

FINAL RESPECTS

by Mark Scharf

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A Dramatic Duet

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SYNOPSIS: What do you do when your dad throws you out of your grandfather's funeral? Play games on your phone, of course! Exiled to the backsteps of a funeral home, Danny is joined by his cousin Tonya. Together, they learn about themselves and each other while navigating the emotional minefield of their Grandfather's funeral.

TIME: The present

SETTING: The backsteps of a funeral home

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 either)

DANNY/DANIELLE (m/f) 16 years old; earnest, sensitive and awkward. *(47 lines)*

TONYA/TONY (m/f) 16-year-old cousin; self-assured and wise for her years, she knows she doesn't know everything. *(46 lines)*

CASTING NOTE: Originally written for one female (Tonya) and one male (Danny); may also be cast with two males or two females. Adjustments to pronouns and character names in the script are approved.

SET: A bare stage or simple set of steps leading up to a door.

PROPERTY LIST: Cell phone (can be mimed).

COSTUMING: Teenagers dressed up for their grandfather's funeral.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: Although the subject matter and the characters are serious, there is humor to be found. Note on Text: (...) after a character's name indicates a character's expectation or desire to speak; no words come or the words are there but it's better not to say them.

AT START: *The lights rise on DANNY sitting on the steps leading up to the backdoor of a funeral home. He is dressed in an ill-fitting suit and is playing a game on his cell phone. He concentrates on the cell phone's screen and keypad as his thumbs fly across the keys. If desired and practicable, audio from the game can be heard. As the game gets more and more intense, he crouches lower and lower over his cell phone. The backdoor opens and TONYA enters. Upon hearing the noise of her arrival, DANNY closes the game. She crosses and stands behind him and he looks back up to her.*

DANNY: You scared me!

TONYA: Go ahead and finish what you were doing.

DANNY: I can wait.

TONYA: You sure? I heard social media is addictive.

DANNY: Not funny.

TONYA: Too stressful inside?

DANNY: Oh, yeah. I got thrown out.

TONYA: Out of what?

DANNY: The funeral home.

TONYA: By who?

DANNY: My dad.

TONYA: How'd you manage that? *(Sits next to DANNY.)*

DANNY: Not sure. I was standing next to him and grandma in the room with grandpa in his coffin. Grandma started crying—I mean really crying. Making this moan from deep in her throat. And I looked at my Dad and he was wiping tears from his eyes and when he saw me looking at him and Grandma he punched me in the arm and told me to get out. So, I did.

TONYA: Were you making a face or something?

DANNY: Nope.

TONYA: Doesn't make any sense.

DANNY: I think I embarrassed him. I'd never seen him cry before.

TONYA: Funerals sure do weird things to people.

DANNY: I figured checking my phone inside would be disrespectful.

TONYA: Checking your email inside would be gross.

DANNY: ...

TONYA: So, what're you going to do? Sit out here the rest of the day?

DANNY: It's not like I can leave and go home.

TONYA: How long a drive was it for you to get here?

DANNY: Ten hours. Ten hours of compressed hell trapped in the car with my parents. Choking to death on my dad's aftershave with my head pounding from being blasted by the speakers behind my head in the back seat with a sickly-sweet Sirius satellite station my dad found. The Muzak torture channel. You'd think he'd listen to rock n' roll from when he was younger, but no... he's the elevator music king.

TONYA: Not even Elvis? Or the Beatles?

DANNY: I don't think he ever paid attention to music.

TONYA: That's not natural.

DANNY: Tell me about it.

TONYA: How do you stand it?

DANNY: I try to read. Make it background noise. At least no one talks.

TONYA: The whole way here?

DANNY: Yep.

TONYA: Huh. Weird.

DANNY: Yeah.

TONYA: ...

DANNY: So...

TONYA: I think I'd better go in and find my mom. She'll freak out if she can't find me. (*Stands.*)

DANNY: No. Stay.

TONYA: ...

DANNY: ...

TONYA: Ok. For a little while longer.

DANNY: Thanks. (*TONYA sits.*) This is the first real conversation I've had since we got here.

TONYA: Nobody here knows what to say. Other than, "I'm sorry." How many times can you say you're sorry?

DANNY: I feel sorry for Grandma.

TONYA: Yeah. Me too.

DANNY: When was the last time you saw Grandpa alive?

TONYA: I don't remember. I saw him a lot. Well, not a lot—but often.

DANNY: I remember. It was this past summer on the last day we were here on vacation. Grandma and Grandpa came out of the house to say good-bye as we were getting in the car. Grandma then went into the house, but Grandpa stayed, standing on the front steps,

watching. As we pulled away, I looked out the back window at him and held my hand up like this. He did the same. We looked at each other 'till he was out of sight. I knew right then it was the last time I'd see him.

TONYA: Just a feeling?

DANNY: I knew. I don't know how I knew—but I knew. And I was right.

TONYA: He was a gentle soul.

DANNY: I never heard him raise his voice. Ever. I never saw him get upset about anything.

TONYA: Me either.

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