

FAREWELL BRUCE

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CHARACTERS:

Kate: Mid 30's

Adele: 60's

Max: 60's – 70's

SETTING:

THE SETTING CAN ESSENTIALLY BE AN EMPTY SPACE. AT VARIOUS TIMES, WITH **NO** CHANGE OF SCENE, IT REPRESENTS ADELE'S FRONT GARDEN OR THE POLICE STATION. THE ONLY PRESCRIBED PROPS ARE A GREEN GARBAGE BAG AND A BIN.

WHEN THE SPACE REPRESENTS ADELE'S GARDEN, THE CHARACTERS ARE INTERACTING WITH EACH OTHER.

WHEN THE SPACE REPRESENTS THE POLICE STATION THEY ADDRESS AN UNSEEN POLICE OFFICER.

MAX: Sergeant, I can give you the facts as I know them. Not that I saw everything...not that I was privy to all that went on....

It all started this morning. Nothing seemed amiss. It was a day like any other. I went down to get the paper about seven. I like to start the day getting the paper and watering my azaleas. Two things I do every day. Regular as clockwork.

I didn't even think to look next door. When I got back I did say to the wife....."I don't see old Bruce this morning".... He was like that sometimes. He'd lounge about and then he'd go off and have some "Bruce time" and be by himself. At heart he was a loner. You can't change someone like that. You just shouldn't try.

Never dreamt anything like this could happen. Well you don't... You get on with life. You take each day as it comes. Something like this pulls you up short. I'll say that. There one minute, gone the next. It pulls you up short.

ADELE'S FRONT YARD

KATE CARRIES A LARGE GREEN GARBAGE BAG

KATE: Mrs Harris.

ADELE: Kate. How are you dear?

KATE: Fine, thank you. Mrs Harris, I need to tell you something.

ADELE: Adele.

KATE: Pardon?

ADELE: Call me Adele. We don't see you around like we used to.....That garden could do with a weed. Not that I like to put my nose in...

KATE: Yes....I suppose it could...anyway-

ADELE: You look slightly peaky-

KATE: Mrs. Harris. You need to let me say this.

ADELE: Adele.

KATE: Adele. Look I regret this but I have to tell youI have just run over Bruce.

ADELE: Bruce?

KATE: There's no question that I shoulder full responsibility but-

- ADELE:** Bruce? My cat?
- KATE:** He was always sunning himself in my driveway. I didn't see him as I was reversing.
- ADELE:** He'll be right.
- KATE:** He's dead Mrs. Harris.....
- ADELE:** Adele.
- KATE:** He's dead. Adele. I have taken the step of putting him in this plastic bag and I'll dispose of him in whatever way you prefer. I can't tell you how sorry I am. I feel awful and I-
- ADELE:** That's a new Mazda.....That car of yours...
- KATE:** Yes. (*PAUSE*) As I was saying....This is Bruce. In this plastic bag. Would you like me to arrange to have him buried in your garden or I will take him to the local vet?
- ADELE:** How much would that have been?
- KATE:** Sorry?
- ADELE:** The car. Over thirty thousand-
- KATE:** I suppose so....Did you hear what I said? I'm happy to make arrangements for Bruce.
- ADELE:** Arrangements? Here give it to me. I'll stick it beside the dirt tin. The garbage men will pick it up. They're coming this morning. Any minute....
- KATE:** Dirt tin?
- ADELE:** Rubbish bin. You know....
- KATE:** I know what it is. I'm just really surprised.
- ADELE:** At what Kate?
- KATE:** I ran over Bruce,
- ADELE:** Yes.
- KATE:** And he's dead.

ADELE: We might get a kitten. Bruce was a bit long in the tooth. I had to get his teeth de-scaled last year. ...Cost an absolute fortune. That was throwing good money after bad but of course I didn't know -

KATE: He's in this bag.

ADELE: You said. Tell me....I don't see that nice young fellow's car.....A Renault wasn't it?

KATE: Yes.

ADELE: I knew it was a Renault. Sell it, did he?

KATE: No.

ADELE: Not stolen? You can't leave cars in the street here....

KATE: It wasn't stolen. . (PAUSE) Now what about Bruce?

ADELE: Not around anymore?

KATE: About Bruce?

ADELE: What happened?

KATE: As I mentioned, I was backing out and –

ADELE: No....With your “partner”...That's what you people have these days isn't it? Partners?

ADELE: Did he get someone else?

KATE: Who Mrs. Harris?

ADELE: Adele. Your partner...

KATE: Yes Adele. Actually yes. He “got” someone else.

ADELE: Younger? That's always the way. How old are you?

KATE: Thirty six. Mrs. Harris. Adele. I am going to be late for work. I can't stand here with Bruce in this bag all day. He should be buried or taken to the vet. It's only right.

ADELE: Thirty six. You girls.....You need to watch yourselves. It's all career this career that....One day it will be too late. No man, no hope. A young girl in your place.....or your Renault at least....

KATE: Rather than stand around all day. I am going to take Bruce and bury him. Myself.

- ADELE:** Now just a minute....He was my cat.
- KATE:** You don't want him. You've suggested putting him in the bin ..
- ADELE:** I'd like to take him and bury him. He was a family pet. My family's pet.
- KATE:** Are you really going to bury him?
- ADELE:** I am.
- KATE:** I don't think I believe you.
- ADELE:** Well. I am sorry about that but I don't think you're in any position....You did kill him.
- KATE:** I didn't mean to.
- ADELE:** Well you say that....But I have seen you drive pretty recklessly out of that driveway. Many times. And now you tell me about this fellow with the Renault leaving you for a younger woman.....Well it's all pretty self evident. If you don't mind me saying that, Kate.....
- KATE:** It was a genuine accident.
- ADELE:** There's no point in playing the blame game. Although not much doubt on that score is there? Anyway pass over the bag and we'll keep everything amicable.
- KATE:** What are you going to do with him?
- ADELE:** Dispose of it.....Bruce.
- KATE:** Do you meanin the bin?
- ADELE:** Now. I'm just not sure it's any of your concern, Kate.
- KATE:** I can't let you put Bruce in the bin. He was your cat for the whole time I've lived here. He deserves respect...for the good times
- ADELE:** Now if you don't mind Kate.....If you don't mind....I'll just take the bag and we'll try to get on with things. ...Lord knows I'll miss his little footprints on my ceramic tiles. The bird carcasses he used to leave on the back patio....
- KATE:** Do you promise that you are going to make proper arrangements for Bruce?
- ADELE:** Kate you're hardly in a position-

KATE: Do you swear?

ADELE: Well I-

KATE: Here's fifty dollars. Take it and donate it to the cat shelter after you make arrangements for Bruce. It will be a last tribute. From me.

ADELE: Kate-

KATE: Please...

ADELE: Well if you insist. I will take your fifty dollars as a tribute to old Bruce....Alright. Now give me the bag.....

KATE: Alright....I'm sorry Bruce. Goodbye old friend.

(KATE HANDS OVER THE BAG AND THE MONEY)

ADELE: Yes...yes well I must get on....arrangements to make.

KATE LEAVES BUT WAITS OUT OF SIGHT, WATCHING ADELE.

ADELE GOES STRAIGHT OVER TO THE RUBBISH BIN, LIFTS THE LID AND PUTS THE BAG IN. SHE LOOKS AROUND DUSTS OFF HER HANDS AND GOES INSIDE.

KATE SNEAKS OUT FROM HER HIDING SPOT TAKES THE LID OFF THE BIN AND RETRIEVES THE BAG.

ADELE COMES OUT OF THE HOUSE.

ADELE: What do you think you are you doing?

KATE: That's rich...You promised you were going to make proper arrangements for Bruce. I gave you fifty dollars.

ADELE: Now listen here Miss. There wouldn't be any arrangements to be made if you hadn't come screeching out of your driveway like a lunatic and flattened him.

KATE: I'm taking him with me.

ADELE: No you're not.

KATE: Yes I am.

ADELE: Give me back that bag

KATE: No...Adele...

ADELE: Mrs Harris to you. Cat killer..... Hand over that bag.....

KATE: No.....

(ADELE LOOKS AROUND AND STARTS YELLING)

ADELE: Help I'm being robbed. Help me someone...

KATE: Are you joking?

ADELE: Help me. I'm a helpless old lady. My neighbour's unhinged. She killed my cat now she's stealing from me.

(MAX ENTERS)

MAX: Hello, hello. The wife was a bit concerned...what's going on here?

ADELE: Max. She murdered Bruce.

MAX: Not Bruce...Not old Bruce.....I said to the wife I hadn't seen him but I hadn't thought anything like this-

KATE: I ran over him. It was completely accidental. I feel awful. I liked Bruce as much as anyone....clearly more than some people.

ADELE: She murdered Bruce and now she's snatching the body.

KATE: Don't be ridiculous-

ADELE: I ask you Max....Who is ridiculous? Is it the poor elderly pet owner, minding her own business.... whose cat has been callously taken from her...Or is it the demented middle aged spinster cat killer whose "flash Harry French car driving boyfriend" has dumped her for someone younger?

MAX: Poor old Bruce....He loved lying across the bottom of my azaleas. I lost count of the mornings I'd see him there when I was about to start the watering. He wasn't too fond of the hose-

KATE: You're only upset because of where it happened. At my place. Bruce was always at my place. Lying across the driveway. Hiding in the garden beds. He preferred it and I know he preferred me. He always preferred me. Even when he was a kitten. Even then...I used to let him inside the house....He used to spend hours lying across my heating ducts.

MAX: I can imagine that. He was an old character....

ADELE: She's not content to murder my cat... ..you heard her...Now she's destroying my memories with her twisted lies. Will you leave me with nothing you bodysnatching bully? Max, don't just stand thereDo something.....

MAX: Would you like me to bury Bruce for you?

ADELE: Heavens no. **(FAINTS DRAMATICALLY)** Call the police.

THE POLICE STATION

MAX: That's the whole story really. I often tell the wife....I don't go along with any of it.... Not body snatching, human experimentation or vegans. None of it. When Adele took her funny turn the wife rang for triple 0 and that's how we ended up here.

You wouldn't know where that plastic bag ended up, do you? Hate to lose what's left of old Bruce amongst all the commotion.

KATE: I just wanted to give him a decent farewell. To right the wrong I had done him. It sounds strange but he was my friend. Whenever I saw Bruce stretched out peacefully....even on the mornings I felt crappy about going to work....it cheered me up.

It's not that she accused me of being a middle aged cat killing body snatcher...It was Bruce. He deserved dignity. Not to be tossed on the scrap heap. He may not have been a kitten.... but wasn't he still special? Didn't all of his years of loyalty mean anything?

The whole youth obsession makes me sick.

(PAUSE)

I certainly wouldn't call 36, middle aged. Would you?

ADELE: I'm much better now, Sergeant. Thank you so much for asking.

I think I was overcome by shock...The way she treated me. I genuinely feared for my safety. And she kept going on about her new Mazda and what it cost. I mean how selfish.... She wouldn't shut her yap about that fellow she used to have hanging around. It wasn't the time. I was....I hate to be overdramatic...Ask anyone.... but....Bruce was more than a cat. He was dear old boy, who stepped into our lives and made them happy. He was beguiling in his way. He was part of the family.

(PAUSE)

Sergeant, I wonder if I could trouble you for that lift home you mentioned earlier.

MAX: You tell Adele...old Bruce is welcome to have his final kip among my azaleas...If she doesn't have any plans for him that is....He was her cat....And a ripper of a cat he was too....It's only right she have her wishes respected.

KATE: It's not like I don't have anything show to for my 36 years....I have a good job, a nice house and a new Mazda.

ADELE: Actually....I know this is probably a bit out of the ordinary but you couldn't get rid of the bag for me? Could you? I saw that big skip bin out the back and I wondered....I mean...I don't really want to take the trip home with a dead cat in the car....and I'm thinking of your lovely police car....Bruce is in my heart....of course...But if you could just sling the bag on the skip....we can be on our way...

LIGHTS DOWN