

PARTING WORDS

by

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Cast of Characters

MARIAN: Age 48. The domineering oldest sibling.

WALTER: Age 46. The over-achieving oldest son.

MARTY: Age 43. The family joker.

FRAN: Age 41. The baby.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR: Any age, male or female.

Setting

We are at a typical funeral home. There is quiet, conservative, somber feel almost as if you should be whispering.

It is just after 2:00 today.

ACT 1
SCENE 1

SETTING: There is an open casket off to one side with a spray of flowers blocking the audience from seeing into the casket. Straight back chairs are scattered around the room. A small table is off to one side.

AT RISE: MARIAN, dressed from head to toe in black, is sitting in a chair. She looks extremely uncomfortable which she is. After all, there is a dead body in the room. She checks her watch, gets up, paces a bit until she accidentally wanders too close to the coffin and returns to her chair. WALTER enters talking on a cell phone. He is wearing a dark business suit.

MARIAN

Well it's about time.

WALTER

(into phone)

We never agreed --

MARIAN

We most certainly did. 2:00. And it's quarter after.

WALTER

(into phone)

Well, that's close enough. Now how about the others --

MARIAN

Late. As usual. What will people think?

WALTER

(into phone)

Don't worry about them. They're on board. It's only a matter of time --

MARIAN

Well, you'd think they'd make an extra effort to be here.
After all, this was Fran's idea.

WALTER

(into phone)

The money still hasn't been wired?

MARIAN

What money?

(She notices the phone for
the first time.)

Oh my God, I can't believe you're on the phone.

WALTER

(into phone)

You're not listening to me.

MARIAN

So you know how it feels.

WALTER

(into phone)

They have until end of business today to finalize the
financing --

MARIAN

Only an insensitive boor would show up at his Grandfather's
funeral talking on a cell phone.

WALTER

(into phone)

Don't hand me that crap! Just close the deal. Call if you
need me.

(WALTER hangs up the phone
and slips it into his
pocket as he gives MARIAN
the obligatory kiss on the
cheek.)

Sorry about that. The Dutch are trying to stall on the
deal. But I have a Japanese firm waiting in the wings. So
if they think --

MARIAN

I trust that will be the last bit of business for the day.

WALTER

Probably.

(MARTY and FRAN enter.
MARTY is wearing dark
slacks and a dark blazer
and tossing a golf ball up
and down. After a second
or two he pockets the ball.
FRAN is wearing a bright-
colored dress and carrying
a large box which she puts
down on the table.)

MARIAN

Probably?! Does this look like a boardroom?

MARTY

Pretty much. Except for the stiff in the corner.

MARIAN

That is your Grandfather!

MARTY

Marian, don't look so horrified. Granddad would have
laughed.

MARIAN

Perhaps. He was the only one who found you funny.

FRAN

Now, now. Let's all try to get along.
(They ALL ad lib greetings
as they do the obligatory
hug, handshake thing.)

Does anyone want any water?

(They ALL shake their heads no.)

Are you sure? There's a pitcher right there - it's no
trouble at all. Really.

(The FUNERAL DIRECTOR
enters.)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Very good, you're all here. Your grandfather's service is
scheduled for about a half an hour from now, but take your
time. We'll start when you're ready. The other guests
will understand.

(The FUNERAL DIRECTOR turns
to leave.)

MARIAN

I'd like the sign changed.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Sign?

MARIAN

His name. Out front.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Good heavens. Have we spelled his name incorrectly?

MARIAN

It says Walt Gilman. It should read Walter P. Gilman.

FRAN

Nobody called him Walter except Grandmother.

MARTY

And she won't be calling him today.

MARIAN

It should be changed.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Mr. Gilman was very firm about that. Listing him as Walt, I mean. Is there anything else? No? Very good. I'll be outside if you need me.

(The FUNERAL DIRECTOR exits. FRAN and MARTY walk over to the coffin and peer in. WALTER starts over to the coffin.)

MARIAN (disgustedly)

Walt.

WALTER

Are you talking to me?

MARIAN

No. Uh, actually yes. Ummm, how are the kids?

FRAN

He looks so peaceful.

WALTER

Fine.

MARTY

Who picked out his clothes?

FRAN

He wanted to be buried in the clothes he died in.

(WALTER starts over to the
coffin again.)

MARIAN

When does Jamie start baseball?

MARTY

That's what he was wearing?

WALTER

In, uh, I don't know.

MARTY

But he matches.

WALTER

Sometime soon.

FRAN

He never matched after Grandmother died.

WALTER

Are you going . . .

(WALTER indicates the
coffin).

MARTY

(imitating Granddad)

First shirt, first pair of pants - good enough for me.

(MARIAN shakes her head.)

MARIAN

It's just too sad.

(WALTER hesitates a minute
then walks over the
coffin.)

FRAN

Do you think he knew when he got dressed that morning he was going to die?

WALTER

You really should Marian.

MARTY

Nah, I think Grandmother paid him a ghostly visit.

WALTER

He looks very peaceful.

FRAN

A ghostly visit?

MARIAN

Thank you Walter. No.

MARTY

Grandmother couldn't handle it . . .

WALTER

Last chance Marian.

MARTY

...if he was wearing plaid pants with a striped shirt for all eternity.

(FRAN laughs out loud
somewhat masking the sound
of WALTER's phone ringing.)

MARIAN

It's quite rude to laugh at a viewing.

FRAN

Sorry.

MARIAN

I can't imagine what you can possibly find so funny.

WALTER

(Into phone)

Walter here.

FRAN

(To the coffin.)

I'm so happy for you, Granddad. You finally made it.

MARIAN

What a horrible thing to say. Happy, indeed. And how dare you wear a dress like that? I want you to go change before the funeral.

MARTY

You can't still order her around.

MARIAN

She simply cannot wear that dress.

MARTY

I think it's it cute. Could be a little shorter though.

WALTER

(Loudly into the phone)

No way, absolutely not.

FRAN

Granddad bought me this dress.

MARIAN

Well, Walter agrees with me.

(MARIAN turns to WALTER.)

WALTER

(Into phone)

We're not backing down on...

(MARIAN grabs the phone.)

MARTY

Granddad went shopping with you?

MARIAN

Walter can't talk now. He's at his Grandfather's funeral.

(MARIAN hangs up the phone.)

WALTER is furious.)

WALTER

Marian!

MARTY

Well, technically it isn't a funeral. It's a viewing . . .

WALTER

Shut up Marty.

FRAN

(To MARTY)

Last time I took him into the city to see the Symphony...

WALTER

(To MARIAN)

You interrupted an important call...

FRAN

... this was in the window in the shop next door.

WALTER

How dare you...

FRAN

It reminded him of a dress Grandmother had.

MARIAN

How dare you!

MARTY

I never saw Grandmother in a dress like that.

MARIAN

I was in the middle of mourning my Grandfather's passing...

FRAN

I think it was the color.

MARIAN

...when you interrupted.

MARTY

I'll buy that.

(MARIAN puts the cell phone
in her purse.)

WALTER

Give me back my phone.

FRAN

He wanted me to wear it to dance at his funeral.

MARIAN
You can have it back afterwards.

MARTY
Dance at his funeral?

WALTER
Marian, I'm not kidding.

FRAN
Well, he called it his going away party.

MARIAN
No.

MARTY
Going away party? Cool!

WALTER
I'm warning you.

FRAN
Complete with band.

MARTY
Marian's going to have a fit.

WALTER
GIVE ME MY PHONE!

(They ALL stop and look at
WALTER.)

FRAN
Will you guys knock it off? We're supposed to be spending
some quality time together, reminiscing about Granddad
and --

MARTY
If you say the word "bond" I'm going to throw up.

WALTER (SIMULTANEOUSLY)
But she has my...

MARIAN (SIMULTANEOUSLY)
But he keeps making...

FRAN

Honestly. You sound like you're 6. Marian, give him his phone.

MARIAN

No. He's ruining everything.

FRAN

What if he turns it off?

WALTER

But I have---

FRAN

(To WALTER)

Voice mail.

(To MARIAN)

Marian, please.

MARIAN

Do you promise not to use it?

WALTER

I promise I won't answer any more calls until after the funeral.

MARTY

Party.

(MARIAN takes the phone out of her purse and hands it to WALTER who puts it in his pocket.)

WALTER

What?

MARTY

It's not a funeral, it's a party.

MARIAN

If it rings again, I'm keeping it.

MARTY

(To WALTER)

Until the end of the term or you get a note from your mommy.