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But Was It An Approved Death?

A Short Comedy By
Greg Freier

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But Was It An Approved Death?

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CHARACTERS

1W /1M

HAROLD TITTLETON: *60's; a proper Englishman.*

EMMA TITTLETON: *60; his wife. A proper English lady.*

SETTING

HAROLD & EMMA's living room

But Was It An Approved Death?

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SETTING: HAROLD and EMMA's living room. There are two chairs center stage; a small table between them. Off to the left is a bar with a few bottles of alcohol and a telephone.

AT RISE: EMMA is seated stage right sipping tea, while HAROLD is at the bar pouring a drink. They speak calmly throughout.

HAROLD

(To EMMA) Cocktail?

EMMA

Still on my morning tea.

HAROLD

Always prefer a cocktail myself, gives me the appearance of self assurance.

(SFX: PHONE RINGS.)

HAROLD

Shall I?

EMMA

Since you're there if you don't mind.

HAROLD

No, not in the slightest. (*Picks up phone*) Tittleton here...yes...yes...yes I'm familiar with him...you don't say...no...I understand completely...yes...well it is a shame...yes, of course...I'll let her know...yes, you do the same. (*Hangs up phone*)

EMMA

Problem?

HAROLD

It seems our son was killed.

EMMA

Killed?

HAROLD

I'm afraid so.

EMMA

(Beat) Which one if you don't mind me asking.

HAROLD

Tomkins. The third one.

EMMA

Tomkins was the fourth one, dear.

HAROLD

Are you sure?

EMMA

Positive, Edmund was the third one.

HAROLD

I always thought Edmund was the seventh one.

EMMA

Katherine was the seventh one.

HAROLD

(Beat) I don't recall a Katherine.

EMMA

That's because she's your daughter. You've always struggled with that one.

HAROLD

Well I certainly can't be blamed for that. I mean that's the problem with having all boys—one girl comes along and next thing you know it's not all boys...It's a bloody nightmare when you get right down to it.

EMMA

(Beat) They didn't happen to mention how he was killed?

HAROLD

Who?

EMMA

Tomkins...our son.

HAROLD

Oh yes, I'd forgotten about that.

EMMA

(Beat) So did they?

HAROLD
Did they what?

EMMA
Mention how he was killed?

HAROLD
No...at least I don't think they did.

EMMA
But you're sure he was killed.

HAROLD
Positive, that was the entire point of the phone call.

EMMA
I certainly hope it didn't have anything to do with clowns.

HAROLD
I don't see why it would.

EMMA
It's just a possibility...I mean clowns are scary, we mustn't forget that.

HAROLD
Yes, but we can't go accusing them just because they're scary.

EMMA
I don't see why not. I'm sure there's nothing illegal about it.

HAROLD
That's not the point. If we accuse one clown, we'd accuse them all, and at this juncture we're not even sure if there's a clown to accuse to begin with.

EMMA
But if there was, then we could accuse them.

HAROLD
Of course we could...and then we'd give those bloody clowns a damn good thrashing.

(HAROLD crosses and sits.)

EMMA
(Beat; speaks with disappointment) Oh and then there's the family portrait we just had done.

HAROLD
Which was a complete waste of time if you ask me.

EMMA

Although I suppose we could just have Tomkins painted out.

HAROLD

Of which you'll get no complaints from me.

EMMA

Except he was holding the dog, and to have him painted out it would look like the dog was hovering.

HAROLD

(Beat) We could always replace Tomkins with a stool of some kind.

EMMA

But if we did that and it turned out well, we might have the urge to replace some of the other children with stools as well.

HAROLD

That's true. They are a rather hideous lot.

EMMA

I'm afraid I have to agree.

HAROLD

That's one thing I've always regretted...how we failed in the genetic sense.

EMMA

Yes but only in the appearance. Intelligence-wise they're all above normal.

HAROLD

And that Tomkins one...he might as well have been a marsupial with that face.

EMMA

I remember when he was little most people assumed he was.

HAROLD

Good thing he's dead then. Simplifies his life from here on out.

EMMA

I hadn't thought of that.

HAROLD

(Beat) I wonder if any other of our children will be killed today.

EMMA

I don't see why they would.

HAROLD

Yes, but we thought the same thing about Tomkins.

EMMA

Do you think we should call them?

HAROLD

The children?

EMMA

It might be best if we warned them.

HAROLD

I don't see what good that would do. I mean it's not like we know who killed Tomkins, so trying to warn the other children to watch out for someone who killed him, when we don't know who that someone is, makes it all but impossible for them to look out for that someone who from a logical standpoint could be anyone. It would be nothing but a complete nuisance if you ask me.

EMMA

So you think it would be best to wait until they find the killer before we call.

HAROLD

I would, there's no point in getting them all worked up over nothing.

EMMA

That would probably be for the best. They do tend to exaggerate things.

HAROLD

Exactly, so you could only imagine how they'd act once they found out Tomkins was killed. They'd be over here in droves.

EMMA

And they'd no doubt want some form of emotional bonding.

HAROLD

And then that idiot Edmund would question whether or not it was an approved death.

EMMA

He does tend to do that, doesn't he?

HAROLD

He's the one that should have been killed. He's nothing but a complete misuse of space.

EMMA

Yes, but I seriously doubt his uselessness came into play when Tomkins was killed.

HAROLD

Well it should have.

EMMA

Unfortunately it didn't, so we just have to go on.

HAROLD

Plus Edmund's the one standing in the back of that bloody portrait. We could have just painted him out without having to put in a damn stool.

EMMA

I don't see why we couldn't do that anyway.

HAROLD

Or for that matter all the children. They only muck it up as it is.

EMMA

I'll give the painter a call in the morning.

HAROLD

And while you're at it, tell him to put a drink in my hand. I've always liked the way I looked with a drink in my hand.

EMMA

Let's keep the dog in there though, makes us seem more loving that way.

HAROLD

(Poignantly) As long as it's on a stool, a hovering dog would distract from our dignity.

EMMA

(Beat) So do you think they'll pursue this Tomkins death thing?

HAROLD

I can't see where they'd have much choice.

EMMA

Seems like such a waste of time though. I mean it's not like he's coming back.

HAROLD

And we can be bloody well thankful for that.

EMMA

And if for some reason he did, we could always refuse him.

HAROLD

Of course we could. He'd be dead.

EMMA

I meant if he was still alive. There wouldn't be much point if he was still dead.

HAROLD

Oh right... sorry... lost track of the logic there for a moment.

EMMA

But since he is dead, there's not much point in worrying about it at all one would think.

HAROLD

He's as dead as they come according to the phone.

EMMA

And one can't argue with dead.

HAROLD

Not if one's trying to get a point across.

EMMA

(Beat) Although I suppose we ought to do something.

HAROLD

In regards to Tomkins death?

EMMA

Well yes... he was our son after all.

HAROLD

Yes, but he wasn't a very good one.

EMMA

Even still....

HAROLD

I suppose. But it's not like he ever did anything for me.

EMMA

I was thinking we could have the funeral out back.

HAROLD

Out back, wouldn't that be rather dangerous?

EMMA

Oh yes, that's right... the wolverines.

HAROLD

That's right, wolverines... ravenous wolverines.

EMMA

We really need to do something about that one of these days.

HAROLD

I don't see why, they keep the deer population in check.

EMMA

Yes, but they also ate one of the gardeners.

HAROLD

Yes, but at least it was an undocumented one.

EMMA

They're still a nuisance regardless.

(SFX: PHONE RINGS.)

HAROLD

Shall I again?

EMMA

If it's not too stressful.

HAROLD

(Crosses and answers phone) Tittleton here...yes...yes that would have been I...Tomkins... that's correct...yes...yes, that is rather amazing when you think of it...incredible odds, I have to agree...no, can't be helped I'd imagine...well I guess we'll just have to carry on then... only thing to do at this point...yes...yes you have a nice day as well.

(HAROLD hangs up and sets phone down.)

EMMA

Not another one I hope.

HAROLD

I'm afraid so. Edmund.

EMMA

Did they say how this time?

HAROLD

No, just said he was killed like Tomkins and that they'd be in touch.

EMMA

No rush I'll assume.

HAROLD

Doubtful...sounded like they didn't much care for Edmund as well.

EMMA

Can't say I blame them.

HAROLD

Nor can I.

EMMA

(Beat) It's probably a good thing then that we decided to paint all the children out.

HAROLD

I have to agree. And the way this day is playing out, we might not have any by the end as is.

EMMA

(Beat) One would think I should feel more sad.

(SFX: PHONE RINGS.)

HAROLD

Shall I?

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