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DARK SHADOWS BECOME LIGHT

A play-in-one-act by Lance Fogan

Cast of Characters

<u>ARLENE STEIN, THE MOTHER</u>	77 year old mother, institutionalized paranoid schizophrenic.
<u>DEIDRA ANNE BLOCK, HER DAUGHTER</u>	Arlene's 52-year-old daughter. Attired in sweater and skirt.
<u>JOE BLOCK, DAUGHTER'S HUSBAND</u>	57 year old physician. Attired in sport coat and bow tie with camera.
<u>NURSE</u>	50-ish, in white uniform.

Place

A late-19th century, long-term institution in Western New York State, the Buffalo State Hospital—previously, the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane. A large, locked facility with heavy screened-in outside porches on its several buildings.

Time

Winter: mid-1990's

ACT I

Setting: A dull, tan-walled, dark, linoleum-floored, century-old hospital corridor. Openings on either side lead to rooms containing several patient-beds each. They are unoccupied.

A desk, the nurses' station, is Stage Right, not-illuminated.

Downstage Left: in the dark, an elderly woman sits in a wheel chair, gazing forward; an attached flat tray covers her lap.

At Rise: Deidra and Joe Block enter Downstage Left. They walk past the woman in the center of the empty corridor. Lights up as they approach the nurse behind a desk Stage Right.

DAUGHTER

Good morning. We're here to visit my mother, Arlene Stein. The social worker made this appointment.

NURSE (Perusing them and the record log)

Arlene doesn't get many visitors. I don't see...let's see when she last had one. Let's see...

DAUGHTER

This is my first visit.

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NURSE

She is your mother, you said?

DAUGHTER

Yes. She's my mother.

NURSE

She's been a patient since 1950...over 40 some years.

DAUGHTER

I last saw my mother 47 years ago...I was five.

NURSE

Five? Did you ever try to visit?

DAUGHTER

No, I didn't.

JOE (Leans forward, confides to nurse.)

My wife's father was advised by the doctors back forty years ago that it would be best to protect the children—not to allow any communications. He thought he was doing the right thing. She would ask him to tell her about her mother, but his answer always was, "I'll write you a letter sometime."

DAUGHTER

I was so angry. He finally sent me a packet in the mail. It had all of her letters to me and to my brother. So, I'm here now.

NURSE

Tsk, tsk, tsk. She's in the wheel chair—right there. You just passed her. I'll open an office. You can visit in private.

(The couple approaches the old woman.)

DAUGHTER

Hello, Mother. Mother, it's me...Deidra. How are you?

(She takes her mother's hand in both of hers. No tears.)

MOTHER (Speaks in articulated stuccato.)

Oh, Deidra, honey. Oh.

DAUGHTER

This is my husband, Joe, Mother.

MOTHER

Dr. Joe

JOE

Yes, Arlene.

(The nurse approaches)

NURSE

You can use this empty office.

(The husband pushes the chair a few feet center stage. He sets up his camcorder on a small table and starts filming.)

DAUGHTER (She admires her mother's painted hands.)
finger-nailed

This must be where I get my make-up habits from. I get them from you, Mom... Was your mother's name Hannah?

MOTHER

Yes.

DAUGHTER

That must be how I got Anne, my middle name, from Hannah.

MOTHER

Yes.

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DAUGHTER (Pause.)

When I was a little girl did you bake cookies?

MOTHER (Pause.)

I don't remember.

DAUGHTER

I think you did. I can smell them sometimes. Did you like to cook?

MOTHER

Yes, I did. I shopped at Super Duper.

DAUGHTER

Do you remember Carol? She was your cousin, wasn't she?

MOTHER

Yes...she was, and she married Monte.

DAUGHTER

That's right. We're going to see one of their children when we leave here.

MOTHER

Yes...they had three children.

DAUGHTER (Pause.)

Where did you go to high school?

MOTHER

Fosdick-Masten, and public school 31 and 81.

DAUGHTER

I went to number 81, too, Mom, ha ha.

MOTHER

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Ha ha.

(A soft scream cries from somewhere—"Help!")

MOTHER

I had a throat and chest examination. (She leans forward, tilts her head.)

DAUGHTER

You're okay?

MOTHER

I'm okay.

DAUGHTER

Do you like cats?

MOTHER

No.

DAUGHTER

We have a cat. Joe had dogs when he was small... I like your teeth, Mom. They're nice... Do you wear glasses?

MOTHER

I always used to. Without glasses I can't read.

DAUGHTER

Do you like to read?

MOTHER

Yes...yes, I like to read.

DAUGHTER

Mysteries or novels?

MOTHER

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Novels.

DAUGHTER

Magazines or—

MOTHER

Yes, magazines. I read a lot of magazines. Fortune magazines, cook books—

DAUGHTER

Do you like to cook?

MOTHER

Yes

DAUGHTER

I do, too. I have a lot of cook books at home. Do you want to look at some cook books and cooking magazines?

MOTHER. (Blank stare without change of expression.)

Yeah.

DAUGHTER

Okay, okay. Our daughter works for a cooking magazine, *Bon Appetit*.

MOTHER

She does?

JOE

That's your granddaughter.

MOTHER

Ahh.

DAUGHTER

I'll have to send you a copy of her magazine. It has good recipes in it. Yeah...It's very nice. She's been working there for three years. Both our daughters like to cook.

MOTHER

When I lived on Carpenter Street in Gowanda I used to make cake...and fish...and meat."

DAUGHTER

What's your favorite kind of cake?

MOTHER

Chocolate.

DAUGHTER

That's mine, too, ha ha. I still love chocolate. I love the candy, too.

MOTHER

I like Hershey bars.

DAUGHTER

Hershey bars? With nuts or plain?

MOTHER

Plain.

DAUGHTER

Me, too. And I love hot cocoa.

MOTHER

What?

DAUGHTER

I like to make hot cocoa.

MOTHER

I like tea.

DAUGHTER

In the morning, what do they give you for breakfast?

MOTHER

This morning I had pancakes, and eggs, and juices, and, ah...

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DAUGHTER

Orange juice or any juice that you want?

MOTHER

And, ah, coffee...I got plum juice.

DAUGHTER

Plum juice?

MOTHER

Two cups of it.

DAUGHTER

Very sweet...Do you see movies in here?

MOTHER

Yeah.

DAUGHTER

Is there a special room for that?

MOTHER

No. They used to show movies in Gowanda.

DAUGHTER

Oh, I see. But here you don't see any?

(A muffled shriek from somewhere.)

MOTHER

Just TV.

DAUGHTER

Oh, I see. Is there a TV in your room?

MOTHER

In a big nave.

DAUGHTER

Do you watch during the day or at night?

MOTHER

Till about twenty to nine.

DAUGHTER (She looks at wristwatch.)

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Oh.

DAUGHTER

So nice to see you.

MOTHER

(Her lips stretch tautly; a psychotropic drug movement abnormality.)

Say hello to Billy.

(MOTHER and DAUGHTER stare into each other's eyes. Arlene presses her lips, puckers, opens them, smacks, smiles and leans toward her daughter.)

DEIDRA stands and leans toward her mother.)

DAUGHTER

Oh, yes. Glad to. He lives in Hamilton.

MOTHER

I thought he lived in Orlando.

DAUGHTER

No. Hamilton is up north of here. You probably visited Hamilton at one time. He has one child, a son, Dennis.

MOTHER

I thought he had more than one child.

DAUGHTER

No. Just one boy.

MOTHER

I didn't know that.

DAUGHTER (Pause.)

I'm so glad to see you, Mother.

(Their lips touch.)

MOTHER

Will Dr. Joe come back to see me, too?

JOE

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