

**'Connie Baxter In Memoriam'**

by Chris Brake

Synopsis

A retiring soap star says goodbye to her character.

Age Range

50+

Gender

Female

Length

3 minutes

**THE SOAP STAR:**

They air my final scene next week.

The grand culmination of an eight-month plotline that peaks with yours truly snuffing it, followed by a long fade to black.

"We're resting the character", is what they said.

Gave me some guff about an open door, should I ever wish to waltz back in.

But Lazarus should be so lucky, the way they've seen me off.

Dragged half a mile down Blackpool sea-front when my hair-net clips the back of a tram.

Still, if I have to meet a grisly end at least it's one for the books.

"Iconic", is what the director said.

That was nice.

Wanted to keep my exit a secret they did, the Producers.

Thought it would leave the nation reeling.

But a local paparazzo from an evening rag clocked me with the double who was doing my stunts, so that was the cat out the bag.

I'd offered to hang off the tram myself, but the insurance

wouldn't stretch to indulge me.

Weren't over-keen to cover a post-menopausal with a history of lockjaw and gout.

I was rather hoping for a public outcry when news of my death hit the stands.

"National Treasure Being Buried"; something of that ilk.

But a minor royal was caught shoplifting Dettol that day, so his nibs hogged all the press.

I shall miss Connie Baxter when she's six feet under.

I dare say the public will as well.

But Connie, to me, she's a friend.

You come to love a character somewhat, once you've sat in their skin and coiffed their wig for thirty some-odd years.

I shall miss the morning routine most.

Donning a floral pinny over that trademark pussy-bow blouse.

Snapping on those marigolds and zhuzhing up me hair.

And sweeping that turquoise smear of shadow right across the lids of me eyes.

Then last thing on; the earrings.

Oh the earrings!

A nice pair of pink lacquer danglers to make the whole thing pop.

Then, I look in the mirror and 'Connie'.

She's there.

Then eight hours later she's gone.

That's the trouble with being a character.

Come 6pm you pack 'em up and stuff 'em in a drawer.

You can never take them home for a chat.

And then when it finally comes to an end, you just hang them up on a rack.

The crew held *me* a send off though, even if there were none for Connie.

Had a bijou gathering after we wrapped.

Nothing worthy of Gatsby, mind.

Just two bottles of Blue Nun split between thirty and a pyramid of garibaldis balanced on a salver.

The meaty end of three long decades, and that's all it amounts to.

A plastic cup and stack of biscuits.

I don't know what I shall do with myself now.

I suppose I'll take up retiree pursuits.

Weeding.

Wordle.

Having falls.

I expect I'll pop up on telly every so often.

A guest appearance on 'Blankety Blank' here.

Dredged up for a Channel Five doco there.

And people will say "'ere, isn't that her? The one who used to be in wotsitcalled? Bramley Crescent, that's it. You reckon those are still her real teeth? She's looks different in real life, don't she? Probably had something done".

Then eventually, of course, they'll come to forget.

And a new generation won't know me at all.

They never repeat the soaps.

That's the curse of our kind.

The soap star.

We tend to burn bright, but not long.

At least I've had a memorable death.

A bit of fodder for the water-cooler chat.

At least I can say they've given me that.

"Iconic", he said.

Iconic.