

Drawing Close

By Valerie Knight

Characters:

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler Ross, a psychiatrist, age 32. She is a small woman with a Swiss-German accent.

Carly, age 9, rambunctious, who vacillates between being a child and knowing what is before her.

Time: 1958

Place: A hospital room with a metal frame bed and worn Bedlam green walls. The room is dank and littered with fallen paper masks, rubber gloves, and a tray of half eaten food. On the bed are linens with assorted color food stains. A window is in the room and grayish sun shines through with a view of another building that is windowless.

At Rise: In the bed is a small figure, Carly, clutching a well-worn brown Pooh bear that is almost as big as she. The bear's head has been shaved and wrapped, mimicking the head of the small child in the bed. At start, the child, Carly, is clutching the bear tightly with her face turned towards the window. There is a screen behind Carly's bed that shows her thoughts of sun-filled experiences in her life, but will later show what she draws.

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross walks in—harried in a white coat which was required at the time. She is carrying crumpled paperwork, and a pack of Benson Hedges is falling out of the side pocket of the coat. She wears yellowed, oversized glasses. Once entering the room, a quiet settles over her as she takes in the condition of the room.

Elisabeth

Carly? (Carly doesn't turn to face Elisabeth,)

Carly

My doctor was already here in the morning.

Elisabeth

I know. Did you get another treatment?

Carly

No. My Dad said there wasn't going to be anymore treatments. (Carly turns to face E., but turns back from the pain.) Are you here to let me go home?

(At first, Elisabeth is confused by her statement. Home as in death, or home to her house. She decides on the latter interpretation).

Elisabeth

No, I just want to talk. You're the first one I am speaking with.

Carly

I don't want to talk.

Elisabeth

I just wanted to know how you feel about what you are experiencing.

(Carly shrugs. Elisabeth shuffles through her paperwork and lays them on the metal chair. She is looking for a clean piece of paper without writing and a box of crayons. She finds the paper and the crayons in between the various forms she has brought in. Carly turns to look with mild curiosity. The turn causes her pain, yet her voice remains strong.) I have these crayons...

Carly

Yeah?

Elisabeth

Would you like to draw something? (Carly shrugs. Elisabeth puts the paper on the bed tray and puts the half-eaten food tray on the nightstand.)

Carly

What do you want me to draw?

Elisabeth

Anything you like. Though I would like to know how you feel about what is happening to you.

Carly

That's stupid.

Elisabeth

What you feel is never stupid. It's...well, it's so important to know what you feel...and for someone, anyone to ...well, not judge what you are feeling.

Carly

Like you?

Elisabeth

Especially me.

Carly

I can draw anything?

Elisabeth

Yes. (Carly pulls the paper towards her. Elisabeth helps push the bed tray towards her. A moment elapses as Carly draws. Elisabeth is watching Carly's face. Lights on stage change. We see a projection of the finished drawing. Lights return to the previous setting. Elisabeth is holding the paper drawing.)

Elisabeth

This is beautiful. Is it your family?

Carly

Yes, my mom and dad.

Elisabeth

They're crying?

Carly

Yes. They cry all the time. Dad tries to hide it, but I know he is crying. It makes me sad.

Elisabeth

Sad?

Carly

Yes, they think I'm going away and leaving them.

Elisabeth

Where do they...?

Carly

They keep saying when I get home, they are going to put up the play tent and everything will be all right.

Elisabeth

Do you...do you think you are going to leave the hospital?

Carly

No, not the way I came.

Elisabeth

Tell me about the figure with the wings.

Carly

It's in a cage.

Elisabeth

Is it trapped?

Carly

For the time being.

Elisabeth

But it has wings. It can fly away, yes?

Carly

In a little while.

Elisabeth

Is that figure you? (Carly doesn't answer.) That figure is facing a great big sun. There's a lot of color in your drawing. It's bright.

Carly

Do YOU want to fly away?

Elisabeth

(Taken aback.) From here? Right now?

Carly

Yes.

Elisabeth

No....sometimes you just can't go home.

Carly

I'm not going back home.

Elisabeth

I want to know what it feels like...to...to fly.

Carly

Why?

Elisabeth

I'm doing research...uh, no, no just that. The truth is...because I was a triplet and I was the only one who left home.

Carly

What's a triplet?

Elisabeth

It means I have two sisters and we were all born at almost the same time.

Carly

That must have been fun. I mean, to have two sisters and not be so alone.

Elisabeth

It was, when we were children, but we were in touch infrequently after that.

Carly

Why?

Elisabeth

I'm not sure why, maybe because I went to volunteer in the war, against the wishes of my parents.

Carly

What did they want you to do?

Elisabeth

They wanted me to be a secretary, but I wanted to be a doctor.

Carly

Yeah, parents are hard.

Elisabeth

I wanted to find mystery. When I was born I was only two pounds, smaller than your bear there. When I was five, I was in the hospital too. I saw my roommate...fly away. It was like a big whoosh of wind had left her bed, then it was quiet and she flew out of the window.

Carly

So you know...

Elisabeth

...and then in Poland. I saw people who were the victims of the war. And then in Majdanek...

Carly

Maj...what?

Elisabeth

This was a place where they put people they felt shouldn't be on this earth. A lot of people died there. I remember the butterflies there. A lot of them on the wind...sparks of God flying away.

Carly

Was it o.k. for them to fly away?

Elisabeth

I don't think they had a choice, but, because they turned into butterflies, it helped us remember...

Carly

Butterflies are pretty. I would be a pretty one with red and gold on my wings—big too—so I could fly a long way. (Carly gets a distant look.)

I would fly over New York City and see all the skyscrapers there. And then I would land on our dog's nose and tickle him. (She giggles.) I would fly around my mom's head and land on her arm and give her a big kiss. Then, to my Dad. I would land on his hand, so he would know I was there. And then he wouldn't have to cover his eyes to hide the tears. (She stops and pulls her bear close.)

(Silence)

Elisabeth

They will miss you.

Carly

They have to stop crying. It's not sad.

Elisabeth

But that's the way they feel. Maybe...I could show them your picture, so they would know you are not so sad. (Elisabeth tries to gather her emotions.)

Carly

Are you going to cry?

Elisabeth

No...but I do feel sad.

Carly

It's not that bad. It won't hurt anymore. It's gonna feel good, like the sun on your skin when summer finally comes. Just think, I'll be flying around, kissing everybody, making them remember how pretty everything can be.

Elisabeth

Like a cocoon to a butterfly.

Carly

A what?

Elisabeth

A cocoon is this big wrapping—like the one on your head. It is so the baby butterfly can be protected while it grows.

Carly

So it's a baby in my head?

Elisabeth

Well, not exactly...

Carly (interrupting)

Yeah, there's a baby in my head. It keeps growing bigger and bigger and bigger, then...
(she yells) BOOM!

Elisabeth (laughing)

I suppose so. So this "baby" will soon turn into a butterfly--a beautiful red and gold one.

Carly

When you see me, flying around, you'll remember me, o.k.?

Elizabeth

O.K.

(Elizabeth embraces Carly. She gathers her forms and collects the crayons. Then she decides to leave them)

LIGHTS FADE

END OF PLAY