

GRANDPA JIM IS DEAD

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Michael Paslawski and Roy C. Booth

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SYNOPSIS: Bob can't take it anymore. One more night of watching the Lifetime channel with his girlfriend, Karen, and he won't know what to do. Luckily, his cell phone goes off and provides him with the means to finally get a programming change.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 1 WOMAN)

BOB (m)(59 lines)

KAREN (f).....(45 lines)

SETTING

Late evening in the main living space of Karen's functional apartment.

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AT RISE:

BOB, a man of 30 years, sits on a sofa watching television with KAREN, his girlfriend, a woman in her mid-to-late twenties.

BOB: Change it. Please, for the love of God, I'm begging you, Karen, change it.

KAREN: No.

BOB: Please?

KAREN: But I like this show -

BOB: *(Groans.)* But we watch Lifetime almost every night!

KAREN: So?

BOB: It's driving me nuts! Every night it's some show about another woman falling madly in love with a man or being tormented by a man. And sometimes, as a dramatic twist, it's a woman being tormented by one man while falling madly in love with another man.

KAREN: Oh, Bob, you can be so insensitive sometimes.

BOB: Can we just watch something else for a change? Okay?

KAREN: It's my apartment and my television.

BOB: So?

KAREN: So?

BOB: So I should get to choose.

KAREN: Why?

BOB: Maybe because I'm the guest?

KAREN: You don't count as a guest. You're my boyfriend. And right now you barely count as that.

BOB'S cell phone in his back pocket rings until he answers it.

KAREN: Just let it go and stay here with me.

BOB: And watch more of Felicia flirting with Philip while prancing around in that French maid's outfit? No, no. I don't think I can take the suspense. Honest. *(Stands.)*

KAREN: You don't know that they will end up together.

BOB: And I really don't care, either.

BOB pulls out the cell phone and answers.

BOB: Hello? *(Pause.)* Wait. Calm down. *(Pause.)* That's it. Take a deep breath and just tell me what happened. Slowly.

KAREN stands and looks over toward BOB with interest.

BOB: What? Who died?

BOB looks down at his cell phone to see who is calling.

KAREN: *(Whispering.)* Who died? Who?

BOB: *(Waving her off.)* What? Grandpa Jim is dead?! No!

KAREN: Oh my God!

BOB: How? When? Where?

KAREN: Oh Bob, I'm so -

BOB motions to KAREN to be quiet.

BOB: A heart attack? *(Pause.)* Grandpa Jim had his third and final heart attack? *(Pause.)* Inside the pharmacy while waiting to pick up his heart medications - ?

KAREN crosses over to BOB to comfort him.

BOB: I didn't think he'd die like that. *(Pause.)* No, I was sure the cancer was going to get him first . . .

KAREN: How terrible.

BOB: You didn't know about the testicular cancer? *(Pause.)* Yep, he was diagnosed with that last year. Right after his trip to South Padre Island last spring -

KAREN: Ouch. I know I had no idea . . .

BOB: I heard he was going to get them taken out next month . . .

KAREN winces. BOB walks over and takes a drink of his soda near the sofa.

BOB: I guess it was his time, though. *(Pause.)* No, I can't imagine living 99 years either. *(Pause.)* Yes, I was going to be at his birthday party this weekend, too. Made reservations and everything. That would have been one heck of a hundredth birthday party.

KAREN: You didn't tell me anything about -

BOB motions for her to keep quiet.

BOB: What did you get him? *(Pause.)* Some new orthopedic sneakers? Oh, what a wonderful, thoughtful gift.

KAREN: We never even got him a present - I guess he doesn't need one now.

BOB: He would have loved them. In fact, I think he should be buried in them. That way he'll have them forever and be able to stroll around Heaven in comfort.

KAREN: *(Starts sobbing.)* Oh, how sad -

BOB: Do you know what his last words were? I wonder if he thought of me - ?

BOB sits on the sofa and makes himself comfortable.

BOB: Sure, we had some great times. When was the last time all of us were together? *(Pause.)* That long ago? Huh. It seems like only yesterday...

KAREN paces the floor in distress.

BOB: I remember that day! That was great. What a memory. The sun was shining. Not a cloud in the sky. Swimming in the lake. *(Pause.)* Are you sure there was no lake? Hmm . . . *(Pause.)* That day was pretty special for you and me, too. *(Pause.)* Remember when we . . . ?

KAREN: What?!

BOB: You and me . . . and Buddy from across the street . . . yeah, the three of us.

KAREN: Bob - ?

BOB: *(To Karen.)* Shush. *(Back on the phone.)* Sorry, I forgot his name.

KAREN: What are you talking about?

BOB: Hang on. I - I think I need a tissue.

BOB puts the phone down. KAREN looks around frantically and then exits to find a tissue. BOB sits back and waits. KAREN enters and hands a tissue to BOB.

KAREN: Here!

BOB: Thanks.

BOB takes the tissue and uses it to pick his nose. Finishing with a slight blow, he hands the tissue back to KAREN, who isn't sure what to do with it. BOB gets on the cell phone again.

BOB: We - we shared a lot of good times together. Most of my favorites were with Grandpa. *(Pause.)* What happened between us? How did we drift apart? You were always like a sister to me . . .

KAREN starts to sob again.

BOB: Of course I know you're my sister. That's why you've always been like a sister to me -

KAREN: What an odd family -

BOB: *(Angrily, stands.)* Hey, you don't need to talk to me like that. *(Pause.)* I mean, we could argue about this all night. I don't think Grandpa would want that though, now would he -

KAREN: Oh, Bob -

BOB: All right, apology accepted. Let's not let this stand between us like in the past. Let's mend those fences and move on. *(Pause.)* Right.

KAREN: *(Sniffs.)* That's so sweet -

BOB: Does everyone else know? Uh huh. *(Pause.)* So when is the funeral? Is there going to be a wake? Booze? *(Pause.)* Good. Good. Where will it be held?

KAREN: Oh! (*KAREN quickly goes over to her purse and pulls out her daily planner, thumbing through it furiously.*) Let me know when it is!

BOB: I don't think I know where that cemetery is - (*Pause.*) Oh, next to Grandma. Well, of course Grandpa would be buried next to Grandma. I must not be thinking straight right now. The name didn't sound familiar. I - (*Pause.*) Oh, you've got another call coming through? Sure, I'll wait.

BOB puts the cell phone down and crouches to tie his shoelace.

KAREN: This is just terrible, Bob. Let me know when and where the funeral is going to be so I can mark it all down on the calendar.

BOB: Huh? Oh, yeah, sure.

BOB stands and picks the cell phone up again.

KAREN: If there's anything, anything I can do, you know I'm here for you.

BOB: I know you are, dear. I know you are.

KAREN embraces BOB.

KAREN: I feel so bad.

BOB: Say, I - (*To caller.*) Oh, you're back. Uh-huh. Who was it? (*Pause.*) Oh, Aunt Fran? How is she taking it?

KAREN: Aunt Fran? Hmp. How cliché.

BOB: Well, that's understandable. She always thought she was his favorite. (*Pause.*) Well, no one has really liked her since she told me she wanted to put Grandpa in a home. (*Pause.*) You didn't know about that? (*Pause.*) Oh, yeah, he was furious -

BOB sits on the sofa, grabs a magazine off the coffee table, and starts skimming the pages.

BOB: She started saying that he was old and senile and just couldn't take care of himself anymore. *(Pause.)* Honestly, I think she was just trying to get at his money.

KAREN: Now that's just despicable

BOB: I agree - Aunt Fran is just a horrible, horrible, tactless woman. *(Pause.)* So when do you think they will be reading the will? *(Pause.)* Hey, don't shout, it's never too early to start thinking about the future.

KAREN: Bob, what are you saying?

BOB motions for KAREN to be quiet.

BOB: We can't let Aunt Fran take it all. She'll probably go ransack his house tomorrow . . . that is if she isn't there right now with the rest of her money-grubbing . . .

KAREN: Would she really do that?

BOB: There is nothing wrong with discussing our inheritance. *(Pause.)* So, how much do you think he was worth when he died? *(Pause.)* What do you mean "inappropriate?" *(Pause.)* How much do you think you'll get? *(Pause.)* Hey, don't talk to me like that! *(Pause.)* Who do you think you are?! Listen here, you little Aunt Fran protégé, you can't tell me how to live my life! *(Pause.)* Oh yeah? Well, that didn't work when we were growing up and it sure as hell won't work now! *(Pause.)* You know, I think Grandpa purposely didn't take that medication so he'd die and not have to deal with you anymore!

KAREN just stares in shock. BOB is quiet for a moment.

BOB: Oh, I'm so sorry, too! Really, I'm sorry. But we have to talk about his money. How else would we know which one of us Grandpa Jim loved most?

KAREN hits BOB on the shoulder.

BOB: Ow! (*Puts the magazine down.*) Well, I think he loved you the most - (*Pause.*) Of course he did. Didn't you notice how he always told everyone how proud he was of you? (*Pause.*) Or how he always made the time for you even when he was too busy for the rest of us?

KAREN: We aren't jealous, are we?

BOB: I think it would be a great honor to Grandpa's memory if you gave the eulogy at the funeral. (*Pause.*) Who would be able to do it better? Aunt Fran? (*Pause.*) Exactly. You'd be perfect. I'll set it up. (*Pause.*) No, no, it's the least I can do - for you and in memory of Grandpa.

KAREN: (*Starting to wipe her eyes again.*) That's so sweet -

BOB: I know. I wish I'd been able to see him one last time. (*Pause.*) I think I would have given him a big hug, probably told him I loved him, and then said goodbye one last time.

KAREN starts to cry.

BOB: What would you have done? Oh, I agree completely. (*Motioning to his heart.*) That gets me right here. (*Pause.*) I'm not sure what I'll do. (*Pause.*) How does anyone cope with a tragic loss like this? (*Pause.*) I know I'll think about him every day. (*Pause.*) Well, he always will be a part of us, no matter what, and now that he's moved on to a much better place -

KAREN sobs loudly, then exits running to get a tissue.

BOB: It looks like I'm running out of minutes on my phone here, so I'm going to have to let you go -

KAREN enters drying her eyes. She sits next to BOB.

BOB: Dry up those tears. It is sad, but you shouldn't lose your ability to love. That's what is really important. I think that's how Grandpa tried to live his life. (*Pause.*) Yeah, I love you too. I'll see you soon. Take - take care.

BOB ends the call and puts away his cell phone.

KAREN: Oh, Bob. I'm so sorry about your loss. You must be crushed right now.

KAREN sobs and embraces BOB.

BOB: Me? Nah.

KAREN: "Nah"?

BOB: That was a wrong number.

KAREN: A wrong number?!

BOB: A wrong number.

KAREN: So who died?

BOB: I really don't know. Apparently someone's "Grandpa Jim."

KAREN: But - but you talked about the good old days with that woman, told her you'd be at the funeral, and - and you completely destroyed Aunt Fran's reputation -

BOB: Huh. I guess I did.

KAREN: And you don't know who any of these people are?

BOB: Nope. Not a clue.

KAREN: But why would you do that? Why?

BOB: Why not?

KAREN: What is wrong with you?

BOB: I think it's because I've been watching too much of the Lifetime Channel. *(Pause.)* So, what do you want to watch now?

Pause.

KAREN: ESPN comes to mind -

BOB: Perfect. *(Starts dancing about doing the ESPN broadcast theme until.)*

BLACKOUT.

THE END

ALTERNATE ENDING:

KAREN: The Sci-Fi Channel comes to mind -

BOB: Perfect.

BLACKOUT.

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NOTES

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