



**JOSEPH ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION**

Supporting Older People in Care Homes at Night

“Night and Day”

Written by Tess Allen

Characters

Jimmy	a care home resident
Carol	a care assistant
Ali	a care assistant
Val	a relative
Jos	a relative
Fiona	the manager

Scene 1

Soundscape

Sounds gradually become louder. They are a mix of doors squeaking, people talking, trolleys being pushed up and down, taps dripping, pipes gurgling and banging, footsteps, buzzers going off....they build like a piece of music....an air raid siren begins...laughter

Jimmy: We need to hide. I can hear them, can you? Are they getting closer? Oh we need to hide! I'm scared on my own. Where are you? Tom! Tom come on! Quick. Quick. Don't speak. Whisper. [*He gets out of bed and tries to hide underneath it.*]

Carol: I'll check Agnes if you do Jack and Bill.

Ali: Oh, is that fair? Two to one?

Carol: Definitely, Agnes will probably be awake again, always takes longer.

Ali: Alright. I'll meet you at Jimmy's and we can do him together.

Carol: ok

[Carol and Ali enter Jimmy's room. He starts shouting and fighting. These words cross over each other.]

Carol : Come on Jimmy what are you doing down there? You'll catch your death. What's that noise you're making? Stop it! Calm down now!

Carol: Does he need changing?

Jimmy: Get off me...get out of my house...I'll call the police'...I'll punch you... *[continues shouting, obviously distressed]*

Carol: Come on Jimmy, stop messing about.

Ali: His pad should be fine. He makes it though the night usually. Do you want me to check?

Carol: No. He'll be fine. We've still got to write up the notes and I need a cup of tea Jimmy...stop that..... but you know.....

Ali: That's *enough* Jimmy. God. What is he going on about? Who is this Tom he keeps talking about? Dementia! I wouldn't wish it on a dog.

Carol: Come on Jimmy, it'll be time for breakfast soon...lets get the kettle on

[They get Jimmy back into bed...he becomes quieter]

Jimmy: Can I have a cup of tea?

Ali: He won't drink it. He forgets he has it. It just goes cold. There's no point. Just leave him and he'll go back to sleep.

Jimmy: Don't leave me. Stay and talk please. I'm frightened.

Carol: Just go to sleep Jimmy. Look we're very busy. You'll be fine. We've got lots of other residents to check. Come on, lie down. That's it.

[Exits]

Jimmy: All night long, the figures at the door, shadows. They will be coming again soon. They never let you sleep, they're always checking. What are they checking for? Who are they? I don't know them. I want to get up. I don't want to stay here in case she comes again. She came last night and she sat on my bed. She sat there for hours. I could feel her pressing into me. I thought it was Mary but when I sat up it wasn't. It was a woman I didn't know. An old woman in a nightdress. She was just staring at me. I shouted out but nobody came. Nobody. And when she had left she had pissed on my bed. It stank. Where did she come from? Why was she in my house? How did she get in? I didn't ask her to be here. Why do all these people come into my house? Where's my things? Where's Tom? Tom! Where's Tom? I had his hand. And then he wasn't there. Where is he. Where is he? Where's Mary? I had her hand and then she was gone... [*his voice starts mumbling and fades out*]

Scene 2

Carol: Oh would you look at the state of that dress!

Ali: Oh God!

Carol: Oh aye I'll wear that to go to Asda eh? And Look at the heels, I'd break my neck in them.

Ali: Do you fancy another coffee then?

Carol: No I'd better not, it doesn't agree with me at this time of night. You know my system's all over the place these days.

Ali: Yeah, I suppose drinking coffee at this time of night can't be good for you.

Carol: Yeah, you should lay off it a bit. You'll never get to sleep in the morning.

Ali: I need my coffee though eh?

Carol: Here, do you know if they've ordered those pads?

Ali: Well I've ordered them three times this week and still no joy so I honestly don't know what's going on.

Carol: I wish someone would just read the reports. Well I suppose we'd better get on with the checks.

Ali: OK you take this floor and I'll do upstairs then let's get together for the difficult ones ok?

Carol: Ok.

Carol: [*speaking to herself*] I'll need to get the day time staff to speak to Agnes' daughter. She could do with some more nighties.

That's it come on Isobel, let's get you comfortable.

I've got used to this job. It suits me. I didn't think it would. My husband has cancer you see. He is terminally ill. I can work here, and then get home for when he wakes up. I don't need a lot of sleep anyway.

And how are you tonight May? You should be asleep? Come on....

Ali: [*speaking to himself*] You feel isolated. Alone. It can be depressing. That SAD syndrome, you know, lack of sunlight. And it plays havoc with your eating patterns. I mean, at three o'clock I could murder for a Snickers, but in the morning I don't feel like having breakfast or going to bed.

And it's really difficult to sleep, particularly during the summer. It's weird. So bright outside. Everyone going about their lives and you are trying to sleep. And when I get up, my kids are home from school and my wife and I get their tea on the table, but I just want a piece of toast.

There's no social life either of course. It's not good for your health.

Come on Bill, let's get you comfy. You've got yourself all twisted up here. Come on...

Carol: [*speaking to herself*] You feel like you are left out of the loop when it comes to training. All the time and money is spent on the day staff. I had one half day on dementia training a while ago but I had to come in during the day. In my own time. I wasn't paid. I don't mind if it's important but it would be good if we were more valued. Sometimes I think we are of less worth than the day staff. But we are a good team. We work well together. The only problem is agency staff. They follow you around and you have to explain everything and they get paid more than us at the end of the day.

Scene 3

Val: I come here twice a week. My mother is in here. She's been here for a while. We just couldn't cope any more with her in her own home and she couldn't come and stay with us so we chose this place. She was very unsettled at first and she can be a bit of a handful. She keeps thinking that she is guilty of some terrible crime. I don't know where that comes from. She wouldn't hurt a fly. I just don't know who to ask.
Excuse me!

Everyone's so busy in here. I suppose that's a good thing.

Jos: I think it's good in here. Dad seems to be well looked after. I don't know what goes on at night though. I never meet any of the night staff. Dad said there was someone sitting on his bed the other night. He thought it was Mum. He was crying. He never used to cry. I think it's probably rubbish. He has dementia. I don't know who to ask though.

Excuse me!

Val: What if there was a fire? They would never get them out would they? Not unless they were super human? It's our fault of course that we don't know them. But I can't come in at night. I have the kids. I just can't.

Jos: I was walking along the corridor with my Dad one day and this young man came out of the laundry and he said "Oh your Dad, he's a character. I work with him at nights usually." That was nice.

Val: What if my Mum falls?

Jos: What if my Dad has a heart attack or dies on his own?

Val: What if someone breaks in?

Jos: What if that woman really did wee on my Dad's bed?

Val: What if??

Scene 4

Carol: Hello, how are you

Ali: We're just checking.

Carol: Is your pad dry there Agnes?

Ali: Are you having nightmares again? I'll get you a cup of water now.

Carol: Shhh. Back into bed now.

Ali: That's better, there you go.

Carol: Oh Mrs Smith don't worry. It's ok. It's still the night.

Carol: Oh Helen it's fine. It's just me don't be scared.

Ali: Come on Bill, relax, calm down, it's OK.

Carol: No love I'm not your daughter it's me, it's Carol.

Ali : Is he still breathing?

Carol: Hello Jimmy, how are you?

Ali: Who are you? Get out of my fucking house or I'll thump you. I mean it.

Ali: Here we go again. Settle down Jimmy, we're just checking that you're ok. It'll soon be morning.

Carol: I just need to check that Agnes isn't wandering again

Scene 5

Ali: So when's Fiona coming?

Carol: She just said sometime during our shift.

Ali: Do you think they don't trust us? Feels a bit weird.

Carol: Yeah. Well let's just get on. Plenty to do.

Fiona: Hello. How are things?

Carol: Fine. Good

Ali: Aye, just the usual.

Fiona: I just wanted to see how you're getting on. Sometimes I feel the day staff get more support than the night staff.

Carol: Is that why you're here? To support us? This is the first time a member of the management has been to see us.

Fiona: Well I know. That's going to change. We know you're experienced but so are the day staff and we support them. I'm not saying I'm going to be here every night but we will pop in at some point at least once a week.

Ali: Yeah, but what will you be doing?

Fiona: Well, we need to know your ideas in terms of improvements we can make.

Carol: I can tell you one improvement straight off. Get dementia training at a time we can go.

Ali: And do something about this checking business every hour.

Fiona: [*speaking to herself*] I know it sounds terrible but I didn't really want to do it. I have two young kids and the idea of spending time on a night shift...well. The night team have always operated very much as a separate unit. We just let them get on with it, and they do a good job.

Anyway, I decided that I should spend some time with them for various reasons. They were missing out on training, particularly dementia training. They DO attend but not to every one. And sometimes they have to come in on their days off. A couple of the relatives had said they didn't know who they were and they would like to. Also I feel it's important to have links and communicate with all staff. So I spent a night with them.

And I was so surprised, not only by my reaction but by the reaction of the staff. They were really pleased to see me, said it made them feel more included, more respected. I thought they would see me as checking up on them but they didn't.

Ali: I like these new torches. They're much better. I'm just going to check on Jimmy. Have you noticed how he's sleeping better when we don't check on him every hour? It feels better to me having key workers too. I feel I've got to know my residents better and I enjoy the responsibility. Jimmy is much calmer...

Ali: We've oiled all the doors and fixed the floorboards too. Hello Jimmy, I didn't expect to see you awake.

Jimmy: Ali is that you?

Ali: Yes, how're you doing? Can't you sleep?

Jimmy: I could do with a cup of tea?

Ali: Well you know we've talked about this and a cup of tea is not the best thing in the middle of the night because it makes you go to the toilet. How about a wee glass of water? Look, I'll just get it now and sit with you while you drink it ok?

Jimmy: Ok.

Ali: Now tell me what you've been thinking about....

Scene 6

Ali: So you got that magazine out again then?

Carol: I tell you it's a waste of money. It's a load of nonsense in them. It's just people griping about their weight and their men. Look at that!

Ali: I'll tell you something, that Fiona could go on a diet couldn't she?

Carol: I'm going to tell her!

Ali: Must be all those brownies that you gave her the other night.

Carol: Stop it! By the way did Mary need changing?

Ali: No, all dry as a bone.

Carol: Those pads are much better aren't they? It makes such a difference when the right equipment's ordered.

Ali: You can say that again.

Carol: It just means that you can sit and have a chat with people.

Ali: Oh and you know the mirror in Jimmy's room? I covered it up. Let's see if it makes a difference to his nightmares.

Carol: Good. It's amazing. I didn't know how frightening it can be for people to see themselves. Although, having said that, I scare myself every time I look in the mirror in the morning.

[laughter]

The End