

SCENE ONE

Nighttime in a small country graveyard.

JOANNE, 60s-70s, enters, with a strong flashlight, moving carefully in the dark. Sounds of a distant freight train. Some frogs and crickets and nighttime sounds.

JOANNE

Righty? Are you out here? (Brief pause.) Righty? (To herself:) I hate this place. (Very brief pause.) Are you here?

RIGHTY, 60s-70s, sits up from where he's been hiding, somewhere behind Joanne and off to the side.

RIGHTY

Yup. Here I am.

JOANNE

(Startled.) Oh God. Why didn't you answer?

RIGHTY

I didn't hear you.

JOANNE

Well, obviously, you did.

RIGHTY

Oh, you're right-- that's true.

JOANNE

(Some lights come up, as she sweeps her flashlight around, but it remains a shadowy scene.)
You can't keep wandering off. You didn't hear your phone?

RIGHTY

It's for emergencies.

JOANNE

And how did you know this wasn't one?

RIGHTY

You got me again.

JOANNE
You're driving me crazy.

RIGHTY
I go for walks. (He stands and brushes himself off, but remains to the side.)

JOANNE
I spent an hour looking for you over on the Cabot Pasture. You said, "I'm going to the Cabot Pasture."

RIGHTY
But I didn't. I was here.

JOANNE
I see that.

RIGHTY
I don't go a lot of places. I'm either here or there.

JOANNE
(She looks around.) It's morbid.

RIGHTY
I like it.

JOANNE
I know, I know-- you like how the moss feels. You feel it growing around you when you lie down. But it's morbid. Maybe it's nice for a zombie.

RIGHTY
(Very slight effort at an impersonation:) I'm not a zombie--
I'm an Elephant Man.

JOANNE
Someone's been staying up watching movies.

RIGHTY
I have. Who told you that?

JOANNE
Let's get you home.

RIGHTY
Okay. Don't worry.

JOANNE
Says the man who puts his socks in
the refrigerator.

RIGHTY
The TV said it helps the
cholesterol.

JOANNE
Well, it doesn't, and I doubt the
TV said that. This is why I don't
let you answer the phone at home
anymore. Remember, you almost
bought a trailer for a boat?

RIGHTY
Yup. (Small self-deprecating
laugh.) You put a stop to that.

JOANNE
Doesn't even own a boat and the man
is halfway through his credit card
number to buy a trailer for it.
Over the phone, from a stranger in
a different state.

RIGHTY
Oops. But this is different.

JOANNE
What is? Come on, silly old man,
let's go. (He sits on the new
gravestone.) No, don't sit down--
we're going. Besides, it's
disrespectful.

RIGHTY
This is my place. Just give me a
minute.

JOANNE
Get off of that. How would you like
it if you were Mr. or Mrs.-- (She
tries to read the gravestone but
RIGHTY's legs are in the way.)

RIGHTY
I wouldn't mind.

JOANNE

Well, that's fine, but you're not Mr.-- (She's able to read.) Oh my God. What is this?

RIGHTY

(He stands.) My name.

JOANNE

I see that.

RIGHTY

(Admiring the gravestone.) Richard "Righty" Morse. It's official.

JOANNE

What's official? When did you do this?

RIGHTY

A little while ago. (He admires the headstone.) I got a 99-year lease. I guess that's how long eternity is, these days.

JOANNE

No. We took care of all this, remember? We got the deal at Greenview Memorial through your union. We're side by side, under a Willow tree.

RIGHTY

We were only looking at that.

JOANNE

No. We put a deposit. A non-refundable deposit.

RIGHTY

I want to be here.

JOANNE

How much did this cost?

RIGHTY

They said it was a good investment.

JOANNE

Oh, I'm sure they did, but here's what they didn't tell you: it isn't. At all. I can see the pamphlet: "This is a good investment.

(MORE)

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Asterisk, footnote: This is a terrible investment." I can't even... this was the big shrewd move you were bragging about, your safety net-- a hole in the ground for when you're dead?

RIGHTY

Well, when you say it like--

JOANNE

--That's how you say it. That's what the words are that describe this. (Brief pause.) How much?

RIGHTY

It's from the savings.

JOANNE

How much?

RIGHTY

I said, the savings.

JOANNE

Oh God. We have to go. We have to fix this. I don't even know who to talk to. And I just have to ask, where did your plan leave me?

RIGHTY

You don't like it here.

JOANNE

No, I don't. (Brief pause.) Do you ever think about anyone other than yourself? Even just by accident? (Very brief pause.) You know, it hurts, it's really hurtful. Every minute of the day, I'm thinking about you, whether I want to or not.

RIGHTY

No. Joanne. (He points to the area next to his gravestone.) This is yours.

JOANNE

Without a gravestone.

RIGHTY

I thought you'd want to choose your own.

JOANNE

And not be on one together with
you?

RIGHTY

And have to see your name right
there, when you visit every week?

JOANNE

Every week? What, are you going to
open up a dry cleaner's here, too?

RIGHTY

I thought you'd want to put a poem
on it or a song and I wanted you to
have room.

JOANNE

Yes, I probably would.

RIGHTY

Let's get me home.

JOANNE

(Noticing something.) What was
that? Something just moved. (She
searches with the flashlight.)

RIGHTY

(He looks around, then
sees it,
looks closer.) Salamander.

JOANNE

(Noticing something else
on the
ground.) Is that bottle
yours?

RIGHTY

Yeah. (He picks up a half-filled
plastic water bottle.) I know I
can't get around like I used to.

JOANNE

It's not that, Righty. It's, you
forget everything. It's your mind.

RIGHTY

It's my mind. (Gestures to
gravestone.) This makes me calm.
I'm not crazy.

JOANNE

Nobody said you were crazy.

RIGHTY

(Brief pause.) Listen to how quiet it is. I mean (He points at his mouth.), except... (Quietly:) So

RIGHTY (CONT'D)

quiet-- except for me talking right now.

JOANNE

It is quiet. (Very brief pause. Gently:) Ooh, you know what I think I just heard starting up? The sound of me talking right now. (Regular voice, but somewhat relentless:) Do you know what my medicine costs? Or your constant care, when I can't do it anymore? Or what every little day of our very little future is going to cost? Do you have any idea what any of this is like for me? That's the worst part. (Brief pause. He's moved into some darkness and turned away. To herself:) It's like talking to a brick wall.

RIGHTY

No, it isn't.

JOANNE

A selfish, financially irresponsible brick wall.

RIGHTY

I just want somewhere, Jo. One place, that stays. So everybody doesn't forget.

JOANNE

I'm not going to forget you, Righty.

RIGHTY

You're old. You'll be gone soon, too.

JOANNE

(Quietly:) Yes, thank you. My husband, the bucket of cold water.