



THE ETHICS OF “MERCY KILLING” AND “ASSISTED SUICIDE”

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- ✓ **POST-VIEWING LESSON/ACTIVITY**
- ✓ **TYPE:** POINTS TO PONDER, DISCUSS OR WRITE ABOUT
- ✓ **SUITABILITY:** GRADE 10-12

The Trespassers – 5th Script Segment – (Act 2, pp. 85 – 87)

Lowell describes the afternoon when he, Roxy and Hardy are in the Anderson Orchard and Hardy is fatally shot by an unknown gunman. Milton suspects it was Lowell which raises the question: why would you kill someone you loved?

Lowell: On the afternoon of the twenty first of September, I left my grandfather at the back of the Anderson house and I went around to the front. The sun was shining. It was warm. I peeked in the front window to see what I could see inside. Suddenly, I heard a shot ring out. For a second I was stunned and I didn't move, and then I saw a blue truck take off from the premises. I ran around to the back of the house and that's where I discovered my grandfather, lying on the ground, bleeding. He had a smile on his face. It looked kind of weird I remember thinking. My mother always said we would get caught trespassing. I guess she was right.

Roxy: It was the only way to go.

Cash: There's no evidence to suggest anything conclusive.

Lowell: I saw a guy in a blue truck is all.

Cash: I was at work at the time.

Roxy: I heard a gunshot. I think I heard a vehicle.

Lowell: And that's all I know.

Cash: Murder is against God's law.

Roxy: Case dismissed.

Lowell: It's the fifth commandment; is that right, Mom?

Cash: Our lives belong to God, and God will take them when he sees fit.

(Cash disappears)

Roxy: And anyway, why would you kill someone you loved?

(Roxy disappears)

Milton: Good question.

(Milton closes his briefcase)

Lowell: I looked at him, just lying there in all that blood. He smiled at me, kind of. I said, ‘you wonder why it has to end. You wonder, Grandpa.’ ‘No’ he said –

Hardy: You don’t wonder. It just does.

(Milton disappears)

Hardy: You hold on, you do your best; at the end of the night, you cash in your chips and you go home.

Lowell: This is your home.

Hardy: That’s right, Lowell.

Lowell: I read about a crime in one of grandpa’s stash of crime magazines; an old man who murdered his wife because she was sick and he didn’t want her to suffer.

Hardy: There’s no crime in that.

Cash: I’m sending you to a place where they can look after you, Lowell; and we’ll hear no more about this.

Lowell: I’m going away where they can look after me, and that’ll be the end of it. Except for one more thing. I saw Grandpa stand up, I mean right there – I’m not kidding – I saw him stand up, out of that pool of blood, and walk back into the orchard. I’m not kidding about this. He walked back into the orchard. He took a peach off a tree and he was gone.

(Hardy waves goodbye. A single light on Lowell. He smiles. Blackout)

The End

POINTS TO PONDER

About the accusation that Lowell shot his grandfather, Roxy asks, “*why would you kill someone you loved?*” Lowell offers an answer based on a story he read in his grandpa’s crime magazines where “*an old man...murdered his wife because she was sick and he didn’t want her to suffer.*” His suffering, terminally ill, Grandpa Hardy, whose life appears to end at the hands of someone who loves him, affirms Lowell’s answer, saying, “*There is no crime in that.*”

What examples of “mercy killing” or “assisted suicide” are known to you? What ethical issues are raised by such actions? How do various jurisdictions deal with such cases?

Before Lowell is institutionalized, he shares a vision of his grandfather after he was shot. He says that he “*saw him stand up, out of that pool of blood, and walk back into the orchard...He took a peach off a tree and was gone.*” **What is Lowell trying to convey through his vision? How is this vision related to the third script segment where Lowell believes that the man sleeping under an orchard tree is an angel? What does it say about the way family and friends view the ending of the life of a loved one?**

Please note:

Part 1: Story, Background, Creators, Characters and Glossary is available for downloading at VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM

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