

LAST WORDS

A one act play

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A brother and sister do battle at their father's funeral.

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Scene

A funeral home. The stage is set with two chairs and a podium.

Characters

Gus: Early 40s. Formally dressed. Put upon.

Kristin: Early 40s. Formally dressed. Supercilious.

LAST WORDS

A funeral. Gus stands facing the audience. Kristin sits in a chair to the side. They are both in their early 40s.

GUS

I hope you enjoyed that photo montage of my father's life put together by my sister Kristin. It was incredibly comprehensive, it felt like over 800 slides.

Kristin waves.

GUS

And in case you were wondering. The musical accompaniment was by Kristin's son Donald alternating between harmonica and I wanna say recorder.

Kristin shakes her head no.

GUS

I'll go with recorder, and the songs played were --
(Looks at a very long piece
of paper)
"Toot Toot Tootsie, Goodbye," "Stairway to Heaven," "The Theme from the Munsters," -- maybe I'll put the complete list up on the web site. Great job Donald. Now, my sister will say a few words.

Kristin gets up. She occasionally dabs her eye with a handkerchief but she has not been crying.

KRISTIN

My dad was like a soaring eagle. He was like the cruel laugh of the ocean. In the summer, he was like a heliotrope bouquet, and in the winter, like an arrangement of mums.

(beat)

And of course, in the Fall, Baby's Breath.

(beat)

The true tragedy is that Dad will never know that my son, Donald has just gotten into Harvard. In retrospect, I should have told Dad the moment we heard but honestly, I never dreamed the sands of time were closing in so quickly.

We can only imagine how Dad would feel upon hearing this fantastic, but totally expected news. Way to go Donald! Dad loved hearing about his grandson's success. Our success lives on, but Dad does not. So, Dad, you are my mentor, my advisor, my doctor, my confidante, my best friend, my font of wisdom, my plumber. I don't know how I'll get by without you. You leave a hole inside me like an infected bullet wound. Goodbye Dad.

(She is about to leave then
says)

Oh, and Dad's Picasso -- I know he would have wanted me to have it.

Kristin sits down. Gus gets up.

GUS

Thank you, Kristin for that heartfelt, tribute. Even though it went longer than we agreed, it was lovely.

(beat)

When we talk about my father, he led such a long a varied life that we have to know which person we're talking about. Troy the cardiologist? Troy the father and provider? Troy the old and embittered man, constantly complaining to me that his children didn't visit, even though I was clearly there. Troy, the man who carefully read through any legal documents - - like a will for example -- to make sure he understood what he was signing in front of witnesses. Rest in peace, Dad.

Kristin gets up again and takes
the podium.

KRISTIN

I have to add one more thing.

GUS

We have a schedule.

KRISTIN

Two minutes. Promise.

(she faces the audience)

Whenever I would speak to Dad on the phone, which was practically every night, we'd talk about many things. The importance of good conversation. How amazing the phone was. It was as good as an actual visit.

And when I gave him an ipad for his birthday, which cost over two thousand dollars, I fully expected to transform my long distance hug fests from sound to picture. "The ipad has a picture phone," I explained to Dad, "like in the Worlds Fair." Unfortunately, Dad was denied that final joy as no one was able to connect the ipad to the internet. My cash outlay was wasted. Still, Dad was so overjoyed by the generous gift of the ipad that he offered to change his will. I will testify to that in court if necessary. Dad, you can never be replaced. Goodbye.

Kristin leaves the podium, Gus returns.

GUS

(Still calm)

Thanks again, for those heart-rending words, sis. Before I continue I have one announcement to make. We are now behind schedule by ten minutes. We have to vacate the funeral home promptly at 11. Uncle Morris, I'm sorry, we have to bump you. I know you flew in from Chicago, but you know Kristin. And that reminds me of a story about Dad. An ipad arrived at the house one day, which confused Dad in an amusing way. He thought it was a badly designed frisbee. I'm sorry that I never had the time to order the complete rewiring of Dad's house in order to use a technology that was as foreign to him as the companionship of his daughter. I was too busy just keeping him fed, clothed and alive. Besides, after he flung the ipad at Jasmine, the home health aid, it was pretty useless. It's still lodged in the bedroom wall.

(beat)

The Picasso is mine.

Gus leaves the podium and Kristin returns.

KRISTIN

Dad was deeply disappointed in his son. Deeply. "Gus never applies himself to anything," Dad told me on numerous occasions. "And he's stealing too!" Of course how could I believe my father was telling the truth -- about the stealing. I was this close to hiring a forensic accountant. But I trust my brother -- even though Dad didn't. See you soon Dad. In our hall we have a picture of you, and a spot, right next to it, for the Picasso. It's specially lit with designer LED lights. It will look lovely.

Kristin and Gus again trade places.

GUS

(now showing his annoyance)

We were going to have a performance by the Bell Ringers of Saint Anthony's, doing a tribute to my father, written by Pastor Michael, but again, apologies. The clock is relentless and if my sister doesn't understand the importance of time management, it can't be helped. OK, let's not dance around the fact that my father had Alzheimer's when he died. Sure, if you weren't around day to day you might have missed subtle signs, like the fact that he started wearing his clothes backwards, or his insistence that he had been kidnapped and was now living in Dunkirk. Gosh, there's so many examples to choose from. Here's one amusing story. One day, Dad started telling coon jokes. And while he couldn't remember what day it was, he sure could remember a ton of coon jokes, each more excruciating than the next. We went through many aids around that time. It was difficult, to say the least. Some might say I should be compensated for the stress of caring for an elderly, not particularly nice man. But how can you put a price on family love and devotion? I can't, but fortunately I don't have to.

(takes a piece of paper out
of his jacket)

Oh, and this is my Power of Attorney.

Gus leaves the podium waving the Power of Attorney at Kristin. Kristin goes to the podium again. She pulls out her own piece of paper

KRISTIN

(reading)

This is one of the last letters Dad sent me. "Help me. I'm in jail for the gold. Strangers eat my apple. Take." I ask you, does that sound like a man receiving quality care? To me it sounds like a man who has begun to question the motives of family. I don't know who is eating Dad's apple. Possibly cousin Fred. I know Dad was upset to learn that cousin Fred was going to Community College -- a fact apparently hidden from him, as each time I mentioned it, he reacted as if he had heard it for the first time.

I won't let Dad's legacy be distorted. I am forced to engage a lawyer to preserve his legacy. Thank you.

Kristin leaves, Gus starts to go to the podium and they bump into each other. Kristin pushes Gus.

GUS

My son Fred just completed his GED, we're very proud. I sometimes feel I haven't had as much time to devote to my son as I would have liked. I wonder why. I wonder where my focus has been for the past three years. I'm reminded of the story of Henny Penny, or the Little Red Turkey. The one about the animal who did all the work and everyone wanted to glom onto what he did. Everyone wanted to eat the bread but no one wanted to take care of the bread when it was old and wearing diapers! And it was horrible bread too! Mean and nasty smelly bread. Anyway that was Dad's favorite story and it reminds me of my sister. Where was she when Dad wanted to watch Torture Porn all night? Oh, right, that's what Dad had in common with Donald. When Donald came to visit, that was their great bonding moment -- Torture Porn! You might want to take a look in Donald's bedroom, by the way. One of his drawers has a false bottom. Next to pay tribute --

Kristin launches herself at Gus and they begin tussling.

KRISTIN

You don't....deserve.....the Picasso!

GUS

(to audience)

The tribute....from Dad's Combat unit... is cancelled.

Kristin and Gus fall to the floor. They each take a deep breath and try to compose themselves. Kristin gets up first.

KRISTIN

(to audience)

If you are interested in making a contribution to honor this extraordinary man, my father -

GUS

-- **my** father.

KRISTIN

Dad requested that contributions be made to --

GUS

Doctors Without borders -

KRISTIN

World Peace Foundation

Kristin and Gus look at each other and begin strangling each other.

Black out.