

**THE CORNERHOUSE – ONE ACT COLLECTION**

LITTLE GRAINS OF SAND

A Dramatic Monologue by Andy Moseley

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A Dramatic Monologue

*Two cases lie on a bed. One is open, the other closed but not fastened. SYLVIE (70) bustles about collecting shirts and other items from a chest of drawers and putting them into the open case. She appears to be talking to someone off-stage.*

SYLVIE: You could give me a hand you know, rather than just sitting there. Robert didn't say he'd come at eight to sit and look at you. He said he wanted to be away by then. You've always held us up when we go away. I did think this year would be different, but oh no, it's just the same. We'll never be ready at this rate. I haven't even done my face yet. I can't go out like this. Certainly can't stop anywhere. I know you don't mind, but they'll think I'm a tramp or something, offer me free food.

*She pulls a hideous looking shirt out of a cupboard.*

You're not taking that with you. Every year you've worn it, every year I've asked you not to.

*She tosses the shirt on the floor, goes back to the chest of drawers and pulls out a shirt that is still in its wrapping.*

This one's nicer. You've had it since Christmas, and you haven't even taken it out of the wrapping. Top of the range it is, but you prefer Littlewoods, don't you? Well you're taking it, and that's the end of it.

*She puts the shirt in the case and looks around the bedroom. She then looks at the discarded shirt.*

I've put up with it this long. I suppose one more year won't hurt.

*She puts it in the case.*

Anyway, gets it out the house. Just you to go now.

*She goes back to the chest of drawers and picks up an urn. She holds it to her chest.*

Oh Norman, this wasn't how we were meant to see Kent again. You said you'd take me. Fiftieth anniversary, nothing fancy, you didn't want to do that. Just Kent. A nice week away in Margate, trips to Ramsgate and Broadstairs and then across to that little beach like we used to.

Said we'd be like kids again, wouldn't have to worry about getting back to work, we could stay up as late as we wanted, not come back till the tide started coming in. That's what you said. That's what you promised.

Never said it'd be me taking you, scattering your ashes. That wasn't how it was meant to be. Never could rely on you could I?

I've packed your clothes. You've got to have some things to take with you. You've never gone without a case, can't start now. They'll think I've gone daft, but it's only on the way down, I'm going to give them to a charity shop, the ones I'm not keeping. Couldn't give them to one round here. Wouldn't be right seeing someone else walking around in them, be like they were copying you. No one could copy you Norman. You were a one-off.

They'll be here soon. Deborah, Robert, the grandchildren, all of us going away on holiday together. You missed that, didn't you.

What I am saying, talking as if you're not coming with us. Course you are. Just not coming back. Staying down there like you always wanted. Sat on that beach, looking out at the sea, till the tide sweeps you out. Then you'll go for a swim, and come back the next day, and the day after that, and the one after that. Every day till I join you. Then we can do it together.

She said I shouldn't take you, you know. Thinks I'm stupid doing it, I don't realise how far away you'll be. Said I should keep you here, as if I had anything to do with it. It was your dad's choice I told her, nothing to do with me. If it was down to me your ashes would still be in the house. Mine would be if it was me that had gone first. I wouldn't have wanted to be out in the cold, or underground all alone. I'd have wanted to be with you, where I belong, until we were both ready. But not you, you've got to be there, that's what

you wanted, and I know why, and I respect that. Anyway, if I did keep you here and tell her to scatter us both, there's no telling what she'd do. Probably just put us in the cemetery down the road, where she can see us, the one with the pond, so we've still got water, as if that was the same.

No, that's not nice Sylvie, don't think like that. It's not her fault, that's what I've got to understand. You would have. But she shouldn't try and get me to change my mind and keep you here, just so she can see you. She didn't see you when you were ill. Said that wasn't you, you'd already gone. Well, if that's right, she shouldn't care where I take you, you're not going to have come back and be in that urn, are you?

So I'm taking you. She can like it or lump it. It's what you wanted, that's what matters. I know you'll be a long way away, and I wished you weren't, but it's not about me or Deborah, or anyone else, it's about you. I couldn't keep you here when I know you don't want to be. Well, you do want to be, but, not how you are now. We'll be together again in Heaven, I know that. You'll be waiting for me, and you'd never let me hear the last of it if I didn't scatter you where you wanted.

I told her that. She said Dad hadn't been there for years, it's not a nice place anymore, all amusement arcades, and clubs and they have fights there most weekends. Like we were never young or got into any trouble! I know it wasn't like it is now, but we weren't angels, we weren't always old. Anyway, it's not about what it is now, it's what it was, what happened there.

It's where we met, where you proposed. Do you remember? We'd just come back from a swim, and you blurted it out, said you were going to ask me that evening, but didn't want to wait. I told you you were going to have to. Before I'd accept, you had to give me the ring. I didn't intend to be in a position to want anyone proposing to me again, once I'd said yes the first time, so, if I was going to marry you, you had to do it properly.

You ran back to the hotel. Told me to wait till you got back. I thought you'd never make it before the tide came in, thought we'd be on our own all night,

you in the hotel and me on the beach, but you did it.

*She looks at her engagement ring, still on her finger.*

You gave me that ring, I put it on, and I've never taken it off once. Not even to do the washing up.

They were good days. You never realise when you're young. Think things'll be like that forever. Think you've got all the time in the world. Never even think about getting older. Can't imagine it. Then the next thing you know, it's gone. You've gone.

*She starts to break down.*

Why God? Why did you take him? He was a kind man, he never hurt anybody. Why take him before his time? And the way you took him. Not his body, just him. His personality, his mind, taking them away bit by bit. The little glint in his eye. The smile that told you he was planning something, but wasn't letting on so he could surprise you. The way he used to look at me when I came home, told me he was pleased I'd come back, even though he knew I'd never go anywhere. You took all of that. Slowly, gradually, you took him from me.

That's why Deborah said it wasn't her dad, big and strong with nothing capable of stopping him, it was just the body that used to be him. But that's not right.

*She picks up the urn.*

No one can tell me that that wasn't you. No one can say you'd already gone before you stopped breathing, that I'd lost you before you left this earth. It was still you, you were still there, underneath it all, I know that. That's why I was still there for you.

*She looks to the heavens.*

Maybe you were trying to help me, prepare me for when he wasn't there, for when I would be by myself, but you didn't need to. I'm not by myself.

*She looks back at the urn.*

You're still with me, aren't you Norman, you'll always be with me, as long as I'm here. No matter where you are, you're in every part of my life and every fibre of my body.

They'll be arguing about what to do with me soon. Deborah's already said I should go and live with them, but I can't do that. I've got to stay here, here in our house. You're here. I see you every time I come home, sat in your chair, waiting for me. I need that, I can't leave it. There's no me without you.

*She reaches in the urn and takes out a handful of ashes. She kisses the outside of the fist that holds them.*

I wished I was coming with you. It doesn't seem right leaving you on your own. Will you be alright? I worry about you. They say that bit of the coast's eroding, you know, drifting into the sea. Say it'll be gone one day. Imagine, the place we met no longer there, just a memory for people like us, and the people they tell about it. And then they'll be gone too, and it won't even be a memory, just be something on a photo from before anyone was born.

You'll be there when it goes, we both will hopefully. Washed out to sea. No one to talk about us and no one to remember us. Like sand that disappears.

*She unclenches her fist and looks in her hand.*

That's all we are isn't it, Norman. Grains of sand. Little grains of sand.

*She holds her hand above the urn and lets the ashes drop back into it.*

THE END