

# ***Them Candles***

*by*

*Joseph Arnone*

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Cast of Characters

<u>DARLA</u> :	54
<u>KENDRA</u> :	19
<u>SAM</u> :	22

Place  
Rural Town

Time  
8PM

2.

Setting: A small house in a rural town. What was once a gorgeous home in the 1940's has withered away by time and lack of maintenance.

At Rise: Kendra readies herself with make-up in front of a mirror, her mother Darla studies her from the couch with a worked up stare.

DARLA: Where you think you're going?

KENDRA: I'm going out.

DARLA: Not in my dress.

KENDRA: You said I could borrow your dress anytime I wanted.

DARLA: I don't want you going out tonight.

KENDRA: Don't give me a hard time.

DARLA: Kendra, you're staying home.

KENDRA: Why?

DARLA: Because I don't like them boys you been hanging with.

KENDRA: They friends of mine.

DARLA: Friend with benefits?

KENDRA: Why you always accusing me of being a---

DARLA: Because this is not what I raised. Going to that damn hotel lobby...there's plenty a places to go in this world than a hotel lobby.

KENDRA: It's a quiet place to chat.

DARLA: And then what? What then?

KENDRA: We talk.

DARLA: And then?

KENDRA: We sometimes go for a walk, there's a lovely park just across the road...

DARLA: You puttin' me on?

KENDRA: Stop it, Mom.

DARLA: Change your dress.

KENDRA: Stop *it*, Mom.

DARLA: Now you take off that dress before I take it off.

KENDRA: Ha, ha, you wouldn't dare.

(DARLA rises from her couch)

DARLA (warning): You don't take off my dress...

KENDRA: ...No.

(DARLA lunges at Kendra and they struggle. Darla rips the dress)

Oh, shit, look what you did!

DARLA: There you go.

KENDRA: Why did you do this to me, Mom? I'm meeting Sam tonight!

DARLA: Sam, who's Sam?

KENDRA: A fella I met that I been talking to!

DARLA: How long you been talking?

KENDRA: I don't know!

(KENDRA runs upstairs to her bedroom)

DARLA: You ain't going out.

KENDRA: YES I AM!

DARLA: Doctor said you partying too much. Said you keep going on like this you're liable to catch pneumonia and then what? Your lungs ain't strong enough to survive pneumonia, that's for sure. You buying yourself a one way ticket to hell, is what you doin' is...(to HERSELF) Damn girl don't listen to squat...(to KENDRA) And I catch you smoking them Paris Blu's (pronounced Blues) and we both know that tar sittin' in your lungs is gonna put you fast away girl. Fast away! (to HERSELF) I don't blame her though...right? How can you blame this poor girl. She wants to live, like one a them candles before they go out, they burn so bright and pshhh, away they go...but she's doing' things in a dirty way. (to KENDRA) A dirty way! Growing up too fast, a race against time and...(to HERSELF) Awww hell, what the hell am I...I want the best for my child, I do, I do...she's a beautiful child.

(KENDA comes barreling down the stairs in a new outfit)

DARLA: Let me look at ya.

(KENDRA keeps walking to the front door)

HOLD IT!

KENDRA: What?! You're ruining my life.

DARLA: Oh, stop with the dramatics.

KENDRA: Sam is waiting. I don't want to keep Sam waiting.

DARLA: Darling, it's like this, I want you to live your life, but there's nothing wrong with taking it slow.

(KENDRA coughs)

You alright?

KENDRA: I'm fine! I don't believe everything those doctors say. If it were up to them I'd be sitting in my room all day listening to the birds.

DARLA: You have to respect your condition.

KENDRA: No! My condition has to respect me! It needs to keep up with where I'm going. If I wanna ride the big ferris wheel in town, I'm gonna do it. If I want to have Sam drive me on the highway at a hundred miles per hour, I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna drink and smoke and love and feel life to the fullest, until this thing decides to get tired or dies without me cause I refuse, I refuse to be slowed down or have my life cut short for some untreatable illness. I'm gonna fight this thing and bend it, twist it and turn it to my will and I am not going to bow down to it! You understand me Momma? I want to live! This is my life and I have to see as much of it as I can while I'm still breathing. (KENDRA coughs) Cause...cause...(she coughs)...I want to see now that when I go, I go with no regrets. There ain't nothin' sadder in life than to die with regret and I damn well promise this disease that I ain't goin' till the sun comes up!

(KENDRA almost faints but regains herself)

(DARLA gently helps her to the couch)

(KENDRA tries to refuse her help but is too weak to put up a fight)

DARLA: Kendra, you see what happens when you work yourself up?

KENDRA: I just want to laugh, Momma, I want to laugh as much laughter as I can hold in my lungs and breathe it out into the world, as much good laughter as I can, so one day when there's a wind brushing across someone's face, that will be me sharing a smile...and feeling...happ...fri...

(KENDRA passes out)

DARLA: Oh, hell!

(DARLA jumps up and runs into the kitchen.  
She quickly comes back with a wet wash cloth  
and places it on KENDRA'S forehead)

Oh, honey, you're alright, you're okay now just rest, you need rest.  
Pushing yourself too hard, I warned you, I did...

(DARLA runs into the kitchen and fixes  
a glass of water)

(DARLA comes back and sets it on the  
coffee table)

(DARLA caresses her daughter's face)

Oh Kendra, if I could take it all away I would. Can't tell you how  
many time's I've asked the good Lord to pass your illness over to me.  
I don't understand it. How does a young, bright, beautiful woman  
such as yourself...(DARLA cries)...makes no sense...

(KNOCK on the door)

(to HERSELF) Who the hell is that?!

(DARLA opens front door and there  
stands SAM, a strapping young man  
built like a bull)

SAM: Good evening, Mam, I'm Sam.

DARLA: Kendra's date?

SAM: Uh, I guess you can say that.

DARLA: Wasn't she meeting you?

SAM: Uh, well, yes, we usually meet at the corner, down the block  
from here and uh, I became worried cause she's always spot on time  
and she didn't show up, so, I came here to make sure she was okay.

DARLA: We ran into a bit of trouble is all. She resting.

SAM: Oh.

DARLA: You'll have to come back another time...she's inflamed...you  
know about her condition?

(SAM nods)

DARLA (cont'd): Her lungs can completely shut down. I hear how she's breathing and coughing. She has inflammation the likes of which I ain't ever seen before. And by the looks of it, you're to blame!

SAM: I would never wish to hurt Kendra.

DARLA: Well, look at her. (DARLA steps away from the door frame) See that? She fainted. Can't keep up with a normal life. Some days just walking to the kitchen gives her trouble. What do you make of that?

SAM: Well, I know times can be hard---

DARLA: Hard? Let me tell you something boy, you ain't seen hard. You have no idea what it's like looking after Kendra. You think you could do a better job?

SAM: Oh, I, I...I don't know what to say.

DARLA: It's better you leave now and rethink what you been doing.

SAM: Um, Mrs.---

DARLA: Call me Darla.

SAM: Mrs. Darla, I didn't mean to get you upset.

(KENDRA stirs awake)

KENDRA: Momma?

(DARLA rushes to her side)

DARLA: You're alright darling, Momma's here.

KENDRA: I'm supposed to be meeting Sam.

(DARLA motions for SAM to leave)

DARLA: Sam? Oh, well I'm sure Sam can reschedule.

(KENDRA lifts up her head and notices SAM leaving)

KENDRA: SAM!!

(SAM turns and KENDRA rushes to him)

(KENDRA and SAM embrace)

SAM: I was worried. I'm sorry I came, but I--

KENDRA: No, I'm glad you came.

SAM: I think I should go and let you rest now.

KENDRA: NO, no, please, we'll get going.

DARLA: Kendra!

SAM: I don't think it's a good idea Kendra. I think you should stay and I guess we can always - perhaps, meet another time.

KENDRA: What if there isn't another time, Sam?

SAM: There will always---

DARLA: Sam, you need to leave.

KENDRA: Don't be so rude, Mom.

SAM: It's okay, your---

KENDRA: I'm feeling fine. Well I'm much better now that you're here.

DARLA: Now I told you that you're staying home tonight and that's final.

KENDRA: But Sam is already here!

DARLA: I don't give a damn! Sam, please leave this instant.

SAM: Kendra, let's listen to your mother. We'll make plans when you're feeling better.

KENDRA: But I feel fine!

SAM: I'll get going now, Darla...

(KENDRA watches Sam as he turns to exit.  
She watches him walk down the road)

KENDRA: ...Well I hope you're happy.

DARLA: You'll thank me later.

KENDRA: There might not be a later.

(KENDRA coughs)

Suffocate me, my whole life...suffocate me till there's nothing left...nothing left at all...

**CURTAIN**