

Dandelions for Becky

You write the story of your life by the choices you make.

A Dramatic Monologue

by James Hutchison

Also available from www.jameshutchison.ca

A Christmas Carol – Two versions available. *Every man has the power to do good.*

When Scrooge's nephew Fred finds some letters Scrooge had written to his sister Fan a long time ago the past is unlocked, and Scrooge learns how his fear of poverty and pursuit of wealth have cost him a chance for love and genuine happiness.

CAST OF 10+ - Two Act Drama, 6M, 4W, Multiple Sets, 100 minutes

CAST OF 25+ - Two Act Drama, 15M, 10W, Multiple Sets, 100 minutes

What the Dickens! *Even Scrooge got a second chance.*

When Marty Fisher gets caught kissing his stage manager Samantha and the actor playing Scrooge shows up drunk Marty has to scramble to save the opening night production of a Christmas Carol and his engagement to his fiancée Tami.

Two Act Comedy, 6M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Heart of Stone: A Jessica Quinn Mystery *Trusting the wrong person can be deadly.*

When Jessica Quinn uncovers the truth about her father's killer and the truth behind a woman claiming to be the long-lost daughter of her client Mary McConnell more than one person ends up dead.

Two Act Mystery, 7M, 3W, Multiple Sets, 120 minutes

Stories from Langford *Every town has its secrets.*

Six characters from Langford tell stories from their lives: stories about, jealousy, revenge, love and forgiveness.

Two Act Drama, 1M, 1W, Simple settings, 120 Minutes

Death and the Psychiatrist *Even Death Could Use a Friend*

Feeling depressed about having a job where no one likes him Death goes into therapy with Dr. Thompson in order to help him cope with his guilt.

One Act Comedy, 3M, or 2M, 1W, Single Set, 50 Minutes

500 Bucks and a Pack of Smokes *How much is your life worth?*

Calling off a hit he put out on himself because he mistakenly thought he was dying proves to be more difficult than Donny expected.

One Act Comedy, 3+ 2M, 1W, Multiple Sets, 60 Minutes

Plus, other One Acts, Monologues, and 10 Minute Plays including The Blood of a Thousand Chickens, 500 bucks and a pack of smokes, Never Give Up, Written in Stone, and Elvis is Dead.

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James Hutchison writes comedies, dramas, and mysteries. He also interviews other playwrights, actors, and directors about the business and creative aspects of theatre, film, and television. You can read his interviews on his blog and download his plays at www.jameshutchison.ca.

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A Dramatic Monologue by James Hutchison

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Trent Bowers a younger man.
Joshua Harcourt Dean an older man.

SETTING

Front Porch of an Old House

TIME

The last week of August 2015

STORY OF THE PLAY

Trent Bowers is painting his fence and talking about the first summer he and his wife Tammy moved into the old neighborhood and how every Sunday morning they'd wake up and find a dandelion bouquet wrapped in a white ribbon on the bottom step of their front porch.

NOTE

Few stage directions have been given as movement and when the actors take a drink of orange juice or eat a bite of fruit will be discovered in the rehearsal process and will be different for different productions.

Readers Theatre: The play can be presented as a staged reading. This would lend itself to an event where there is a limited amount of rehearsal time or only a single evening's presentation.

Stories from Langford: Every Town has its Secrets.

Dandelions for Becky is one of six monologues included in the play *Stories from Langford*. You can download each individual monologue or the entire play from www.jameshutchison.ca.

Scene 1 – BACK ROADS: Mitch just wants to get drunk with his friends, roast marshmallows, and burn every copy of, *The Story of Langford: A Century of Progress*, the book he was commissioned to write by the Mayor.

Scene 2 – SMILE FOR THE CAMERA: Simone is busy getting things ready for her parent's 50th wedding anniversary while she talks about Debbie Fisher and how much the two of them hated each other and how she caught her father cheating at the Green Gables Motel when she was sixteen and how that forever changed the relationship between her and her father.

Scene 3 – AIN'T NOTHING BETTER THAN FRIED CHICKEN: Earl is eating fried chicken and potato salad, on a hot summer day, in the park, while remembering, how twenty years ago, all that trouble started and people ended up getting killed.

Scene 4 – BAD HABITS: On a hot summer day during the Harvest Festival Carol is packing a picnic basket and talking about wanting to leave Langford when she was growing up and having to come back years later to look after her sick mother.

Scene 5 – DANDELIONS FOR BECKY: Trent Bowers is painting his fence and talking about the first summer he and his wife Tammy moved into the old neighborhood and how every Sunday morning they'd wake up and find a dandelion bouquet wrapped in a white ribbon on the bottom step of their front porch.

Scene 6 – TWELVE YEARS: Nora is celebrating her twelfth wedding anniversary alone, drinking wine, and talking about how cities and buildings and mountains and trees and animals and people all have souls and that sometimes you can capture that soul in a photograph.

For Elaine

ACT ONE: DANDELIONS FOR BECKY**SCENE i: THE HOME OF TRENT AND TAMMY BOWERS**

Setting: Front Porch of an old house late afternoon.

At Rise: TRENT has been painting his fence a bright yellow in the hot afternoon sun. He's just finished for the day and is cleaning up his brushes and putting the lid on the paint can. Sitting on a patio table nearby is a pitcher of lemonade and a couple of glasses and a bouquet of dandelions in a mason jar.

TRENT

I love the color yellow. Yellow is the color of sunshine. And yellow is the color of love. Most people think it's red. But they're wrong. It's yellow.

When Tammy and I first moved into this place it was pretty run down. It needed a lot of work and we didn't have a lot of money, so we did most of the work ourselves. The country was going through a recession and I couldn't find a job. I had a degree in education and a diploma in drafting and I couldn't get work. And it's not like I didn't send out resumes and make phone calls and knock-on doors and ask for favors but the job market was tight. Thousands of people were out of work and I was one of them.

I did manage to get a temporary job down at the old Wellington Department Store in December. Do you remember those? You could find anything you wanted at the Wellington Department Store. They had a hardware and furniture – groceries and a pharmacy. Everything you wanted, they had. And it was a great place to work too. They treated their employees well and paid a decent wage, but...they got into trouble.

You see, when old man Wellington died, and the kids took over the company – the kids decided they didn't want any hardware or groceries. No – they wanted to focus on clothing and fashion. They didn't like the idea of being the head of a grocery store. It didn't really fit with their image. They wanted to be part of the fashionably elite. So, that's what they did. They got rid of the furniture and the groceries and the toys and sold nothing but clothes and shoes and jewellery.

Ten years later they went out of business.

Maybe selling groceries wasn't such a bad thing after all.

But the year I worked for them they still had a toy department. I was a twenty-seven-year-old stock boy in the toy department with a degree and a diploma and twenty thousand dollars of student loans to pay back. But I didn't mind, really. I liked my job. It was fun. The people were fun. I liked going there every day and just doing something physical – something that didn't take a lot of mental power – something you could do and walk away from and not take home.

That's the problem with a lot of jobs – you take them home – and when you do that it can poison your family life. I've seen a lot of couples torn apart because the work becomes the obsession and the goal is to retire wealthy and free from financial worry. The only problem is they get so focused on the end game that they forget about looking after the things that really matter. You know – things like family. And even though this place wasn't anything fancy it was big enough for us and we were pretty excited to have our own home.

But then something strange started happening that first summer we moved in. We thought it was the neighborhood kids playing some kind of prank on us for some reason because every Sunday morning there'd be a big dandelion bouquet wrapped in a white ribbon sitting on the bottom of the front step. Tammy and I just thought they were having some fun with us, being the new people on the block, and that once they got tired of their little game – they'd stop. But they didn't. Every Sunday – the dandelion bouquet would appear.

That really bothered me. I didn't like the idea of me and Tammy sleeping in our bed and some stranger poking around outside – even if it was just a bunch of kids. So, on the first weekend in July, Tammy and I sat out on the porch, deep into the night, waiting to see who the dandelion bouquet delivery man would be.

We were sipping on lemonade and gin and just passing the time. Not that crappy sticky sweet frozen stuff you buy from the grocery store. That's not lemonade. That's nothing but liquid sugar. No, my Tammy and I make lemonade the old-fashioned way – with real lemons and cane sugar. Natural sugar – it's not processed – it's raw sugar – better for you. And then you add some gin – a little mint – and you've got yourself the perfect summertime drink. Tammy sat with me until about one and then she got so tired she couldn't keep her eyes open and went to bed. But I wasn't going to go to sleep. I was going to catch this guy and find out who he was and what he was up to.

When I woke up the next morning – the sun was already rising, and those damn dandelions were sitting at the bottom of the step. Whoever he was he'd come and gone in the middle of the night

while I was snoring away on the porch. Man, I was mad at myself for falling asleep. Now I'd have to wait an entire week before I could try and catch this guy again.

So, the next Saturday, I slept all day, so I wouldn't fall asleep that night. And I sat, more in the shadow, so I couldn't be seen. I think the first week I hadn't sat far enough back – and he could see me and knew I was there – and just waited until I fell asleep before sneaking over and leaving those dandelions. Well, that wasn't going to happen this time. No way.

Tammy didn't sit with me that night. She was mad at me over some stupid thing, so she went to bed. Things were a little tense between us that summer. Like I said, I couldn't find a job, and Tammy was finishing her degree and working two part-time jobs, and that meant she was exhausted all the time. We'd been fighting about a lot of stupid things – you know – me not putting my shoes in the closet – her leaving the garage door open when she went to work – little things that add up, and I could feel her slipping away from me.

I felt kind-a worthless not being able to find work, and that soured me a bit, and there was a distance growing between us that frightened me and instead of fixing things I'd get angry and make things worse. Why do we do that? Why when we're hurting – do we hurt others? I don't understand it. But I was doing it, and for the first time in our marriage I could see doubt in her eyes, and I was scared.

I was deep in thought – thinking about Tammy when a voice said, “I take it, young man, you have been waiting for me.”

Well, I almost jumped right out of my skin and I yelled a yell that shattered the silence and woke the neighbors and set the hounds a howling. “Jesus! You scarred the hell out of me!” I said.

And this old guy, he just laughed and said, “I sure as hell didn’t mean to scare ya, but I figured I might as well introduce myself since you seem determined to meet me. Joshua Harcourt Dean at your service, sir.”

Joshua Harcourt Dean – how’s that for a name?

“Trent Bowers at yours,” I said.

He told me that Tammy and I had done a nice job of fixing up the old place and that it was good to see young people moving back into the neighborhood. He was standing there holding a dandelion bouquet wrapped with a white ribbon. So, I asked him what the deal was with the dandelions and he paused...set them down on the bottom step and said if I got him a glass, of that fine-looking lemonade, I had there – he’d tell me. “I think that’s a fair exchange, don’t you,” he said. “A glass of lemonade to hear a story.”

So, I gave him a glass of our home-made lemonade and told him it had a healthy dose of gin in it.

He said that's the way he liked it and he took a drink of his lemonade and sat across from me and didn't say anything for a long moment.

TRENT pours a glass of lemonade and then takes a long drink and transitions to JOSHUA.

JOSHUA

You write the story of your life by the choices you make. Now I haven't always made the right choices. Everybody makes mistakes and some of those mistakes are little things. Things that don't matter much, but when it comes to love, you don't want to make a mistake. No sir – that you do not want to do.

Now, this house used to belong to the Carter family. I lived over on the next block. I grew up in this neighborhood, and I knew the Carter family, and I knew Becky Carter from the second grade.

Becky was the first girl I ever kissed.

We used to sit in the front seat of her dad's Oldsmobile pretending we were flying an airplane and heading to Africa. We were on an adventure and on one of those adventures we kissed. I liked it, and Becky liked it too, but we were at an age when kissing wasn't high on the agenda. No, riding bikes, playing baseball, and just running around the neighborhood was how we spent most of our days.

Becky and I stayed friends all through school. She had her boyfriends, and I had my girlfriends, but I cared about Becky in a way I never cared about any other girl. We liked each other. We enjoyed each other's company. We were happy going for a swim or catching a movie or just sitting out on the porch late at night talking about life. The trips to Africa were replaced with talk of career and family. We sat on this porch many a night discussing our futures but never talking about the possibility of a future together.

And then she went off to College, and I went into the army. Now you want to change a man – you put that man in the army. You will find clarity of purpose. You will understand your place in the world. That was two years of the most grueling, but I believe character building, time of my life. I was fortunate that I never saw combat but being in the army gave me a different perspective. I grew up. I became a man. And growing up means knowing what you want in life. And when the other guys would head into town to chase a little skirt I'd stay behind because, truth be told, all I could think about was Becky – and that first kiss – and I wondered what it would be like to kiss her now that we weren't kids.

That's when I knew I truly loved her. I was too blind and too much of a fool to see it when we were together but now that we were apart she was all that I thought about.

Becky and I would write to each other. She'd tell me about college and how her family was doing and how annoying her sister was and how much of an ass her father could be. He wasn't much for girls and college, but Becky's mother was very excited and very proud of her daughter.

Anyway, I decided I should tell her how I felt – to let her know what was in my heart. I wouldn't put that in a letter you understand. You don't put that kind of news in a letter. No that's something you do face to face. I figured I'd go see her. You know. Take her out. Move the conversation in the right direction and when the time was right let her know. Oh man was I nervous. I thought basic training was hard but thinking about telling Becky how I felt was terrifying.

Thing is, before I could tell her how I felt she'd gone and met herself some guy in college named Jason. And this Jason was better with words and expressing his feelings than I was. And he told her how he felt. And before I knew it, Jason and Becky got engaged. When she wrote and told me – I couldn't eat for a week. I didn't know what to do. After that, I didn't write her too much. I started so many letters wanting to tell her how I felt but I never did send any of them. Just threw them all in the garbage.

And I'm not ashamed to admit it but I spent a lot of nights wishing all kinds of terrible things would happen to her fiancée. Car accidents, heart attacks, alien abductions – nothing was beyond my imagination – and in each and every case poor Jason met a horrifying and terrible end.

So, the summer I got out of the army and came back home was the summer Becky was getting married. I hadn't seen her in two years but knowing that she was engaged I wasn't sure I wanted to see her. Jason was a couple years older than her, and he came from a pretty good family. They sure as hell weren't any Rockefellers but they had a lot more money than me.

Becky and I ran into each other, about a month before her marriage, down at the pharmacy in Wellington's Department store. She was happy to see me. Gave me a big hug. Broke my heart but feeling her wrapping herself around me was heaven.

She asked me why I'd stopped writing and I made some excuse, but I could tell she didn't believe me. She didn't push me on it...but she gave me a look – you know...a look like you're not telling me everything. And then we chatted for a bit. It wasn't easy. It was the first time since we'd known each other where we couldn't talk. I knew what I wanted to say but didn't know how to say it. So, we said goodbye and she made me promise that we'd get together and see each other again.

And we did. We saw a lot of each other over the next couple of weeks. We'd go out with old friends from High School and just hang out. And I got to know her fiancée Jason pretty well. She wanted us to be friends, but I didn't have too many friendly thoughts about Jason.

The problem with Jason is – he's a nice guy. Now if he'd have been one of those self centered egotistical controlling bastards that so many women end up marrying I wouldn't have had any problem telling Becky exactly how I felt. I'd be saving her from a life of misery and pain. But he wasn't like that. I could see that he loved Becky and he'd make her a good husband. But they weren't married yet – so I decided I was going to tell her how I felt. Nice guy or not, I wasn't going to pass on a chance for happiness.

So, the weekend before her wedding, her and I and a bunch of our friends had gone out to the movies for the evening to see David Lean's Doctor Zhivago which was playing at the Plaza. You ever seen that film? It's all about this poet during the Russian Revolution and his love for a woman. Well, the whole time I'm watching that movie I'm thinking I got to say something – if this movie isn't a message from God I don't know what is. So, after the movie, the whole group came back to Becky's place. And as it got later everybody cleared out. Even Jason left, and I found myself alone with Becky sitting on the bottom step of this porch.

So, we got to talking about life and love and I put my arm around her and she leaned into me and I think she sensed where the conversation was going – because just as I was working up the courage to say what I needed to say to her – she turned to me – and told me she was pregnant. She was going to have Jason's child and because of that they had decided to get married.

Well, what could I say to that? How could I steal another man's woman let alone his child? Here I was working up the courage to tell her how I felt and she goes and tells me she's pregnant. I felt the bottom drop out of my world because I knew then and there that I couldn't say anything – even if I wanted to. I just put my arm around her and held her close and we sat there until the sun rose and she went inside.

Becky got married and her and Jason moved up north and a few years later. I got married to a good woman. We had a family. Raised two fine children. My son, Martin is a military man. And my daughter Amy is a geologist. Both married. Martin more than once. Six grandchildren between the two of them. Oldest is thirty-three and the youngest is thirteen. And Becky and I –

well we kept in touch. Christmas cards, birthday cards, that sort of thing. Once in a while we'd write a long letter to each other. And when the internet came along we used e-mail. We had quite the correspondence over our lives. We shared a lot. Thoughts about world events, turning 40 – turning 50 – trips we'd take – places we'd seen – thoughts about marriage and happiness and choices we'd made.

And in time I got used to the idea of her being with someone else – even if I didn't like it. Of course, I always wondered what would have happened if I'd said something. But I didn't.

Becky died about ten years ago. My own wife took ill and she's up at the Memorial clinic where they can give her the care she needs. She doesn't remember things. Her mind's gone. I'm a stranger to her. Half the time she thinks I'm her brother Phil instead of her husband. Anyway, when Becky died Jason came to see me.

He brought me a letter from Becky. A letter she had written and asked to be delivered to me. And her husband – Jason – good guy that he was – saw to it that I got that letter. I think Jason always knew how I felt, but he never said anything. He always made me feel welcome in their home when we would pass through and visit.

You know when Becky and I were kids I would bring her a bouquet of dandelions. Some people look at dandelions and see weeds, but I don't. Becky didn't. Becky and I saw flowers. We would gather up dozens of dandelions and cover the porch in dandelion bouquets. We'd fill jars and jars full of dandelion bouquets and place them all over the porch. And on that night, a week before

her wedding, when we talked long into the early hours of the morning we wandered about the yard and I picked her a big bouquet of dandelions and she took the white ribbon from her hair and tied them up together and held them as we sat on the bottom step.

That's why ever Saturday night as long as there are dandelions in bloom I leave them here on your door step. It's here on this doorstep all those years ago that I should have told the woman I cared about how much I loved her. I have regretted that decision every day of my life. It is always better to speak your heart and have it broken than to live a life and to never know.

TRENT

The old man finished his lemonade and put the glass down. I waited, as long as I could, and then I had to ask, "What was in the letter?" He looked up at me and smiled.

JOSHUA

The three words I never had the courage to say to her: I love you. Those three little words can change your world if you're willing to speak them. Don't ever be silent about what's in your heart, son. You want some advice from an old man – you tell the woman you love how you feel. Otherwise, some other man will. Married or not, a woman likes to know that she's loved.

TRENT

By now the sun was rising and he thanked me for the lemonade and wished me well and told me that if I had found the woman I loved I was a lucky man.

After he left I took that bouquet of dandelions, he had brought, into the house and put them in a jar and took them upstairs and set them beside our bed and waited for Tammy to wake up. When she did and she looked at me through sleep filled eyes and asked me if I had met the dandelion

delivery man. I said – I had – and that we had spent the night drinking lemonade and talking about life.

She asked me if I had learned anything, and I told her I did – and I told her I loved her. I told her that I loved her and that I didn't say it nearly enough and that I wanted her to know how important she was to me and how lucky I felt to have her in my life.

The strange thing is, after that weekend, I never saw the old man again. Joshua Harcourt Dean simply vanished. Sometimes I think I dreamed the whole thing. Sometimes I think Joshua Harcourt Dean was just the result of a little too much lemonade and gin. But that doesn't mean he was wrong even if he never existed any place but my imagination, and so every Saturday during the summer I bring my Tammy a dandelion bouquet and tell her how much I love her. She thinks I'm a bit of a fool, but I don't care. There is no shame in being a fool for love.

Curtain