

Elegy for a Pear

A Short Play

by

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CAST: JIMMY, mid-forties, pear grower

JOHNNY, mid-forties, attorney

TIME: Present, late Summer

PLACE: Among the pear trees in the family orchard

Lights up on JIMMY eating a crisp Green Anjou pear. Downstage is a coffin surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of bright green, red and yellow pears.

Enter JOHNNY, JIMMY's younger brother, well-dressed in shirt and tie.

JIMMY

Want one?

JOHNNY

No.

JIMMY

You should.

JOHNNY

No thanks.

JIMMY

You used to eat 'em like candy, Little Johnny B. Grab one.

JOHNNY

No.

JIMMY

Afraid he's gonna reach out and grab ya?

Jimmy grabs Johnny suddenly.

JOHNNY

No! I had roast beef.

So? JIMMY

My stomach? JOHNNY

JIMMY
Oh, your stomach. Well, that's the law for you, Little Johnny B.

JOHNNY
Please stop calling me that. It's John.

JIMMY
Oh, John. Sure.
(pause)
Look at that sunset. Beautiful. Like a thousand pears dancing.
(pause)
Too bad he can't see it. They glued his eyes shut. Or was it staples. You know they put balloons in his lungs?

JOHNNY
Must you be so morbid?

JIMMY
What, can't stomach nature, Johnny B?

JOHNNY
It's John! Goddamn it, Jim. I'm not ten years old.

JIMMY
That's right, you're not.

JOHNNY
That's right.

JIMMY
That's right.

JOHNNY
Jesus Christ, what the fuck are you doing?

JIMMY
Hey, watch your mouth. He's got his eyes all stapled up and his lungs full of balloons and God knows what else stuff in his middle and you're cursing all to high noon.

JOHNNY
Then don't make me.

JIMMY
I'm making you?

JOHNNY

Look, Jim, forget it, okay. I need to...

JIMMY

No, no, no. You don't get off that easy.

JOHNNY

I just came out here to talk...

JIMMY

I don't care what you're doing. You gotta apologize.

JOHNNY

Apologize? For what?

JIMMY

For cursing here in front of him. The guy's got balloons in his lungs for crying out loud.

JOHNNY

Fine, fine. I apologize.

JIMMY

No, not to me. To him.

JOHNNY

Fuck you.

JIMMY

Whoa, now you've done it.

JOHNNY

Look, I'm not doing this, whatever this is, with you. I need to discuss the agreement with you and not stand around bullshitting about pears and the fucking sunset...

JIMMY

(to coffin)

Whoa! Did you hear that? That's your Little Johnny B! All grown up lawyer with the spit shine mouth come back home to pay his respects. Thank God your eyes are all stapled up 'cause you don't want to see this.

JOHNNY

Alright, alright I'm tired of this shit.

JIMMY

You apologize right now.

JOHNNY

I have people interested in the orchard and you need to sign the agreement so I can...

JIMMY

Apologize.

JOHNNY

Did you hear me? You wanted me to help you sell the orchard and I can't do that unless you sign the agreement...

JIMMY

Say you're sorry.

JOHNNY

I'm not apologizing, Jim! For crissakes, this is serious.

JIMMY

Yeah, it is serious. You come over here and say you're sorry right now.

JOHNNY

Let's go inside, you got to sign some papers.

JIMMY

I'm not going anywhere until you...

Johnny quickly crosses to the coffin.

JOHNNY

I'm sorry for swearing.
(to Jimmy)

Let's go.

JIMMY

Not good enough.

JOHNNY

I'm not fooling around here, Jim!

JIMMY

Either am I and that ain't good enough.

JOHNNY

Well it's going to have to be good enough.

*Jimmy crosses to coffin, knocks on it,
listens closely.*

JIMMY

Sorry, Little Johnny B. He says it ain't good enough either.

JOHNNY

Are you out of your mind?

JIMMY

(listening to coffin)
 What's that? Oh, I see. Good call.
 (to Johnny)
 He says you gotta sing the song.

JOHNNY

Stop this right now!

JIMMY

Sorry. He said. Sing the song.

JOHNNY

What the hell are you talking about!

JIMMY

The SONG! You remember the song, don't you? Or did the law
 get that head of hair of yours all lost and broken.

JOHNNY

I don't know what the hell you're talking about and I don't
 have time for this. Now, are you coming in or do I have to
 pursue another option because believe me, I will.

JIMMY

Sing the song, Little Johnny B!

JOHNNY

What SONG?!

JIMMY

The Pear Song.

JOHNNY

(remembering)
 Oh my God.

JIMMY

(listening to coffin)
 He says with gusto.

JOHNNY

Have you lost your mind?

JIMMY

Don't blame me. He's the one you gotta answer to.

JOHNNY

I'm not singing anything and I'm tired...

JIMMY

Aw, one pear song ain't gonna kill ya, Little Johnny B.

Johnny grabs Jimmy, pushes him to the ground.

JOHNNY

It's JOHN! JOHN, JOHN, JOHN, JOHN! Christ almighty, can't you fucking get that through your head. I have a wife named Jenny, a son named Branson and my name is John! You got it?!

JIMMY

Yeah, yeah. I got it. Just cool off, will ya. He's laying right there.

JOHNNY

Don't tell me to cool off, Jim. I know who's laying there.

Johnny crosses to coffin and knocks on it.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, Dad! Wake up! You hear me! My name is John! J.O.H.N. Jenny has red hair and Branson is only three and can read. I graduated from Stanford Law, I drive a Subaru Outback, my favorite CD is Nevermind by Nirvana, my hobbies include snowboarding and crossword puzzles. You see, I did just fine without one ounce, one fucking ounce of help from you or this fucking orchard. So go to Heaven now and eat your pears. I'm fine without you. Always have been.

(to Jimmy)

You keep playing your Frank Capra movie about your wonderful life among the pears over and over in your head, Jim. I don't care.

JIMMY

Whooeee. Some eulogy, Little Johnny B.

JOHNNY

Alright, I'm done with this. I'm done. Let's go...

JIMMY

"Done" like when you were twenty and left and disappeared for, oh, fifteen years or so? That kind of "done?"

JOHNNY

The day I left he made it very clear to me I was on my own. Very clear. "Nothing" was the price for wanting something more out of life than picking pears and I gladly paid it because there is no way, *NO WAY*, I'm ending up like him. Sixty going on eighty and dead. I wasn't going to work twenty hours a day, busting my ass for pears. Look what that got him. Mom left. The orchard's a total loss. For pears? For fucking pears?

JIMMY

So you got something against pears?

JOHNNY

Okay, Jim. I'm only here because you asked me to help you sell the orchard. Now, you're either signing the agreement or I'm leaving and you're on your own. Got it? If it wasn't for you, Catherine and the kids, I wouldn't care if this place burned to the ground.

JIMMY

Gee, that's nice of you.

JOHNNY

Let's go. You got to sign.

JIMMY

Can't do that, John.

JOHNNY

I'm not playing games here.

JIMMY

Sorry, But I'm not signing anything.

JOHNNY

Are you screwing with me? You better not be screwing with me because I swear to God I will...

JIMMY

I can't sign anything because he *sold it already*.

JOHNNY

What?

JIMMY

He sold the orchard.

JOHNNY

The orchard is sold? Are you screwing...

JIMMY

No! He sold it a couple of months ago.

JOHNNY

I don't believe this.

JIMMY

It's true.

JOHNNY

Why didn't... You knew and you didn't tell me? Why the hell am I here? What the hell are doing, Jim?

Wonder what happens next?

For a copy of the full script, email me at:

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Thanks!