

VIRGINIA THROWS A WAKE

A comedy

CHARACTERS
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

ANN FLYNN:	In her late 30s, she is the daughter of Francis and Virginia. Her parents are currently living in the home she shares with her husband, Ted. Ann is a bit bull-headed and easily flustered. She can have a sharp tongue when challenged or stressed.
VIRGINIA DOYLE:	In her mid 70s, she is the devoted wife of Francis. She is a hard headed, Catholic woman of Irish heritage. When Virginia has made a decision, no one stands in her way be it her children or the Pope himself.
FRANCIS DOYLE:	In his mid 70s, Francis has come to a bad time in life where he is experiencing dementia. He is still a handsome elegant gentleman who is loved by his wife, Virginia
TED FLYNN:	In his late 30s, Ted is a lawyer and husband of Ann. He is the ultimate good guy who graciously accepted Virginia and Francis into their home to live. Ted can be a little flippant sometimes which can irk Virginia.
JACK DOYLE:	In his early 40s, Jack is the son of Francis and Virginia. He lives in Chicago and leads a life Virginia finds less than Catholic. Jack is a good son under it all, but can be a little blunt sometimes.
BETH RUIZ:	In her late 20s or early 30s, Beth is Jack's current girlfriend. She works for the federal government. She is of Mexican heritage.
MAURICE HAMPTON:	In his 50s, Maurice is the African-American owner of Shaugnessy's Funeral Home. He is elegant, poised and can BS with the best of them when needed.

ERIC: In his 20s, Eric is Hampton's assistant. He speaks only in ASL and has aspirations of being the first Sign Language Rapper. Despite his position in the funeral home, Eric tends to dress a bit "gangsta".

WANG: 30ish of Chinese heritage. He is a member of a Chinese mob -- more Mafia, than street .

HONG: 30ish also of Chinese heritage and partner in crime of Wong.

SETTING:

We are in the family room of a middle class mid-western family living in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri. The house is a traditional style house built sometime in the 1960s with an open floorplan that allows the kitchen and family room to run together. It is comfortably furnished. This is the home of ANN and TED FLYNN. There are hallways leading off to the bedrooms and bathrooms on one side and a hall leading to the sun porch and garage on the other side. Upstage is a door that opens to the outside rear of the house. Through a large window we see the pleasant yard of the Flynn family. By the color of the trees, it is autumn. At the moment, the furniture in the room has been pushed aside to accommodate a large dining table that is dressed for Thanksgiving.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

LIGHTS UP ON:

AT THE RISE:

ANN FLYNN is finishing the preparation of the table. She places a basket of dinner rolls and two open bottles of wine on the table. She crosses downstage to the TV and with the remote turns on the set. In progress is the Thanksgiving Parade, band music, crowd sounds, etc.

The telephone rings and Ann turns down the TV volume and answers.

ANN

Happy Thanksgiving... Oh, hi, Jack. Where are you? You're not bailing on me are you because I am not explaining to Mom why once again you had something more important than family... I say that because you are always irresponsible... What?... Oh, sorry. I just assumed you would be the usual self-indulgent Jack.... I said, "Happy Thanksgiving." But that was before I knew it was you... Can we save our annual sibling holiday arguments until you get here? The turkey's in the oven so... How do you think Dad is? The same as he's been for the last two years. We need to talk about this, Jack. His condition is only getting worse. Something needs to be done...

Virginia enters from the bedrooms. She is in her seventies and is dressed in a robe and has her hair in curlers.

VIRGINIA

Who's on the phone?

ANN

Jack.

(on phone)

No, I'm talking to Mom.

VIRGINIA

(grabbing phone from Ann)

Jack, this is your mother. If you are not coming to this Thanksgiving and you waited until the last minute... All right then, you'd better be here.

Virginia hangs up the phone.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Jack will be here. He's a good boy. Stop rotting your brain on that television and set the table, Ann.

Virginia clicks off the TV with the remote. She starts to go, touching the curlers, stops.

ANN

I'm working on it, Mother.

VIRGINIA

What time did the girl say I should take my curlers out?

ANN

I think you can take them out now.

VIRGINIA

But what time did the girl say?

ANN

I don't know, Mother. I wasn't paying attention.

VIRGINIA

Maybe I should telephone her.

ANN

It's Thanksgiving. She won't be open. I can't believe you have more respect for the opinion of a beautician than your daughter who happens to have a Master's Degree.

VIRGINIA

Not in hair. I'll give them five more minutes.

Virginia exits towards the bedrooms.

ANN

God, give me patience. It's my television and I'll watch what I want.

Ann turns the television back on and defiantly increases the volume. She exits to the kitchen.

FRANCIS DOYLE, in his seventies, enters from the bedrooms. He moves cautiously. He is dressed in pajamas and wears a pair of slippers. He seems lost. He stops and regards the room with wonder as if this is the first time he has been here. The sounds from the television attract his attention. Francis wanders over and stands in front of the TV. He is mesmerized by what he sees. A loud sound from the parade startles him.

FRANCIS

Ah...!

He recoils and bumps into the table. He turns to see what he hit and notices the bottles of wine. He picks up a bottle, looks it over, sniffs it then begins to drink from the bottle.

Ann enters carrying plates for the table. She sees Francis in mid-gulp.

ANN

Dad, stop.

Francis dodges around the table carrying the bottle and drinking when he can. Ann is doing her best to catch him.

ANN (CONT)

Dad... stop... Mom...! Give me the bottle...

FRANCIS

I don't like you, Lucy Wheeler.

ANN

No, Dad, it's your daughter, Ann. Come on give me the bottle.

Virginia races in.

VIRGINIA

What is going on... ?

(sees Francis)

Francis, stop it. Put down that bottle.

FRANCIS

No... Lucy started it.

Francis pummels Virginia and Ann with dinner rolls.

VIRGINIA

Ann, you know your father can't take too much stimulation.

Virginia turns off the television.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

You need to think about what you're doing when you're around your father, Ann. He's not well. He needs love and attention.

ANN

I think taking him and you into my home for two years qualifies as 'love and attention'.

VIRGINIA

(sweetly)

Yes, dear, it does and we are very thankful to you and Ted.

ANN

Okay... sorry...

VIRGINIA

But it wouldn't hurt you to step up your game.

(to Francis)

Come with me, darling, it's time for you shower.

FRANCIS

Virginia?

VIRGINIA

It's me, my sweet. Come on.

He sees Ann as if for the first time.

FRANCIS

Who is that girl?

VIRGINIA

That's Ann, our daughter.

Strokes Virginia's curler-laden hair.

FRANCIS

I like your hair.

VIRGINIA

Thank you, dear.

They start to the bedroom.

ANN

He called me Lucy Wheeler. Who is Lucy Wheeler?

VIRGINIA

A little tramp who used to taunt your father and do rude things to him when they were children.

ANN

And you still hold a grudge?

VIRGINIA

Has Jesus forgiven the Devil? I will never let anyone hurt my Francis.

(to Francis)

Will I, darling? You are the kindest most loving man I ever met. I'm here to take care of you and always will be.

ANN

That's sweet, mom.

VIRGINIA

Thank you. Put the bread back on the table.

ANN

It's been on the floor.

VIRGINIA

Don't waste food, Ann. Think of the poor people in China.

Virginia and Francis exit. Ann picks up the dinner rolls, dust them off and replaces them.

ANN

There are no poor people in China anymore. They have all our jobs and loan us money.

Through the window, we see TED FLYNN arriving. He wears sweats and has been running.

ANN (CONT)

Good run?

TED

(trying to catch his breath)

Great. My knees hurt, my lungs are on fire and I think I might throw up, but oh so refreshing.

ANN

Dad went off the deep end again.

TED

Was it funny?

ANN

It's not funny, Ted. It's sad. He was swigging from the wine bottle and hurling dinner rolls at me and Mom.

TED

Sounds funny to me.

ANN

Ted... This is just getting worse and worse.

TED

I know, hon.

ANN

It's hard enough watching what's happening to Dad, but it's really taking a toll on Mom. I try to be supportive. I mean, that's my father... But I don't know how much longer I can take it. Especially now...

(touches her belly)

She's becoming impossible to be around. Our relationship has always been... I don't know... argumentative, combative... but this... This is bad, Ted.

TED

(holds her)

Okay, okay... We'll get through this together, honey. We always do. Are you going to talk to her about doing something with your Dad? Professional help...?

ANN

Not now. Maybe after Thanksgiving.

TED

Then it will be Christmas.

ANN

So after Christmas.

TED

Then New Years, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day -- Oh Lord, definitely can't say anything on St. Patrick's...

ANN

I just need time, Ted. Time to figure out how to handle this

TED

Ann, I'm not trying to push them out. I'm just concerned about the situation. It's taking its toll on you as well and that's the last thing you need right now.

ANN

I know. I know. I'd just like her to have a little bit of happiness this holiday season after the year she's had with Dad. This isn't going to get better, is it?

TED

No, honey, it's not. When Jack gets here you should talk with him about this. It might be time to put Francis in a nursing home? Did you mention that to Jack?

ANN

Yes, but I called it an assisted living facility. I thought that sounded less like water boarding.

TED

And what did he say?

ANN

He said if we do that Mom will go crazy.

TED

Shouldn't that be "crazier".

ANN

Ted...

TED

Sorry. But he's not wrong. She will not take it very well.

ANN

I know, I know. She has to be in charge of everything. I don't know how much longer I can deal with her. I'm an adult married woman with a Masters Degree but she treats me like I'm a child... worse an idiot child.

From the bedroom area, Virginia races in. She is frantic. Virginia is now in a full slip.

VIRGINIA

The turkey. Did anyone check on the turkey?

TED

Not my job.

VIRGINIA

Cover your eyes, Ted.

Ted does as told.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Stop lollygagging, Ann. There's work to do.

Virginia continues off to the kitchen.

ANN

(calling after her)

Turkey's fine, Mom. I just looked at it.

TED

How long has it been in the oven?

ANN

Seven hours.

TED

Jesus. It's going to be shoe leather.

ANN
(whispering)

I turned the heat down.

Virginia crosses towards the bedrooms. Ted
recovers his eyes.

VIRGINIA
The heat was too low. Do I have to do everything? The turkey won't be cooked enough.
We'll probably all die of food poisoning. Ann, you forgot to get my dress from the dry
cleaners.

ANN
I didn't forget.

VIRGINIA
It's not in my closet. That's where it would be, but it's not there, so you must have
forgotten.

ANN
Take a breath, mother. It's hanging on the sun porch.

VIRGINIA
Why in God's name would you hang my dress on the sun porch where all the neighbors
can see it? We are not shanty Irish, Ann. We do not hang our laundry in the yard.

ANN
I hung it on the porch, because you always complain about the smell of the cleaning
products so I thought I'd air it out before you wore it.

VIRGINIA
I do not complain. I never complain.
(to Ted)
You smell bad.

TED
Just going to shower, Virginia.

VIRGINIA
And wear the gray suit for dinner, not one of your athletic costumes.

TED
Yes, ma'am.

Virginia exits towards the sun porch.

TED (CONT)
(referring to Virginia)

Crazy, we have lift off.

ANN

Mom's not crazy, just Irish -- worse, Irish Catholic. She believes that she and only she can possibly have all the correct answers. Did you know she Tweets with the Pope?

TED

Really?

ANN

Yes. She's concerned his modern attitude is a bad choice. Her last Tweet was to remind him that there is no mention in the Bible of Jesus ever taking a poll. She's making me nuts. She never listens to anything I have to say. You know how she can get.

TED

Yes, but she can be amusing. I love when she doesn't want to hear what you're saying she sings...

(sings)

"Oh, Danny Boy..."

ANN

At the top of her voice.

TED

You've got to admit that's kind of funny.

ANN

Do you see me laughing? What am I going to do, Ted? This is becoming a real problem.

TED

Okay, calm down.

He hugs her. She pulls her head away.

ANN

Whew, you do smell bad.

(then)

Oh my God, I'm becoming her. Promise you'll shoot me if that happens.

TED

You have my word.

Ann hugs Ted but pinches her nose with her fingers.

TED (CONT)

I worry about you, honey. Since she's been living here, you are always stressed out. I don't think that can go on much longer. The doctor said you need to watch your blood pressure, especially now. We're going to have to do something about your father soon.

ANN

I know. Let's just wait until after Thanksgiving.

TED

Okay. I'm going to grab a shower.

Ted kisses Ann then exits to the bedrooms. Ann continues to prepare the table.

Through the window we see JACK DOYLE and BETH RUIZ arriving. Beth carries a large potted plant. Jack opens the door and enters. Beth stays in the doorway. Jack crosses to Ann and embraces her.

JACK

The Prodigal Son returns.

ANN

Jack...

JACK

Happy Thanksgiving.

ANN

God, I hope so.

JACK

Smells good in here. Sorry to be late. The plane was delayed.

ANN

It's been a while since you visited your parents. I'm surprised you remembered where I live.

JACK

I just plugged hovel into the GPS.

ANN

Funny.

He hands Ann the bottles.

JACK

How's Mom doing? She handling Dad's situation okay?

ANN

Were you raised by a different mother? No, she's not handling 'Dad's situation' okay. Nobody's handling this 'okay'. There is nothing 'okay' about any of this situation.

JACK

Take a breath, Ann. You always were over-emotional.

Ann releases a loud sound of frustration.

JACK (CONT)

Listen, I thought about our phone conversation about Dad and I've come to a conclusion.

ANN

Have you?

JACK

Very simple. You are not putting him in a home. Forget it. Not gonna happen on my watch.

ANN

Oh, okay... good... glad you worked that out. Lucky break that plane was delayed or you wouldn't have had time to come up with a solution.

JACK

You want to get snitty or you want to hear my plan?

ANN

(sees Beth)

There's someone at the door.

JACK

Pay attention for five minutes.

ANN

(to Beth)

Be just a minute...

BETH
(meaning the opposite)

Not a problem...

ANN

We've been through this. Dad's condition is rapidly deteriorating and soon Mom won't be able to take care of him and Ted and I would like to have our lives back.

JACK

I get that. So... you want to hear my idea?

ANN

No, because I know it will be ridiculous.

JACK

Dad and Mom can come live with me.

ANN

What?

JACK

In Chicago.

ANN

Oh, I'd pay money to see that.

JACK

You don't think I can take care of them as well as you have?

ANN

You have no idea...

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

Ann... I need you to zip me up.

JACK

I'll help Mom. Think about it. Dad always loved Chicago. Where is Mom?

ANN

On the sun porch.

Jack exits thru the kitchen.

JACK

Mom...?

Ann watches him go. She goes to Beth. Beth is feeling awkward and nervous.

ANN

(Uncertain of the situation.)

Hi...? Sorry...

BETH

(Shyly.)

Hi. I'm Beth.

ANN

Beth? Ann...

(Is there more.)

This might sound stupid, but -- Are you with Jack or just delivering that plant?

BETH

With Jack. He asked me to come with him.

ANN

From the florist?

BETH

From Chicago.

ANN

Of course. Come in, please. Sorry you had to hear all that.

BETH

That's all right.

ANN

Families...

BETH

(Entering.)

Yes. May I use your bathroom? We've been rushing since the airport and I haven't had the chance...

ANN

Sure -- wait, I'd better check that nobody's in it.

Ann starts towards the bathroom and meets Ted on his way out. He's dressed in his gray suit as commanded.

ANN (CONT)

You finished in the bathroom.

TED

Yeah.

(Noticing Beth. Aside to Ann.)

Who's that?

ANN

(Sotto voce.)

Jack brought a date to our festive commit Dad holiday dinner.

(To Beth.)

I'll just make sure the bathroom's presentable.

Ann exits to the bathroom. Ted crosses to Beth, who clearly needs to get to the bathroom.

TED

(Offers his hand.)

Hi, I'm Ted. I'm Ann's husband.

BETH

Nice to meet you.

Beth is squirming uncomfortably.

TED

Are you okay?

BETH

I need to use the rest room.

Ann returns carrying a couple of wet towels.

ANN

You can use the bathroom now.

TED

I'm going to go pick up the pies. I'll be back in five.

ANN

Okay. Here throw these in the dryer on your way out.

Ted exits towards the kitchen. Jack enters with Virginia, who is dressed for dinner, but not yet brushed. Virginia is glaring towards Beth. They cross paths with Ted.

TED

Hey, Jack, welcome to the mad house.

JACK

Thanks.

Ted continues off

BETH

The bathroom...?

ANN

Oh, sorry. Down that hall. First door on the left and the flush is kind of broken, so jiggle the handle.

BETH

Okay. Thank you.

Beth starts towards the hallway as

JACK

Beth, hang on.

BETH

Oh God...

Beth stops.

JACK

I want you to meet my mom.

BETH

Oh...

Beth glances wishfully towards the hallway, then crosses to Jack and Virginia.

BETH (CONT)

Hello, Mrs. Doyle.

(offering the plant)

This is for you. Happy Thanksgiving.

VIRGINIA

(Coolly.)

Thank you, dear. What is it? Corn?

BETH

It's a Bird of Paradise.

ANN

Boy, did you get the wrong house.

VIRGINIA

Don't be smart, Ann. Take the plant. Put it near the window.

Ann takes the plant as instructed.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

(As if she's invisible.)

What's the girl's name, Jack?

Ann places the plant upstage near the window.

JACK

Beth. Beth Ruiz.

VIRGINIA

Ruiz? That sounds foreign.

JACK

She's half Spanish. Like us.

VIRGINIA

We're not Spanish, Jack. We're Irish.

JACK

Black Irish. That's half Spanish, right? Because when the Spanish Armada was wrecked a lot of Spaniards swam ashore and raped the Irish women, right? And made a lot of dark-haired babies.

VIRGINIA

Get your mind out of the gutter, Jack. We're Irish. One hundred per cent Irish blood.

BETH

Could you excuse me, Mrs. Doyle? I need to use the bathroom.

VIRGINIA

Of course, dear.

Beth crosses rapidly to the bathroom.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Jack, explain to me why you would bring your paramour to a family dinner?

JACK

God, I'm barely in the house and you're all over me.

ANN

Now it's a true Doyle holiday.

VIRGINIA

I just think you might show a little more respect for your family than to turn up with some strumpet.

JACK

Jesus -- She is not a strumpet.

VIRGINIA

I don't know what else you'd call a woman who shacks up with a man who is not her husband.

JACK

This is not nineteenth century Dublin. Times change.

VIRGINIA

Really? Because if a supplement to the Ten Commandments was issued, I didn't get my copy. Set another place at the table for the girl.

ANN

You can get a chair from the sun porch.

Jack exits through the kitchen in search of a chair.

There is a **SCREAM** from off stage in the area of the bathrooms.

ANN (CONT)

I think Beth just met Dad.

Beth enters looking horrified.

BETH

Sorry. There was a man in the hallway waving his... his...

VIRGINIA

The word is penis, dear. I'm sure you're familiar with it.

(to Ann)

Are you going to get dressed for dinner?

ANN

I am dressed.

Virginia looks her over.

VIRGINIA

If you say so.

ANN

What? What's wrong with what I'm wearing?

VIRGINIA

It's a bit... floral. Doesn't really feel like something appropriate for Thanksgiving dinner.

ANN

Sorry. I've got nothing with turkey feathers.

VIRGINIA

Don't be smart. I'm going to get your father ready.

Virginia exits to the bedrooms as Jack enters carrying a chair. It's more of a patio chair than a dinner chair.

BETH

(commiserating with Ann)

Families...

ANN

Right?

JACK

This is all I could find.

Jack works the chair into a place at the table.

JACK (CONT)

I could use a drink. You have any booze, Ann?

ANN

In the sideboard.

Jack crosses and retrieves a bottle of Jameson whiskey and several glasses.

JACK

You want a drink, hon?

BETH

God, yes.

Jack pours.

JACK

Ann...?

ANN

(hesitantly)

Yes but no.

JACK

You live with this madwoman and you're not drinking? What's going on?

ANN

Well... I was saving it, but I have an announcement.

JACK

You're pregnant.

ANN

Yeah...

JACK

Thought you looked a little puffy.

ANN

Bite me. I was going to tell Mom at dinner. I thought maybe that would make it easier to accept ... what we have to say about Dad.

BETH

That's wonderful, Ann. Is this your first?

JACK

Ann and Ted have been trying for years but they weren't scoring.

ANN

Excuse me. Can I answer the question? It's my uterus.

JACK

Sorry.

Ted enters carrying several bakery boxes.

TED

Okay. I got some pie.

JACK

You certainly did.

Ted looks at Jack, then Ann. He gets it.

TED

You told them.

Ann nods 'yes'. They AD LIB congratulations to Ted as Ann shushes them.

TED (CONT)

Amazing what a quart of Margaritas and the Cardinals winning the World Series can accomplish.

Ted starts to the kitchen with the pies. From the kitchen is the **SOUND of a TIMER**. Virginia dashes into the room carrying a pair of men's trousers.

VIRGINIA

That's the turkey.

Virginia continues into the kitchen.

JACK

Damn, she's got the hearing of a cocker spaniel.

TED

I would have said Rottweiler.

Virginia dashes back in and tosses the trousers to Ann.

VIRGINIA

Here put these on.

Virginia returns to the kitchen almost knocking Ted over.. Ted takes the bakery goods to the kitchen.

Francis enters from the bedrooms. He wears a dress shirt and tie, calf length socks and boxer shorts.

FRANCIS

I don't have pants.

ANN

I've got them right here, Dad.

FRANCIS

Thank you, Virginia.

ANN

I'm Ann.

Francis crosses to the table and takes a seat.

FRANCIS

Let's eat.

Jack takes the trousers from Ann.

JACK

First let's get you dressed.

FRANCIS

Jack, how nice to see you.

JACK

Thanks, Dad. Come on. Let's finish dressing.

Francis rises and hugs Jack. Ted enters.

FRANCIS

You are as handsome as ever.

Francis starts to the bedrooms. Jack looks to Ann.

JACK

Still don't think I can take care of him?

Jack exits after Francis.

ANN

Unbelievable. Dad has been living in my house for two years and never recognizes me. Jack drops in for two minutes and they're old buds. Oh yeah I've got tons to be thankful for this year.

Virginia enters carrying a large turkey in a pan.

VIRGINIA

Here it is. Hope we don't die eating it.

BETH

Yum. That smells delicious.

VIRGINIA

It's under cooked. Ann, make yourself useful, take it into the kitchen and have Jack carve it for us.

ANN

Ted can do it. Jack's helping Dad get dressed.

Ted takes the turkey and returns to the kitchen.

VIRGINIA

Jack is such a good kid. The gravy. I forgot the gravy. You could learn a thing or two from your brother, Ann.

Virginia exits to the kitchen.

ANN

God, I wish I could drink.

Jack and Francis enter dressed in a blue suit and ready for dinner. Ann exits to the kitchen.

JACK

Here we are.

Virginia enters carrying a plate of potatoes and the gravy.

VIRGINIA

(to Francis)

Well aren't you the handsome devil.

She places the plates on the table and crosses to Francis, wets her fingers and fixes his hair.

Ann enters carrying a dish of stuffing.

FRANCIS

This boy helped me. He seems very nice.

VIRGINIA

It's Jack, your son.

Francis turns to Jack and looks at him a moment or two then...

FRANCIS

You've gotten old.

ANN

(pumping her fist)

Yes!

VIRGINIA

Jack, go make sure Ted is carving the turkey correctly.

Jack exits.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

All right, everyone at the table, please. Senorita Ruiz, you can sit over there.

BETH

Gracias.

VIRGINIA

Sorry, dear. That's all the Spanish I speak. Ted will be here and Ann near the kitchen in case we need her to fetch something.

They all take their places as ordered. Jack enters with a platter of carved turkey. Ted follows.

ANN

I'll 'fetch' the cranberries.

Ann exits to the kitchen.

VIRGINIA

You're over here next to Dad, Jack.

Ann returns with the cranberries.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Shall we say grace.

JACK

I'll do it.

VIRGINIA

Considering your living arrangements, I don't think that would be appropriate. Ted...

TED

I don't think I remember it.

VIRGINIA

Oh for God's sake, Ted.

(rushing through the prayer)

"Bless us, Oh Lord, for these thy gifts which we are about to receive through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

ALL

Amen.

FRANCIS

Why are we praying?

VIRGINIA

We were saying grace before dinner.

(prepares to serve Francis)

What would you like dark meat or white?

FRANCIS

Potatoes.

Virginia ladles mashed potatoes on his plate.

VIRGINIA

And how about the turkey?

FRANCIS

Potatoes.

VIRGINIA

You have potatoes. What else would you like?

FRANCIS

Potatoes.

VIRGINIA

We'll get back to you. Everyone serve yourselves.

The others commence serving themselves.

Plates are passed around. Wine is poured.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Shall we raise a glass? Jack... something Irish, please.

JACK

All right --

Jack stands and raises his glass.

JACK (CONT)

"To live above with the Saints we love, ah that is the purest glory. To live below with the Saints we know...

(Addressed to Virginia)

Ah, that is another story."

ALL

Here, here...

Francis grabs Virginia's arm and shakes it.

FRANCIS

Oh, oh...

VIRGINIA

Did you want something, dear?

FRANCIS

Pee.

VIRGINIA

There are no peas, Francis. Would you like some stuffing?

FRANCIS

(squirming)

Pee!

VIRGINIA

You getting yourself all agitated. I'll get your medicine.

Virginia rises and exits towards the bedrooms.

TED

Ann, I really think you need to talk to your mom about... you know what.

JACK

Forget it, Ted. The decision is made. They are coming to live with me. You okay with that, Beth?

Francis rises from his place and crosses upstage towards the window. Seeing the plant, he opens his fly and pees into the plant.

BETH

I shouldn't even be in the conversation.

ANN

Wait... you two are living together?

BETH JACK
No. That's not the issue at hand.

BETH
(seeing Francis)
Jack...

JACK
It's okay, Beth. We'll work it out.

BETH
Your father...

Virginia enters and sees Francis.

VIRGINIA
Francis, don't...

ANN
(to Jack)
Still want him living with you?

VIRGINIA
Jack, help your father to the bathroom.

TED
I'll take care of Francis. Ann, don't you and Jack have something you want to talk about with Virginia.

VIRGINIA
And what would that be?

ANN
That's evil, Ted.

Ted crosses up to Francis.

TED
Come on, Francis. Let's take a little walk.

FRANCIS
I didn't get any potatoes.

Ted and Francis exit to the bedroom. Beth rises and grabs the plant.

BETH

I'll take this outside and rinse it.

Beth starts to the kitchen with the plant.

VIRGINIA

Hold the plant straight, dear. You're dripping.

BETH

Sorry.

Beth exits. Virginia folds her napkin and looks accusingly at Ann and Jack.

VIRGINIA

So...?

ANN

The turkey smells good, Mom.

JACK

Yeah, very moist. What did you do differently?

VIRGINIA

What is it you want to talk to me about?

ANN

Uh... Jack...

JACK

It's your house.

VIRGINIA

Ann...

Hoping to change the tone in the room.

ANN

Okay, here it is... I'm pregnant.

VIRGINIA

(after a beat)

I know, dear. I spoke with Doctor Bauer after your last visit. I wondered how long it would be before you told me.

ANN

You spoke with my doctor? Don't I have any privacy in my own home?

VIRGINIA

I'm your mother. I think I'm entitled to know. Now, if it's a boy you'll call him Francis and if it's a girl, you can still call her Frances... just a different spelling.

ANN

(pissed off)

That's it. That's enough. I want my life back.

JACK

Ann... This is not the best way, Ann.

ANN

There is no 'best' way. There will never be a best way because she's crazy.

VIRGINIA

If you have something to say to me, Ann, I think you can do it respectfully.

ANN

Okay...

(deep breath)

Dad's condition is only getting worse and it's getting more difficult for you to take care of him. I think the time has come to consider alternatives.

VIRGINIA

Meaning... A nursing home?

ANN

Jack, Ted and I have talked about this...

VIRGINIA

You talked about 'this'? What you are talking about is not a 'this'. It is my husband. And despite the way this terrible disease has changed him, inside that body, inside that brain is the man I married and love, a man to whom I made a vow... 'better or worse'... well, we have reached the 'worse'. And no matter how bad things get, I will never abandon him. So if you think that I am about to turn his care over to... to... to... an institution, you do not know me. I won't do that. I will never do that. Never! And if that doesn't work for you then I will make other arrangements for your father and me.

JACK

Look, Mom, Ann is just trying...

Virginia turns away, covers her ears and sings loudly.

VIRGINIA

“Oh, Danny Boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling...”

ANN

You can sing all you want, but we need to talk.

Beth reenters without the plant.

VIRGINIA

“From glen to glen and down the mountainside...”

BETH

I left the plant on the sun porch. Is everything okay?

ANN

No. We have just released the hounds of hell.

VIRGINIA

“The summer’s gone, and all the roses falling...”

Ted enters from the bedroom.

TED

He wanted to go back to bed. The poor guy... Oh crap, she’s singing.

VIRGINIA

“It’s you. It’s you must go and I must bide.”

Francis enters. Jack sees him first.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

“But come ye back when summer’s in the meadow,”

FRANCIS

Hurt...

JACK

Dad, are you okay?

VIRGINIA

“Or when the valley’s hushed and white with snow,”

Jack starts to Francis. Francis grabs his chest and begins to collapse. Jack lowers him to the floor.

FRANCIS

Hurt...

VIRGINIA

“It’s I’ll be here in sunshine or in shadow.”

ANN

Mom...!

Virginia sees the problem and races to Francis.

JACK

Call nine one one...

TED

Got it.

Ted dials the phone.

VIRGINIA

Francis...

JACK

He's still breathing.

TED

(on phone)

We need an ambulance right away. We have a seventy-four year old male in cardiac arrest... He's conscious and breathing... Thank you.

(hangs up)

The ambulance is on the way. The firehouse is just three blocks away. I'll go out front and show them the way.

VIRGINIA

Don't leave us, Francis. It's not time to go.

As the sirens grow louder approaching the house...

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE II

LIGHTS UP ON:

It is late afternoon of the following day. The room has been returned to a family room. The large table is gone and furniture is in its place.

Ann enters. She is dressed in sweats and carries a vacuum cleaner and a plastic bucket full of cleaning supplies.

She plugs in the vacuum cleaner and turns it on. It is annoyingly **NOISY**. The telephone rings but Ann doesn't hear it.

Ted enters dressed for work. He taps Ann on the shoulder. She turns off the vacuum.

TED

Any news?

ANN

I spoke with the doctor early this morning. He said Dad was awake and aware but in serious condition.

TED

So things are looking okay?

ANN

We'll find out in a while. Jack and Mom went to the hospital a couple of hours ago.

TED

Okay. I have to get to a meeting.

ANN

It's a holiday weekend.

TED

Judge Canapari... He could care less. If there's any news you can call my cell.

ANN

All right, hon.

TED

You going to be okay?

ANN

I'm better now but I still feel horrible about yesterday.

TED

It had to be said, Ann.

ANN

I know, but I feel like I let them down.

TED

You didn't.

(checks his watch)

I've got to run.

ANN

If I hear anything more, I'll call you. Love you.

TED

Love you, too.

Ted kisses Ann and starts to go.

ANN

Ted... I hope I can be as good a wife to you as my mother is to dad.

TED

You already are.

Ted exits. Ann returns to vacuuming with the noisy machine.

After a few moments, Virginia enters. Ann is unaware of her arrival. Virginia is tight-faced.

She angrily tosses her purse on a chair, then whips off her coat and deposits it on the same chair. She regards Ann for a moment, then goes to the wall and yanks the vacuum plug from the socket. Ann turns and is startled to see Virginia.

ANN (CONT)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! I didn't expect you until...

Virginia stomps down the hall to the bedroom.
Jack, enters. He looks grim.

ANN (CONT)

Why are you back so soon? Is everything...?

Jack shakes his head 'no'.

ANN (CONT)

Oh-my-God... Dad?

JACK

Yeah...

ANN

Dead?

JACK

Yeah.

ANN

Oh my God -- Oh, God...

Ann cries.

JACK

I know. I know.

ANN

I'm a terrible daughter. I should have gone with you.

JACK

It's okay, Ann. We didn't think this would happen so fast.

ANN

Why didn't you call from the hospital, instead of just showing up? I could have prepared myself.

JACK

I tried to call you, from the car but...

ANN

When...?

JACK

(Confused.)

When did I call?

ANN

When did Dad die? Oh my God... Mom...

Ann starts to go to Virginia, but Jack stops her.

JACK

Let her be for the moment.

ANN

I can't just ignore her.

JACK

She just needs to be alone, Ann. She's not going to do anything drastic. She's still in shock. She hasn't even cried yet.

After a moment of silence, Ann looks to Jack.
She begins to cry and Jack holds her tenderly.

ANN

If you had let me know before you got here I wouldn't be such a disaster.

(Getting teary)

God -- I can't believe Dad's dead.

JACK

We knew this day was coming.

ANN

I know, but... but now he's... he's... gone and I was just blithely going about my chores and now I'll never see him again.

JACK

There's nothing I can say, Ann. I still haven't really gotten my head around it yet. One minute there and then... We're all going to have some tough days ahead of us. I need a drink.

Jack gets the whiskey from the sideboard and pours a glass.

ANN

When did he die?

JACK

I don't know. We arrived at the hospital a little after eight and he was dead when we got there. Don't say that to Mom. She thinks she had the chance to say goodbye to him.

ANN

He was dead when you got there?

JACK

Looked like it to me.

ANN

And nobody from the hospital called Mom?

JACK

They didn't know he was dead until I told them.

ANN

God! Shouldn't that be the first thing they teach a doctor? The difference between a live person and a dead person.

JACK

Ann, calm down. I'm going to need your help with all of this.

ANN

I'm sorry. I need to do something. I should be doing something. What? The church... I should call the church.

Ann takes out her phone to call.

JACK

Ann, take a breath. There's no rush.

ANN

I should let Father Brimsley know. Where's Dad now?

JACK

The funeral home picked him up. They were going to prepare him -- fix him up -- whatever they do.

Virginia enters. She crosses to Jack.

VIRGINIA

Pour me one.

Jack gets a second glass and pours a whiskey for Virginia. Ann goes to her.

ANN

Mom... I'm so sorry.

VIRGINIA

I know, Ann. We knew this was coming, but it's still very hard.

Virginia takes a drink. Ann embraces her.

ANN

It's okay to cry, Mom.

VIRGINIA

There will be plenty of time for that later. Now we have things to do.

ANN

Just sit for a minute, Mom.

VIRGINIA

We've lost your father, Ann. There is nothing I can do to change that but I won't hide in my room in tears as if I'm ashamed of my grief. When a man like Francis Doyle passes, that loss touches more than us. I am going to honor your father and share our loss, just as I shared our love.

(determined)

This will be the greatest wake in parish history or my name isn't Virginia Cullen Doyle.

Virginia starts to the kitchen.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

I'm going to make some coffee.

Virginia exits to the kitchen.

ANN

What's going on? Is she okay? Stupid question. I know she's not okay, but...

JACK

From the moment, they told her that Dad had died, she put on that tough, tight, determined face she has. First thing she said to me was, "Okay, what's done is done." Then she turned to Dad and said, "You will not go gentle into that good night. You have my word." And off we went.

ANN

Where?

JACK

The funeral home.

ANN

She already made the funeral arrangements?

JACK

(Nervously)

Uh... yeah.

ANN

I've got to call Father and reserve the church quickly. Somebody else could die tonight and beat us to it. Is tomorrow too soon for the funeral?

JACK

(listens)

Yes. The burial won't be until...

(Dreading this.)

....Tuesday.

ANN

(Reacts to this news)

Tuesday?! That's three days. Why are we waiting three days?

JACK

Because Mom wants an Irish wake -- a traditional three day Irish wake

ANN

Okay... if that's what Mom wants that's what we'll do. Dad deserves that.

Ann retrieves her phone.

ANN (CONT)

I still need to let Father Brimsley know and the Spitlers, the Mercurios, the Gaudings... what was the name of that man with the turquoise Thunderbird... Ted something...? Dad would want him to know. And flowers. Do we need to order flowers or does the funeral home take care of that? Oh, and which funeral home?

Ann dials a number.

JACK

O'Shaugnessy's. But that's not where the wake will be.

ANN

I got voice mail. I'm not going to leave a message. And I need to call Ted.

Ann dials.

ANN (CONT)

So not O'Shaugnessy's. Where then?

JACK

More... traditional.

ANN

Where?

JACK

In the traditional place.

ANN

Not a funeral home? Where?

JACK

His home.

ANN

He doesn't have a home.

(on phone)

Voice mail... He lives... oh no, no, no.

JACK

Yeah.

ANN

Here?

JACK

Yeah.

ANN

Dad's body here?!

JACK

Yeah.

ANN

No. No, no, no, no, no...

JACK

That's what Mom wants.

ANN

We're going to have dead Dad in the house for three days?!

JACK

Ann, it's our father. Mom needs this. We have to do it for her.

ANN

Oh my God, that's horrible. She's completely off the deep end, Jack. This is ridiculous. Why is she doing this?

JACK

Because it's an Irish tradition to wake the beloved in his home.

ANN

But this is my home!

JACK

Because he doesn't have a home.

ANN

Because Ted and I took them in.

JACK

And that was a wonderful thing, but now...

ANN

But now, I'd like to get my life back to normal. And having a corpse in the house is by no intelligent person's definition 'normal'.

JACK

Ann, if there was anything I could do...

ANN

You could've called from the hospital and said, "Dad's dead. Is it okay if we keep him at your place?"

JACK

I promise -- next time, I'll call.

Ann drops onto the couch overwhelmed by this turn of events.

ANN

Oh, God...

Unseen by Jack or Ann, through the window, MR. HAMPTON an African-American gentleman in a dark suit, arrives. The **DOORBELL SOUNDS.**

ANN (CONT)

Who the hell is that?

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

I'll get it!

Virginia RUSHES into the room.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

That'll be your father.

Virginia adjusts her hair then opens the door.

MR. HAMPTON

Mrs. Doyle, I'm Maurice Hampton the owner of Shaugnessy Funeral Home.

JACK

I thought it was O'Shaugnessy. Doesn't Michael O'Shaugnessy own it?

MR. HAMPTON

He did. Unfortunately, three years ago during a terrible storm, the letter 'O' was ripped from the signage. Desperate to save his 'O' Michael gave chase but while dashing across Page Avenue, was struck by a city bus and ended his days as a client.

MR. HAMPTON (CONT)

I bought the establishment and decided it would be bad luck to replace the letter 'O'. So we are now simply Shaugnessy's. But I assure all of you, I am very familiar with the proper way to conduct an Irish wake and your husband will be treated with the utmost respect.

VIRGINIA

Good for you. Where's my husband?

MR. HAMPTON

Out in the driveway. Shall I bring Mr. Doyle in?

VIRGINIA

Well, of course, this is where he lives.

MR. HAMPTON

I'll be just a moment...

Hampton exits and momentarily disappears around a corner.

VIRGINIA

Ann, Jack, let's clear some of this furniture out of the way.

Jack starts to move furniture. Ann stands staring out at the yard.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Ann, it would be nice if you helped your brother.

ANN

Is this really happening or am I just having a bad dream?

Virginia crosses and pinches Ann on the arm.

ANN (CONT)

Ow!!!

VIRGINIA

It is not a dream. Now lend a hand.

Ann joins Jack in moving furniture.

Through the window we see Hampton assisted by ERIC rolling the bier with the coffin towards the house. Ann sees it coming.

ANN

Oh my god...

VIRGINIA

Ann, door please.

Ann rushes to the door, locks and bolts it as Hampton, Eric and coffin arrive.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Really, Ann, sometimes I think you need serious therapy.

Virginia opens the door for Hampton.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Come along. In here please.

(to coffin)

Hello, Daddy...

They roll the bier into the room. Ann stands stunned watching the delivery. Virginia is in her glory as she supervises.

MR. HAMPTON

Where shall we put the deceased, Mrs. Doyle?

VIRGINIA

Let's see -- Try by the window. Dad always loved to keep up on the weather. Thank you so much for preparing him so quickly.

MR. HAMPTON

(To Virginia.)

We do our best.

(referring to the coffin)

Open or closed?

ANN

(slams hand down on lid)

Closed!

VIRGINIA

Really, Ann.. What's the point of having a wake, if your father can't see who shows up.

ANN

We'll open it for the wake. Until then it stays closed. My house, my rules...

VIRGINIA

Fine. You can leave it closed for the moment.

MR. HAMPTON

We'll be back later to do the dressing.

ANN

He's naked?! No, no way. I will not have my father in my living room dead and naked. You get one or the other...

MR. HAMPTON

Ma'am -- Your father's dressed.

JACK

He's wearing the blue suit he had on for Thanksgiving.

MR. HAMPTON

I was talking about draping the bier, the flowers, the usual.

ANN

Thank God.

MR. HAMPTON

(As he crosses to the door)

Will there be anything else?

VIRGINIA

No, dear. Jack...

Jack looks quizzically at Virginia who nods towards the mortuary men. Unsure of what's expected, Jack takes a few bills from his pocket and hands them to Hampton.

JACK

Thanks.

Mr. Hampton looks at him like he's nuts.

ANN

Jesus, Jack. It's not a pizza delivery.

VIRGINIA

Don't take the Lord's name in vain, Ann.

JACK

I thought Mom wanted me to tip them.

Virginia crosses and takes the money from
Hampton.

VIRGINIA

I just wanted you to be polite and show them out.

Escorting Mortuary Men to the door.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Thank you, honey.

The Mortuary Men exit and Virginia closes the
door behind them. She observes the set up and
takes a deep breath. She crosses to the coffin.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Welcome home, Francis. I promise you we will give you the send off you deserve.

(a kiss on the coffin)

All right, we need to call the Post and place an obituary, start calling his friends, get hold
of Father Brimsley --- I wish Monsignor Ryan was still around -- your father always
thought Brimsley was a little dim, but we make do with what we have. Sorry, Francis, it
will have to be Father Dumb-bell. At least it's not that Filipino priest the O'Malley's
used. Couldn't understand a word he said and he was barely as tall as the coffin.

ANN

I wish you had asked me before you decided to have a wake in my house.

VIRGINIA

And if I had asked, what would you have said?

ANN

Would I have had a choice?

VIRGINIA

No. So there was no point in asking.

ANN

Yes, there's a point. It's my house. You can't just barge in and make decisions that turn my life upside down.

VIRGINIA

(In tears.)

If that's the way you feel... Jack, help me put Dad in the car. We'll go to your place in Chicago.

Virginia starts to push the bier towards the door.
Ann barricades the door with her body.

ANN

No, no, you're not going to put that guilt trip on me.

VIRGINIA

Out of my way, Ann, or I swear to God I'll run you over.

Ann and Virginia jockey for position until Jack
stops Virginia from pushing the bier away.

JACK

Mom... Mom... stop. Everybody stop. Dad's not going anywhere.

VIRGINIA

(Sobbing.)

I should have been the one to die. No matter what I say or do, one of you always takes offense. I just want your father to have a wonderful send off.

JACK

(Hugs Virginia.)

It's okay, Mom. Ann's just upset. We're all upset. Don't cry.

VIRGINIA

(Wiping tears.)

You know me, my bladder's right behind my eyes.

JACK

I know.

Virginia breaks the embrace.

VIRGINIA

All I want is to make certain that your father's wake is as elegant a celebration as he was a man.

JACK

We know, Mom.

VIRGINIA

Not some drunken shanty Irish hoe-down like the O'Malleys threw to send poor Mr. O'Malley off to hell.

JACK

We understand, Mom. And we'll all help you make that happen. Right, Ann?

ANN

Yes. We will all help.

(takes a deep breath)

So... where do we start?

VIRGINIA

We start by making sandwiches. I'm hungry and we have a lot of details to work out.

Virginia exits to the kitchen.

JACK

You can do this, Ann.

Ann nods 'yes'. Jack exits to the kitchen. Ann crosses over near the coffin. She looks for a moment, then hesitantly places a hand on the coffin.

ANN

Guess what, Dad. I'm going to have a baby.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE III

LIGHTS UP ON:

THE NEXT MORNING. It is still quite early. The bier is now dressed, draped in a white satin curtain. Vases of flowers decorate the area around the coffin. The coffin remains **CLOSED**. Virginia enters from the bedroom hallway in her robe. She crosses to the coffin. She carries a crucifix and a shoe.

VIRGINIA

Good morning, Daddy. I knew there was something they forgot.

She leans across the coffin and attempts to nail the crucifix to the wall using the shoe as a hammer. Jack enters from the yard. He is wearing jogging clothes and has been running. He is a little winded.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Jack -- I didn't know you were up.

JACK

(Winded.)

Went -- jogging with -- Ted. He's doing another mile.

VIRGINIA

You're just in time. Hold Jesus while I nail Him to the wall.

JACK

Sure you want to do that? How about this time we do Barrabas?

VIRGINIA

What are you talking about?

JACK

It's from the Bible. Pilate asks the crowd, "Should I free Jesus or Barrabas?" And the crowd calls out, "Give us Barrabas." Don't you remember the movie, "The Robe" with Richard Burton?

VIRGINIA

Richard Burton played our Savior? That seems a little blasphemous after the life he led. Gregory Peck could play Christ. He's a nice man. But Richard Burton...? He's not even American.

JACK

Nevermind. Let me do that.

As Jack nails the crucifix to the wall, Ann enters still half asleep.

ANN

What's all the pounding?

JACK

We're crucifying Jesus.

VIRGINIA

Don't be blasphemous, Jack.

ANN

Where's Beth?

JACK

She went shopping. She said she didn't have anything appropriate to wear for a wake.

VIRGINIA

(to the coffin)

I hope you're at peace now, Francis. You've had a wonderful life.

JACK

You guys were together a long time.

VIRGINIA

Married forty-six years. Courted for two. So yes... a long time. Your father was a truly lovely man.

JACK

Mom, if there was one secret about Dad you would tell us what would it be?

ANN

I don't think Dad had many secrets. He led a pretty basic life.

VIRGINIA

Oh, he had a few, and those will go to the grave with him. But don't be so certain, you really knew your father. I'll tell you something that just might surprise you.

JACK

Oh, good. Is it juicy?

VIRGINIA

No. It's romantic.

ANN

Really? Tell...

VIRGINIA

Before your father and I were even dating, I was at a dance one night. A fraternity party, if I remember, I had noticed Francis watching me all night, but he never asked me to dance. Not that I lacked for partners. Well, midnight rolled around and the band played their final number and everyone started to leave. I was gathering my things when your father came over to me. He said "I've been hoping you would dance with me." I said "I'm afraid now it's too late. They're closing. The band is finished." And your father, that elegant, gentle man said, "Not for us. For us the music will always be playing." And he signaled the band who began to play and he took my hand and led me onto the dance floor and we danced all alone.

Virginia hums circa 1970s Sam Cooke style ballad as she dances alone. Jack steps in as her partner. They stop.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

He was a dashing young man your father. Swept me off my feet.

All make sounds of appreciation.

JACK

Go, Dad!

ANN

Who'd a thunk it?

JACK

You must have been one hot mama.

VIRGINIA

And still am.

They are all smiling and laughing and enjoying
this moment of family closeness.

ANN

I'll go make coffee.

Ann exits.

VIRGINIA

(following)

Not too strong. Oh and there's a gooey butter cake in the cupboard -- from Schnucks.
You're father loved those.

The **PHONE RINGS**. Jack slowly crosses to
answer it just as Virginia rushes into the room.

VIRGINIA

(Warning.)

Get the phone.

JACK

(Picks up the phone)

Hello... Yes, this is he.... Well, yes. We would be honored. Just a minute, please.

Jack covers the receiver and turns to Virginia.

JACK (CONT)

What time will the wake begin tomorrow?

VIRGINIA

At ten. Who is it?

JACK

(on phone)

At ten tomorrow, but if you need to come earlier... Very good. And thank you. My
father-in-law would be very pleased to know that he was remembered like this. We'll see
you tomorrow.

Jack hangs up the phone.

VIRGINIA

Who was it?

JACK

It was the Mayor's office.

Ann carrying a cup of coffee.

ANN

Who was that?

VIRGINIA

Hush, Ann... What did the Mayor want, Jack?

JACK

He remembers Dad's charitable work in the city and he would like to come by and pay his respects.

VIRGINIA

(impressed)

Oh my... Did you hear that, Francis? The Mayor is coming to see you. We will be the envy of the parish. This is going to be the most magnificent and important wake in history. Ann, we're going to need some very nice food and drinks for the wake not the usual Costco party platter. Try the Jewish place on Hanley. Do you think there will be press and television coverage? Of course, there will, he's the Mayor. I need to make an appointment with the hair dresser.

Virginia exits to the bedrooms.

ANN

The Mayor is coming by tomorrow to pay his respects to Dad. That's wonderful

JACK

No... that's terrible.

ANN

No it's not. It's an honor. The Mayor didn't come to the O'Malley wake.

JACK

(leading her on)

And Mom's reaction was... ?

ANN

She was ecstatic... ordering food, making hair appointments... oh my God you're right. This is terrible. She's going to be impossible to be around until tomorrow.

JACK

Bingo. I'm going to take a shower before the madness begins.

Jack exits to the bathroom. Virginia enters.

VIRGINIA

I have a hair appointment at three and I made one for you as well, Ann.

ANN

My hair is fine.

VIRGINIA

It's lovely, dear, if this was just Sunday mass, but this is the Mayor and all the television people. You need to do something about those roots.

ANN

(to the coffin)

You had to go first, huh?

Ann exits to the kitchen. Virginia crosses to the closed coffin. She looks around to make certain she has privacy.

VIRGINIA

Look what I found --

She takes an old piece of notebook paper from her pocket.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

That naughty song you wrote for your fraternity party when we were first courting.

She begins to SING the lyrics to the song and 'perform' a little 'demonstrative DANCE.'

VIRGINIA (CONT)

"Let me tell you 'bout my gal. She's sweet as candy, And the way she's put together -- well it's downright dandy."

Hikes up her robe to show her legs.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

"If it's legs you like, fellas she's got 'em. And they're attached to a nice round bottom."

Coquettishly punctuating the lyric with her backside.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

“She’s got bright shiny eyes and something even better,”

Sticking out her chest.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

“I can’t say what, but they sure fill a sweater.”

Stops singing and feigns embarrassment.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

I was so embarrassed when you sang that. Here hide this. I wouldn’t want the children to see it.

Virginia opens the coffin, freezes then
SCREAMS. Ann races in from the kitchen area. Jack dashes in wrapped only in a towel.

ANN

What’s going on?

JACK

What happened?

VIRGINIA

(pointing into the coffin)

That is not my Francis.

Jack moves in for a look. Ann hides her eyes.
Jack stares a minute.

JACK

Holy crap. They delivered the wrong corpse.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE I

LIGHTS UP ON:

It is several hours later. Jack stands near the coffin which is once again closed. Ann is angrily pacing the room.

ANN

How does this happen? First they didn't know Dad was dead now they don't know where Dad is.

JACK

I can't answer any of those questions. All I know is they sent the wrong body. I can understand sending the wrong pizza, but the wrong body. Amazon never sends the wrong merchandise. Maybe next time we should have Amazon handle the arrangements.

ANN

And you are absolutely sure that's not Dad, because a dead body can look a lot different than a living person.

JACK

You know you're starting to sound a lot like Mom.

ANN

That's the meanest thing you've ever said to me.

The telephone in the room rings. Jack reaches for it.

ANN (CONT)

If it's Ted find out when he can get home. I think we're going to need his legal skills.

Jack answers the phone.

JACK

Hello... Yes, Mr. Hampton, of course you can park in the driveway.

ANN

That's what he's worried about?

JACK

Come around the back. We're all with the body.... I understand, Mr. Hampton, I understand. We'll talk about it when you get here.

Jack hangs up the phone.

ANN

Is Dad with him?

JACK

I don't think so. I didn't ask. Listen, Ann, let me handle this, okay?

ANN

What does that mean?

JACK

It means let me take care of it. You tend to fly off the handle and that's not going to help the situation or Mom's feelings.

Mr. Hampton is seen crossing through the yard.
He is alone and dressed very professionally.
Jack spots him and opens the door before he can knock.

MR. HAMPTON

I'm Maurice Hampton.

JACK

Jack Doyle. We've already met.

MR. HAMPTON

Oh right. You wanted to tip me.

ANN

That was before he knew the service sucked.

JACK

My sister, Ann.

Ann waves, then...

ANN

I would say hello, but I'm not allowed to open my mouth.

MR. HAMPTON

Mr. Doyle, I'm truly sorry for this inconvenience.

ANN

"Inconvenience"? Should we Google that word? Because I don't think "inconvenience" is the most applicable word. Inconsiderate, maybe...

JACK

Ann...

ANN

Incompetent, maybe...

JACK

Ann...

ANN

Idiotic, certainly...

JACK

Ann... Please, come in, Mr. Hampton.

ANN

Incredible... in the bad sense... not in the sense of...
(a sense of wonder and awe)

Incredible...

JACK

Ann...

Ann sarcastically makes a gesture zipping her lips.

MR. HAMPTON

(entering)

Please, call me Maurice. As I was saying...

Virginia bursts into the room in full rage.

VIRGINIA

Where is my husband? I sent you a handsome, tall, blue-eyed Irish gentleman with the full trust that is who would be returned to me prepared to meet his Creator, but instead you send me...

Virginia flips open the coffin.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

...an ugly, shriveled up, tattooed Chinese dwarf.

Ann accidentally catches sight of the body.

ANN

Oh God...

Ann turns away, but Virginia keeps the coffin open.

VIRGINIA

Where is my husband?

MR. HAMPTON

I assure you, Mrs. Doyle, that it is not the habit of the Shaugnessy Funeral Home to misplace...

VIRGINIA

I don't give a good goddamn about your habits. I want my husband.

MR. HAMPTON

I understand your anger and all I can tell you for the moment is that there was some confusion.

VIRGINIA

And just how does one confuse my Irish husband with a Chinese dwarf?

Virginia slams the coffin shut.

ANN

Incredible...

JACK

Ann...

MR. HAMPTON

There is some question as to whether your husband was in fact... deceased.

JACK

Of course, he was deceased. We saw him deceased so unless you are proclaiming another resurrection he is still deceased.

MR. HAMPTON

With all due respect, Mr. Doyle, let me rephrase that... we are still reviewing our records to ascertain whether we actually received the body of Mr. Doyle.

ANN

What the crap are you talking about?

(to Virginia)

Sorry about the language, Mom.

VIRGINIA

Lay it on him, Annie.

Virginia slams the coffin shut.

MR. HAMPTON

I assure you we will resolve this matter. It just so happened that today was an unusually busy morning. Besides having received the body of your father... possibly...

JACK

We sent you the body of my father.

MR. HAMPTON

Sending and receiving are two completely different issues.

VIRGINIA

(slapping the coffin)

As you have proven.

MR. HAMPTON

We also received multiple bodies as a result of a tragic bus accident. The bus was transporting a small Chinese circus which explains the existence of the tattooed dwarf currently residing in Mr. Doyle's coffin.

JACK

All right, let's put aside the anger and the arguing and try to find a solution. What do you propose, Mr. Hampton?

MR. HAMPTON

I am hoping to hear from my associate at any minute.

On cue his cell phone rings.

MR. HAMPTON (CONT)
(regards the screen)

Ah that is him now.

(answers)
Yes, Darnell, what have you found?
(listens, gives thumbs up to the family)
Excellent.

VIRGINIA
Did they find Francis?

MR. HAMPTON
One minute, Darnell.
(covers the phone; to Virginia)
They found the paperwork that Mr. Doyle was indeed checked into our establishment.

VIRGINIA
I don't want the paperwork. I want my husband. Did they find my husband?

MR. HAMPTON
Let me check.

(back to phone)
Darnell, have you had any luck locating Mr. Doyle himself.... Uh-huh... uh-huh... How about the loading dock?

ANN
If my father is rotting on your loading dock...

JACK
Ann, please...

MR. HAMPTON
Sure I'll hold.
(to the family)
We're getting closer. Mr. Doyle was received now it's just a matter of tracking the paperwork... actually we don't do paperwork. We use iPads. Much more efficient... or normally much more efficient.
(listens)
Yes, I'm here.... Uh, huh... uh, huh... Really?... Well that's a new one. No, I've never heard of something like that...

Sees the family glaring at him.

MR. HAMPTON (CONT)
Anyway I have to go. Good work. Thank you very much.

Hampton hangs up the phone.

VIRGINIA
(hopeful)

So...?

MR. HAMPTON
(nervously)

We have located Mr. Doyle.

VIRGINIA
Thank God.

All the family looks relieved.

JACK
When can we make the switch?

MR. HAMPTON
Well, as you have noted you have accidentally been sent the remains of a deceased Chinese circus performer who goes by the name of Jian Zhang. The reason that error occurred is with the rush to prepare the bodies, the remains of Mr. Doyle were mistakenly placed in Mr. Zhang's coffin and Mr. Zhang in Mr. Doyle's coffin which are very similar except for the lining, one in our tranquil ocean satin, one in our summer clouds quilted satin. Thank goodness there was no cremation involved. The Chinese often prefer...

VIRGINIA
(enough of this)
Where is my husband?

MR. HAMPTON
Well, as I said Mr. Doyle's remains were erroneously placed in Mr. Zhang's coffin and as such Mr. Doyle's body has accidentally been sent to Mr. Zhang's family... in Xi'an, China.

ANN
I'm going to kill you.

Ann lunges for Hampton, but is restrained by Jack.

JACK
Ann...

VIRGINIA

You sent my husband to China?

MR. HAMPTON

A regrettable error...

VIRGINIA

I'm going to kill you!

Virginia lunges at Hampton. Jack restrains her.

JACK

Mom... Everybody calm down. We're not going to get this worked out if everyone is screaming and fighting.

A moment as they all collect themselves.

JACK (CONT)

All right, Mr. Hampton... a 'regrettable error' has been made. How do we make this error un-regrettable?

MR. HAMPTON

It appears that your father has not yet departed... Sorry, bad choice of words. According to our records, the remains of Mr. Doyle are currently in a shipping facility at Lambert International airport awaiting a China Air flight which is scheduled to take off at four twenty-six this afternoon.

JACK

(regards his watch)

That's less than three hours away.

MR. HAMPTON

Darnell is contacting the facility and arranging to have the body returned to us. I should have that confirmation at any...

His cell phone rings. He looks at the screen.

MR. HAMPTON (CONT)

And here he is...

(answers the phone)

Yes, Darnell... Uh-huh, uh-huh... I see. Thank you. Carry on.

Hampton hangs up.

ANN

This had better be good news or Jack is not going to be able to stop me and my mother while we bitch slap your sorry ass.

MR. HAMPTON

It is good news, ma'am. Our representative at the facility has personally identified the remains as those of Mr. Doyle...

VIRGINIA

Thank God.

MR. HAMPTON

...and as soon as he can resolve a small problem with the customs inspector, the body will be returned to the mortuary. Now if you'll excuse me...

Jack grabs Hampton's arm to restrain him.

JACK

Whoa, whoa, whoa... Why would there be a problem with customs?

MR. HAMPTON

Actually, Homeland Security more than customs. It seems that during the mandatory x-ray of the package...

ANN

My father is not a 'package'.

MR. HAMPTON

My apologies. It seems that during the mandatory x-ray a suspicious article turned up hidden in the summer cloud quilted satin lining of the coffin. Given that the coffin is being shipped to communist China, Homeland Security wants to make a thorough investigation before they release the pack... box... coffin.

ANN

It's not going to communist China. It's coming to my house.

MR. HAMPTON

Yes and no.

Ann starts towards him, but Jack stops her.

JACK

Ann...

MR. HAMPTON

As we have determined, that...

(points to coffin)

...is your father's coffin which I might point out was correctly delivered to your house.

ANN

With the wrong body!

MR. HAMPTON

Acknowledged. And the coffin en route to China is that of Mr. Zhang.

ANN

With the wrong body!

MR. HAMPTON

Yes. We've already stipulated to that.

VIRGINIA

Mr. Hampton, I am a patient woman.

Jack and Ann regard her knowing how wrong that statement is.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

But if you don't give me a clear explanation in the next two minutes I am going to do something to you that would negatively effect any chance of you ever have of breeding.

MR. HAMPTON

(a little pissed off)

Very well. I was trying to be delicate, but since you feel it necessary to threaten me, here it is. Homeland Security is required to empty the coffin so they can rip it apart and see what's concealed in the interior. In the meantime, your husband will be placed in refrigerated storage along with various botanicals, pharmaceuticals and illegally imported wild game meat. Once they determine the nature of the illicit contents and ascertain that the body was not involved in any crime, they will release the deceased to us. There. Now you know.

JACK

How can my dead father be involved in a crime. This is totally absurd.

MR. HAMPTON

That's your opinion, Mr. Doyle. I, on the other hand, applaud Homeland Security for their dedication to the safety of our nation.

VIRGINIA

Get me a knife, I'm whacking his balls off.

JACK

Mom, hold that thought.

MR. HAMPTON

However, under no circumstances is your father considered a suspect. If anyone is suspect, it would be Shaugnessy Funeral Home since we prepared the pack... body for shipment. I'm certain that it will not be a problem. For the moment, we must all focus on the bright side. We have located Mr. Doyle and he will be back among you no later than tomorrow morning... although this is the Thanksgiving weekend so it may be next week...

ANN

Next week?! This is ridiculous. There must be someone in the government we can talk to.

MR. HAMPTON

I doubt it. Thanksgiving is a federal holiday and most employees take the long week end.

JACK

(pulls out cell phone)

Beth...

VIRGINIA

This is no time to be calling your... girlfriend.

JACK

It's the perfect time. Beth is a federal agent.

ANN

Beth is in Homeland Security?

JACK

No.

ANN

FBI?

JACK

No. The Department of Agriculture. She inspects meat. It went to voice mail.
(in phone)

Beth, call me when you get this. We have a problem.

Jack disconnects.

MR. HAMPTON

Again, I apologize profusely. Now if you'll excuse me, I'd like to personally supervise the resolution of this problem.

(attempting to leave)

Mrs. Doyle... Mr. Doyle... Lady...

JACK

Whoa, whoa, whoa... you're not taking him...

(referring to coffin)

... with you?

MR. HAMPTON

If you could hold onto him until the exchange...

JACK

No. We don't want the dead body of a stranger in our family room

ANN

I don't want any dead body.

(off Virginia's glare)

But what do I know?

JACK

Can't you take Mr....

MR. HAMPTON

Zhang.

JACK

Mr. Zhang with you?

MR. HAMPTON

I'm afraid not. I don't have the hearse.

JACK

So stick him in your car. Just get him out of here.

MR. HAMPTON

That's not possible. I drive a Porsche Cayman... S. He wouldn't fit.

JACK

(losing it)

He's a goddamn dwarf. Take him out of the box, fold him in half and shove him in the trunk of your goddamn Porsche Cayman S.

MR. HAMPTON

That would be against the law. I'm sorry. I'll be in touch.

Hampton quickly exits.

ANN

Holy shit...

Virginia takes a deep breath.

VIRGINIA

Okay, we now know where your father is and we have to believe that soon he will be back with us. In the meantime, Jack,... stick Hop Sing in the garage.

Jack starts to maneuver the coffin towards the garage.

ANN

That's just great. We have mourners arriving and we don't have a body to mourn over.

VIRGINIA

Jack! Stop!

Jack halts his progress with the coffin.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Ann is right. We need a body for the Mayor. Put the dwarf back where you found him.

JACK

You can't have a wake for the wrong body.

VIRGINIA

We'll keep the box shut. Nobody will know.

ANN

I thought the whole point of this madness was to have a great wake for Dad? That is not Dad.

VIRGINIA

And what would you have me do? Call off the wake?
(sarcastically)

I'm so sorry, Mr. Mayor. You'll have to come back another time. We seem to have misplaced my recently deceased husband. How would that look on the evening news?

JACK

Maybe you can delay it a day or two. Until we make the switch.

ANN

I do not want a dead dwarf in my house!

VIRGINIA

And I don't want your father's friends to think we are just a bunch of Irish louts that can't even throw a decent wake. The dwarf stays. Ann, get your video camera.

ANN

What?

VIRGINIA

Jack, find a place behind the coffin to hide the camera. We'll record all the mourners, then when your father returns, we'll show him the tape.

ANN

Have you totally lost your mind?

VIRGINIA

No, dear, just my dead husband. Get the camera.

Virginia exits to the bedroom.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE II

LIGHTS UP ON:

It is the next morning. The closed coffin is back in place near the window. The room is very clean and neat. The door to the yard is OPEN.

Jack is busy arranging a video camera on a tripod behind the coffin. He is setting it up amongst pots of large palms in an attempt to disguise it.

Ann enters carrying platters of little sandwiches.

JACK

I think we're all set to go here. A whole new concept --America's Freakiest Home videos.

ANN

There is something very ghoulish about this whole affair. I feel kind of bad. I mean, I'm sad that Dad has died and I'll miss him... or I'll miss the him that was. He was a wonderful father... took me to ball games and father-daughter dances and scouts... He shouldn't have had to live his final years like he did. He didn't deserve that. I hated seeing him like that.

JACK

No, he didn't. You know one of the things that used to annoy me about Dad was that he'd always challenge my thoughts... ideas... make me defend them. But it was a great way to teach a lesson. I would have liked to spend more time with him. I guess that's the lesson now, huh? Don't put things off. Trite, I know, but isn't that what always happens. We wait. We regret.

ANN

You're right. So...

(takes a deep breath)

...I'm going to do my best to support Mom with this crazy wake. It will probably kill me, but I'll try.

JACK

Hang in there, girl.

ANN

Now all we need is the correct body in the coffin. Only in the Doyle family...

Jack takes one of the little sandwiches and eats it.

JACK

(referring to the sandwich)

Turkey? Don't you think that's a little redundant?

ANN

There's other stuff. Why is the door open?

JACK

It was starting to smell a little like fish cakes in here.

Ann sniffs the air.

ANN

Oh my God, it does.

Virginia enters from the bedrooms. She is beautifully dressed and coiffed.

VIRGINIA

Ann, get changed. The Mayor will be here soon.

ANN

I am changed.

VIRGINIA

Isn't that the same dress you wore for Thanksgiving?

ANN

No. Jack, is this the same dress I wore on Thanksgiving?

JACK

No. That was the one with all those big flowers.

VIRGINIA

Fine, take your sister's side.

Virginia inspects the room.

ANN

What's wrong with this dress anyway? It was very expensive.

VIRGINIA

I don't think red is an appropriate color for a wake.

JACK

Actually, the Chinese consider red a very lucky color so maybe her dress will bring luck to us and our Chinese guest.

VIRGINIA

Fine, if you want the Mayor to think your sister lives in a bordello.

ANN

Dad, liked this dress. Besides I want to celebrate his life not mourn his death.

VIRGINIA

Speaking of which... Where is the alcohol? We need alcohol. Everyone knows the Mayor is a boozier.

ANN

It's coming.

Ann exits to the kitchen. Virginia sniffs the air.

VIRGINIA

Why do I smell fish cakes?

JACK

I believe it's Mr. Zhang. Chinese like their fish cakes.

VIRGINIA

That will not do and close the door before every bug in the neighborhood gets in.

Virginia exits quickly to the kitchen. Jack crosses to close the door and is BUZZED by a fly. He swats at it but with no luck.

Virginia returns with a spray can and begins to spray the room.

Jack begins to cough.

JACK

What are you spraying?

VIRGINIA

I don't know. I don't have my glasses.

Jack takes the can and reads...

JACK

"Easy Off" oven cleaner.

Ann returns with two bottles of alcohol. She sees places them on the table. Virginia picks up the two bottles.

VIRGINIA

This is all the alcohol you have? This is an Irish wake, Ann, we're not sitting shiva. We need much, much more alcohol.

ANN

Ted is picking up a case of whiskey.

VIRGINIA

I should hope so. Two bottles... that's not even enough for a Methodist. Where's your girlfriend, Jack?

JACK

She went down to the federal building to see if she could do anything about Dad's body.

VIRGINIA

She's a good girl. Better than you deserve.

JACK

Just the other day she was a "strumpet."

VIRGINIA

And now she's not. End of conversation.

Through the window, they see Mr. Hampton arriving. He and his assistant, Eric, are pushing a bier. Virginia rushes to the door and opens it.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Is that my Francis?

MR. HAMPTON

Yes.

VIRGINIA

Oh thank God. Bring him in. Bring him in.

They roll the bier into the room

MR. HAMPTON

We were able to apply a little pressure on the customs inspectors. They cut open the lining of the coffin and what did they find...?

VIRGINIA

We don't care.

MR. HAMPTON

It's really quite interesting. They were smuggling discs of major Hollywood movies into China where they would duplicate them and resell them. So problem solved and...

(tapping coffin)

... here is Mr. Doyle.

ANN

Now get the other one out of here.

MR. HAMPTON

I'm afraid it's not that easy. Remember, Mr. Zhang is in Mr. Doyle's coffin and Mr. Doyle...

JACK

We get it. So what do you need to do?

MR. HAMPTON

We need to put each of the deceased in their appropriate coffins.

ANN

What does it matter? They're the same coffin.

MR. HAMPTON

Not exactly the same. As I explained the linings...

ANN

We got it. One's in the ocean, one's in the clouds. We don't care.

MR. HAMPTON

But the state of Missouri does care. The laws governing mortuary operations are very clear and very strict. Plus there is the difference in cost. The ocean lining...

VIRGINIA

Enough...! Just make the switch. The Mayor will be here soon.

MR. HAMPTON

Right away.

Mr. Hampton signals to Eric and they cross to the coffin of Mr. Zhang and open it. The family all turn away.

The hesitate a moment and Eric in American Sign Language tells Hampton something.

MR. HAMPTON (CONT)

Good point, Eric. Small problem.

JACK

What?

MR. HAMPTON

As Eric has pointed out, to make the exchange, we must first remove Mr. Zhang from his... actually Mr. Doyle's box which of course would require putting Mr. Zhang somewhere during the exchange. I was wondering, would it be okay if we lay Mr. Zhang on your couch for a minute or two?

ANN

No. No, it is not okay. I am not having a dead dwarf on my couch.

VIRGINIA

For God's sake, Ann. It's Scotch Guarded.

(to Hampton)

Put him on the couch.

Ann blocks the couch with her body.

ANN

Not gonna happen!

VIRGINIA

We are running out of time.

JACK

Okay, look. Take the boxes out to the garage and make the exchange there.

VIRGINIA

Good idea, Jack.

(to Ann)

At least someone is helping.

MR. HAMPTON

Right. Where's the garage?

JACK

(indicating kitchen exit)

Through there.

Hampton tells Eric in ASL what they are doing.
Eric responds with something that makes
Hampton laugh. He catches himself.

MR. HAMPTON

Sorry about that. Eric has a very rich sense of humor. He's also very talented. He aspires to being the first sign language rapper.

(signs as he speaks)

Eric, give them a sample of your flow.

Eric begins an energetic rap in ASL.

ERIC

(in ASL)

"Ain't so sweet livin' on the street,
summer got the heat, ain't nothin' to eat...
so I sit, spit, hit the shit still got my wit so
I'll never quit..."

MR. HAMPTON

(interprets in rhythm)

"Ain't so sweet livin' on the street,
summer got the heat, ain't nothin' to eat...
so I sit, spit, hit the shit still got my wit so
I'll never quit..."

Virginia crosses to him and grabs his hands
stopping the rap. Virginia using hand signals...

points to Hampton, Eric and the coffin then jerks a thumb towards the garage.

Hampton and Eric close Mr. Zhang's coffin and start awkwardly wheeling it towards the garage. Jack helps guide them until they are through the doorway.

VIRGINIA

Jack, open that box and make sure it's Daddy.

Jack hesitantly lifts the lid averting his eyes.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Well...?

Jack looks.

JACK

It's Dad.

VIRGINIA

Thank God.

Virginia crosses to the open coffin and looks sweetly at Francis.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

It's nice to have you home again, Daddy.

Hampton and Eric return to the room.

MR. HAMPTON

Okay, we're ready for Mr. Doyle.

VIRGINIA

Go. Go.

They roll Francis towards the garage.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Time? Ann, what time is it?

ANN

Nine forty five.

VIRGINIA

We have fifteen minutes before the Mayor arrives.

Ted enters carrying a case of whiskey.

TED

I assume you all know what's going on in the garage.

JACK

Yes.

TED

Did you know that Mr. Zhang doesn't wear pants?

JACK

You mean trousers?

TED

No. I mean his Mu Shu Pork is draped across the seat of my lawn tractor. I'm going to need lots and lots of Lysol.

Hampton and Eric return wheeling the coffin.

MR. HAMPTON

Here we go. Just like new... again bad choice of words.

VIRGINIA

Ted, move.

(to Hampton)

Put him by the window.

The box is rolled into place.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Wait. Who's in the box?

MR. HAMPTON

Mr. Doyle.

VIRGINIA

Jack, check it out.

JACK

Why can't Ann do it? It's her house.

TED

I'll do it.

Ted opens the lid and looks inside.

TED (CONT)

Whoa...

ANN

Oh my God, what now?

TED

Who chose the blue suit? Francis hated that suit.

VIRGINIA

You're absolutely right. We have to change him. Jack, Ted, help me get him out of the box.

ANN

Stop! If he wants to be waked in my house, he's wearing the goddamned blue suit.

VIRGINIA

I don't think you are the one to be giving advice on proper attire. Jack, Ted...

TED

We'll take him to the bedroom.

JACK

Wait, we are not...

VIRGINIA

Go, Jack, we're running out of time.

As Jack and Ted roll the coffin towards the bedroom.

JACK

(to Ted)

Had to open your big mouth.

TED

I'm a lawyer. It comes naturally.

They exit.

VIRGINIA

(seeing Hampton and Eric)

What are you standing around for? Get Mao Tse Tung out of the garage.

MR. HAMPTON

Yes, ma'am. Eric...

The two of them scurry through the kitchen
towards the garage.

VIRGINIA

Where's the guest book, Ann?

ANN

It's on the table.

Virginia crosses to examine the book. She picks
up a pen from the table.

VIRGINIA

What is this?

ANN

A pen, so people can sign the guest book.

VIRGINIA

You don't have something more elegant than a plastic giveaway pen from the dentist that
says...

(reading from the pen)

"See Dr. Hurlees, protect your pearlies."?

ANN

I'll see what I've got.

Ann roots through some drawers.

VIRGINIA

Do. We don't want people thinking Dad's death has cast us into poverty.

Jack and Ted return rolling the coffin in front of
them.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Grey suit?

TED

Yes, ma'am. And the burgundy tie with the little golfers on it.

VIRGINIA

He loved that tie.

JACK

I gave it to him for Christmas.

ANN

I gave him the suit.

VIRGINIA

Enough. Ted, my camera is on the kitchen table. I want to get a picture of the family before the Mayor arrives.

JACK

A picture?

TED

Yes, ma'am.

Ted exits to the kitchen.

Through the window we see Hampton and Eric leaving with the other coffin.

VIRGINIA

(To the family.)

All right, everybody, let's gather around Daddy.

JACK

You're kidding, right?

VIRGINIA

Button your jacket, Jack.

(Calling.)

Ted -- ? We don't have all day.

TED

Coming...

Ted enters. Virginia stands behind the closed coffin and places the others.

VIRGINIA

Jack on my right. Ann on my left.

Ted composes the shot in the view finder.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

(A quick look down the line.)

Stand up straight.

Everyone corrects their posture.

TED

Okay, everybody smile -- wait --

(Lowers the camera.)

Should you smile?

VIRGINIA

Yes. We're all together for one last time.

TED

(Raises the camera.)

Okay. Smile.

They all smile. Ted shoots and the flash goes off.

VIRGINIA

And now one more with Dad in the picture. Ted, you'll have to get up on a chair.
Everybody down...

Virginia opens the coffin. They all squat so their faces are at the edge of the coffin looking up at the camera. Ted stands above them to take the photo.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Okay, nice smiles, everybody.

All do as instructed and Ted takes the picture.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Wonderful. Thank you, Ted. Now be a dear and go out front to show the Mayor the way in.

TED

Yes, ma'am.

Ted exits.

VIRGINIA

Jack, pour me a quick one. Ann, do I look all right?

Jack pours a shot of whiskey.

ANN

You look very elegant.

VIRGINIA

Do I look sad?

ANN

Yes.

VIRGINIA

I don't want to look sad. I want to look strong. I should put on a different dress.

Jack's cell phone rings. He takes it from his pocket and answers.

JACK

(looks at screen)

It's Ted...

VIRGINIA

That'll be the Mayor. No time to change.

JACK

Hey, Ted. Is the Mayor here?... I don't know who that is but send them in.

VIRGINIA

You don't just send the Mayor in. Escort him.

JACK

It's not the Mayor. It's some people Ted didn't recognize.

VIRGINIA

All right, Jack, take my arm. Ann, stand by the guest book... Wait...
(digs in a pocket)

My rosary.

Virginia places the rosary in her hand, then strikes a a pose of the ‘strong widow’ and waits for the mourners to arrive. Ann stands with the guest book.

Through the window, two men in leather jackets wearing jeans and sunglasses cross the yard to the house. They enter. They do everything in perfect synchronization. It’s weird.

VIRGINIA

Thank you for coming.

They ignore Virginia and go directly to the coffin.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

(whispers to Jack)

Well, that was certainly rude. Who are they?

JACK

I have no idea but they don’t look like the kind of people Dad hung around with.

The two men reach into the casket and begin to poke around. Ann sees this and goes to them.

ANN

Excuse me. What do you think you’re doing?

The two men remove their sunglasses in sync. They are Chinese, WANG and HONG.

WANG

We are taking the box with us.

VIRGINIA

The hell you are.

Virginia crosses and protects the coffin.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

I don't know who you are but you are not welcome in my house. Go!

Wang and Hong pull guns in sync from under their jackets.

WANG

Everybody hands up.

VIRGINIA

I will not.

Jack and Ann comply.

JACK

What's going on?

WANG

Just cooperate and no one will get hurt.

JACK

Wait, if this is about Mr. Zhang, you're too late.

HONG

Forget Zhang, he was a tiny pantless pervert.

WANG

(pointing to the box)

Is that Doyle?

VIRGINIA

Mister Doyle. I would think even a common criminal could show some respect for the deceased. Did your mother teach you no manners? Now scam.

WANG

We're taking him with us.

VIRGINIA

Over my dead body!

Virginia blocks the coffin with her body. Wang and Hong point their pistols at her.

ANN

Wow... talk about a moral conflict.

Wang pushes Virginia out of the way. Hong grabs one end of the coffin and they begin to roll the bier towards the door. Virginia throws herself across the coffin.

VIRGINIA

Leave my Francis alone, you... you hooligans.

JACK

Mom...

Jack blocks the route of the bier. Virginia does not get off the box.

JACK (CONT)

(to Wang and Hong)

There's got to be another way to settle this. Why do you need my father's body?

HONG

He has the movies.

JACK

No, he doesn't. The customs people took them.

WANG

Don't lie. We want Mad Max: Fury Road. *(or whatever action movie is current)*

Ted enters.

TED

No Mayor yet. I'm sure they'll...

Wang and Hong draw their guns. Virginia uses this opportunity to get off the coffin and start pushing it back in place.

TED (CONT)

Are those guns? Those are guns. Why do they have guns?

ANN

They want to take Dad's body with them.

They turn back towards Virginia with their guns. She protects the coffin.

HONG

We are taking the box and the deceased with us.
(as an afterthought)

Our condolences.

VIRGINIA

I'll make a deal with you. We'll keep Mr. Doyle and you can take the box.

Wang and Hong confer for a moment.

HONG

Okay, you keep Mr. Doyle and we take the box. Put him on the couch.

VIRGINIA

Jack, Ted... give me a hand.

TED

Okay. Hang on. You guys are making a big mistake. This isn't the coffin you want.

VIRGINIA

Stay out of this, Ted.

WANG

Is that the box with the body of Mr. Doyle?

TED

Yes.

WANG

Then that's the coffin we want.

TED

Not really. See, originally this was the box with the body of Mr. Zhang.

Wang and Hong look confused.

JACK

The mortuary guys were just here. They put everybody back in the correct boxes. The box you want is now on it's way to the airport with the body of Mr. Zhang.

HONG

They switched the bodies?

JACK

Yes.

HONG

That's disgusting.

WANG

(raising his pistol)

The deal is off, we're taking the body and the box. Move, lady.

Wang pushes Virginia out of the way. Virginia
grabs Wang in a bear hug.

VIRGINIA

You are not taking my husband anywhere.

HONG

Don't make me shoot, lady.

Suddenly from the kitchen, Beth arrives. She
sees Hong and Wang with their guns drawn.

BETH

(slips into Spanish)

Qué esta pasando?

HONG

Mantente fuera de esto, cariño.

(to Wang)

Let's do this.

Once again they try to move the coffin, but
Virginia is in their way.

Beth pulls up her skirt and from her waistband
draws a pistol and points it at the Chinese thugs.

BETH

Federal agent. Drop your weapons.

In a panic, Hong accidentally fires a shot.

Beth returns fire and hits Hong in the shoulder.
He drops his weapon.

HONG
(howling in pain)

Ow! Ow! Ow!

Wang drops his gun and raises his hands.
Virginia looks in the coffin.

VIRGINIA
(to Hong)
You son-of-a-bitch, you shot my husband.

Virginia is on top of Hong in a hurry starting to pound on him. Jack pulls her off.

JACK
It's okay, Mom. Dad was already dead.

Beth hands two pair of cuffs to Ted.

BETH
Cuff them, Ted.

Ted proceeds to cuff Wang and Hong. Virginia returns to check on Francis.

VIRGINIA
Jack, get me a towel. Your father is leaking through his bullet wound.

Jack exits to the kitchen. The PHONE RINGS and Ann answers..

ANN
Hello... Yes, it is.

Jack returns with a towel and hands it to Virginia. She directs Jack to the coffin.

VIRGINIA
Plug up your father.

ANN
(covers phone; to others)
It's the Mayor's office.

VIRGINIA

(crossing to Ann)

Oh my God, they must be close. Jack, Ted stick those two in a closet somewhere.

(to Wang & Hong)

And not a peep out of either of you.

She shoves a tiny sandwich in Hong's mouth to serve as a gag. She grabs a second sandwich for Wang but doesn't gag him.

ANN

Hang on, Mom.

(listens)

Yes... Yes... We understand. Thank you for calling.

Ann hangs up.

VIRGINIA

We understand what?

ANN

The Mayor sends his regrets.

VIRGINIA

Regrets? He can't have regrets. I already told half the parish he was coming. Why isn't he coming?

ANN

They said his presence was urgently needed at the airport.

JACK

I think we can guess what that's about.

ANN

If it's any consolation, he's sending flowers.

VIRGINIA

Flowers?! Every dead Mick in the city gets flowers.

Virginia crosses to the coffin. She's teary.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

I'm sorry, Francis. I wanted to give you the best wake this parish has ever seen and now it's ruined.

ANN

Are you kidding? This beats the crap out of the O'Malley wake.

VIRGINIA

I tried my best. I really, really tried my best.

In tears, Virginia crosses to the bedrooms. She pauses to slap Hong in the back of his head.

VIRGINIA (CONT)

Bastard.

Virginia exits.

ANN

Beth, thank you... wow...

BETH

Glad I could help.

JACK

Damn. Do I know how to pick a strumpet or what? Where did you have that gun?

BETH

In my Spanx.

ANN

(to Jack)

You said she works for the Department of Agriculture.

JACK

That's what she told me.

ANN

They take their meat inspections very seriously.

BETH

I actually work for ICE -- Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Agriculture was my cover. When I was at the Federal Building I found out that there is a ring that was trying to smuggle stolen classified hard drives to China inside caskets. These two must be part of that ring.

TED

No, these guys were stealing movies.

BETH

Really? Couldn't you guys just pirate them off the internet like everybody else?

WANG

We have very slow WiFi. Doesn't make a good download.

TED

What should we do about our friends here?

BETH

I'll call the police to pick them up.

Beth takes out a cell phone and moves towards the open doorway.

JACK

I'm kind of glad we had this wake. It was a true testament to the madness of the Doyles.

ANN

You know Mom's life was dedicated to Dad... not just these last couple of years, but always. They had a really profound love. I'm not sure she can make it without him.

TED

She's got her friends. She's got us. She's got the church. She'll find a way. As we all know -- she's one strong woman.

ANN

Somebody once said that it's difficult to lose those you have been given to love... siblings, parents... but it is far more difficult to lose those you have chosen to love.

TED

Yeah, the funeral is going to be a most difficult day.

Jack crosses over to the coffin.

JACK

Francis Patrick Doyle, may you be in Heaven an hour before the devil knows you're dead.

(beat)

Although I think we've missed that deadline.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE III

LIGHTS UP ON:

Three days later. It is very late at night. Only the moon illuminates the room with a soft glow. Virginia enters the room. She turns on a LAMP adding a little more light. Virginia is dressed in a flowing nightgown and robe. She crosses to Francis' coffin and stands a long time just looking. She gently touches his face and arranges his hair and clothing.

VIRGINIA

Tomorrow...

(A long beat)

Tomorrow, you will be gone. I can remember saying those same words to you so many years ago. We stood waiting for you to board out at Lambert airport. You in your sharply creased Army uniform. Those shiny bars on your shoulders. You looked like a child dressed up for Halloween, so out of place, but you were standing your straightest, trying your best to look soldierly.

(She laughs at a memory.)

So, there we stood. Two amongst hundreds saying their good-byes. Watching their men go off to that horrible Asian war.

(Thinks a moment)

I'm not certain which is more difficult. Watching you go and not knowing if you would return or watching you go and understanding that you will not.

(Beat.)

Then, I could measure time in your letters, written in your crisp Jesuit penmanship. With each letter, I could hold the passage of time in my hands. I could hear your voice and one more day of fear and loneliness would be eased by the belief that we would be together again. Now, I do not know how I will measure this time which I must pass without you, nor ease the fear and loneliness that will most certainly take your place. I do not know what I will hold in my hands to connect me to you, to help me through those days to come.

LIGHTS DIM. Now the only illumination is a SPOTLIGHT on Virginia. She turns back towards the center of the room.

Another spotlight illuminates Francis standing in the middle of the room. Virginia turns towards him with a smile.

FRANCIS

You are without doubt the most beautiful girl in the room.

VIRGINIA

I saw you watching me.

FRANCIS

I've been hoping that you would dance with me.

VIRGINIA

I'm afraid now it's too late. They're closing. The music is finished.

FRANCIS

Not for us. For us, the music will always be playing.

MUSIC begins. The tune Virginia earlier hummed. Francis opens his arms. Virginia steps into his embrace. Sweetly, slowly, elegantly, they begin to dance. At first, Francis holds her a proper distance. They smile at each other. After a short moment, Virginia steps in closer and rests her cheek on his shoulder. They continue to dance.

VIRGINIA

Thank you, Francis. Thank you for our lovely dance.

As the music and the dance continues...

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF THE PLAY