

A Casket Man

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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THE PLAY

(Early morning at JOHN's house. TODD is dressed very well and is generally put together. JOHN is dressed in a robe. They are on the front porch.)

TODD

Okay, give me the details one more time.

JOHN

We've been over it a hundred times.

TODD

It's important.

JOHN

This is stupid Todd. It's like five in the morning. I have to go to work soon.

TODD

Who cares about work?

JOHN

My bills.

TODD

Who cares about bills? We are talking about something bigger here. It could happen at any moment so you need to be prepared.

JOHN

Todd this is dumb. Go home. You're going to wake up the kids and then Angie's going to get all pissed and then you won't be able to come over Sunday night to watch HBO.

TODD

TV is more important to you than your own flesh and blood?

JOHN

It's not TV, it's HBO. Come on man, we can talk about it then. Again.

TODD

Humor me.

JOHN

Fine.

TODD

So, you get the call. Now what?

Who's gonna call?
JOHN

I don't know, Mom.
TODD

What if Mom's dead?
JOHN

John.
TODD

It's a fair question.
JOHN

Why do you gotta say something like that?
TODD

Chances are she's going to die first.
JOHN

You just want Mom to die.
TODD

No, I want her to stop calling me three times a day.
JOHN

Look it doesn't matter who calls.
TODD

Sure it does. My brother's dead I want to know who's calling to let me know.
JOHN

Fine. Your wife.
TODD

Why does Angie know before me?
JOHN

Because the cops called your house but you weren't home.
TODD

And why are the cops calling? Are you planning on doing something illegal?
JOHN

The funeral home calls you then.
TODD

JOHN

I don't think that's how it works Todd.

TODD

The hospital, mom, a French prostitute, it doesn't matter.

JOHN

It matters, but we can move on. I mean there's a big difference between mom and a French prostitute, but go ahead. What are you doing with prostitutes anyway? And why French?

TODD

I'm not doing anything with prostitutes.

JOHN

Well if it were me I'd make sure that Angie called you.

TODD

But she can't call you?

JOHN

I just think that I'd know before her.

TODD

That doesn't make sense. Anyone could find out.

JOHN

That's not how it works. I deal with our side of the family and she deals with her side. You don't make your spouse deal with the in-laws like that.

TODD

Shut up.

JOHN

Maybe if you get married your wife can call.

TODD

Fine. My future wife calls you.

JOHN

Your future wife - Katie Couric.

TODD

Katie Couric?

JOHN

Katie. Couric.

TODD

Kati-?

JOHN
Where did you guys meet?

TODD
What?

JOHN
What's she like? Does she-

TODD
We met at the supermarket.

JOHN
That's pretty cliché. When was the last time you talked to somebody at the store? Let alone Ka-

TODD
John. Please focus. This is important. It's for all eternity so I need to know that I can trust you.

JOHN
You can trust me. I'm just asking what your ideal wife would be like.

TODD
She's smart and funny and good looking and she does something noble for a living like care for the elderly. And she needs to be a good mom.

JOHN
You're having kids now?

TODD
In your fantasy world.

JOHN
How many?

TODD
John!

JOHN
Two? Three? Seven?

TODD
I don't know...three.

JOHN
I would have pegged you for one. It'll be easier for you to smother and repress one.

TODD
Fine, one.

JOHN
Was that so hard?

TODD
So, Katie Couric calls you—

JOHN
What if I die first?

TODD
John!

JOHN
Sorry. You just seem so certain that you're going to die before everyone else.
(Pause.)
You have some horrible disease don't you? Is this like Philadelphia?

TODD
What? No, I'm just planning.

JOHN
Explain it to me like I'm four years old.

TODD
What?

JOHN
Denzel. From Philadelphia. He said that to everybody. Remember? He's in court and he's all like hey mister gay hater, explain it to me like I'm in second grade and then Tom Hanks comes out and he's like look at my legions and then he almost dies on the stand and Antonio Banderas is all like why did they make me dress up as a sailor for Halloween? I mean not all gay guys are sailors and then they play that really sad montage at the end. I hate that montage. Do I have to make one of those for you?

TODD
Can we focus please?

JOHN
Sorry. You're sure you don't have AIDS?

TODD
Yes.

JOHN

No cancer, or tumors, or TB or anything?

TODD

Not yet.

JOHN

Okay.

TODD

Okay. So you get the call. Now what?

JOHN

Well, I'm probably sad.

TODD

Probably?

JOHN

Well I don't know what's recently transpired. What if you steal my wife or like murder ten people?

TODD

Why do you have to make this so complicated?

JOHN

I don't want to have anything to do with it. I want to go back to bed.

TODD

Then why did you agree to help me?

JOHN

What was I supposed to say? My brother wants me to spread his ashes, I can't say no.

TODD

Just shut up. Here.

(He hands JOHN a Ziploc bag.)

JOHN

What's this?

TODD

Me.

JOHN

That's weird. I don't want to touch it.

TODD

It's not really me.

JOHN
I know, but it's supposed to be you. Can I wear gloves when I do this?

TODD
No.

JOHN
Not even like fancy white gloves?
(Pause.)
What is it really?

TODD
Sand.

JOHN
Why is there a screw in there?

TODD
What?

JOHN
There's a screw in there.

TODD
I got it from the backyard.

JOHN
You stole it from Abby's sandpit?

TODD
John, please.

JOHN
Sand's too heavy.

TODD
How would you know?

JOHN
I don't know, it seems too heavy to be a person.

TODD
Just take it.

JOHN
Okay.

TODD
Toss some.

JOHN

No.

TODD

You need to practice. I don't want you to mess everything up right at the end.

JOHN

It's not that hard.

TODD

There's a lot that goes into it. First you need to make sure you're downwind, otherwise it'll blow back on you. Second you need to make sure that it isn't raining, otherwise it won't spread and it'll clump up and stick to everything and that's just disturbing. Third you have to pace out the handfuls. You don't want to just dump it all out at once, but you don't want it to take forever either.

JOHN

I'm sorry I wasn't paying attention.

TODD

John!

JOHN

I'm kidding. Relax, it's not rocket science.

TODD

It's my life.

JOHN

Am I supposed to say something?

TODD

I don't want to force you to say something about your dead brother, but yeah, it would be nice if you said something.

JOHN

Okay.

TODD

So?

JOHN

What?

TODD

What are you going to say?

JOHN

I don't know. I have to think about it.

TODD

This is supposed to be a dry run.

JOHN

Do I really have to go to the ocean?

TODD

You have to go to Cape Cod - Provincetown, not just the ocean.

JOHN

This is going to cost me a fortune you know. I hope you live forever.

TODD

I'm sorry you have to go to one of the most beautiful places in the world to carry out your dead brother's last wish.

JOHN

Fine.

(He takes a handful out of the bag - including the screw - and tosses it.)

Todd.

(Pause.)

TODD

That's it? You're just going to say my name?

JOHN

I don't know. I couldn't think of anything to say.

TODD

I'm your brother.

JOHN

Quit being so dramatic.

TODD

I'm not being dramatic.

JOHN

You're not being dramatic? What would you call this? You're thirty-two years old. You're digging up your ashes out of your niece's sandbox at three in the morning in a three piece suit because our great uncle who we saw twice died without a will. I just practiced tossing-

TODD

Spreading.

JOHN (Con't)

-your ashes into the ocean off of my front porch - in Indiana!
I've got better things to do than plan your funeral.

TODD

Forget it. I knew I couldn't trust you with something important.

JOHN

We both know that you won't get cremated. It's not your personality. It's too messy for you. You're a casket man all the way. You like things wrapped up nicely, tight corners and straight lines - I mean look at this whole thing with the ashes. With a casket you can control everything-style, fabric, clothes the whole nine yards; a tight little self contained box. With the ashes they could end up anywhere, but you know where a casket is going. You pick the perfect spot and you know that you're going to end up there. I've never met anybody that's more perfect for a casket than you. Plus you don't have to worry about me ruining your epitaph - you can write it yourself. You really want me to spread your ashes, fine, I'll do it, but I think you'll be sorry.

TODD

You think so?

JOHN

Absolutely.

TODD

Maybe a casket would be better.

JOHN

Yup.

TODD

I do like woodwork. And I am better with words than you. Maybe you're right.

JOHN

You think about it.
You want some coffee? Maybe watch some old Today Show reruns?

TODD

Yeah.

(They exit inside. Lights fade out.)

THE END