

The Tears of My Sister

by Horton Foote

The Play: Originally written for live television, Foote's short play is seen through the eyes of Cecilia Monroe, a young lady living with her mother and older sister in a boardinghouse. For the live television production, Cecilia was only a voice and the camera served as Cecilia's eyes, moving among the actors as the character would. The story concerns Cecilia's sister, Bessie, who is promised to an older man with means, but loves another. Cecilia tells the audience her inner thoughts as the drama plays out.

Time and Place: Late summer, 1923. Harrison, Texas.

The Scene: Cecilia (a girl) is seated on the front porch of the boardinghouse. Bessie, Cecilia's older sister has just come onto the porch. Cecilia speaks to us.

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CECILIA: I swear, I think my sister Bessie is the prettiest thing on the face of this earth. Mama agrees with me. But Bessie just laughs when you tell her that.

[(Bessie smells the other rose and smiles to herself. She looks as if she knew some wonderful secret.)]

CECILIA: I swanny. My sister Bessie laughs at the drop of a hat. She laughed when she failed the sixth grade, she laughed when Mama couldn't afford to buy her a new dress for the dance last winter. Of course, she cried when our cat got poisoned and when Papa died two years ago. Why, she cried then like her heart would break and would never mend in this world.

[(A pause. Bessie walks up and down the porch strumming the uke.)]

CECILIA: Of course, I cried then and Mama did, goodness

knows. But not like Bessie. Bessie cried for six months. She still cries when you mention Papa's name. I don't know why she was cryin' last night though. Nobody mentioned Papa's name to her in the middle of the night, certainly. It's all very mysterious to me anyway. Mama has forbidden me to talk to her about Bessie's cryin' in the night this way or anything until supper time. Mama says I talk too much. *(She looks at Mr. Williford and then at Miss Sarah.)* I wish I could talk to someone about it. There's so much I don't understand. Mama says she puts it all down to happiness. I wish I could go along with that.

[(Bessie puts the uke down. She smells the roses.)]

CECILIA: Bessie ought to be happy. Certainly she's engaged to a lovely man and he's so rich you just can't imagine it. So maybe Bessie is cryin' for happiness. I don't know. Now you take me. I've got plenty to cry about if I put my mind to it. I'll be lucky. Mama says, to get any kind of a husband. Much less a rich one. Oh, well.

The Scene: Near the end of the play, Bessie has been asked to put a stop to her affections for the young Syd Carr and to marry Stacey Davis (an older man who could take care of the family and find a home). Crushed with the fate life has handed her, Bessie weeps in her room as her mother consoles her. In her room, which she shares with Bessie, Cecilia listens.

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CECILIA: Oh, I can't sleep. Mama and Bessie are in Mama's room. They've been talkin' for nearly two hours.

[(Bessie comes out of her mother's room. She looks at Cecilia's bed, decides she's asleep and walks across the room to her own bed. Mr. Williford can be heard snoring down the hall.)]

CECILIA: Now Mr. Williford has started his snorin' again. (*Cecilia sits up in bed and looks over at her sister in her bed. Bessie has her eyes closed.*) Now Bessie's in bed and not cryin' an' that puzzles me, because the way she was cryin' in Mama's room there for a while I thought she'd be cryin' all night.

[(We hear crying in the mother's room.)]

CECILIA: Now Mama's cryin'. She cries soft like Bessie, but I can hear her and somebody ought to go in to her. (*She gets up out of bed and goes over to Bessie's bed.*) Bessie? Bessie? Are you asleep? Mama's cryin', Bessie. Wake up, Mama's cryin'. And I'm cryin', Bessie, because I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared in this old boardinghouse with Mr. Williford snorin' every night and Papa dead and you cryin' and Mama cryin'...

The Trojan Women

by Euripides

The Play: Euripides fifth century B.C. tragedy set immediately after the fall of Troy, recounts the fate of Queen Hecuba, her daughters Cassandra and Polyxena, and Andromache, widow of the Trojan hero Hector, at the hands of their Greek captors.

Time and Place: Outside the walls of the fallen city of Troy, 1184 B.C.

The Scene: *Half-mad, Cassandra, who is to be taken as Agamemnon's concubine, prophesies that the indignity laid upon her will result in the fall of Agamemnon's house and great suffering for Odysseus. Note: See Hekabe and related Greek myths for a full appreciation of this work.*

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CASSANDRA: O Mother, crown my triumph with a wreath.
Be glad, for I am married to a king.
Send me to him, and if I shrink away,
drive me with violence. If Apollo lives,
my marriage shall be bloodier than Helen's.
Agamemnon, the great, the glorious lord of Greece—
I shall kill him, Mother, lay his house as low
as he laid ours, make him pay for all
he made my father suffer, brothers, and—
But no. I must not speak of that—that axe
which on my neck—on others' too—
nor of that murder of a mother.
All, all because he married me and so
pulled his own house down.
But I will show you. This town now, yes, Mother,
is happier than the Greeks. I know that I am mad,
but Mother, dearest, now, for this one time
I do not rave.