

EXTRACT

DOLORES IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE

Richard Murphet

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by Richard Murphet

OPENING

*As the lights come up gradually on the set.
The sound of voices can be heard, faintly at first then
gradually increasing in volume. The voices are many
It is the 'She' poem (see Appendix One) done by several voices
and interlayed with cires and other crowd sounds.
The voices become more insistent - panicky, in fact - like a
large crowd gathering outside a shop door at sale time, intent
on entering.*

*In the background somewhere but quite distinct, above the
crowd's hum, we can now hear a woman crying, sobbing.*

The light has highlighted the golden door.

*In the back behind it Dolores 1 has entered. She begins
speaking. As she speaks she slowly enters through the golden
door onto the set. She crosses the 'swamp' area, touches the
stairs, moves up and down the ramp and finally moves towards
the ironing board.*

*Behind her intermittently throughout the speech, Dolores 2 and
3 repeat some of the words.*

DOLORES 1:

I. Dolores.

Who believed that night was more silent than day.
Who never drives a bargain.
Whose only bank is a river.
Whose name does not appear in the book of names.
Who walked out onto the long extending finger of swampland.
Who likes the words "somersault" and "beyond".

I. Dolores.

Who is not a function of someone else's memory.
Who can still feel the lily pad inside.
Who once saw a crowd in the field behind a fence.
Who is a public figure for herself.

I. Dolores.

Who likes the opening of shops but not the closing.
Who stands in foyers.
Who has never placed an order.
Who has her wits about her.
Who watches escalators as the others disappear.
Who is solitary but not alone.

I. Dolores.

For whom a tune and a wisp of smoke are from another world.
Who is the Golan Heights.
Who is a coordinate in time,
At the point of civil war,
Standing stranded, waking in the way of the tide.

I. Dolores.

At the edge of the world as if watching a film through the mist.
The spy seen through the goldfish bowl.
The passenger in the seat of that wrecked car.
The deserted country station at night.
The outline of the murder victim on the footpath.
The cancelled phone call still alive on the line.
The hypnotised patient when the hypnotist's dead.
The threshold of the mirror.
The threshold.
The shadow.
The echo.
(To the audience) The gap between 'the' and 'echo'.
The comma, the colon, the dash, the bracket.

(to the audience) "The gaping holes in the black earth of the rose beds
bordering the drive."

*She has reached the ironing board and as she says the next
words she reaches down to touch it.*

I. Dolores.
Swollen.

IRONING 1

Dolores 1 strokes the ironing board, then clasps the iron. Unexpectedly, it yanks her arm aloft as if some other force were trying to get it off her. She struggles and finally succeeds in bringing it back to the board. She begins ironing a shirt.

DOLORES: On and on and on and back and forward and so on.
Tucking into the neck and down the arms.
Again and again.
Blouses and shirts, shirts and blouses.
Again and again.
No more creases, Dolores.
And on and on and on.
And on and on and on. Forever.
To hide in.
This is just the beginning. And not the beginning.
The moment says stop but I move fast and smooth.
And again and again and in and out.
Oh yes.
A sense of action in the angle of my head and my arm crooked.
Hand on the iron, eye on the cloth.
Mmmm. Mmmmm.
Lord knows what my other arm is doing.

An alarm clock begins ringing, terrifyingly loud and insistent..

On the floor in her bed, the young girl puppet, Bonnie, stirs and yawns. Dolores 1 continues ironing.

BONNIE: Mummy!

DOLORES *(to herself):* Bonnie.

BONNIE: Mummy!

DOL: I'm here, darling. Out here. *(To herself)* Out her somewhere.

BONNIE: It's so loud.

Dolores goes into Bonnie's room, still carrying the iron.

DOLORES: Turn off the alarm, darling. It's time to get going
The alarm stops.

This iron was new when I bought it. *(Bonnie backs off slightly, as if in fear of the iron)* Sunbeam steam. And the ironing board. No one has used them but me.

BONNIE: I had a dream.

DOL: Yes, Bonnie! Yes... Wanna help? ...Wanna help me?... With the shopping?
I'm going to make the list soon. Wanna help me?

BONNIE: Can Dollie help, too?

DOLORES: Who?

BONNIE: Dollie.

DOLORES: Oh ... yes. We wouldn't want to leave her behind, would we.

Dolores returns to her ironing board. Bonnie quietly calls to her doll

BONNIE: Dollie!... Wanna help? ...Wanna help me?... With the shopping? You betta help me, you naughty naughty naughty girl.

DOLORES: *(to herself)* But the house is old. Someone has lived here before. Probably many people. And animals. Animals gather under the floorboards.

BONNIE: I dreamt that we were on a little boat. You and me. Sailing under a bridge... *She settles back to sleep again.*

IRONING 2

Lights out on Bonnie. Dolores 1 continues her ironing.

DOLORES 1: Again and over and over again and over again.

All the clothes are creased.

Again.

Always more to iron.

Up one sleeve and down the other.

Around the hem and across the collar.

If I close my eyes the iron knows where my hand should go.

Smooth.

DOL 2: *(On Voiceover. The word begins soft enough and builds to a barely contained scream)* Smoooooth.

An alarm clock starts ringing, loud and insistent. DOL 1 clutches her temples.

In his bedroom, Frank wakes up, stirs, stretches, yawns, calls out.

FRANK: Dolores!

DOL 1: Frank!! Turn the alarm off, Frank. Its time to get going.

The alarm continues. Through his next speech, Frank stirs from his chair, rises, stretches, and finally hangs and swings from the beams like an ape.

FRANK: Dolores! I'm awake AWAKE
fighting fit its me its your
hubby its him hair in place
ready for the day eh Dolly
What's for getting concerned
here Dolly what's for for the
man for me for food Dolores
you out already out of bed
out of the house out of sight
out of ooh weren't out last
night were we Dolly In In
In In In out of this world
where are you where is she
rolling his shoulders Bonnie
you seen Mummy Bonnie
Bonnie where the fuck is
everyone what the fucking
Robinson Crusoe is it Robinson
fucking Crusoe island I'm on
DOLORES!

DOLORES *(to herself)*:
I want to be in America
OK by me in America
Everything's free in America
DOL 1 & DOL 2 *(V/O's)*
La laa la la la laa America
La laa la la la laa America
La laa la la la laa America
La laa la la la laa America

*A loud crack is heard as of an electrical charge.
A blackout, during which Dolores 2 joins Dolores 1 at the
iron.*

BONNIE: Mummy?

Pause

*When Dolores 2 speaks, her voice is husky, loose, somehow both
lively and with a touch of menace. Dol 1 clasps onto the iron
with one hand, with the other she clutches her eyes. She is
slack. Dol 2 is controlling the proceedings.*

DOL 2: Bonnie, baby. Come on out here.

BONNIE: Mummy!

DOL 2: She got problems don't you think, girly

BONNIE: Mummy are you OK?

DOL 2: Wrong house, wrong man, wrong att-tit-tude. Wrong wrong wrong.

BONNIE: What's wrong?

DOL 2: Take this life for a start, honey. These clothes. How's a girl supposed to cope.
Hold this iron for me will you, girly.

BONNIE: N-no. Mummy what are you -?

*Dolores laughs. Growls, howls. Tries to approach Bonnie with
the iron.*

DOL 2: I'm gonna iron you flat, girly. Flat as a blouse.

BONNIE: Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

She starts crying. Dol 2 is laughing. There is a struggle between Dol 1 and Dol 2 - Dol 1 trying to return to ironing board, Dol 2 trying to use it against Bonnie. Dol 3 runs in to help break the fight - she just gets drawn into it.

Frank calls out from the bedroom.

FRANK: Bonnie shut the fuck up girl (*he sees the struggle going on*) What the fuck who's doing the what what is the who EH EH? Dolores!! Got this this got this head shit like a like a banging shit gimme here the iron Dolly I'll Dolly shit shit this head like a volcano Bonnie you OK hold her fainting while I Bonnie you all white get the blood moving EH EH EH EH come with me with Daddy

He picks up Bonnie and takes her back to his room

FRANK: Dolly what's with the shit

The three Dolores remain. In the distance we see the shape of Dolores 4.

DOL 1: In the centre of the room was a snake pit. Lots of men were standing round it.
All -

DOL 2: Oh look at me. Oh look at me.
Oh look at me , I'm dancin', I'm dancin -

DOL 1: No, not that voice, another -

DOL 3: Another time ... the black cockatoos

DOL 1: All of them had scaly hands

DOL 3: The black cockatoos...

DOL 1: The men all had scaly hands like snakes

DOL 2: I'm dancin, I'm flyin' like Cyd Charisse and Fred Astaire

DOL 3: ON THAT DAY the flock of cockatoos flew around the bridge

DOL 1: Into the room from a side door came Frank.

DOL 2: No not that one not that one it's -

DOL 1: They took him and threw him into the pit.

DOL 3: They flew around time after time, ripping the sky open, and headed off to the trees around the swamp

DOL 2: I could be a singer like Julie London or Judy Garland

DOL 3: Dolores!

DOL 2: I'M FLYIN'

DOL 3: I'm trying to get it together here, Dolores ...that moment on the bridge

DOL 1: When he emerged his feet and hands were black

DOL 3: Like the black queen...

DOL 1: ... and they also looked like snakes.....

DOL 2: I'm kickin' up one leg, I'm kickin' up two.

I'm perfectly happy, I know what to do.
There's only one problem, I'm waitin' on you.
I'm dancin' dancin' dancin'

DOL 3: Where are we Dolores? Where are we? We screen one another from the world.

DOL 1: Two nights later I dreamed the same dream. except this time the man forced into the pit was my d-d- my d- oh it was a ditch.

DOL 3: And the world moves around us like a shadow.

DOL 4: Alone ... suspended ... on the bridge. So many years ago. The birds above me and the water below as the sun set. I remember. Inside all that ... all of them ... still there of course ... the little core of myself ... I remember. I - we - no I groped my way down in the bright incredible light. And then there I was...

Song: The River Inside

Sung by Bonnie and Dol 2.

Maybe you work in a munitions factory
Struggle each day through mechanical roar
How to survive is your solitary focus
Machines pounding out all the weapons of war.
You go to the boss and you go to the union
You tell them your brain cells are starting to tear.
One smiles, the other just winces
“Bear it” “Wear it” is all that you hear.

No! Wait! No need to hide.
Just! stop!
And listen to the river inside.
Just! freeze!
Feel the wind through the trees

Home from the battle there's blood on the doorstep
Someone has left a dead cat on the lawn.
You cannot avoid as you enter the kitchen
Your teenager cursing the day she was born.
You turn on the TV to escape all the madness
You're hit by the power of the madness within
Corpses and cunts are the sought after prizes
Cover your eyes as the panic sets in.

No! Wait! No need to hide.
Just! stop!



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