

I DON'T CARE

by

Charlotte O'Leary

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CHARACTER

OLIVIA, 17, emotionally worn down, wears clothes more suited to a 40 year old.

The play is set in a non-specific location, it only requires a chair.

SCENE 1

Olivia is sat on a chair.

OLIVIA: Every time I see the GP the first thing he says is: "How are you?". It's like they're trying to catch you out. Before you know where you are you've said "I'm very well thank you" and they've got you. Nothing to see here.
(Beat) I showed him my bruise.

Olivia rolls up her cardigan sleeve and shows a huge blue bruise on her forearm.

OLIVIA: He said "You want to get some arnica cream on that". I said "Don't you want to know how I got it?". I could have cancer. Cancer gives you bruises. Then I told him. I've waited years to say it. My tummy felt all wobbly my knees went to jelly and I did a little fart but I don't think he heard. I said:

"It was my father".

The GP looked at me, you could tell he was shocked. "Oh" he said. Oh indeed. Then he starts fiddling with his computer. Good he's making a note of this.

Olivia inspects her bruise. Lightly rubs it.

OLIVIA: "Do you want to report domestic abuse?" I want him gone, I'm 17, I've given up my A-Levels because of all of this and I can no longer cope. You lot can have him.

"Oh we can't just take him away" he says.
"It's all police reports, solicitors and the courts, it's a long process".

I told him it's not like that - he's violent because he's got dementia. He doesn't know who I am. He was a gentle man, now he attacks me. The dementia put a different light on it. I said: "He just sits there every day like a bastard." "Like a bastard?"

"You can put that in your notes" I said.

Olivia pulls the sleeve of her cardigan down tight.

OLIVIA:

Out comes the checklist.

"Are you his sole carer?" "Yes".

"What about your mother?" "She has cancer and I'm her carer too".

"Can he dress himself?" "Sort of" "Make a cup of tea?" "Maybe" "Cook a meal?" "He could pop in a Fray Bentos I suppose".

"What about the toilet?" "He can go on his own, but you have to go there afterwards and scrape it off the walls".

Then: "We only provide care for end of life patients. Your father could still go on for years." Years?

"Come back if things get worse".

"Get worse? I should be at school and instead I have to watch him like a hawk to make sure he doesn't fall over or set fire to himself, I'm awake all night listening to see if he's still breathing. All the thanks I get is a thump in the face. I've had to resuscitate him in the middle of the night, call ambulances and stand around shivering in my nightie while the doctor comes. My dad hits me. Start whatever wheels rolling that start rolling when this sort of thing happens."

Then a moment. "That's torn it" I thought.

"Have you ever thought about being violent towards your father?"

Now I know this game. They lull you into a false sense of security and then WHAM! They report you to Social Services. "No".

"You've never thought about hitting him, even in moments of stress?"

I told him I knew his game. I'll not admit defeat. He sighed. I stood up to leave.

"You're a bastard and you and David Cameron and all his cronies can go swivel" I said, flicking the V sign at him.

Olivia flicks the V sign at the audience. Pauses.

OLIVIA: Actually I didn't say that. I wish I had of done.

"Olivia, you've never thought about being violent towards your dad?" I don't know why but I sat back down. My knees went funny and I plomped back in the chair.

"Maybe, just sometimes, I think about a quick whack around the back of the head with the frying pan".

And then he nodded and scribbled in his notes.

SCENE 2

Another day. Olivia is sat on a chair. She gently rubs her wrist as if she's injured.

OLIVIA: I thought Maria was Polish, but apparently she's Lithuanian. She turned up at four pm, asked for a cup of tea and the toilet and I said could she tell me who she was first. She laughed and said she was the carer.

I told her he's in the front room. Instead she shuts herself in the downstairs toilet and when I ask her through the door if I can pop out while she's here she laughs - laughs while she's peeing mind, which you'd never get off a Pole and says: "He's got a twenty minute slot and five minutes of that was parking the car, the traffic round here".

She flushes the toilet and comes out, I surreptitiously try to inhale a whiff for suspicious odours. A wee is one thing but if she'd done anything more I'd have grounds for a complaint.

"I'm ten minutes late already, the traffic round here". She spends another minute discussing how she'd like her tea and then five minutes drinking it despite being over time already. "I'll give him a quick wipe down and get him ready for bed".

"It's four o'clock in the afternoon!" But apparently he's on her rota for putting to bed

and so if she comes at four, he goes to bed at four.

"Get me a bucket of warm water and a flannel and I'll start him off and you can finish him, OK?" I told her he'd often thump me when I was trying to wash him, he'd think I was a burglar or rapist or maybe Nigel Farage.

"I'll be back tomorrow morning to get him up and dressed" "What time will that be?"

"Any time between five thirty am and eleven o'clock". Five thirty?

SCENE 3

Another day. Olivia is sat on a chair. She gently rubs her leg, as if she's been kicked.

OLIVIA: Everyone was asleep when Vanessa made her first appearance. She just barged in. "Is he in here?" before merrily letting herself into the front room. The door slammed behind her. I heard her bellow at my dad.

"HELLO MR HARRIS HOW ARE YOU I'M THE COMMUNITY MATRON. YOUR DAUGHTER SAID YOU'RE BEING A BIT OF A BASTARD".

Olivia smacks herself on the forehead.

OLIVIA: I sat and waited, buttocks clenched, dreading the state he'd be in once she'd finished. She eventually comes out, all smiles, and he's all smiles and I ask her when she's coming back.

"Oh I'm not coming back dear". What? Why not? "There's nothing wrong with him."

"He's got dementia, he hits me. I told the GP I need help. He's got multiple organ failure, he's partially sighted - "

"Oh he seemed very jolly to me" she says.

Oh course he would. Of course he would. That's how dementia works. You can hold it together for an hour, then he'll go back to being completely demented again and I'll have to clear up the mess. I show her the bruise.

"Look what he's done!"

"Oh have you put arnica cream on that?" and before I reply she's out the door: "If there are any problems see your GP".

SCENE 4

Another day. Olivia is sat on a chair. Gently rubs her face as if to remember a bruise.

OLIVIA: I finally did it. I didn't want to be one of 'those' people but I did it.

She pauses, mulls it over.

OLIVIA: I rang Social Services. 'Doreen' she's called. A vision in 1970s polyester. Showed her the bruise on my face, demanded something be done. She inspected it, I waited for her to note it down on her clipboard but she just said:

"Have you tried arnica for that?"

I said I want him taken in somewhere. I'm 17 and I can't cope.

She looked at me, nodding. At last someone is listening and will do something about it.

"We can get you some respite care" she says, a week, maybe a month. "It's £500 a week though. Per person." Five hundred pounds a week? My dad'll never go for that. He's rather go to the Ritz.

"Most people sell their house" she continued, "but I'd wait for the end of life care before you do that." What?

"That's a thousand a week." We can't sell the house, where will I live?

"Try to keep him at home for as long as possible." Puts down her clipboard. If things get worse try going to my GP.

SCENE 5

Another day. Olivia is sat on a chair. She is holding her arm, it's wrapped in a sling.

OLIVIA: He didn't know who I was. He was just screaming. It wouldn't stop.

I wait for Maria. As soon as she comes he's fine, cheery, knows his name and what day it is. Except he leaves Radio 4 blaring out. It's so loud yet he can't seem to understand he needs to turn it off. Maria's shouting: "Are you alright, are you peeing OK?" just as the theme tune to the Archers come on. Dum-de-dum-de-dum-de-dum "Bowels alright?" Dum-de-dum-de-dum-dum. He starts to tell a tale about the war, not even one he's fought in, some Spanish thing from years ago. Reckons he's fought all over the globe; if he wasn't for him we'd all be speaking German. Or Spanish. Or Irish if he hadn't beaten the potato famine of 1845.

When she'd gone I just calmly walked into the front room, and pushed his beloved telly on the floor. I'd had enough. I was clutching the frying pan.

Olivia nurses her arm.

OLIVIA: I told the ambulance, you'll find him in there, dum-de-dum-de-dum-de-dum.

Olivia picks at her sling and then gazes out of the window.

OLIVIA: My tummy goes all squiffy when I think about it. But the solicitor said she is sure the judge will look on the case favourably - "extenuating circumstances" - and she'll say that because of my age, and all the people I asked for help from it can't be considered grievous bodily harm.

We're losing the house, that's up for sale. Not for his end of life care, when push comes to shove you'd be amazed at what they can pull out. He's in hospital now, reckon with his injuries his next stop will be a hospice.

It's the solicitor's fees that have done it. No legal aid. Pay or represent yourself. I said "Sod my inheritance, sell the house and get the best lawyer possible." If I'm going down I'm going down with dignity and grace.

CURTAIN