



DEATH OF A LOVED ONE; LETTING GO

BY DR. WARREN MCKINNON

UBC, CONTINUING EDUCATION | MEMBER, VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE TEACHER ADVISORY BOARD (VPTAB)

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

This – 7th Script Segment – (pp. 128 – 132)

Marrell: Tell Me What To Do Before You Go

Jean-Pierre: About what

Marrell: (*gesturing toward Tom and Jane*) About this

Jean-Pierre: Why Americans are so threatened by nature So you have a body and you have another body and these bodies do what bodies do Fantastic (*He starts to leave.*)

Marrell: But this is upsetting

Jean-Pierre: (*lifting up his manila folder*)

Non THIS is upsetting This (*pointing vaguely in the direction of Jane and Tom before asking Alan*) What's that word you taught me about your life

Alan: (?) Dinky

(*Jean-Pierre smiles and walks to the door, then exits.*)

Alan: Oh no

Jane: (*really drunk by now*) Oh no

Marrell: (*to Tom and Jane*) Where When How many times Was it fun

Tom: The other day

Jane: Once

(*SLIGHT PAUSE*)

Marrell: Why

(*Tom moves toward Marrell, but she avoids him and goes to Alan for comfort instead. Jane crawls over to the door. She picks up the paper bag containing Roy's ashes and then crawls into the kitchen. She struggles to stand up, succeeds, and then manages to put the paper bag up on top of the fridge.*)

Marrell: What are you doing

Jane: He's better off on top of your fridge Marrell

Tom: Who

Marrell & Jane & Alan: Roy

Marrell: Get your husband off my fridge Jane

Jane: Please Marrell Your fridge is so much more of a beautiful place than mine

Tom: (?) Roy's in there

Jane: Please take him

Marrell: No

Jane: I'm begging you Marrell

Marrell: Don't do that Jane

Jane: This is horrible

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

Marrell: Fine Roy can stay but you're out

Jane: I'm out

Marrell: Yes you're out

(PAUSE. Marrell passes the paper bag back to Jane, who accepts it.)

You should take Roy home

Jane: I'm sorry

Marrell: You should give him a proper place to spend eternity

Jane: I know I know but

Marrell: What

Jane: If I treat him like he's really dead then that will mean that he's not just Out Of Town *(Jane stares at the paper bag.)* Death has got to be stopped Marrell

Marrell: I know

Jane: I mean What are the people left behind supposed to do

(?) Live

(Jane has opened up the bag and the metal container within it and is staring down at the ashes. She reaches her hand inside the metal container and feels the ashes. Then, she brings a small amount of ashes up to her lips and rubs them against them.)

Jane: Down with death *(She reaches her hand into the bag again and rubs some ashes on her face and chest, her arms, etc., smoothing them in while repeating:)*

Down with death Down With Death DOWN WITH DEATH DOWN WITH DEATH/DOWN WITH DEATH *(etc.)*

POINTS TO PONDER

Jean-Pierre dismisses Marrell's distress and wonders "*why Americans are so threatened by nature.*" He considers Tom and Jane's sexual encounter a "*natural*" relationship. In a word borrowed from Alan, he describes it as "*dinky*" or inconsequential and makes his exit. Jean-Pierre sees himself as un-American perhaps in relation to the American emphasis on righteousness and retribution in all relationships.

Using the philosophical analysis of Charles Taylor, Jean-Pierre is probably someone who holds the undisturbed, indifferent view that "*nothing is demanded of us; we have no destiny which we are called to achieve, on pain of damnation, or divine retribution, or some terminal discord with ourselves*" (p. 367, *A Secular Age*). However, Jane and Marrell do not embrace such a perspective. When Alan questions the "*exalted concept*" of shame, Jane explains its purpose: "*Because it means you have a gauge for conduct for behaviour. People do stupid things when they ignore the gauge*" (p. 63). Marrell affirms Jane's behaviour "*gauge*" noting that her "*moral compass is true*" (p. 51).

If you have a moral compass or behaviour gauge, how much of it is based on the fear of consequences from beyond yourself and how much is framed from within your own mind?

Roy's ashes remain on top of Jane's fridge a year after his death. She imagines that "*he enjoys the hum.*" Her friends, Alan and Marrell, recommend that she "*spread them somewhere maybe*" (Alan) and "*in a place that he loved*" (Marrell). Because of her ongoing relationship with Roy ("*he's laughing somewhere right now*"), she wonders why Marrell seems so concerned about Roy's feelings about throwing "*a person's ashes into a situation he would have found scary when he was alive.*" Jane is dealing with her ambivalence about letting go of Roy, saying, "*If I treat him like he's really dead then that will mean that he's not just Out Of Town.*" Finally, instead of leaving Roy's ashes on a fridge again (Marrell's), in an inebriated state, she takes the ashes out the metal container and ritually rubs Roy's ashes against her lips, face, chest and arms, repeatedly crying out, "*Down with death DOWN WITH DEATH.*"

Charles Taylor, in his book, *A Secular Age*, writes: *"Sometimes the dying will ask their loved ones to make no fuss over them, hold no ceremony, just cremate and move on...The aim can be to glide through the whole affair, smoothly and as much as possible painlessly...The cost is a denial of the issue of meaning itself...a need for meaning, a desire for eternity."* (p.723) For Taylor, when you connect death with meaning the first issue we face is *"what we have lived for"* and the second is *"the struggle to hold on to the meaning while (unavoidably) letting go"* of the deceased person.

**In answering the question – what we have lived for? – what meaning do you connect with a loved one's death?
How do you hold on to that meaning while letting go of the deceased person?**

Please note:

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or Meredith Elliott at **604 629 2097** / melliott@vancouverplayhouse.com

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