

*script sample*

# Mrs Holt

a play

by **Trevar Alan Chilver**

## ***Mrs Holt***

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**SCENE EIGHT**

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*ZARA's room. ZARA sits in her chair wearing a blue dress. She is not doing anything, just waiting. She twiddles her thumbs a little, but exudes an air of patience rather than impatience. RACHEL enters, carrying a Tupperware container of biscuits, and moves towards ZARA, who doesn't notice her until she is quite close.*

**RACHEL**

Hi Nan.

**ZARA**

Oh, Katy. Hello dear. Sorry; Linda. No, Rachel. Sorry.

**RACHEL** *(handing her the Tupperware container)*

Mum sent you some biscuits, Nan. *(she goes to get a chair from near the wardrobe).*

**ZARA** *(taking and opening the container)*

Oh, melting moments, my favourite. Tell her thank you, dear. That's lovely. *(she puts the container down on the table beside her chair)*

**RACHEL**

I think there might be a promotion in the wind, Nan. Brad sat me down yesterday and wanted to know my *(for this next phrase she bungs on a mock serious voice)* plans for the future. Had a long chat, we did. He was a bit awkward, though.

**ZARA**

Did he ask you to marry him?

**RACHEL**

Nan!

**ZARA**

Don't know what's wrong with the man.

**RACHEL**

There's nothing wrong, he's a businessman. I'm an employee, not a skirt.

**ZARA**

You might get further if you wore a skirt occasionally.

**RACHEL**

Honestly, Nan, sometimes you're so old!

**ZARA**

I'm eighty-two, what do you expect?

**RACHEL**

You don't act eighty-two.

**ZARA**

Are you trying to tell me to act my age?

**RACHEL**

Women don't have to do that sort of thing anymore.

**ZARA**

See, that's your trouble right there. Think you can just do what you like. Well we could do that in my day too, but there were consequences. For every action there is a reaction.

**RACHEL**

So now you're going to teach me about the laws of motion? I did that in high school.

**ZARA**

Well you should have paid more attention. You might not be heading for spinsterhood.

*RACHEL laughs.*

**ZARA**

Oh, yes laugh it up.

**RACHEL**

No one talks about spinsterhood anymore, Nan.

**ZARA**

That doesn't mean no one suffers it.

**RACHEL**

Look, Nan, I would love to find the right guy and get married and have kids, but not at the expense of my career. I wanted to be a lawyer, like Uncle Mark. I now work at one of the biggest law firms in Sydney, and there is the distinct possibility that in the next decade, there will come a time when I can go into a courtroom and not have to prove myself to all the boys.

**ZARA**

There is also the distinct possibility that if you don't prove yourself to one of those boys soon you'll never have kids.

**RACHEL**

And so what if I don't? That lifestyle is not what I've chosen.

**ZARA**

What? Getting married, having kids, stopping your complaining and living a happy life?

**RACHEL**

Those things don't often come as a package, Nan.

**ZARA**

They did for me.

**RACHEL**

That's history, Nan.

**ZARA**

Your Papa was a whiz in bed.

**RACHEL**

Oh Nan, please!

**ZARA**

Well he was. *(a pause)* Not that I had anything to compare him to, mind. Still, I know what I felt.

**RACHEL**

Nan!

**ZARA**

Maybe you should ask Brad out yourself. He seems a bit of a slow one.

**RACHEL**

I was trying to tell you about my promotion.

*Mrs Holt*

**ZARA**

Promotion: is that what you call it these days?

**RACHEL**

No; a real promotion. They are moving me into casework.

**ZARA**

Boring!

**RACHEL**

Nan, this is what I've been working towards for the last ten years.

**ZARA**

Is that why you're not married?

**RACHEL**

I don't want to get married, Nan, not until I've got this promotion. I wanted you to be happy for me. I drove all the way out here just to see you and tell you about it.

**ZARA**

Well I'm sorry it's such a chore for you. Perhaps you should get going, so you don't waste your whole Saturday afternoon in Penrith when you could be back on the bloody north shore.

**RACHEL**

Oh, don't be so difficult, Nan. That's where I get it from.

**ZARA**

You do not! It's on your mother's side.

**JACK** (*entering with a pile of washing and heading for the wardrobe*)

Clean washing, Mrs Holt! (*he notices RACHEL, and stops for a moment*) Oh, hi. You must be Mrs Holt's great granddaughter. I'm Jack.

**RACHEL**

Oh, no, I'm her...

**JACK**

Oh! I'm sorry; her great great granddaughter

**ZARA**

I'm not that old, boy.

**RACHEL**

Don't try to come on to me. I just want Nan looked after properly.

**JACK**

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

**RACHEL**

Yeah, I know. You were dropping off Nan's washing?

**JACK**

Yeah, I...

**ZARA**

Rachel, mind your manners.

**RACHEL** (*mellowing*)

Look, I don't know if you've spoken to Julie, but I'm not trying to be difficult, I just expect a nurse to do her job and make sure my Nan's looked after.

*Mrs Holt*

**JACK**

His job.

**RACHEL** (*realising her faux pas and overreacting*)

Oh, I'm so sorry! I don't normally do things like that, I...

**JACK** (*he interrupts and offers his hand*)

Jack.

**RACHEL** (*shaking his hand*)

Rachel.

**JACK**

Look, I just plan to make your Nan as comfortable as possible.

*ZARA stifles a laugh.*

**RACHEL**

I'm sure you will. I'm in the habit of being too defensive.

**ZARA** (*under her breath*)

That's an understatement.

**JACK**

It's alright. I'm in the habit of being too precocious.

*There is an awkward moment, then JACK turns and quickly distributes the clothes to various parts of the wardrobe. ZARA winks at RACHEL.*

**RACHEL**

You behave yourself, Nan.

*JACK finishes distributing the washing, and turns to say goodbye.*

**ZARA**

Thank you, Jack.

*JACK nods and exits.*

**RACHEL**

Bye Jack.

**JACK**

Bye.

**RACHEL** (*ignoring her*)

See? Aren't you glad I insisted they change your nurse?

**ZARA**

Over the moon, girl.

**RACHEL** (*taking the chair back towards the wardrobe and getting the walking frame*)

Come on, Nan, let's go get some coffee.

**ZARA**

I don't want coffee.

**RACHEL** (*bringing the walking frame towards ZARA*)

Tea, then.

*Mrs Holt*

**ZARA** *(turning her head away from the frame)*

I don't want tea.

**RACHEL**

Well we're going for a walk, anyway. Up you get.

*ZARA does not move.*

**RACHEL**

How about I sign you out and we go across the road for a beer?

*ZARA places her hands on the walking frame and slowly begins to stand.*

**RACHEL**

There's only one way to get you out of here sometimes.

**ZARA**

Don't be ridiculous, I need the exercise. I'll only have an orange juice.

**RACHEL**

Yes, Nan. I know all about your 'orange juices'.

**ZARA**

A girl's allowed to enjoy herself when she's raised her family.

**RACHEL**

Yes, Nan.

**ZARA**

No 'orange juice' for you.

**RACHEL**

The day will come.

**ZARA**

Not if you don't do something about it. You've got a long way to go, girl.

**RACHEL**

Yes, Nan.

**ZARA**

Better get started.

**RACHEL**

Yes, Nan.

**ZARA**

I'm talking about Brad, not Jack.

**RACHEL**

Oh, Jack's yours, is he?

**ZARA**

Don't be ridiculous, Rachel.

*ZARA has been struggling to stand, with RACHEL's help, and at this point she gives a short sharp yelp of pain and sits back onto the bed. RACHEL immediately presses the buzzer.*

**RACHEL**

What is it?

*Mrs Holt*

**ZARA**

Nothing. Give me a minute.

*JACK enters.*

**JACK**

What is it?

**RACHEL**

She was standing up, and stopped in pain.

**JACK**

Where is it Mrs Holt?

**ZARA**

I'm fine. I didn't ring the buzzer. Have a look at her and find out what's wrong with her!

**JACK**

Let's get you back in bed.

**ZARA**

No, I need to go to the toilet.

**JACK**

I'll get you a pan.

**ZARA (sharply)**

No you won't. I will go to the toilet.

**RACHEL**

Nan, let him get you a pan.

**ZARA**

Shut up Katy.

**JACK**

Rachel.

**ZARA**

Oh why don't you both shut up. *(again she attempts to stand)*

*JACK takes her arms and helps her up. She stands, groaning, and takes hold of her walking frame.*

**JACK**

I should get the doctor up.

**ZARA**

You should shut your trap and help me to the toilet.

*JACK leads ZARA away to the 'toilet' door.*

**RACHEL**

Nan, let him get the doctor.

**ZARA**

I don't need a doctor, I need to go to the toilet.

**JACK**

Now, now, Mrs Holt, that's where we're getting you. We can worry about the doctor afterwards.

*Mrs Holt*

*A few more steps. They're at the toilet door.*

**ZARA**

Right, I'm fine now.

**JACK**

You know I can't let you go by yourself.

**ZARA**

An old woman needs her privacy!

**JACK**

I've been taking old women to the toilet for years.

**ZARA**

Says a lot.

**JACK**

I take you to the toilet all the time! I showered you this morning!

**RACHEL**

Why don't I come?

**JACK**

No, I have to. It's an insurance thing. Bloody lawyers think they know better than anyone else.

**ZARA**

Neither of you are coming in here!

**JACK**

Rachel, Julie's just next door, could you ask her to come and help?

*RACHEL nods and exits.*

**ZARA**

I don't need anyone to help me.

**JACK**

We're not insured if you break your neck, Mrs Holt, so you don't really have a choice.

*JULIE enters, followed closely by RACHEL.*

**JULIE**

Having some troubles, Mrs Holt?

**ZARA**

No, and I don't need any help.

**JULIE**

I know you don't, I'll just watch you don't hurt yourself.

**JACK**

Do you need me to do anything for Mrs Kirkland while you're in here?

**JULIE**

No, she's fine.

*JULIE takes over from JACK, taking ZARA into the toilet and closing the door. JACK smiles awkwardly at RACHEL.*



*Mrs Holt*

**RACHEL**

I'm sorry, I guess it must be a little awkward for you too, having to take over when I complained about her.

**JACK**

Julie's a great nurse.

**RACHEL**

Nan just doesn't seem to be doing well lately.

**JACK** (*gently despite the gravity of the information*)

She's not doing well. The doctors have spoken to you, haven't they?

**RACHEL**

Yeah, we know, she hasn't got long left. That's why I come in all the time. That's why I care about what nurse she has.

*Pause.*

**JACK**

Look, a nurse can make a mistake or two, but there are times when you can do everything right and it just doesn't help.

**RACHEL**

Still, I'm glad you're looking after her.

**JACK**

She's a lot of fun really. She'll take whatever I can dish out, which is a nice change.

*There is an awkward silence.*

**JACK**

I should wait until she's out.

**RACHEL**

Of course.

*Pause.*

**JACK**

So what do you do?

**RACHEL**

I'm a lawyer.

**JACK** (*with sympathy*)

Oh.

**RACHEL**

Is that it? No lawyer jokes?

**JACK**

What do you call ten lawyers at the bottom of the ocean?

**RACHEL**

A good start.

**JACK**

See? There's no point telling lawyer jokes to a lawyer.