quite sentimental, clutches her bouquet to her chest.)

BRIDE

Be kind. Her mind is just wandering. It's Friday, you know. Or perhaps Saturday. Oh, I do love Saturdays! The smell of lemon wax is intoxicating!

(MAID OF HONOR, quite scattered, frantically straightens her gown.)

MAID OF HONOR

Wait, is it Saturday? Did she dust us? If she didn't dust us, it's definitely not Saturday. Or is it? And where is my fan? Did I leave it in the box? I haven't seen my box in years. Someone tell me I'm

still standing on my pedestal. I feel completely detached!

(FLOWER GIRL, quite sweet, peeks over the edge of the shelf.)

FLOWER GIRL

Your left heel is a tiny bit over the gold trim, but you're doing wonderfully! I think it's a lovely night. Plus she opened the window. That's a good sign! And did you hear her sigh? It sounded like a little breeze through tissue paper.

DUCHESS

(Paces the narrow length of the shelf)

It isn't a breeze, it's a storm. A quiet one, but a storm nonetheless. When she doesn't know her own face, she doesn't know us. And if she forgets us, we're just baked clay and dead paint.

MAID OF HONOR

Dead paint! Oh, don't say that word. Paint is the only thing keeping my petticoats together! If she forgets us, do we fade? Does the color just slide off our skirts onto the wood? Or worse yet, get swallowed by the fog?

BRIDE

No one is fading. The room still smells of the lavender water she puts on her wrists.

NOBLEWOMAN

It smells of confusion, if you ask me. She spent twenty minutes today talking to the grandfather clock in the hall as if it were the mailman.

FLOWER GIRL

Maybe she was just telling it the time! It's polite to share.

DUCHESS

She was looking for her tea cozy. She thought the clock was hiding it. The mist is rising from the floorboards, I can feel it in my ankles. It's the kind of quiet that makes you look at your own hands and wonder if they belong to you.

BRIDE

But that's why we have the visits. The loving visits. Think of last week. When the yellow cloth came out, she didn't just wipe away the dust. She lingered.

MAID OF HONOR

(Nods rapidly)

She did! She did! She held my base for three whole seconds. I counted. One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand, three-one-thousand. Or was it four seconds? My internal clock is so dreadfully scattered today.

BRIDE

She held you because she was anchoring herself. Every time she passes that cloth over our shoulders, it isn't just cleaning. It's roll call. She's checking to see if the pieces of her life are still standing in a row.

NOBLEWOMAN

Well, she certainly took her time with my lace trim. Though, who could blame her? If you had to choose between staring at faded wallpaper or the exquisite detailing of my bodice, the choice is rather elementary.

DUCHESS

Enough with the lace. For years you've claimed your glaze was superior because it caught the afternoon sun better than my emerald lacquer.

NOBLEWOMAN

Because it does, darling. Facts are not arguments, they're simply truths.

FLOWER GIRL

I miss the afternoon sun. Remember when she used to leave the sheer curtains open? The whole shelf looked like it was made of gold. I think she still sees the gold, even through the fog. When she looks up here, her eyes get so wide and soft. Like she's looking at a window that opens into a secret garden.

DUCHESS

A garden that's growing over with weeds.

(OFFSTAGE: A tea kettle whistles.)

(The figurines all instantly freeze, eyes darting toward the sound.)

(OFFSTAGE: The sound of tea being poured into a teacup. A spoon clicks against the teacup.)

FLOWER GIRL

(Whispers)

She's moving. I hear the spoon against the porcelain.

BRIDE

(Relaxes slightly)

She's taking her time. She always does when she uses the blue willow cup. So it must be Saturday.

MAID OF HONOR

Oh, thank goodness! My knees were about to lock. If I freeze too quickly, my petticoats get that dreadful draft underneath. I used to love her Saturday visits. Not that I mind the yellow cloth. But the Saturday one --

DUCHESS

Her violet scarf!

NOBLEWOMAN

The silk even smelled of violets. Quite an upgrade from the dreadful microfiber she got from the hospital.

FLOWER GIRL

It was so soft! When she pulled it across my cheek, it felt like a butterfly landing. But where has it been?

BRIDE

It must be in the cedar chest at the foot of the bed. The one she only opens when the house is entirely silent.

FLOWER GIRL

I've been trying to place the pattern. It's so familiar. I could swear I remember seeing it worn. Not by Doris, but by one of us.

MAID OF HONOR

(Frantically looks left and right)

One of us? Don't look at me! I've only ever worn burgundy velvet. If I had a silk scarf with violets, it would clash with my trim, and we all know how I feel about color coordination. My nerves simply couldn't handle it.

DUCHESS

I remember a scarf like that. Decades ago. When the light in the room was different, and the furniture didn't look so tired. I remember looking down from the shelf and seeing it draped over a pair of shoulders. Brilliant, young shoulders.

NOBLEWOMAN

Well, it certainly wasn't me. I'm entirely self contained, and masterpieces don't require accessories. Though, if it were mine, it would explain the exceptional quality of the silk.

FLOWER GIRL

Maybe it belonged to a sister we haven't met yet? A figurine she keeps wrapped up in tissue paper in the closet?

BRIDE

(Shakes her head)

No, sweetie. There are no other sisters. Just the five of us. But when Doris held that scarf, she didn't just dust with it. She pressed it to her cheek first. As if she were trying to catch a whisper left in the threads.

DUCHESS

(Looks out into the darkness)

That's the trouble with the fog. It doesn't just take the names and the keys. It takes the pieces of the story that connect us. We know the scarf is important, but the origin is slipping away into the grey, just like everything else. Her stories have become our memories... and we can barely keep them straight ourselves!

BRIDE

Don't fret. We'll help each other fill in the gaps.

(OFFSTAGE: A sharp creak echoes from the floorboards.)

(The figurines snap back into position.)

FLOWER GIRL

(Whispers eagerly)

Is she coming? Is that her slippers on the floor?

NOBLEWOMAN

(Peers over her fan)

No, it's just the house settling. It does a lot of sighing these days, too.

(The figurines relax.)

MAID OF HONOR

(Adjusts her dress)

Oh, thank goodness. My petticoats were starting to itch. And now I'm worried about the violet scarf. If it wasn't ours, and it wasn't a

sister in the closet, then whose shoulders did it belong to?

(BRIDE strokes the lace of her gown, with a faraway look in her eyes.)

BRIDE

They were hers. Long before they were hunched over a walker, they were Doris's shoulders.

DUCHESS

Doris? But she's an old woman. She wears thick cardigans and dusty slippers. I've never seen her in silk.

BRIDE

That's the twilight taking over. We sometimes forget when things were brighter. But I remember the morning sun. Close your eyes and you will, too. I remember her as a girl.

MAID OF HONOR

(Gasps)

A girl? Doris was a girl? Was I there? Did I see it? My memory is like a sieve tonight. Someone hand me a calendar!

BRIDE

We were all there. Or rather, the idea of us was. Look at what we're wearing. Look at the emerald, the yellow, the burgundy, the purple. We aren't just a random collection of pretty things picked up at a department store. We're a wedding party. Her wedding party.

NOBLEWOMAN

The June wedding!

BRIDE

(Nods)

Exactly. The fog hasn't touched this memory yet. I've kept it polished ever since she told it. She was twenty-two years old. And that scarf with the violets wasn't a dust rag. It was the scarf she tied over her hair so the wind wouldn't ruin her curls on the way to the church. I remember the exact sound of her laughter. It wasn't that fragile sigh we hear now. It was loud. It was vibrant. It sounded like bells bouncing on marble.

FLOWER GIRL

(Awestruck)

Was she beautiful?

BRIDE

She was breathtaking. She sat at the vanity mirror, looking at her reflection. The very same mirror she walked past tonight without knowing her own face. But that morning, she knew exactly who she was. She was a bride. She looked at her bridesmaids, all dressed in these exact shades of emerald, yellow, burgundy, and purple. She wanted to freeze that moment forever. She wanted to capture the certainty that the world was hers.

DUCHESS

So her husband didn't just buy us because we're pretty?

BRIDE

No. He bought us, one by one over the years, to give her back her favorite day. Every time a milestone passed, he found a figure that matched one of her bridesmaids. He gave me to her on their silver anniversary. When she opened the box and saw my white lace, she wept. Not because she was sad, but because the years melted away and she was suddenly standing in the church again, holding her breath before the doors swung open.

MAID OF HONOR

(Wipes a tear from her eye)

Oh, dear. I think my glaze is cracking.

NOBLEWOMAN

She surrounded herself with us so she would never forget the women who loved her, and the man who adored her. We're the anchor to the happiest morning of her life.

FLOWER GIRL

But if she's forgetting the wedding, she's forgetting the girl.

BRIDE

Then we will just have to tell her the story again. Every single night. Until the doors swing open for her one last time.

(OFFSTAGE: A door creaks open.)

(The figures instantly snap back into their porcelain poses.)

(OFFSTAGE: The shuffling of footsteps enter the room. A teacup is set on a side table. The creak of an armchair as Doris settles into it. Doris sips on her tea. She lets out a gentle sigh.)

(Seeing that Doris is safely in her chair, the figurines subtly ease out of their frozen stances once more. NOBLEWOMAN gathers the others, with a knowing smirk on her face.)

NOBLEWOMAN

Well, if we're going to speak of the wedding, we must address the catastrophic prelude. Because before there could be a white lace dress or a violet hair scarf, there had to be Sandy.

MAID OF HONOR

(Gasps, her hands fluttering)

Of course! Dear, sweet Sandy! He always stood when a lady walked in the room!

NOBLEWOMAN

A true gentleman. But let's be entirely honest, the man was an absolute menace on a bicycle. That's the true story of how they met, you know. Not some romantic gaze across a crowded ballroom. No, it was a collision on Tupper Street.

FLOWER GIRL

A collision?! Did he break her?

NOBLEWOMAN

(Waves her fan dismissively)

He broke her grocery bag. Which, back then, was a tragedy of epic proportions. Doris was walking home from the market, minding her own business, looking spectacularly chic in a pleated skirt, when Sandy came hurtling down the hill. He had completely lost control of his brakes. He swerved to miss a stray cat, hit the curb, and launched himself, not to mention a very large basket of carrots, directly into her path.

DUCHESS

(Laughs unexpectedly)

I forgot about the carrots!

NOBLEWOMAN

It rained root vegetables for three solid blocks! Doris was flattened on the sidewalk, covered in dirt, with a bruised shin and a carton of crushed eggs leaking into her left shoe. She was absolutely furious. She stood up, shook her fist at him, and shouted phrases she certainly didn't learn in Sunday school.

(She slips off her pedestal, her haughty demeanor dropping as she grips imaginary bicycle handlebars.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Out of the way! Look out! The brakes are completely gone!

(DUCHESS steps into the memory, dropping her arms to cradle an invisible grocery bag.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Watch where you're going! My carrots!

(NOBLEWOMAN throws her hands up as if crashing, tumbling onto the shelf floor, taking DUCHESS down with her.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris, furious)

Look what you've done, you lunatic!

BRIDE

(Laughs)

She had a marvelous vocabulary when she was provoked.

(NOBLEWOMAN looks up with a dazed, lopsided grin.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Well, hello. I'm Sandy. Are you doing anything for the next fifty years?

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

You buffoon! There's egg yolk running into my socks!

MAID OF HONOR

(Giggles)

Fifty years! That's exactly how long they had, isn't it?

(DUCHESS gets up and begins to storm off. NOBLEWOMAN rises and limps along after her, gathering invisible carrots in the folds of her gown.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy, pleading)

Wait, don't walk away! Look, this carrot isn't even broken! Let me buy you a chocolate malted. Please?

DUCHESS

(As Doris, fighting a smile)

Three days, Sandy Davidson. You will wait three whole days before you even think about knocking on my front door.

(NOBLEWOMAN salutes DUCHESS, who giggles, before they both slip back into the present.)

NOBLEWOMAN

She made him wait three days just to prove a point. But on the fourth day, she wore that very same violet scarf in her hair, sat on the back of that exact same bicycle, and held onto his waist so tight that her knuckles turned white. She spent the rest of her life laughing at his lopsided grin.

DUCHESS

And he spent the rest of his life trying to make up for those eggs.

(OFFSTAGE: A soft chuckle from Doris.)

(The figurines exchange triumphant, glowing looks.)

MAID OF HONOR

She laughed! Did you hear it? A proper, old-fashioned Saturday laugh! Oh, quick, who has the next chapter? We can't let the silence settle back in.

FLOWER GIRL

(Bounces on her pedestal)

Let's do the reception! The part with the cake! I've always wanted to know what the cake tasted like. Was it sweet? Was it made of clouds?

BRIDE

It was three tiers of almond sponge with raspberry jam.

NOBLEWOMAN

(Snaps her fan open)

And it was nearly ruined by a monsoon. Honestly, your memory skips

over the most dramatic details. The reception was supposed to be a flawless garden affair. Instead, the sky turned the color of a plum exactly ten minutes after the vows.

BRIDE

The wind came up first. It caught the edges of the white tablecloths and turned them into sails. It was utter chaos.

(DUCHESS steps back into the memory and becomes Doris, frantically trying to save her wedding reception from a downpour.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

The punch bowl! Someone grab the crystal punch bowl before it fills with rainwater! Aunt Minto, put down the brisket and run for the tent! Not that tent, the poles are lifting! Sandy, do something manly with the ropes!

(NOBLEWOMAN steps back into the memory and becomes Sandy.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

I've got it, Mrs. Davidson! Fear not! A little precipitation never hurt anyone! Just somebody tell the wind to stop pulling so hard, my trousers are getting soaked! Where's the champagne?

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Sandy, look at the ice sculpture! The swan is melting!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

It's not melting, sweetheart, it's evolving! Now dance with me. Right here on the grass!

DUCHESS

(As Doris, giggling)

In a thunderstorm? In my satin slippers? My mother will have a fit!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy, pulling her close)

Your mother is currently wrestling a punch bowl, she won't notice. The band has already run inside, so we'll just have to hum.

(The other figurines start to hum a waltz as NOBLEWOMAN and DUCHESS clutch one another and begin to dance. For a few moments, they are completely lost in the rainy June afternoon. Then, the music in their heads fades and the humming stops. They step apart, exhaling softly, and return to the present.)

BRIDE

And they did. They hummed long into the night. Her hem was covered in mud by the time they cut the cake, but she didn't care. She said she felt lighter than air.

FLOWER GIRL

(Sighs happily)

I knew it! It was made of clouds.

DUCHESS

The rain always stops eventually. But the fog... the fog just keeps drifting in. Look at the light under the door. It's getting dimmer. Doris? Can you still hear us?

(They all look toward Doris, hopefully. A quiet pause fills the room.)

(OFFSTAGE: The sound of a page turning in a notebook. A lead pencil scribbles on the page.)

MAID OF HONOR

She's writing. Or trying to. I can hear the scratch of the pencil, but it keeps stopping. It stops for so long between the words.

NOBLEWOMAN

She's just thinking. Authors never rush their prose. She's likely composing a spectacular description of my tulle overlay.

DUCHESS

(Shakes her head)

She isn't describing you. She's trying to write down the name of the song they were humming. I can feel the blank space in her mind from here. It's like a draft blowing through a cracked window.

FLOWER GIRL

(Steps to the very front edge of the shelf)

Then we need to give her a bigger memory! A loud one! What happened

after the rainy wedding? Where did they go in that shiny car with the tin cans dragging behind it?

BRIDE

(Smiles)

Niagara Falls. The honeymoon.

(DUCHESS becomes Doris, standing on a windy boat in the mist.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Sandy, hold onto my hand! I can't see a thing through all this spray!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Look at all that water, sweetheart! It looks like a giant washing machine exploded!

MAID OF HONOR

Keep her close, Sandy. Don't let her slip. She's small, and the river is so terribly fast.

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

It's freezing! My scarf is completely ruined. It looks like a drowned cat! Is this what romance is supposed to feel like? Hypothermia?

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Here, put your hands in my coat pockets. I've got two packets of sugar from the diner and two tickets for the Maid of the Mist. We're on top of the world, Doris!

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Sandy, look! The boat is driving us right into the mouth of it! We're completely surrounded by the thunder!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Let it roar, Doris! We've got the yellow slickers and the whole world in front of us! Lean into the spray!

FLOWER GIRL

Look at how he holds her. He wouldn't let the water take her then, and he wouldn't let the fog take her now. Remind her of the grip! Make her feel his arms!

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

I'm not letting go, Sandy! Not even if we drown!

(NOBLEWOMAN kisses the top of DUCHESS'S head.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

We aren't going to drown, Doris! We're just getting started!

(DUCHESS and NOBLEWOMAN step out of the memory.)

FLOWER GIRL

Did they ever get warm?

BRIDE

They bought a wool blanket at a souvenir shop, with Mounties embroidered on the corners. They shared a single order of soggy french fries in the back of the car and watched the fireworks explode over the horseshoe.

DUCHESS

She still has that blanket. It's folded over the back of her armchair right now.

MAID OF HONOR

She's touching it. Look. Her fingers are running over the wool. She's remembering the mist.

(OFFSTAGE: The pencil begins again, moving a little faster across the page.)

(The figurines watch silently, reverently.)

(OFFSTAGE: The scratching of the pencil suddenly falters. The pencil drops to the floor. It rolls across the hardwood. A silence drops over the room.)

MAID OF HONOR

The pencil stopped. It didn't just pause, it dropped. I heard it roll across the floorboards.

FLOWER GIRL

(Leans forward)

Doris...? Why is she so quiet?

NOBLEWOMAN

The fog didn't just come in. It froze.

DUCHESS

It isn't the fog of old age. Not this time. It's the old shadow. The one that sits at the very bottom of the cedar chest, underneath all the linens.

BRIDE

(Full of sorrow)

I know that shadow. The winter it never stopped snowing.

(DUCHESS steps back into the memory and becomes Doris. Her posture collapses into absolute exhaustion and grief. She sits on the edge of the shelf, fighting back tears.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

The nursery is so quiet, Sandy. Turn the radiator off. It's too loud. Everything is too loud.

(NOBLEWOMAN steps back into the memory as Sandy. She kneels beside DUCHESS, taking her trembling hands in hers.)

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Sweetheart. The doctor said you need to rest. You have to eat something. Just a little broth.

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

I can't. Every time I swallow, it feels like stone. Why is the snow so bright? It keeps falling and falling, covering up everything, as if there wasn't supposed to be another heartbeat in this house. There were supposed to be booties, Sandy. I knitted them in yellow. Where did you put them?

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

I put them away, Doris. I put them in the cedar chest. Don't look at them. Please.

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

He's gone. He was so tiny, and he's just... gone. And the doctor... the way he looked at me, Sandy. The way he shook his head. He didn't have to say the words. I saw it in his eyes. There won't be another one. The room is going to stay empty. We're always going to be just the two of us.

BRIDE

And the house was so terribly quiet for months. The neighbors didn't know what to say. They walked past the porch on tiptoes.

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

Doris, look at me. Look at what I found. It was caught in the lining of your winter coat.

(She offers DUCHESS a long stretch of ribbon that's tied around her waist.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

My scarf.

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

It still smells like the June rain. Remember the wind? Remember the waltz on the grass when the swan melted? We're still here, Doris. You and me. The room might be empty, but my arms aren't. Hold onto me. Tie the scarf tight, and hold onto me.

(DUCHESS clutches the ribbon to her chest and buries her face in NOBLEWOMAN'S neck.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

I can't let go, Sandy. If I let go, I'll shatter. I swear I'll shatter into a thousand pieces.

MAID OF HONOR

I know what that feels like. To shatter.

BRIDE

(Warmly)

Oh, sweetie. Don't think about that.

(MAID OF HONOR speaks softly as she gently caresses the ribbons around her waist.)

MAID OF HONOR

It was the first time Sandy got the shakes. His hands, they just started trembling at breakfast, completely out of nowhere. He reached up to dust the shelf, trying to act like nothing was wrong, but the control just wasn't there. And then... the terrible gravity happened.

DUCHESS

We all thought you were a goner.

MAID OF HONOR

I fell so far. The hardwood floor felt like iron. When I hit it, I didn't just break... I exploded. My burgundy gown went one way, my locket went another, and my left hand rolled all the way under the sofa. I lay there in the dust, completely disconnected from myself. I remember looking at my own fractured pieces and thinking, this is the end of the story. The garbage bin is my next pedestal. Nobody keeps a broken thing.

NOBLEWOMAN

(Closes her fan)

He offered to buy a replacement at the mall.

MAID OF HONOR

(Smiles, radiating pure warmth)

But Doris wouldn't let him. She shook her head, knelt right there on the floor, and gathered up every single microscopic splinter. Even the tiny flecks of paint that had chipped off into the rug. She sat at the kitchen table for three whole days with that tiny little brush and that smelly bottle of glue. Her hands were trembling, but her touch... oh, it was so patient. She held my waist together, rib by rib, piece by piece, until the cracks finally closed.

BRIDE

(Tenderly)

She wouldn't give up on you.

MAID OF HONOR

She made me whole again. The seam is still there, of course. If you

look closely in the afternoon sun, you can see where the fractures meet. But Doris says that makes me special. She says the mended ones have the most character. That's how I know she won't let the fog win tonight. She's a fixer. She fixes the things she loves.

DUCHESS

It's sad they never had the children.

NOBLEWOMAN

No. They never did.

MAID OF HONOR

(Looks toward Doris)

But they had fifty years of holding onto the violet scarf together. And when Sandy left us, she kept it right beside her pillow.

(OFFSTAGE: Doris lets out a shaky sigh.)

DUCHESS

The scars don't stay in the chest, do they? Once you open it, they all want to come out. The snow, the empty room... and the suitcase.

MAID OF HONOR

(Gasps)

Oh, the suitcase! The big tan one with the brass buckles! It sat by the front door for a whole week after the holiday. I kept counting the buckles. One, two, three... or were there four? My head is spinning just thinking about it!

NOBLEWOMAN

There were two buckles. Quit exaggerating. And it wasn't a holiday. Not really. It was a race against the clock. Sandy's heart was starting to tire. The lopsided grin was still there, but it took so much more effort to pull it off.

BRIDE

Doris saw the shadow falling over him. She knew the pages of their book were running out. So, she didn't cry, and she didn't panic. She did what Doris always does. She planned. She stayed up for three nights straight with travel brochures scattered across the kitchen table, mapping out his dream.

FLOWER GIRL

The castles? The ones with the stone towers and the green hills?

BRIDE

(Nods)

The Scottish Highlands. He had talked about seeing them since he was a boy on Tupper Street.

(DUCHESS and NOBLEWOMAN step back into the memory and transform into older Doris and Sandy, standing on a windy hill in Scotland.)

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Look at the heather, Sandy! It goes on for miles! Just like the brochures promised. Pull your wool scarf up over your chin, dear. The wind from the loch is fierce today. Look over there. Do you see the castle ruins on the cliff?

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy, frail)

I see it, Doris. It looks just like a painting. Thank you for bringing me. My legs are a bit like lead today, sweetheart. I think I need to lean on you a little more.

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Lean all you want. I've got you. I'll hold you up for the next fifty years if I have to. Look at the sky, Sandy. The fog is lifting over the mountains. It's beautiful, isn't it?

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy, closing her eyes)

So beautiful...

BRIDE

They stayed away for a while. A long while. The house here was completely dark for two whole months. No visits. The grandfather clock ticked into empty rooms, and the dust... oh, the dust gathered on our shoulders like a heavy winter coat. We couldn't move. We could only wait.

(DUCHESS and NOBLEWOMAN return to the present.)

DUCHESS

And then the front door finally unlocked.

MAID OF HONOR

She brought back so many things. The little tartan ribbon she tied around my pedestal. The tiny pewter thimble shaped like a castle. The shelf was suddenly so crowded with new knick-knacks from the trip.

NOBLEWOMAN

But she didn't bring back Sandy. Not really.

DUCHESS

He walked through the door, but he stayed on that windy hill in the mist. He was never the same when he came home. Never the same again. His voice was like a whisper that couldn't find its way out of his throat. He sat in that armchair, looking right through us, looking right through the walls.

BRIDE

The lopsided grin was gone. And three months later, the armchair was empty.

FLOWER GIRL

But wait! The armchair wasn't always empty! And the suitcase didn't just bring back sadness and tartan ribbons. Remember what else was inside it? Right at the very top, wrapped in three layers of crinkly tissue paper?

MAID OF HONOR

Oh! Oh, I do! I remember the tissue paper! It was white with little silver stars on it! Or were they gold? No, definitely silver. They caught the light from the hallway mirror!

NOBLEWOMAN

Finally, an arrival worthy of a standing ovation. The new girl.

DUCHESS

We had been a quartet for so long. Decades! We had our rows perfectly arranged, our arguments entirely settled. And then, the box arrived on the kitchen table.

(FLOWER GIRL steps forward, her naive sweetness bubbling over. She doesn't just step into the memory, she becomes her own brand new self being unpacked for the very first time, blinking up at the world in absolute wonder.)

FLOWER GIRL

It was so dark in that box. There was no air! And then, rip! The cardboard flaps flew back, and suddenly, there she was. Doris. Her face was so big, looking down at me like a warm, smiling sun.

DUCHESS

(As Doris)

Oh, Sandy! Look at her! Look at the purple of her gown. It's the exact shade of the heather we saw near the loch. She's perfect!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

I told you I'd find her, sweetheart. It took three different antique shops in Edinburgh, but I knew the moment I saw her face. She belongs on the shelf with the others.

(MAID OF HONOR steps into the memory as her own self from years ago, leaning over the edge of the shelf to inspect the newcomer.)

MAID OF HONOR

Look! She has a silver cape! Does it clash with my burgundy? I feel completely under-dressed!

BRIDE

She's terribly shiny. Her glaze hasn't even settled yet. She smells like bubble wrap and fresh factory paint. Do you think she's going to take my spot near the clock?

FLOWER GIRL

(Waves to the others, cheerfully)

Hello! My clay is still a little warm from the delivery truck. Please don't push me off the edge, I'm very fragile!

NOBLEWOMAN

(As Sandy)

There you go, Doris. The whole party is back together now. All your girls, right where they belong.

(The memory fades. The figurines step back, exhaling a collective breath of unadulterated joy.)

BRIDE

He smiled for three whole days after that. He just sat in his chair, holding Doris's hand, and the two of them would look up here and count us. One, two, three, four, five.

FLOWER GIRL

I was the final piece of the song.

DUCHESS

You were the melody that brought the music back into the house.

(OFFSTAGE: Doris begins to hum. It's the same song from her wedding night.)

(The figurines freeze in breathless triumph.)

BRIDE

Do you hear that? She's humming the tempo. She's giving us the beat.

NOBLEWOMAN

(Snaps her fan shut with a flourish)

Well, darlings, an artist doesn't ignore a cue from her director. Everyone, pick up your petticoats and find your footing!

MAID OF HONOR

Wait! Are we dancing? Right now? On the shelf? What about my left heel? It's still over the gold trim! Oh, who cares about the trim! Someone grab my hand before I lose my balance entirely!

DUCHESS

Let the fog try to match this footwork!

(OFFSTAGE: A needle hits a record on a old phonograph. The needle scratches a few times.)

BRIDE

She's putting on the record!

(OFFSTAGE: An old fashioned instrumental arrangement of the song swells underneath Doris's humming.)

(One by one, the figurines leap off their pedestals. They step completely into the music, transforming the shelf into a high society ballroom. NOBLEWOMAN grabs DUCHESS by the hand.)

NOBLEWOMAN

Keep your chin up as we dance! The floor is boring. Look at the rafters!

DUCHESS

I'm not looking down! I'm looking at the sky!

(BRIDE twirls gracefully in the center, her white lace catching the light.)

BRIDE

It's the rainy June afternoon all over again! Look at us! We're dancing in the mist!

(MAID OF HONOR takes FLOWER GIRL by the hand and they join in the waltz.)

FLOWER GIRL

One-two-three, one-two-three! I'm flying!

MAID OF HONOR

The cracks aren't even pulling! The glue is holding! Look at the room! The whole house is dancing with us!

(The five figurines weave a beautiful path across the stage. They partner up, switch, and spin, their diverse personalities blending into one.)

(OFFSTAGE: The music peaks in a grand crescendo. Suddenly, right at the height of the dance, a terrifying sound tears through the music. The needle scratches across the entire record and the music abruptly stops. A violent crash of a body hitting the floorboards, followed by the shattering smash of a porcelain teacup.)

(The figurines snap out of their choreography, their faces contorted into sheer horror as they look toward Doris.)

DUCHESS

(Breathless)

Doris...?

(BRIDE drops to her knees at the edge of the shelf, reaching out into the darkness.)

BRIDE

Doris!

(The figurines burst into a state of chaotic disarray and frenzied panic.)

MAID OF HONOR

She didn't get up! Why isn't she getting up?! One-one-thousand, two-one-thousand... she always gets up by three-one-thousand! Someone call the mailman! Call the grandfather clock! Call anyone!

DUCHESS

The fog didn't just freeze, it swallowed her! I can't hear her breathing. Doris! Doris, look at my dress! Look at the emerald! Focus on the color!

FLOWER GIRL

This isn't happening! Sandy! Sandy, where are you? You're supposed to do something manly with the ropes! You're supposed to fix this!

MAID OF HONOR

The gravity! The terrible gravity happened to her! She's broken. I know the sound of a shattering, I know it! But who's going to sit at the table for three days with the tiny brush and the smelly glue for her? Who's going to mend Doris?!

NOBLEWOMAN

The doors didn't swing open for her. They slammed shut.

(DUCHESS snaps her head around, her eyes wide with a sudden realization.)

DUCHESS

Wait! I know what to do. Where is it?

NOBLEWOMAN

Where is what? The tea? The porcelain is in pieces on the rug.

DUCHESS

Not the cup! The anchor! The thing she holds onto so she doesn't shatter!

(BRIDE slowly looks up, her eyes scanning the darkness where Doris fell.)

BRIDE

The violet scarf.

MAID OF HONOR

It's not here! If it's not in the cedar chest, where did it go? Did the wind take it? Did the monsoon from the reception blow it away?!

FLOWER GIRL

It's gone. The scarf is completely gone.

BRIDE

Without the scarf, she won't remember the girl on the bicycle. She won't remember the waltz in the rain. She's lying down there in the grey, and she doesn't have the threads to climb back up.

DUCHESS

Then we have to find it. We have to look into the dark.

NOBLEWOMAN

Look into the dark? Are you mad?! We're clay. If we step off this edge without her hands to catch us, we aren't looking for a scarf, we're committing suicide.

MAID OF HONOR

She's right, she's right! It's dark down there! What if the scarf is wedged between the wall and the baseboard? I can't fit my burgundy velvet into a crevice, I'll get scuffed! I'll lose my glaze!

FLOWER GIRL

(Points forward, to a spot below)

Look! Over there, by the leg of the telephone table! Is that a shadow, or is it... is it violet trim?

BRIDE

(Gasps)

It's the silk! It drifted when she fell. She must have had it on.

MAID OF HONOR

For our Saturday visit!

NOBLEWOMAN

She remembered today.

BRIDE

It's trapped in the draft by the hallway door.

(DUCHESS grips the edge of the shelf,
preparing herself for battle.)

DUCHESS

Then we lean in. Just like she did at Niagara Falls.

(To BRIDE)

Hold onto my hand.

(To MAID OF HONOR)

Grab her waist.

(To FLOWER GIRL)

Hold her skirt.

(To NOBLEWOMAN)

Anchor the line! We're a wedding party, remember? We don't leave a
bridesmaid behind, and we certainly don't leave the bride.

END OF PREVIEW

For a complete script, or to apply for production rights:
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