

*Black Tie Affair*

By

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ACT I

Scene 1

Stage is blacked out. Spot light on JOSH (mid twenty's, clean cut, constantly looks tired). He is wearing a black suit, crisp white shirt, no tie. He stares out into the 4th wall. We hear the ringing of a phone. Again. Again. It hits Josh's voice mail. It's his mother, DAWN.

DAWN:

Josh. Pick up if you're there. Josh? It's your mother. I know you're busy but if you're there please pick up. I don't know how to say this. I don't even know what to think. It your Da-. It's John. Apparently there was an accident. He's...well he's dead. There's gonna be a wake. I don't know. I need to pick up a sandwich platter or something. Josh. Come home... please.

*All black, spot light still on Josh. He takes out a cigarette and lights it. A pull. Thought. Another. He walks off stage. Lights up on stage. A kitchen and dining room. The kitchen has wear and tear where ever there can be. Average appliances. Many cabinets over counter space create a perimeter for the kitchen. A large open space runs from the kitchen to the dining room. The space that would usually hold a table is holding a large oak casket roughly center stage. It is very nice and polished but not fancy or glamorous. The scent of fresh laundry fills the room (although these days that scent is made by Bath and Body Works Wall flowers and not actually fresh laundry since DAWN is the only one left in the house). DAWN is an older woman 50's going on 60 and she has not aged well and looks 8 to 10 years above her age. She is cleaning the kitchen although it seems to be clean already. We hear the doorbell. Dawn goes to answer it. Enter Josh.*

DAWN:

Oh Josh!

JOSH

Hey Mom.

DAWN:

Why'd you ring the door bell? This is home sweetie!

JOSH

(beat)

There is a casket in the kitchen.

DAWN:

Well I didn't know where to put it.

JOSH

(beat)

The ground comes to mind.

DAWN:

Besides I wanted everyone to be able to gather around it.

JOSH

Everyone?

DAWN:

(sigh)

Yes everyone. My you must be starving. Can I make you something?

JOSH

No I'm ok.

DAWN:

I have a casserole. Or I can make a grilled cheese.

JOSH

I ate at the airport. I'm fine. Thanks though.

DAWN:

Oh airport food, that's no good. I'll just make some soup then.

JOSH

Coffee.

DAWN:

Good idea. Where's Laura?

JOSH

I don't know.

DAWN:

Oh she didn't tag along?

JOSH

This is a funeral right?

DAWN:

Well yes but you know she's always invited. Like a plus one. They have that in weddings I don't see why a funeral has to be different.

JOSH

We broke up.

DAWN:

Oh no! She's such an angel. I don't care what it takes Josh, you win her back. She's worth it.

JOSH

I broke up with her.

DAWN:

Oh...when?

JOSH

About a year ago.

DAWN:

Oh. Well...sugar?

JOSH

Black. Thanks.

DAWN

Are you dating?

JOSH

Yeah.

DAWN

Ah that's nice. What's her name?

JOSH

I'm not dating any one right now.

DAWN

But you just said you were.

JOSH

I mean, I date. I've dated since Laura. Just no one now.

DAWN

Oh well that must be fun. Going out into the city.

JOSH

Sure.

*A long pause. Sips of coffee. Silence.*

DAWN

So... do I get details?

JOSH

On?

DAWN

The dates. Do you date a lot or? Do I get to meet any of these girls?

JOSH

No. Yes, and No.

DAWN

Oh come on I'm your mother. Can't we talk gossip?

*A long pause. Sips of coffee. Josh sets his coffee on the casket.*

JOSH

So dad is dead...

DAWN

Yes. Heart attack I'm afraid. I guess he was-

JOSH

I really don't need the details.

DAWN

Everyone will be in tomorrow.

JOSH

Do we even know what that means?

DAWN

Not exactly. I guess just anyone that your Dad touched in his life.

JOSH

Packed house then.

DAWN

I suppose.

JOSH

It had to be here?

DAWN

I guess it was in his will. How could I say no? Besides it's nice having you home...even considering the occasion.

JOSH

How are you?

DAWN

I'm good. Doctor says I check out just fine, could stand to do a little more exercise though... my joints ache a bit. Nothing Aleve can't handle!

JOSH

No I mean, are you ok?

DAWN

Oh...I'm not sure yet. I think so. It's more than I thought it'd be.

JOSH

Heavier?

DAWN

Yes.

JOSH

Was he in pain?

DAWN

Sadly I think a heart attack can be quite painful, but I think he was in some pain before that even.

JOSH

Good.

DAWN

I'm surprised you came.

*They sip their coffee over the casket. A moment.*

JOSH

Sarah, Molly, Brittany, Caitlin, Ann, Mary, and Brooke.

DAWN

I'm sorry?

JOSH

The girls I've dated since Laura. Those are their names.

DAWN

I see.

JOSH

They were all beautiful...in some way.

DAWN

That's...very nice.

JOSH

It's good to see you Mom.

DAWN

You too Josh.

*They sip their coffee and smile. Lights fade. Lights up on the kitchen/ dining room. It is the same except there is food platters and drinks everywhere. We either see a group of people in a quiet party like fashion or hear small crowd jabber from off stage, we can see DAWN clearing plates and refilling drinks and food platters. We see MEG standing in the corner, becoming good*

*friends with her drink. She is around 40 or 45, very attractive. Josh is in the other corner, uncomfortably avoiding crowds. He sees MEG. A moment. He approaches.*

JOSH

Kill me.

MEG

I'm sorry?

JOSH

You um, seem like you could use a refill.

MEG

That bad huh?

JOSH

No I only noticed cause I needed one too. Whatcha drinking?

MEG

What ever is strong.

*Josh takes out a flask from his coat. He pours some into her cup then into his.*

JOSH

Right now it's gin. I could get you some of that stuff from the bowl over there but let's leave it for the birds.

MEG

*(She smiles)*

Thanks.

JOSH

How'd you know him?

MEG



Humm?

*(Josh gestures over to the casket)*

Oh. Um, John and I worked together for a while.

JOSH

MMM...New York?

MEG

Yes, how did you know? Do you work there?

JOSH

You drink like New York.

MEG

What does that mean?

JOSH

It means cheer up. Drink like you're celebrating. Isn't that what this little shin dig is for.

MEG

I suppose. You two must have been close.

JOSH

Another?

MEG

It's early.

JOSH

It's a funeral.

MEG

Alright.

*(He pours her another pull from the flask.)*

I'm sorry I never got your name.

JOSH

Josh.

MEG

Just Josh?

JOSH

Just Josh. You?

MEG

Meg.

JOSH

Just Meg?

MEG

For now.

JOSH

Well just Meg for now, it was nice to meet you.

*He begins to walk away, to anywhere, anywhere at all.*

MEG

Thanks for the uh-

JOSH

No problem.

*Lights fade. Lights up on Josh's bedroom. It is covered in star wars memorabilia and the like. It apparently has been kept in museum condition since he moved out. The casket still remains center stage, although it now serves as a bed. Josh is sitting on the bed, about to light a cigarette. The window is open. Meg walks by she looks lost, Josh signals her into the room.*

MEG

I'm sorry I was looking for the bathroom.

JOSH

It's uh, down the hall on the left side.

MEG

Oh thanks...um hate to be a trouble but you think I could bum one of those.

Josh holds out his pack.

JOSH

Bum away.

MEG

Thanks. Whose room is this?

JOSH

Mine.

MEG

Starwars fan?

JOSH

So how did you know John?

MEG

We worked together.

*He lights her cigarette.*

JOSH

No one else from New York came. Nebraska came, Illinois, Kentucky, a California, even a Hawaii...but no one else from New York. No other work buddies.

MEG

Six huh?

JOSH

You are the only one not in tears about this. Everyone else clings to each other for comfort but you're out. You hold your drink. So, I guess what I meant to ask is why exactly are you here?

MEG

To pay my respects. Just like everyone else.

JOSH

You have a funny way of doing that.

MEG

So do you.

JOSH

Tell me this, what arrogant prick has a multi day wake?

MEG

Ha-ha. Everyone hanging around, wondering what he looks like.

JOSH

A wake with a closed casket.

MEG

It was a heart attack.

JOSH

Dead people are ugly.

MEG

We'd hate to have that.

JOSH

You're alive.

MEG

Is that your way of calling me pretty?

*Josh smiles. He sits on the casket and bides his time.*

MEG

When's the last time you used this room?

JOSH

High school.

MEG

Christmas? Thanksgiving?

JOSH

Do you really want to talk about Star Wars days?

MEG

No.

*Josh and Meg kiss. Passion. They lay across the casket and begin to un do each other clothes. Lights fade out. Lights up. Josh is seen closing the door. The casket opens. A man wearing a black suit, older but looking remarkably like Josh comes out. Closes the lid. then sits on the casket. He takes a cigarette and lights it. Josh seemingly doesn't notice. He crosses and sits on the casket next to the man, John.*

JOHN

I loved her.

JOSH

Meg? California? Nebraska? Hawaii?

JOHN

Dawn.

JOSH

Mom.

JOHN

She was one of a kind.

JOSH

They all are.

JOHN

Seriously, there is nothing like her. She was...something something I can't describe...even in after-

JOSH

Shut up. You loved mom like you love the girl in high school. You have no idea what love is at that rate, but you keep coming back to the "first love" because it is familiar, it's easy and safe.

JOHN

What are you? 25?

JOSH

What are you dead?

JOHN

You don't understand love. Your Mom, that was love. Real love.

JOSH

Fool me once shame on me, fool me six god damn times and it's a fucking franchising opportunity. How much of you is out there running around?

JOHN

Legacy is important.

JOSH

What's it like?

JOHN

I don't know, I mean love is complicated it's hard to discr-

JOSH

No I mean being dead.

JOHN

Oh. I don't know. Time is slower sometimes...faster others.

JOSH

So what did you see a bright light? How's Jesus or the Devil or Santa Clause or whatever the fuck is there?

JOHN

Nothing. There's nothing. Just...black.

JOSH

Numb.

JOHN

I don't really feel all that different.

*Josh and John both take out another cigarette and light it. Take a pull. Lights fade. Lights up on Josh curling up next to Meg. It is morning. Josh has been awake all night (not all that unusual for him) and Meg is just awaking. They are cozy on the casket.*

MEG

Good morning. I thought you'd slip out.

JOSH

Never.

MEG

Last night was great.

JOSH

It was.

MEG

You were um, well you were great you were...fuck what's the word?

JOSH

Familiar.

MEG

...That's mean.

Josh

You seduced me.

Meg

Did not.

Josh

You were snooping.

Meg

Josh...

JOSH

Meg I'm going to tell you something. I'm not gonna say don't freak out, you'd have every right, but if you don't it would be appreciated.

Meg.

Josh look I know this is weird-

Josh

I think I love you.

Meg

You- We just-

Josh



I don't know what it is. Maybe your hair. The curls. Maybe the brown eyes. You have such strong eyes. Those eyes can hold us both up when we're down.

Meg

Josh I don't know what to say I-

Josh

I don't believe in anything. No god, no higher power. No fate, but I do believe in love. I know it when I feel it. I can't promise you a house or white fences or a dog, but I can promise you all that I have while I have it.

MEG

So what do we do?

JOSH

I like that. You said we.

MEG

I – well I know I feeling and-

JOSH

Just step up and make the bold choice

MEG

I love you too. I just I didn't expect this. You're just- it's so complicated. What's our move?

JOSH

Nothing.

MEG

We just keep it a secret?

JOSH

No, we can't be.

MEG

I know it's weird but-

JOSH

I already know how this goes. We'll get close. We make plans, and I'll go. I'll run, you'll never see me again.

MEG

*(She starts to put on her clothes)*

Then why tell me all this?

JOSH

Wouldn't you want to know when someone loved you? When someone found you to be irritable? Wouldn't you want to know when someone made you *feel* something?

MEG

If I'm that great, then why not take a chance. I mean if age doesn't matter, and you don't care about the mess then why not?

JOSH

Eventually you'll see me. We'll sit down to dinner and the tone will change. We'll make love and I'll be somewhere else. You'll really see me. I'll hurt you. I'll inflict pain wrapped in flowers and trinkets and I'm sorrys. You'll love me, and want to see more, and you'll just find this monster...this cancer eating away at anything good we could have. When you finally see that, I'll be gone. No note. No call. I'll break you, and leave you to clean up after the mess I've made.

MEG

This was a mistake.

JOSH

Yes.

*(He takes out a cigarette)*

Tell me one thing.

MEG

What?

JOSH

Was I better?

MEG

Better?

JOSH

You know.

MEG

You were younger. More energy.

JOSH

You were younger once. More energy. Did you know you were the first?

MEG

For him? (Josh nods) Yes.

JOSH

How could you be sure?

MEG

He felt so guilty.

JOSH

For a year?

MEG

No it got better.

JOSH

And how did you feel?

MEG

Loved.

JOSH

And now?

MEG

Fucked.

JOSH

Do me a favor. When you go home and look at your son, don't think of how it looks like him. Think of how that little guy looks like me. The guy you fell in love with, even if only for ten minutes. The guy you fucked. You're old enough to be my mother. Do you know that? Did you do the math? Every time you see your son, you give him a hug, play ball with him, kiss him on the forehead, and think of a family you tore apart you fucking cunt.

MEG

(tears)

Good by Josh. (she goes to exit)

JOSH

Oh Meg. You really do have nice hair.

*Lights fade. Lights up on the dining room slash kitchen. Dawn and Josh are eating breakfast on their casket table.*

DAWN

Well this was nice. Having you home.

JOSH

Mom? How did you fall in love with him?

DAWN

Oh I don't know. He was charming. Cream?

JOSH

No. How did you move on?

DAWN

Well I realized that I never really loved him as much as I loved things about him.

JOSH

But you never moved on.

DAWN

Of course not. Why would I want to?

JOSH

I don't know closure?

DAWN

I got you out of the deal. Of course I don't want to move on. Sugar?

JOSH

No thanks.

DAWN

I do wish you would bring someone home every once in a while though. I like to check in on your life.

JOSH

I brought home Laura.

DAWN

You know I'm glad you broke it off with her. To be honest I never really liked her in the first place.

JOSH

I thought you loved her.

DAWN

She was fine but she smoked like a chimney. I don't like smokers. Ha that was one of the things that killed me about your dad...he smoked must have been a pack a day.

JOSH

Don't worry. I don't smoke.

*They eat breakfast. Lights fade.*