

PEEPS

ONE ACT COMEDY

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PEEPS

A One Act Comedy

SYNOPSIS

DONNIE puts up a clothes line and ignites unresolved conflicts.

TIME

Contemporary

LOCATION

Midland, TX; a mid-sized city in West Texas.

SETTINGS

PATIO – At the home of Karen and Donnie. Picnic table w/umbrella.

TRUDI'S DOOR / HALLWAY – an interior hallway.

NOTES

Two old men with moustaches dress as old women and portray Grandma Payne & Verna. Facebook pages will be laid to look like real pages with all comedic details.

CHARACTERS

ONSTAGE

KAREN – Age 40. Wife of Donnie. Mother of Trudi. Daughter of Grandma Payne. A Baptist. A real estate agent. Likes to get her way.

DONNIE – Age 40. Husband of Karen. Father of Trudi. A manager at a local mortuary. Wants to do the “right thing.”

GRANDMA PAYNE – Age 70 +/- . Wife of the late Harry. Mother of Karen and Alice. A Baptist now toying with spirituality and gurus.

VERNA SCHWAM – Grandma Payne's friend. A Baptist also toying with spirituality and gurus.

PRESTON O'DONNELL – 50's a Methodist minister. Former structural engineer. Dating Alice. Precise. Highly strung.

ALICE – 50's. Karen's older sister. Daughter of Grandma Payne. Dating Preston. An artist, creative, outgoing.

OFF STAGE

TRUDI – Age 13. Never seen, but always heard O.S. Daughter of Donnie and Karen.

(AT RISE.)

1 TRUDI BR SET / BOWLS SPOONS

(SEE TRUDI'S BEDROOM DOOR SET.
THE DOOR IS PLASTERED WITH
TEENAGE PHOTOS, SIGNS, TRUDI'S
NAME, ETC.)

(KAREN ENTERS S.R. CARRYING A
tray with bowls with spoons
and glasses. KAREN KNOCKS ON
TRUDI'S BEDROOM DOOR.)

KAREN:

Trudi?

(PAUSES. THEN KNOCKS 2ND TIME.)

KAREN:

Trudi!?

TRUDI: (O.S.)

What!?

KAREN:

I'm doing dishes... and I'm looking for bowls and spoons.
Do you have any?

(NO ANSWER.)

KAREN:

Trudi!

TRUDI: (O.S.)

No!

KAREN:

Tomorrow is recycling! Do you have any catalogs, cardboard,
plastic or cans in there?

(NO ANSWER.)

KAREN:

Trudi!

TRUDI: (O.S.)

No!

KAREN:
(sweetly)

Thank you!

(KAREN EXITS TRUDI SET.)

(TRUDI'S DOOR opens slightly
and pile after pile of bowls
and spoons of assorted sizes
are pushed out of door. DOOR
IS QUICKLY SHUT.)

(DOOR then opens and several
pizza boxes, a stack of
catalogs, weight-watcher soda
cans and 2-liter bottles are
shoved out. DOOR SLAMS.)

(BLACKOUT ON TRUDI DOOR SET.)

2 PATIO SET / ENTER DONNIE

(DONNIE ENTERS PATIO SET,
loosening his tie and removing
his jacket.)

3 PS: BROADCAST TEXT: BOWLS

(TRUDI TEXT MESSAGE APPEARS ON
PROJECTION SCREEN:)

("Fnd sum bowls n stuff 4 U.
Trudi ;>")

(DONNIE is talking into cell
phone. Pacing as he talks.)

DONNIE:
(on cell phone)
The grave side memorial service was a FIASCO!

(DONNIE puts a laptop on the
patio table.)

DONNIE:
(pause)
Let's just say we had a BIRD MAL-FUNCTION.
(MORE)

DONNIE: (CONT'D)

(pause)

But it might have been expected since the client belonged to the "Henny Penny Sorority", a group of 60 year old women chicken fanciers and bird lovers, and it was THEIR service.

(Drapes jacket on chair.)

DONNIE: (CONT'D)

(a beat)

That's right. Yeah, Preston O'Donnell, the Methodist preacher

(a beat)

That's right, the same one that SCREWED UP my father-in-law's funeral! Today it was ME that played "gotcha" and gave him a little, harmless pay-back.

(a beat)

I got the crew to dig the grave, set up the larger tent. There were 20 women there with head bands filled with dyed chicken feathers. That's right. Apparently one for every year of membership. It was hard to keep a straight face. No, O'Donnell didn't laugh. He did okay, followed their order of service. At one point they released a white dove to symbolize the soul of the dear departed "Henny Penny" member flying upward into heaven.

(a beat)

The bird took one lap around the tent and landed on the coffin looking for birdseed. O'Donnell didn't know WHAT to do. I whispered to him: "There's one that didn't make it!"

(a beat)

I could see him gnawing on the inside of his cheeks to keep from busting out laughing. The Henny Pennies never knew a THING. I'm sorry. I couldn't help it. Yeah. Pretty funny, right? He shot me a VERY black look when we parted, but it was NO BIG DEAL!

(a beat)

Everything's in the back of the hearse at the shop. See you Monday.

(DONNIE hangs up the phone.)

4 PATIO SET / CLOTHESLINE INTRO

(KAREN ENTERS PATIO SET with BRIEFCASE, GYM BAG and CORDLESS PHONE. CROSS to TABLE.)

(DONNIE opens laptop. KAREN puts cordless telephone on the table.)

KAREN:
(in a hurry)
Honey... how'd the funeral go?

DONNIE:
It was a disaster... O'Donnell again.

KAREN:
Oh, no! Not O'Donnell! After what he did at my FATHER'S funeral! He should be whipped. That man's a MENACE! He embarrassed my mother so much that she's left the Baptist church!

DONNIE:
I know. But, I gave him some payback.

(KAREN FREEZES and DONNIE steps out to address the audience.)

DONNIE:
(to audience)
There has ALWAYS been a disagreement in this family about churches. Grandpa Harry Payne was a life-long Methodist. Grandma Payne, a Baptist. Grandma had Harry's funeral at HER church, but asked the Methodist minister, Rev. O'Donnell, to say a few words at the service. Now, the two daughters, KAREN, whom you see here; and Alice whom you'll meet later, split their church affiliation. Karen attends the Baptist church like her mother. Alice attends the Methodist church like her father.

(KAREN UNFREEZES and DONNIE drops back into character.)

KAREN:
I've got an Open House.

DONNIE:
I'm going to start on chores in a minute.

KAREN:
I've been thinking that we should do our part to reduce our carbon footprint and save money, so I'd like us to put up a clothes line.

DONNIE:
Clothes line? Okay. That sounds simple enough.

KAREN:
I be back after the Open House, okay?

DONNIE:

Okay.

KAREN:

Oh, and don't forget to clean Trudi's room. It NEEDS it, BAD!

(KAREN gives DONNIE a quick peck on the cheek and EXITS.)

DONNIE:

(to audience)

It sounds simple, doesn't it? It always does. Clothes line. Can't get much simpler than "clothes line", can it? Two posts. One line. Clothes line.

(a beat)

I've got plenty of time. So, I'll check our Peeps on Facebook and see what's shakin'.

(DONNIE opens laptop but continues to stand and he DOES NOT SIT.)

*

(PROJECTION SCREEN (PS) comes to life. This may be REAR SCREEN PROJECTION. It may also be LIVE ACTION and linked to DONNIE'S COMPUTER or PRE-RECORDED.)

(IMAGES ARE SEEN on LARGE SCREEN AND APPEAR TO BE FROM DONNIE'S COMPUTER.)

5 PS: BROADCAST TEXT MESSAGE / TRUDI - MORNING

DONNIE:

The modern family, in touch at ALL times... in all ways!

(TRUDI TEXT MESSAGE APPEARS ON PROJECTION SCREEN:)

("Can Ferret have a soda?")

DONNIE:

Can Ferret have a soda?

(DONNIE types a response which appears on screen: "No.")

DONNIE:

No.

6 PROJECTION SCREEN (PS): DONNIE'S FB OPEN PAGE

DONNIE:

Facebook... just the thing for checking up on my Peeps.
Here's my page...

(SEE NOTES FOR DETAILS.)

(STATUS:)

(FRIENDS, SEE 5 friends: VERNA SCHWAM, EDNA PAYNE, KATHY PAYNE-TRUSDALE, DONNIE TRUSDALE, TRUDI TRUSDALE.)

7 PS: KAREN FB PAGE

DONNIE:

Karen's page... and there's the open house...

(SEE NOTES FOR DETAILS.)

*(STATUS: "Open House Today!
2955 Orthowood Drive")*

(350 FRIENDS: VERNA SCHWAM, EDNA PAYNE, DONNIE TRUSDALE, TRUDI TRUSDALE, DEREK DOBBS)

8 PS: TRUDI FB PAGE - MOMENTS LATER

DONNIE:

(reading)

Trudi's page... "One week until summer vacation. Tell me something you have been meaning to tell me."

(SEE NOTES FOR DETAILS.)

(STATUS: "One week until summer vacation. Tell me something you have been meaning to tell me.")

(FRIEND REPLY: "I saved your life the other day.")

DONNIE:

And a friend replies... "I saved your life the other day."

(TRUDI REPLY: "When? How?")

DONNIE:

Then Trudi replies, "When? How?"

(FRIENDS: More than 250 friends.)

DONNIE:

These kids sure like their electronic gizmos, don't they?
I'll check Karen's mother's page... Grandma Payne.

9 PS: GRANDMA PAYNE FB PAGE

DONNIE:

Grandma Payne's page...

(SEE NOTES FOR DETAILS.)

(STATUS: "My beloved Harry
contacted me from the spiritual
world last night. He says his
boat is for sale.")

(FRIENDS, SEE 5 friends: PRESTON
PAYNE, VERNA SCHWAM, KAREN
PAYNE-TRUSDALE, DONNIE TRUSDALE,
TRUDI TRUSDALE.)

DONNIE:

Oh, look! Grandpa Harry contacted Grandma from the spiritual
world last night! I'll have to hear more about this... Let's
see what Karen's sister Alice says on her page...?

10 PS: ALICE PAYNE FB PAGE

DONNIE:

Alice's page... look at all the wild, modern art! She's
quite art aficionado, is our Alice.

(SEE NOTES FOR DETAILS.)

(STATUS: " ")

(FRIENDS, SEE 5 friends: VERNA
SCHWAM, EDNA PAYNE, KAREN PAYNE-
TRUSDALE, DONNIE TRUSDALE,
TRUDI TRUSDALE.)

(AUDIO: Skype fx.)

DONNIE:

And, speaking of Peeps, here's a Skype call from Grandma Payne!

(a beat)

Hello Grandma Payne.

11 PS: GRANDMA PAYNE AND VERNA 2-SHOT

(PROJECTED IMAGE IN SKYPE SCREEN: two shot of GRANDMA PAYNE and VERNA SCHWAM. GRANDMA PAYNE is dressed in a bright ORANGE SARI dress. VERNA has no special outfit, is dressed as an old woman.)

12 SKETCH: GRANDMA PAYNE AND VERNA SCHWAM

(FADE PS IMAGE DOWN AS LIGHTS UP ON SET: GRANDMA PAYNE AND VERNA SCHWAM sit in front of an exceptionally large lap top computer screen.)

(DONNIE stands by his laptop at table.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:

You'd better sit down Donnie.

DONNIE:

(sitting)

What? Revelation from the spiritual world?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Your video cam is aimed at your crotch.

(DONNIE sits and repositions camera)

DONNIE:

Hi Verna.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Hello Donnie!

DONNIE:

How was the Mind, Body & Spirit convention in Lubbock.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Four hours and fifteen minutes of good ol' Baptist preaching up boring Interstate 27 and four hours and fifteen minutes of CD's of gurus and spiritual insights on the way back. Verna wanted to listen to the Grateful Dead channel!

VERNA SCHWAM:

That's inspiring... to me!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

The convention was VERY spiritual! Very uplifting! What did you think, Verna?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Spirituality is so much more cosmopolitan in Lubbock! "Bright lights, big city... go to my baby's head!"

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Sin city some say. I wanted to hear ALL the GURU workshops.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Donnie, it's not at all like Baptist Sunday school, is it?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

NOT like Sunday School at all!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Gurus are NOT like Mr. Ed our Sunday School teacher (gesturing) PEERING over his glasses and quoting chapter and verse.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(Waggles finger) And waggling his finger!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Why at the workshops you get to DO things, don'tcha?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

That's right...

VERNA SCHWAM:

Try things out for YOURSELF!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

That's right. Nothing BORES me more than plodding through the returgical calendar week after week! Bore-ing!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Oh, I know what you mean, dear!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

It's such a breath of fresh air to PLAY with the spiritual world!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Oh, I KNOW what you mean!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

So many MORE gurus to choose from this year.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Did you think so?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Oh, yes, dear. There were WAY MORE gurus this year!

DONNIE:

Why would that be?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Maybe it's a trade imbalance they're always talking about. We're exporting JOBS, they're sending us all their gurus.

VERNA SCHWAM:

You could be right. I thought maybe gurus RIPENED... you know, like fruits or nuts?

DONNIE:

Well, there were fruits, nuts and squirrely ideas, that's for sure. What would gurus ripen INTO?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Not Baptists?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

No. I don't think gurus ripen into Baptists. Evangelists, maybe.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Methodists?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Oh no! NOT Methodists! Methodists would have no earthly idea WHAT to DO with a guru! Although I think Methodists want to BE gurus.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Catholics?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

But, the Pope's AUSTRIAN.

VERNA SCHWAM:

So is Arnold Schwarzenegger.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Can't imagine a guru in leiderhosen.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Israelis?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Ummm

(a beat)

PentaCOASTALS?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Thems that handle snakes and talks in tongues?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Yes. Gurus COULD ripen into Pentacoastals.

VERNA SCHWAM:

I know! Jehovah's Witnesses!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Oooh! I had an Uncle that was Jehovah's Witness! He was an old bachelor. He smelled like he was OVER RIPE if you ask me!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Or a MORMONS!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Maybe Mr. Ed's our Sunday School teacher will ripen from a Baptist into a guru?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Ewww! I don't think I'd like Ed for MY guru! He can't grow a big handlebar moustache.

DONNIE:

So, what did you buy at the exhibition?

VERNA SCHWAM:

You know my memory has been slipping a bit.

DONNIE:

Well, maybe a little...

VERNA SCHWAM:

So, I bought a SPIRITUAL DEVICE guaranteed to sharpen my mind.

(VERNA SCHWAM reaches under the bench for pyramid shaped cardboard piece (3 sides cut from the corner of a cardboard box) which has been brightly painted red. She puts it on as a PYRAMID HAT.)

VERNA SCHWAM:
(Putting it on) It's a pyramid thought focuser.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
You're not going to believe this...

(GRANDMA PAYNE reaches under the bench and pulls out a bright yellow PYRAMID HAT.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:
I got one too!

DONNIE:
PYRAMID POWER!

VERNA SCHWAM:
The Ancient Egyptians used to put pyramids over their razor blades to keep 'em sharp? I can feel it sharpening my brain cells already! I'm having lofty thoughts!

GRANDMA PAYNE:
It's boosting my I.Q.... My INTELLIGENCE QUAGMIRE! And, it keeps my Lady Bic sharp!

DONNIE:
No one can call you dim wits since your trip to Lubbock, that's for sure.
(a beat)
What else did you get?

VERNA SCHWAM:
(Removing pamphlet from bag) I bought a pamphlet on ASTRAL TRAVEL and the SACRED NAP.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Oooh! SACRED NAP! I like a nice nap!

VERNA SCHWAM:
And, Astral travel!

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Is Astral travel something that happens at the airport? Like an extended BUTT-FEEL by those nice TSA agents?

VERNA SCHWAM:

No, dear. ASTRAL, means the starry world, not your butt!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

That's too bad, I like those new TSA pat-down regulations. I put thimbles and things in my bra to make it more interesting.

(a beat)

I also bought a pamphlet on communicating with the dead.

DONNIE:

How's that working out for you? You said you contacted Harry?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Yes, Harry has communicated with me! I'll tell you all about it when we come over.

DONNIE:

Doesn't sound like good Baptist theology. So you're not going to the Baptist church any longer?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

No, Donnie I'm not and Verna isn't either.

VERNA SCHWAM:

No, I'm not. We're expanding our consciousness. My guru has Thursday KARMA BINGO.

DONNIE:

Karma Bingo, what's that?

VERNA SCHWAM:

It's like regular bingo except you don't get your prize until your next lifetime. Prizes are things like being reincarnated as the Queen of England.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Don't know if I'd like that. I like to take my prizes home with me.

VERNA SCHWAM:

But these are REALLY NICE prizes. So far, I'm going to be a Rock star in my next lifetime. I've even got the address in Beverly Hills where I'm going to live. I'm thinking about going to California my next vacation so's I can measure for new drapes.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

You figger your guru's THAT spot on so that he can tell you WHO and WHERE you'll reincarnate NEXT time?

VERNA SCHWAM:

I don't see why not. He's VERY intuitive and he channels a lot of spiritual big wheels. He told me who I was LAST incarnation, why wouldn't he be able to tell me who I'll be NEXT incarnation?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Who did he say you were last time?

VERNA SCHWAM:

(Proudly) Mary MAGDALENE.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Well, there you go! That's silly bosh! You couldn't have been Mary Magdalene in your last incarnation!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Why not?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Because MY guru told ME I WAS Mary Magdalene!

VERNA SCHWAM:

You couldn't have been Mary Magdalene...!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

And why not?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Because of the spiritual principle of REVERSAL!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Wot do you mean by that?

VERNA SCHWAM:

If you was a woman last time, like a Mary Magdalene, you would be reincarnated THIS TIME in REVERSE... as a MAN!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Well, so would YOU!

VERNA SCHWAM:

In certain cases there are EXCEPTIONS! Which happens to be ME!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Well, lah-dee-dah! Aren't YOU special, then!?

DONNIE:

Ladies, don't argue...

GRANDMA PAYNE:

I think your guru's wrong.

VERNA SCHWAM:

He's not wrong. YOUR guru is wrong.

DONNIE:

Ladies, c'mon.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Is not.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Is.

DONNIE:

So, how long's you been going to your guru, Verna?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Been goin' to him for 3 weeks now!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

You're just a NEWBEE, and I've ALREADY gotten ELEVATED! *

DONNIE:

Elevated to what?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Elevated to the very exclusive ORANGE SARI CLUB!

(preening a bit)

See my SARI, Donnie?

DONNIE:

Yes, I do. It's very nice. Congratulations.

VERNA SCHWAM:

And what does the Orange Sari Club MEAN?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(prissing)

It means I'm a member of a very EXCLUSIVE club and ORANGE
YOU SORRY?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Haha. Very funny.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(excited)

But, Donnie! My THIRD EYE is opening... (points) See?

VERNA SCHWAM:

(Peering at her forehead) Is NOT.

Is. GRANDMA PAYNE:

Not. VERNA SCHWAM:

IS! GRANDMA PAYNE:

VERNA SCHWAM:
I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, dear, but that's a zit! A giant, humongous zit. With a bit white head!

It's not a zit! GRANDMA PAYNE:

'Tis. VERNA SCHWAM:

'Tisn't. GRANDMA PAYNE:

'Tis. VERNA SCHWAM:

'Tisn't. GRANDMA PAYNE:

C'mon, girls... DONNIE:

VERNA SCHWAM:
(Confidently) I know we've had our differences in the past, dear. But you can trust me on this one! It's a BIG pimple! With a big white head! (Digging in purse) I've got some Noxzema that'll clear that right up.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
(Confidently) That's just how it looks before the thousand petaled lotus flower emerges!

VERNA SCHWAM:
(Handing her the Noxzema) Well, Noxzema will help it emerge, I'm sure. If your thousand petaled lotus flower is emerging, that must mean that you're ENLIGHTENED!

GRANDMA PAYNE:
I'm not surprised. Did I tell you what MY guru told me the other day.

VERNA SCHWAM:
No. What did your guru tell you?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

He told me that HE'S the reincarnation of the CHRIST!

VERNA SCHWAM:

NO WAY!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

That's what he said!

VERNA SCHWAM:

My turn to correct YOU, dear! Because MY guru said that HE'S the reincarnation of the CHRIST!

(They sit quietly for a long moment.)

DONNIE:

Well, how about that? That's a shocker, isn't it?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Dear, I don't know what to say.

VERNA SCHWAM:

No, there's not much to say, is there! Except ONE of our gurus is LYING! (Points to forehead) Blimy! Your zit has gone beet red!

*(A long, uncomfortable pause.
A line has been crossed.)*

DONNIE:

I've got some work to do... want to come over later and tell me about Grandpa Harry?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(Sigh) Yes, that would be nice.

DONNIE:

Want to come for tea, Verna?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Now that we're not tea-totallers any more, I think I'd like something a bit stronger.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Oooo! I have a bottle of French... what do you call it, Donnie? That the bubbly white wine... CHANDELIER!

DONNIE:

I know what you mean.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

We'll come over later and have chandelier and I'll bring my dearly departed Harry's ashes.

(tearing up)

I need you to help me figure out what to do with them... that okay, Donnie?

DONNIE:

Sure, Grandma Payne. We'll drink some chandelier and figure out what to do with Harry.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Peace on you, Donnie!

13 PS: END GRANDMA/VERNA SKETCH

(LIGHTS DOWN ON SKETCH SET.)

(PROJECTION SCREEN UP WITH 2 SHOT OF THE TWO DEARS.)

DONNIE:

Peace on you too, Grandma. See you later. Bye-bye.

(DONNIE disconnects SKYPE.
PROJECTION SCREEN GOES TO
DONNIE'S FB PAGE)

(AUDIO: telephone rings on the
PATIO.)

14 REV. O'DONNELL PHONE CALL

(DONNIE checks CALLER I.D.
answers phone.)

DONNIE:

Reverend O'Donnell. I was just about to call you!

PRESTON: (O.S.)

Donnie? I wonder if I can stop by for a few minutes to talk about what happened this morning?

DONNIE:

Sure, that would be fine.

PRESTON: (O.S.)

A little later?

Fine.

DONNIE:

See you then.

PRESTON: (O.S.)

*(AUDIO: telephone disconnect.
DONNIE hangs up telephone.)*

15 PS: BROADCAST TEXT MESSAGE / KAREN HOW'S THE CLOTHESLINE
COMING ALONG?

*(KAREN sends DONNIE a text
message which appears on the
PROJECTION SCREEN.)*

*("How's the clothes line coming
along? - Karen")*

16 PS: BROADCAST TEXT MESSAGE / DONNIE RESPONSE

Oh, yeah! How's the clothes line coming along?

DONNIE:

*(DONNIE TYPES a text message
which appears on PROJECTION
SCREEN.)*

("Fine.")

Fine, just fine. Thank God these things aren't VIDEO!

DONNIE:

*(DONNIE closes computer and
stands up.)*

17 DONNIE / CLOTHES LINE

Oh, yeah! Clothes line! What a simple project. Takes no
time at all.

DONNIE:

(PANTOMIME.)

I went to the home center...

DONNIE:

(DONNIE crosses the stage and brings from wings two posts which can firmly affix into stage floor.)

DONNIE:

(setting up posts)

They even make a clothes line brace for the cross-members, a coupla bags of concrete, and... clothes line rope. Don't forget the rope! A very simple "honey do" project for a guy like me. So, I picked the sunniest spot so the clothes would dry quickly.

(PANTOMIME pacing off the site.)

DONNIE:

Measured it out. Stepped it off.

(POSITIONS posts on either side of the stage.)

DONNIE:

Dug the holes. Planted the posts.

(Take plumb-bob to make sure they are correct.)

(AUDIO: portable phone rings. DONNIE ignores it. It rings four times and then stops.)

DONNIE:

Made sure they were per-pen-dicular... want 'em to look nice in our back yard! Cemented them in. When the cross members go on, and the rope, then: viola! Clothes line!

(DONNIE crosses to patio table and sits, admiring his work.)

DONNIE:

Simple, elegant in design. And, I was done quickly!

18 PS: BROADCAST TEXT MESSAGE TRUDI: "LIKE THE PILLARS"

(AUDIO: FX INCOMING TEXT)

(TEXT MESSAGE FROM TRUDI: "Cool pillars, Dad!")

DONNIE:
Well, it's got Trudi's approval.
(reading)
Cool pillars, Dad.

19 PS: DONNIE'S POST REPLY

(DONNIE SENDS A REPLY: "They R posts, not pillars.")

DONNIE:
They... are... posts... not... pillars.

20 PS: BROADCAST TEXT / TRUDI PILGRIM

(AUDIO FX INCOMING TEXT)

(TEXT FROM TRUDI: "The Pilgrims tied people 2 posts when they flogged them. Who is gonna get flogged?")

DONNIE:
What's this? "The Pilgrims tied people to posts when they FLOGGED them? Who is gonna get flogged?"

21 PS: BROADCAST TEXT / DONNIE'S WHIPPING REPLY

(TEXT FROM Donnie: "Hahahahahah!")

DONNIE:
Hahahahahahah!

(Picks up telephone.)

DONNIE:
(a beat)
I'll check the phone message.

(DONNIE listens to the message and presses phone button.)

DONNIE:
Ooh, ooh!

(DONNIE stands up... a look of importance crosses his face.)

DONNIE:
 (excited)
 A call for Trudi! From a boy!

(DONNIE EXITS PATIO SET.)

22 DAVID CALLS TRUDI

(LIGHTS UP on TRUDI'S DOOR SET.
 DONNIE ENTERS.)

DONNIE:
 (knocks on door)
 Trudi?

(No answer.)

(DONNIE knocks 2nd time.)

DONNIE:
 (louder)
 Trudi!?

TRUDI: (O.S.)
 What!?

DONNIE:
 There was a mumbled message on the answering machine from
 some boy whose name sounded like David.

TRUDI: (O.S.)
 (incredulous)
 What?

DONNIE:
 David... I think that's what he mumbled.

TRUDI: (O.S.)
 (amazed)
 David?!

DONNIE:
 Yes. I think so.

TRUDI: (O.S.)
 You THINK so?! David!? David left a message on our answering
 machine?

DONNIE:
 That's right.

(DONNIE replays the message on the phone.)

TRUDI: (O.S.)
(suspiciously)
You didn't listen to it, did you?

DONNIE:
Of course I listened to it! How do you think I got the message?

TRUDI: (O.S.)
(angrily)
That's my PRIVATE message!

DONNIE:
Well, I had to listen to it. Don't worry he sounded nervous, he mumbled. I'm not very sure about what he said.

TRUDI: (O.S.)
And he said...!?

DONNIE:
I'm listening again... he mumbled something that sounded like dance... I think.

TRUDI: (O.S.)
Dance!
(to herself)
Yesssss!

DONNIE:
I think so. And then he mumbled a phone number. I didn't get it . . .

TRUDI: (O.S.)
Ohmygawd, DA-DDY! You DIDN'T get his phone number!?

DONNIE:
He MUMBLED! What's his last name, we can look it up?

TRUDI: (O.S.)
(sobbing)
His last name? How should I KNOW?!

DONNIE:
Well, call your friends!

TRUDI: (O.S.)
And ADMIT I don't know?!

DONNIE:

Well, it's up to you...!

*(DONNIE turns to leave and EXITS
TRUDI BR SET.)*

TRUDI: (O.S.)

How could you do this, Daddy? Good grief! Parents are so
TECHNOLOGICALLY STUPID! GIVE ME THE PHONE!

*(DONNIE sets phone on floor
near TRUDI BR DOOR, turns and
EXITS.)*

23 ENTER PRESTON O'DONNELL

*(DONNIE ENTERS PATIO SET.
PRESTON enters and is looking
at clothes line posts.)*

DONNIE:

(to AUDIENCE as he
walks back to PATIO)

Well, I had to admit that she was pretty much right. Parents
are usually NOT high tech.

(proudly)

So, I took comfort in the fact that I THOUGHT I was WAY MORE
technologically competent than my wife or her sister Alice.

(a beat)

Hi, Preston!

PRESTON:

Donnie...

24 PRESTON CLOTHESLINE COMMENT

PRESTON
(walking to the
spot)

Wow, look at this. I'm impressed!

(Looking over very closely.)

PRESTON:

How'd you pick this spot?

DONNIE:

Oh, geez... I dunno? Sunshine?

PRESTON:

Not everybody thinks with precision, Donnie. Men like you and I think with precision. Women think with, well I don't know what women think with.

DONNIE:

Maybe creativity?

PRESTON:

Whatever, there IS a difference. Well, siting something is important... but it with the right kind of thinking, it seems like a simple decision, doesn't it?

DONNIE:

It IS a simple decision. A clothes line requires sunshine! I know where the sun shines... so I got the posts, the concrete, the cross-members, and...

(gesturing with
rope)

The rope! And, voila!

PRESTON:

Yes, voila! That's French for "magnificent"!

*(PRESTON looks up as if he's
gauging the sun.)*

PRESTON:

(pointing)

It's very, very perpendicular. Even from over there. Very precise.

*(DONNIE walks over THERE and
looks around. Then he walks
over HERE.)*

DONNIE:

Creates a sense of more space HERE.

PRESTON:

But, when you consider the fence line, the roof line, the trees, the shrubs, the plantings, the flower beds, the patio... it's just WELL PLACED.

DONNIE:

Thank you.

PRESTON:

Two simple posts.

DONNIE:

Simple and elegant. It's classic!

PRESTON:

I'll say!

(a beat)

What I came over for was to try to fix this blunder I made a few weeks ago at your father-in-law's funeral.

*(They walk to DONNIE's LAPTOP
on the patio table.)*

25 DONNIE / PRESTON

DONNIE:

Let me apologize for the sarcasm this morning.

*(DONNIE opens his computer and
turns it on.)*

PRESTON:

It was a "gotch", I know. But, there have to be rules of behavior in such professional circumstances. Clear lines of authority. Clear lines of communication. Straight forward and clear. Like a clothes line. Otherwise, I can't trust you. *

DONNIE:

I know.

PRESTON:

You work for one of the oldest and largest funeral homes in Midland. I have to be able to trust you AND the company. I want us to be able to trust each other and work as a TEAM.

DONNIE:

That would be good.

PRESTON:

I realize this morning was a little pay-back for my earlier HUGE mistake at Harry's funeral.

DONNIE:

Yes a little.

PRESTON:

I thought so. I hope we can clear the air and start anew. Can we do that?

DONNIE:

Yes. No hard feelings.

PRESTON:

Thanks.

DONNIE:

Since you and Alice are dating, you should know that Alice is more like her father... a Methodist. Karen is more like her mother, a staunch Baptist. So, because your mistake happened in the most sacred part of the Baptist church, Grandma Payne and Karen feel it most strongly.

(little giggle)

You'll just have to talk to them. I mean, I PERSONALLY have stopped laughing when I think about the tragedy.

(snicker)

PRESTON:

You call it "the tragedy"?

DONNIE:

Yes. And I assure you, I've stopped

(snicker)

Really. It's NOT funny to me anymore.

(chortle)

I don't even snicker. I don't grin. Or, laugh aloud anymore when I think about how you made...

(ha)

That teeny, tiny, but VERY TRAGIC mistake.

(haha)

PRESTON

Which ANYONE could have made.

DONNIE:

But, in my 20 years of working in the funeral business, I've never seen ANYTHING like it. It was a whopper! Like they say in basketball, if you're going to make a foul, make a GOOD one!

(snicker)

And you sure did. But, I don't think anything about it. It's gone! Put 'er there, Preston.

(They shake hands.)

DONNIE:

What's done is done. Water under the bridge...

(snicker)

I'm sorry, can I use the word "water"?

(chortle)

PRESTON:

I don't object.

DONNIE:

Why don't you sit a while?

(more snickering
build)

PRESTON:

Thanks. Alice invited me over for tea... but I wanted to come early and clear up this uncomfortableness between us.

DONNIE:

Oh, I see.

(chuckle)

Of course. Well, I'm afraid it's going to get even MORE UNCOMFORTABLE

(hahahaha)

Because my MOTHER IN LAW

(hooheee!)

Will be here shortly with her friend VERNA.

(hahahahahahaha)

I don't think you are aware that Grandma Payne

(stifle)

Has left the Baptist church

(giggle)

Because of the EMBARRASSMENT you caused her.

(hahahaha)

PRESTON:

No, I wasn't! And, she's a life-long Baptist, isn't she?

DONNIE:

(barely able to speak)

Yes...!

(a beat)

And, she's turned to drinking!

(hahahahaha)

PRESTON:

As a result of MY mistake?

DONNIE:

I believe so.

(chortle)

PRESTON:

Oh, my!

DONNIE:

And, she may have left the church entirely and fallen in with some new age CULT!

(hehehehehe)

Wears pyramid hats!

PRESTON:

NO! REALLY?!

DONNIE:

She swears her husband speaks to her from the spiritual world!
(giggle)
She carries his ashes around in an urn!
(hoo ha)

PRESTON:

Harry speaks to her and she hears him?

DONNIE:

(trying mightily)

Yesssss!

(guffaw)

And, he talks about you! A lot!

PRESTON:

Talks about me? Oh, my.

(DONNIE gains control of himself.)

DONNIE:

Aren't you a bit old to be a student preacher?
(snicker)

PRESTON:

I received a calling! I was successful in my career as an engineer.

DONNIE:

An engineer, eh? You know the difference between an introverted engineer and an extroverted engineer?

PRESTON:

No.

DONNIE:

The introverted engineer stares at his feet. The extroverted engineer stares at your feet.

PRESTON:

I'm not very good with jokes. I don't know how someone can laugh at the pain of another.

DONNIE:

I know what you mean. Engineers are not funny.

PRESTON:

Engineering is a SCIENCE.

DONNIE:

(giggle)

What kind of engineer were you?

*

PRESTON:

Structural... Water, sewer, public utilities... those things.

DONNIE:

Y'know, when God designed the human body he showed it to several engineers for their comments. The electrical engineer said that his engineering portion was most important, the brain being like a computer. Then the mechanical engineer said that his engineering task was most important because the heart is the most perfect machine. But it was the structural engineer who commented, "That this is the most flawed project I've ever seen." God was very concerned and asked him why? "Well," he says, "they put the sewer pipe through the playground!"

(hahahah a beat)

PRESTON:

Excuse me?

DONNIE:

Too bad you weren't a martial arts instructor. That would'a come in handy when you see Grandma Payne and Alice together.

PRESTON:

They're combative? You think Alice's mother is still very upset?

DONNIE:

Way upset. Got any body armor? A hard hat from your engineering days?

PRESTON:

Maybe I'll leave now and then come back when Alice is here.

DONNIE:

That might be a good idea. I have some more chores to do before Grandma Payne shows up.

PRESTON:

(standing to EXIT)

I'll be back later.

(looks at posts)

As an engineer... I will vouch that those are REALLY great lookin' posts! Really nice.

(PRESTON EXITS.)

26 PS: TEXT MESSAGE / DON'T DO CLOTHESLINE YET

(KAREN sends text message which appears on PROJECTION SCREEN.)

(AUDIO: FX FOR TEXT ARRIVAL)

("Don't do clothesline yet...I
have some things to show you!
Have you cleaned Trudi's room? -
Karen")

DONNIE:

Oh, crap! Busy day with the Peeps... I've got Grandma Payne and Verna coming over to drink champagne. Got the clothes line almost completed. Karen is at an open house. Alice will be over to have tea with Preston O'Donnell. I've got to clean Trudi's room.

27 CLEANING TRUDI'S ROOM.

(DONNIE crosses to TRUDI'S DOOR
carrying a rake, two black plastic
trash bags and gloves.)

DONNIE:

(knocking on door)

Trudi?

(NO ANSWER.)

(DONNIE KNOCKS 2nd TIME.)

DONNIE:

(putting on gloves)

Trudi!?

TRUDI: (O.S.)

What!?

DONNIE:

Let me in.

(no answer)

Time to clean your room.

(A beat)

Trudi!?

TRUDI: (O.S.)

What!'

DONNIE:

Let me in Trudi!

TRUDI: (O.S.)

I'm busy.

TRUDI: (O.S.)

No-o-o-o-o-o! Those are my clean clothes.

DONNIE: (O.S.)

Where do you keep the dirty clothes?

(NO ANSWER.)

TRUDI: (O.S.)

I was gonna do 'em...!

(DONNIE EXITS TRUDI'S ROOM with two black plastic bags. He also has portable phone.)

(DONNIE EXITS TRUDI ROOM SET.)

28 ENTER GRANDMA PAYNE & VERNA

(GRANDMA PAYNE ENTERS PATIO SET carrying UNCLE HARRY'S ASHES in a large, gaudy urn)

(VERNA ENTERS PATIO SET carrying a bottle of champagne and two fluted glasses.)

(GRANDMA PAYNE and VERNA wear their Pyramid Hats. They sit at the table.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Now that I've found a way to communicate with Harry, I can't get him to SHUT UP!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Have you asked him what it would take to get him to stop chattering on? Maybe you can BRIBE him!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

No! What a good idea!

(pausing in prayer)

Harry! What will it take to get you to STOP chattering on?

(GRANDMA PAYNE and VERNA sit in silence for a moment.)

VERNA SCHWAM:

Well?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
(putting her head
into her hands)

I'm doomed!

VERNA SCHWAM:
What'd he say?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
"Retribution."
(sadly)
He always complained I did TOO much talking! "Why don't you
just LISTEN?" He'd say. I think he's paying me back.

VERNA SCHWAM:
Maybe you could get some ear plugs?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Ear plugs? I mean, he doesn't actually TALK aloud.

VERNA SCHWAM:
How about psychic-ear plugs?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
(exasperated)

Verna!

VERNA SCHWAM:
I guess you are doomed! Harry's got eternity. He doesn't
sleep. What's to stop him?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Thank you, Verna. That was VERY helpful. Let's drink.

*(ENTER DONNIE ONTO PATIO set
carrying a large tray of multi-
colored plastic iced tea
tumblers and a pitcher of tea.)*

DONNIE:
Preston O'Donnell is coming over later to have tea with Alice
and apologize to you for his mistake.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
I won't accept it!

VERNA SCHWAM:
Won't accept his apology for his mistake?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
A mistake is something which can be fixed.
(MORE)

GRANDMA PAYNE: (CONT'D)

What that Methodist minister did to me is FOREVER SEARED into the collective memory of the Wilderness Baptist Church! I can't show my face there ever again without people snickering at the memory of what that man DID.

(a beat)

Forgiveness is NOT the Baptist way! I'll dispense RETRIBUTION!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Retribution? That sounds very familiar. Doesn't that sound familiar to you? Don't give, lest ye receive!

GRANDMA PAYNE: (CONT'D)

(on the verge of
tears)

I'm NOT a Baptist any more! And, I can't get my dear departed husband to SHUT UP! So Verna; pour me a belt of that chandelier!

VERNA SCHWAM:

Yes, dear.

(VERNA pours champagne and hands GRANDMA a flute.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Let's drink to HARRY, who now is chattering for ETERNITY to me from the spiritual world! I'll try Harry, I'll try to forgive him!

(VERNA and GRANDMA clink glasses.)

DONNIE:

How do you know its Harry who talks to you?

(VERNA and GRANDMA sit. GRANDMA pulls a book from her purse.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:

This pamphlet taught me how to speak with the dead.

DONNIE:

How do you do that?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

I ask specific questions and Harry answers. As a matter of fact, since I asked my first question of Harry a few days ago, he hasn't SHUT UP! I can't get him to shut up. He's giving me answers to questions I haven't even asked, which is quite annoying!

DONNIE:

Doesn't that give you some comfort?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

The problem with communicating with the dead is that the dead can only use VERBS... no NOUNS.

DONNIE:

ONLY verbs?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Only VERBS. The dead want CHANGE, ACTION... FEELINGS!

DONNIE:

Can you give me an example?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Well, here's a REVERSE example. You remember Johnnie Carson's character "Carnack The Magnificent"?

DONNIE:

Yeah. The mind reader.

VERNA SCHWAM:

Carnack would hold an envelope to his forehead and then say three NOUNS... like "A Duck, a Yuck, and a Schmuck?"

DONNIE:

Okay...

VERNA SCHWAM:

Then he would open the envelope and read the question: "What is Daffy, Broccoli and Preston O'Donnell?" A duck, a yuck, and a schmuck.

DONNIE:

Okay...

GRANDMA PAYNE:

I tested Harry on the same three things I said, "What is Daffy, Broccoli and Preston O'Donnell." And he replied in VERBS: "Waddle, gag, and jerk off."

DONNIE:

But, "jerk off" COULD be a verb, but I think Harry used it as an adjective... Preston O'Donnell IS a jerk off.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Harry was never very good with grammar, Donnie. Just because you die doesn't mean you get to be a smart. You're just as stupid up there as you are down here.

DONNIE:

Then you got a problem!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(a beat)

Yes, I do! I asked Harry what I should do about his boat, his golf clubs, and his stock portfolio.

DONNIE:

And he answered?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Sink, sank, sunk.

DONNIE:

Which means?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Utter confusion. I don't know if he's saying I should take up golf and use the putter to SINK the ball? Or, should I throw his clubs into the pond off the 4th green and watch them sink!

DONNIE:

Oh, boy!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Or, if he's saying don't touch the boat because I would be SUNK.

DONNIE:

Yeeks.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Or, is he telling me it would be good to liquidate the portfolio because he SANK so much money into it?

DONNIE:

Ask him a follow-up question and narrow it down. Like ask about the stock portfolio. Should you buy, sell or trade?

VERNA SCHWAM:

She did.

DONNIE:

What verb did Harry respond with?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Good-bye.

DONNIE:

Does that mean it's time to get rid of the portfolio as in "good bye?" Or, that it's a good time to buy.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

See?

DONNIE:

You're sink, sank, sunk!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(sigh)

I guess I'll just have to wait until my thousand petal lotus flower erupts from my forehead, then I'll be ENLIGHTENED and KNOW what to do!

DONNIE:

(peering at her
forehead)

Oh, yeah. How's that coming along?

VERNA SCHWAM:

It's a zit.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Tisn't!

DONNIE:

You know, it DOESN'T really look like a lotus flower to me, it looks like something else...

GRANDMA PAYNE:

What does it look like to you, Donnie?

DONNIE:

A penis. We got a guy into the funeral home who had a penis growing out of his forehead in about that same spot. Apparently he had been to see a guru who convinced him it was really a thousand petaled lotus flower until it emerged. By that time his balls hung down over his eyes and he died in a car wreck.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

WHICH guru?

VERNA SCHWAM:

Probably YOURS, dear. The one who told you that you were Mary Magdalene! That's a zit on your forehead and either you are too unenlightened enough - read STUPID - or you are just too stubborn to cleanse your pores.

DONNIE:

What did Harry say about his ashes?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Only one word, dear: "marinade".

DONNIE:

"Marinade"? But, marinade is not a VERB. To "marinate" would be the verb.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

We have to forgive the dead who are not good grammarians, Donnie. "Marinade." What does "marinade" mean to you, Donnie?

DONNIE:

Could mean "crank up the barbecue, Grandma Payne!" Harry may be signaling "ashes to ashes"!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Oh, I SEE! Maybe you're right. Harry always liked a good barbecue!

DONNIE:

But, if he meant "to marinate", then that means to soak in a sauce... stew in your own juices, so to speak.

*(ENTER ALICE and PRESTON.
PRESTON wears a bright yellow
construction hard hat. ALICE
carries a pan of brownies.)*

29 GRANDMA PAYNE & PRESTON

ALICE:

Hello, Momma!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Alice! How nice to see you!

*(ALICE and GRANDMA PAYNE hug
and kiss.)*

ALICE:

What IS that on your forehead?

GRANDMA PAYNE:

I say it's a thousand petaled lotus flower about to emerge... Donnie says it's a penis.

VERNA SCHWAM:

I say it's a zit.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
What do you think it looks like, Alice?

ALICE:
(pointing to VERNA)
What she said.

PRESTON:
Mrs. Payne, I have just been SOAKING in SELF LOATHING over
the past several weeks.

GRANDMA PAYNE:
What did you just say?

PRESTON:
What? SOAKING in SELF LOATHING?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
That's it! Soaking in self loathing is TO MARINATE! You've
been MARINADING in SELF LOATHING, haven't you?

PRESTON:
Yes, in a way, I suppose you could say that?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Well, THANK YOU!

PRESTON:
What? What did I do?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
You've just answered Harry's VERB.

PRESTON:
His VERB?

GRANDMA PAYNE:
Yes! Marinade! That was his verb.

PRESTON:
But, marinade ISN'T a verb. Have I missed something here?
I think I've missed something here.

DONNIE:
Don't worry about it Preston. Carry on! Apologize!

PRESTON:
Mrs. Payne, I'm so sorry for making my teeny, weeney mistake
at Harry's funeral and causing you pain Mrs. Payne. For the
pain I caused you, Mrs. Payne, I'm sure was very painful.
Mrs. Payne.

*(PRESTON grows more and more
stooped during the next section.)*

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(interrupting)

Enough! That was very painful.

(a beat)

I can forgive you arriving at the Wilderness Baptist Church late. It is a very small country church some distance out of Midland... and not easy to find.

(a beat)

I can even forgive you for being anxious... what with you being a student preacher and all... and maybe not paying too close attention to the instructions the funeral director, my son in law Donnie, gave you when you arrived.

DONNIE:

I told him to go in the back door, down the hall and the SECOND door on the right.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

But, you went into the FIRST door on the right, didn't you?

PRESTON:

(contritely)

Yes ma'am. And there were no lights on in there.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

And you did a BELLY FLOP into the baptismal font, didn't you?

PRESTON:

I tripped.

DONNIE:

Sounded just like a very big catfish breaking water... ka-whoosh!

PRESTON:

I'm so filled with REMORSE and SELF LOATHING!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

And then you THRASHED AROUND trying to get out...

PRESTON:

Yes ma'am...

GRANDMA PAYNE:

And FLOPPED in a SECOND TIME...

PRESTON:

Fell backwards, yes...

GRANDMA PAYNE:

And THRASHED AROUND SOME MORE!

DONNIE:

It was awful. The congregation was afraid you couldn't swim!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

I was praying you COULDN'T swim!

PRESTON:

Uh-huh. But, I did my duty! You gotta give me credit for that!

GRANDMA PAYNE:

(long beat)

Another VERY BAD judgment, wasn't it?

PRESTON:

I suppose.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

You SUPPOSE!?

PRESTON:

Yes ma'am.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

You walked into the church with your SHOES SQUEAKING, SOAKING WET, and NONCHALANTLY walked to the pulpit, SQUEEGEEING WATER OFF YOUR HAIR as if NOTHING AT ALL HAD HAPPENED! Then, you reached into your pocket and took out what was left of a little piece of drenched notebook paper, gave it a little squeeze, AS IF you could get SOME of the water out of it, and then you attempted to give my husband Harry's memorial address with WATER RUNNING OFF OF YOU with never a word mentioned! Any FOOL would have known that the ink would have been all RUN TOGETHER and it would be IMPOSSIBLE to read your notes. But, NO! Since you COULDN'T READ IT, and apparently you thought that the entire congregation was waiting eagerly for a preacher who looked like a drowned rat to speak at a funeral, you just made some stuff up about Harry. None of which was TRUE! He was NOT an Eagle Scout! He was NOT an ace in the Air Force in World War II! He did not win AMERICAN IDOL! Didn't you think that I would know whether or not he was married before? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

PRESTON:

I... I was hoping no one would notice?

ALICE:

Oh, come on, Mother! It was FUNNY. It was an ACCIDENT!
(MORE)

ALICE: (CONT'D)

Preston is really a nice guy... a little starched around the edges... a little too much of an engineer, but I'm workin' on him! Think of how bad PRESTON FELT when he made that one little slip.

(PRESTON nods anxiously.)

ALICE:

So where's your sense of humor. I know you've got one because you've got a pyramid hat and a penis growing out of your forehead!

(a beat)

And, I'm sure that HARRY LOVED the entire scene because he was a Methodist! He was a SPRINKLER and detested IMMERSION. I think he probably thought it VERY FUNNY that Preston flopped around like open night at the Midland Municipal Swimming pool.

(a beat)

I'm thinking about dating Preston. I even called his mother to get the recipe for Preston's FAVORITE BROWNIES which I made and brought over. Okay? Let me hear some forgiveness in your voice.

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Well... let me ask Harry.

(a beat)

Harry? Should I forgive Preston?

(ALL sit/stand in silence.)

GRANDMA PAYNE:

He said "flog."

DONNIE:

"Flog?"

GRANDMA PAYNE:

That's it, "flog". What's that mean?

(ALICE begins cutting the brownies into portions.)

DONNIE:

It's a word that Trudi texted me earlier today. She said that Pilgrims had posts, just like these in their town squares. They would tie people to them when they were flogged.

PRESTON:

I'm going to be flogged!?

ALICE:

No...! My father is quite a jokester... and Mother could have mis-heard.

(KAREN ENTERS.)

(ALICE stops abruptly and crosses to the posts.)

ALICE:

But, what in the name of creation are THESE?

(ALICE puts down the brownies and walks toward the clothes line posts.)

PRESTON:

(following her)

Aren't they fantastic? So precise!

ALICE:

(looking at him in disbelief)

Uh, NOOOO!

(to DONNIE)

Did YOU do this, Donnie?

DONNIE:

Yup.

ALICE:

Well, congratulations on finally getting in touch with your inner rage brought on by the impotence of the SHAME and ANGER of being a white male in today's rapidly changing multiethnic culture.

PRESTON:

It's perfectly perpendicular!

ALICE:

It's a SICKNESS and an ABOMINATION! It's PERVERSION OF NATURE! TRUE ART is other than this! Is one a missile? The other a phallus?

(a beat)

What is this? A homage to male virility?

(to DONNIE)

What's going on, Donnie? Erectile dysfunction?

PRESTON:

Something wrong with perpendicular?

*

ALICE:

Oh, my Gawd, Preston! Who ARE you?

PRESTON:

Are you upset?

ALICE:

Preston! Where is the art, Preston?

PRESTON:

Art? Is this art?

(PRESTON begins to catch the drift of ALICE's outburst.)

ALICE:

Precisely my point, Preston.

PRESTON

(shifting entirely)

Of course! Who in the hell put these two ugly posts right in the middle of this BEAUTIFUL back yard?! You're going to have to rip these out before you do ANYTHING else! SEE, a STRUCTURAL ENGINEER would NEVER put something like this right in the middle of the playground!

KAREN:

(concerned crossing to DONNIE)

Honey...! What's going on ?

DONNIE:

(proudly)

Hi Karen! How do you like the clothes line?

KAREN:

(walking to the spot)

Oh, honey... why'd you put it HERE?

DONNIE:

Why'd I put it here? Oh, geez... I dunno? Sunshine?

KAREN:

But, hon-ey... the neighbors can see it HERE. I don't want the neighbors to see my panties or your underwear blowing in the breeze!

PRESTON

I should say not! Where are your FEELINGS man?

DONNIE:

But, it's a clothes line!

KAREN:

But, why didn't you ask me where I wanted the clothes line?

DONNIE:

Ask YOU? Why? It's a simple decision. A clothes line requires sunshine! I know where the sun shines... so I got the posts, the cross-members, the concrete and

(gesturing with
rope)

The rope! And voila! Clothes line!

PRESTON

(parodying)

Voila! That's French for REALLY UGLY!

DONNIE:

Preston, you said they were perfect!

PRESTON:

I did no such thing!

ALICE:

Two, un-beautiful, phalluses?

PRESTON:

I agree with Alice's artistic sensitivities!

ALICE:

You DON'T like them?

PRESTON:

Me? No way! I know how a woman THINKS... she likes CREATIVITY! CHANGE! INNOVATION!

ALICE:

Preston, you're more sensitive than I gave you credit for.

PRESTON:

I LIKE change!

(ALICE takes PRESTON'S arm.)

KAREN:

Donnie, there are always things to consider. There are OPTIONS.

(pointing)

I think it ought to be more over THERE.

(DONNIE walks over THERE and looks around. Then he walks BACK.)

DONNIE:
I think there's more space HERE.

KAREN:
(like he's an idiot)
Oh, hon-ey, it's wide open here, sure!
(gesturing)
But, when you consider the fence line, the roof line, the trees, the shrubs, the plantings, the flower beds, the patio... over THERE is much better!

DONNIE:
I like it here.

KAREN:
Oh, Hon-ey...! May I show you a clothes line?

30 MAGAZINES

DONNIE:
Be my guest.

(KAREN Stalks off stage at a brisk pace.)

DONNIE:
It's simple and elegant. And, right where it is, is JUST FINE.

PRESTON:
What kind of mind thinks in such an OVERLY PRECISE way? Just because you do something, doesn't mean you have to CLING to it! You should give it up, Donnie! Learn to change.

ALICE:
Yes. You can change, Donnie. Like PRESTON!

GRANDMA PAYNE:
I asked Harry what he thought about the posts.

DONNIE:
Oh, yeah, let's have EVERYBODY weigh in! We've had the Manhating Artist, Mr. Catfish... now, let's have Dead Grandpa's VERB read by the pyramid wearing widow with the thousand petal lotus flower about to emerge from her forehead! What VERB have you got for Donnie, Harry?

(KAREN returns at an equally fast pace with a giant stack of magazines and books loaded with post-it notes. She drops the magazines and books on the table with a loud "thud".)

KAREN:

(flipping through
top magazine)

Here, dear... here's what a real clothes line looks like.

(a beat)

The clothes lines of Paris. How romantic is that? Paris...! France. Look...! Look...! Monmart! Clothes lines in Monmart!

(a beat)

When will I ever get to Paris?

(a beat)

Never. Could I have a clothes line like they have in Paris?

(a beat)

No! Not ME! I've got to have two UGLY posts stuck in the middle of MY yard! Look at the couples in the photo... why, you can just tell what THEIR clothes line has meant to their relationship!

(ANOTHER MAGAZINE)

KAREN:

(with emphasis)

Clothes lines in the Bahamas. Bahamas! White sands. Bright sun. Blue, blue water... Will I ever get to see the Bahamas? Ummm? I doubt it. But, my undies could be flappin' in the breeze in our back yard on something that looks like it belongs right next door to that beautiful, beautiful beach!

(looks at clothes
line location)

Sheesh!

(shakes her head)

(ANOTHER MAGAZINE)

KAREN:

Antique, Victorian clothes lines. Look at the lace on that, will you? You can almost smell the rose water! Not some stupid post and concrete! Where's the ROMANCE, Donnie?

PRESTON:

Exactly! Where's the ROMANCE, Donnie!

(ANOTHER MAGAZINE)

KAREN:

Clothes lines of the Vatican. Plain but reverent and oh, so inspirational! Is our clothes line inspirational?

(A PAMPHLET)

KAREN:

Here's a pamphlet on the spirituality of clothes lines. The Feng Shui of clothes lines!

(PICKING UP THICK BOOK)

KAREN:

I've even specially ordered the Bible on Clothes lines... "More Creative Clothes Lines: Expandable, Collapsible, Multi-Function"... and it even says right on the cover, "step-by-step photographs for professional looking results every time!"

(a beat)

Professional looking results!

(PUTTING BOOK DOWN)

KAREN:

Now do you understand at least a little bit about what a clothes line can truly mean to the quality of our lives... and the environment?

(DONNIE Rocks back and forth with hands in pockets. Wife reaches over and picks up cotton rope.)

KAREN:

(with a pitying look)

Cotton rope?

(long pause)

You were going to hang our clothes on COTTON ROPE?

DONNIE:

Well... it sounds like this clothes line is real important to you and you've put a lot of thought into it.

KAREN:

No shit, Sherlock! What were you thinking?

DONNIE:

I was thinking you could take the cotton rope and tie me to the post of your choice and then burn me like Joan of Arc. Or, whip me from Pillar to Post!

KAREN:

That would be a waste of good rope. And, that would not reduce our carbon footprint.

DONNIE:

Okay... I'll just turn 'em into bird feeders.

(ALICE returns to the table and takes a large tumbler of tea.)

(PRESTON reaches for a brownie.)

31 PS BROADCAST TEXT / TRUDI TETHERBALL

(TRUDI TEXT MESSAGE APPEARS ON PROJECTION SCREEN:)

("David wants to hang out. Can one of the posts be for tetherball?")

32 CONCLUSION

DONNIE:

Well, even Trudi wants to weigh in, get this: "David wants to hang out. Can one of the posts be for tetherball?"

KAREN:

Wow! Coming outside to play? This is a change!

DONNIE:

(a beat)

Okay, I can change, too. Where would YOU like to put the clothes line?

KAREN:

I'm so glad you asked!

(KAREN takes DONNIE'S ARM.)

PRESTON:

Let's try my favorite brownie recipe Alice made, shall we?

(PRESTON takes a bite out of the brownie. He chews thoughtfully.)

PRESTON:

My mother NEVER put chopped pecans in HER brownies.

ALICE:

Pecans? Oh, I see... Sure! You can change, can't you?

(ALICE takes off PRESTON's hard hat and pours her tumbler of tea onto PRESTON's head and replaces his hard hat.)

DONNIE:

Grandma Payne, what was Harry's verb?

33 PS BROADCAST TEXT / HARRY

(TEXT MESSAGE APPEARS ON PROJECTION SCREEN:)

("Enjoy! - Harry")

GRANDMA PAYNE:

Enjoy!

(a beat)

Is that a verb?

(CURTAIN.)