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POOR LONELY MAN

by Pam Valentine

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ISBN 978-0-573-00054-6

concordtheatricals.co.uk
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CHARACTERS

In Order of Appearance

LILIAN
ANNIE
SHEILA

SETTING

Annie's house, the day after her husband Leonard's funeral.

TIME

The Present

NOTES ON STAGING

The play is best set in the black. Exit stage left to kitchen; stage right to hall and front door. Centre back, a table displaying pieces of silver, including a small photo frame. Also a large china jug. Stage right a table with bottle of sherry, glasses and a telephone. Stage left a table with sympathy cards. Down centre facing front as if before a fireplace, two comfortable chairs, one high-backed, slightly angled towards each other. By each chair a small table with a lamp. By one chair, a cat bed.

LILIAN. *(Into phone.)* But you're feeling a bit better, are you? ...Good... No, you go back to bed. I'll see to everything when I get home... It's no use, she won't. I've asked and asked. She says she'll be alright... Not too bad... I've said I'll come over again at the weekend. If you're on the mend... Yes, well, we'll see... Take care, then. See you in a couple of hours. Depending on the traffic. Bye bye, love. Bye bye.

*(***LILIAN** *replaces the telephone as* **ANNIE** *enters stage right. She carries a large bag containing a man's green jacket.)*

ANNIE. I want you to give Bert this coat of Leonard's. There's such a lot of wear left in it. There'll be more when I've finished going through everything.

LILIAN. Oh Annie, don't start sorting things out yet. Give yourself time!

ANNIE. It's got to be done. And you know me, I can't sit idle. Was that the vet on the phone?

LILIAN. No, love. It was Bert. Wondering what time I'd be back.

ANNIE. How is he?

LILIAN. Not so bad. Sends you his love. He said he wishes you'd come back with me.

ANNIE. That's very nice of him, Lilian. And I do appreciate the offer. But I can't leave my Jason, can I? It's worrying me to death him being at the vets.

LILIAN. Troubles never come singly, do they? Mum used to say that.

ANNIE. I thought of Mum yesterday in the Chapel. Last time I was there was for her. Do you know I think he had more flowers than she did!

LILIAN. Beautiful wreath from Tindalls. Beautiful.

ANNIE. Well, he was with them for over thirty years. They thought the world of him.

LILIAN. We all did, Annie. He was a lovely man. One of the best.

ANNIE. *(Picking up the silver photograph frame.)* I want you to have this. You and Bert. A little memento.

LILIAN. Oh… I couldn't. Not possibly. No.

ANNIE. He would have wished it. Go on – take it. I'll put it in the bag. With the coat.

LILIAN. I shall treasure that, Annie. But I really don't think –

ANNIE. I won't hear another word. You'll upset me if you say no.

LILIAN. Well, it's very kind of you. I thought yesterday how the silver gleamed. Several people remarked on it. You must have spent hours polishing it all!

ANNIE. It gave me something to do. Now then. You get going. It's a bitter night and that traffic's going to get so heavy! Give Bert my love and wish him better.

LILIAN. He was brokenhearted not to be here. Of all times to get the flu! I can't think when he was last ill.

ANNIE. Well, you make him take it easy. I've brought your bag down. It's in the hall. I'll get your coat.

*(***ANNIE** *exits to the hall.* **LILIAN** *looks round the room.* **ANNIE** *enters with a coat.)*

Here we are. Now button it right up. We don't want you getting ill.

LILIAN. I don't like leaving you. It's not right. You shouldn't be alone.

ANNIE. If you stayed for a week I'd be alone when you went. And I've got my memories.

LILIAN. You're so brave, Annie. If it was Bert… I don't know what I'd do.

ANNIE. You'd manage. The same as I will.

LILIAN. Please don't stand and wave me off. It's so cold and I've got to sort myself out in the car. You stay here in the warm.

ANNIE. Alright, dear. God bless and drive carefully. Love to Bert.

*(***LILIAN** *exits stage right.* **ANNIE** *waves.)*

Bye bye, take care.

*(***ANNIE** *turns back into the room.)*

Jason! Jason! Where's Mummy's little darling? Where's my little – Oh! Silly old fool!

(She starts to tidy the room. Straightening the silver and plumping cushions. There is a ring at the doorbell. She looks puzzled. Then shakes her head.)

Now what's she forgotten?

(She goes to the front door and opens it, speaking as she does so.)

Now what have you forgotten – Oh!

*(***ANNIE** *exits stage right to front door. We hear voices until* **SHEILA** *enters.)*

SHEILA. Good evening. I'm so sorry to trouble you but I –