

The Birthday Bench

By Leonie Thompson

CHARACTERS:

MARY, a long-suffering older woman, aged 70+

BILL, an older man who is struggling with life, aged 70+

MICHELLE, their daughter, aged 40

EXTRACT:

MARY searches in bag and brings out a cake in a tin, she takes off the lid and lifts the cake onto the plate on her lap. She then finds a knife and carefully cuts the cake.

MARY: I am going to make a wish. Do you think it still counts if you are cutting someone else's birthday cake? The wish, I mean.

BILL: How would I know. I gave up wishing years ago.

MARY: I know you did.

Silence

MARY: Here, have some cake.

BILL No, I don't want any.

MARY: Please, Bill, have some cake. It's for Michael. Please. For me?

Silence

BILL: I need to go to the toilet.

MARY: Well, I am going to have some. I want to celebrate my son's birthday.

BILL: He's not your son anymore.

MARY: I know!

BILL: I said that I need to go to the toilet.

MARY: I heard you! You know where it is. You don't need me to go with you, do you? Do you?

BILL: (*with uncertainty*) I can manage on my own.

MARY: Can you?

BILL: Yes.

MARY: It's just there. They unlock them early for dog walkers and those park runs and things.

BILL: Yes. *Beat (with less certainty)* You will be here, won't you?

MARY: Where else would I be. Just take your time. No rush.

BILL: Ok. I will be back in a while.

MARY: You know where they are, don't you?

BILL: Stop fussing woman!

(BILL gets up uncertainly and shakily walks off stage right)

MARY eats her cake. MICHELLE enters from stage left, she is smartly dressed.

MICHELLE: Hello Mum.