

SMELLS LIKE HIGH SCHOOL  
Julie Winston-Thomas

JAMES  
Well, shit howdy.

LANEY  
Fuck you James.

JAMES  
That's no way to greet an old friend.

LANEY  
Oh, please, since when were we friends, old or otherwise?

JAMES  
Well, Laney, you could at least have some sense of decorum. I mean, you have noticed where we are, haven't you?

LANEY  
I only grieve at real funerals.

JAMES  
What?

LANEY  
Oh come on, James, I know you're an idiot, but you're not really that gullible, are you?

JAMES  
Gullible? What are you talking about?

LANEY  
This is all a fucking conspiracy.

JAMES  
Excuse me?

LANEY  
Philip is not really dead, and you know it! Choking on a happy meal toy? Please, that reeks of death fantasy. I mean why was he chewing on it in the first place? He just did it to get attention.

JAMES  
Did what to get attention? Chewed on the happy meal toy? Because that I'll believe.

LANEY  
No, pretending he's dead. So that everyone will line up and talk about how wonderful he was. Wow, I knew he was a masturbatory artist, but really.

JAMES  
You've got to be kidding me, Laney. Real people don't fake their own deaths.

LANEY  
No, it all makes sense, James! He's a performance artist. What a wonderful concept. A performance he doesn't even have to show up at. He gets all the credit and all the recognition with none of the work.

JAMES

But everyone here is so upset. He wouldn't do that to all the people who love him.

LANEY

Bullshit! James, how many times did Philip make crap up? And how many times was it something cruel? Remember the time he called me on April Fools' and said he had AIDS? And how I cried and cried and he finally broke down laughing and said "April Fools!" That's the sign of a compulsive liar. Or a sadist

JAMES

That's the sign of a fifteen year-old kid, for christ's sake! That's a far cry from a grown man staging an elaborate funeral, complete with full mass and friends from all over the country, just to get attention that he can't even enjoy because he's not there.

LANEY

Oh, he's here. Trust me, James, he's here.

JAMES

Whatever Laney. You are a fucking freak. I'm going to go pay my respects.  
(Exits)

(PHILIP comes from around the corner. He is decked to the nines in goth regalia, makeup, you name it.)

PHILIP

Such a tragedy, don't you think? I would have expected a much better turn out.

LANEY

(turns and sees him, screams) I was right! You asshole, you aren't dead! Philip, you owe me a \$200 ticket plus pain and suffering for having to relive high school.

PHILIP

Shhh. No one knows. So, are you impressed? I planned every last detail out in my will. Don't you like the headless cherubs? They add that certain Je Ne c'ost quoi, don't you think?

LANEY

You are one sick bastard. But yeah, it's pretty cool. If I were FIFTEEN and at a Korn concert! Goth is so passe', Philip.

PHILIP

Never! You're just jealous because it's not your funeral. We both know that there hasn't been a decent album produced since Jesus and Mary broke the chain.

LANEY

You should try some new stuff, Placebo's great and they've got that heroin-chic vibe you are so enamored of.

PHILIP

I wouldn't dare. I'd just be disappointed. Like always. Sigh. Oh, please, somebody tell me, what's the use in living?

(LANEY just looks at him.)

PHILIP

Oh, that's right, I'm already dead! Oh, I'm so clever! I'd better go, James is coming back. Hey, try the cheese sticks, they are to die for! Hee, hee, I made another one!

LANEY

I won't tell him you're here, don't worry.

PHILIP

Oh, go ahead, I don't care. He won't believe you anyway. Ta-ta!

(PHILIP exits, JAMES reenters)

JAMES

Wow, his parents seem to be holding up really well. Poor things, they blame themselves. They're the ones that insisted he needed the happy meal when he asked for the extra value. He was probably still so hungry he had to chew on the toy.

LANEY

He's here!

JAMES

Who?

LANEY

Philip! He's here, he just came and talked to me. He's really alive.

JAMES

Okay, Laney, now you're starting to freak me out. Really. It's okay to have your little theories about Philip still being alive, but when you start hallucinating-

LANEY

No, James, he's really here! He's hiding and watching everyone fawn over him. And loving it.

JAMES

Laney, his coffin is right out there! I just saw it, he's dead.

LANEY

So how did he look?

JAMES

I don't know, it was a closed coffin.

LANEY

Ah, ha! How convenient to have a closed coffin, huh?

JAMES

Actually I was relieved. Open coffins freak me out. All that makeup, and they look all shrunken-

LANEY

Yep. How convenient when there's no body.

JAMES

Laney, they had to do it because the paramedics did a lot of work to try and resuscitate him. And we both know how Philip looks in turtlenecks.

LANEY

Sure. That's what they tell you. I'm going to go prove it.

(LANEY exits offstage.)

JAMES

(yelling after her)

What the fuck is wrong with you, Laney, keep it together.

(Looks offstage the way she went.)

Oh, shit, Laney, don't do that.

(He runs offstage after her. Quickly returns, dragging the coffin with LANEY on top of it. Just pulls it part way in)

LANEY

Let me open it! I can prove he's not dead! Just let me open the casket.

JAMES

(struggling to pull LANEY off the coffin)

Laney, this is ridiculous! I know you guys were close, but he's gone.

LANEY

If you just let me open the coffin, you'll see that it's empty, Philip can come back out and the jig is up!

JAMES

"The jig is up?" What planet are you from? Let go of the coffin!

(Finally manages to pull her off. Shoves the coffin back offstage.)

Now stop this right now, Laney, people are staring.

LANEY

Who cares, they'll just think I'm stricken with grief.

JAMES

Well, I definitely think you are, but this is a "creative" way to deal with it.

LANEY

He was just here, I swear to you, James.

JAMES

Okay, I'll humor you for a moment. Where'd he go?

LANEY

(she calms down a lot, sits down.)

Back around the corner. He's hiding. I think he's hiding in the rec room, you know where we used to have all those teen dances when we were kids?

JAMES

Philip's ghost is hiding in the rec room. How appropriate. I hope you remembered to bring extra hairspray and black eyeliner. After the service we can go do the roger rabbit or something.

LANEY

It's not his ghost, it's him! He's alive. Why did you have to show up anyway? You never understood any of us weirdos. You dressed more like a shitkicker than a waver.

JAMES

Hey, I did my own thing, marched to my own drummer. I didn't have to follow some stupid MTV Fashion- Wait a minute, I am not getting into this argument with you. We are not in high school and you are not cool.

LANEY

Yeah, fine, you go ahead and hide behind your little mantle of maturity. We don't need you anyway.

JAMES

Okay, Laney. Well, "we" don't need you either.  
(Sees someone come in across the room, offstage.)  
There's Amber. I'd better go say hi to her, see how she's holding up.

LANEY

Oh, you're back on speaking terms? I guess if I can talk to you again, anyone can.

JAMES

I'm ignoring you.  
(Starts to exit, turns)  
Oh, and when Philip comes back, tell him I said hi.

LANEY

I'll do better than that. I'll get him to come right over and talk to your face. That'll show you!

(JAMES exits)

LANEY

That bastard. Next time I get married in Puerto Vallarta on my senior class trip, it's not going to be to him!

(PHILIP pops up again)

PHILIP

He went down on me once, you know.

LANEY

(jumps)  
What?! You have got to stop doing that, you're scaring the crap out of me. And James did not go down on you.

PHILIP

Okay, if you say so. But he did. At your sixteenth birthday party. Remember? Your parents were downstairs and we brought in all that booze and set up the bar on your dresser and you locked yourself in the bathroom because you were so upset we'd brought ALKEEHOL into YOUR party. God, you were such a prude.

LANEY

Fuck you! You were disrespecting my wishes.

PHILIP

We were disrespecting your bed too.

LANEY

Ewww! Right now I wish you were dead.

PHILIP

Maybe I am.

LANEY

Oh, don't pull that shit with me. I'm not that gullible.

PHILIP

Maybe I'm a ghost. Maybe only you can see me. How do you know? Maybe you're a medium.  
(Stands back and looks at her)  
Although, you've always been a bit of a large to me.

LANEY

Erggggh. You are not doing this to me. I am twenty-five years old, I am successful, I am well-liked, I don't live in my parents' basement.

PHILIP

Hey, I live upstairs at my parents. And it was only temporary. LIVED upstairs at my parents. You're still a loser.

LANEY

You will NOT turn me into an insecure teenager.

(PHILIP starts "kneeding" her upper arm)

PHILIP

I always loved your arm breasts.

LANEY

Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you! Okay, you just proved you aren't dead. You touched me.

PHILIP

Oh, is that in the rule book? I really must read that sometime. Wouldn't want to screw up being a ghost. It is a role I was born to play, isn't it?

LANEY

That's it! I'm going to find James!

(She exits to go find JAMES. PHILIP banter with the audience)

PHILIP

(to audience member) Lovely funeral isn't it? I am a bit disappointed, dear, that you didn't wear black. You know, it's the one thing that never goes out of style. Black for funerals, that is. Here, take this. At least you'll have SOMETHING to show your respect.  
(Hands her a black piece of construction paper made into a rose if possible. LANEY reenters, dragging JAMES behind her. PHILIP sits down on a step or something.)

(LANEY stops, astounded that PHILIP is still there.)

LANEY

Look, there he is!

JAMES

What are you talking about?

LANEY

Philip! He's sitting right over there.

JAMES

Laney, stop this right now. You're scaring me.

PHILIP

He can't see me, Laney. I told you, only you can see me.

JAMES

Laney, let me take you home, you need to get some rest.

LANEY

Stop it, Philip, stop it, I know you're not a ghost! Quit fucking with me.

JAMES

Who are you talking to Laney? Is it Philip?

PHILIP

Yeah, who, Laney? Are you crazy, Laney? Cuckoo, cuckoo!

LANEY

Quit it, Philip!

JAMES

(Speaking to her as if she's a child)

Okay, Laney, where's Philip? What is he saying to you?

LANEY

James, I know you can see him. Stop pretending like you can't.

JAMES

(still as if to a child)

Janie, just tell him to go away. Say, "Follow the light, Philip, follow the light."

PHILIP

Oh, Mommy, I'm scared of the light. I don't want to go.

LANEY

(to PHILIP, she is getting increasingly agitated with both of them)

Shut up, Philip!

(To JAMES)

He's not dead, James, there's no reason to tell him to go into the light. Just fucking acknowledge his presence!

JAMES

You have really got to calm down. Now just sit down.

(He holds onto her arms and tries to calm her down)

PHILIP

Oh look, James likes your arm breasts too, Laney!

LANEY

You asshole!

(She breaks free of JAMES and flies at PHILIP. She starts trying to "claw his eyes out".)

LANEY

Go to hell! If you're dead, then just get the fuck away from me and start your afterlife now. And if you aren't dead, well let me help you out with that too!

JAMES

Laney, you are off your rocker. I'm going to go get help.

(JAMES exits)

PHILIP

Ever the feisty one.

(She starts hitting him. PHILIP curls up and screams like a little baby.)

Stop it, I'm sorry Laney, I didn't mean it. Ow, you're hurting me!

LANEY

(mimicking him.)

Ow, you're hurting me! You baby. You big fucking dead baby! If you're dead, then you won't feel this.

(Pulls his hair.)

Or this.

(Turning his nipples.)

Tune in Tokyo, tune in Tokyo!

PHILIP

Laney, stop it! This is not nice. Have some respect for the dead.

LANEY

(pulling and holding PHILIP'S arm behind his back.)

Say you're not dead and I'll let you go.

PHILIP

But I am!

(LANEY pulls his arm harder.)

Ow! Laney!

LANEY

Just say it and you get your precious little arm back.

PHILIP

Okay, okay, I'm not dead.

(LANEY lets him go.)

PHILIP

But my soul's dead.

(Big grin)

That counts for something, doesn't it?

LANEY

Why did you do this? Why did you lie to me? I mean, I understand why you faked your own death, that's so you. But why did you lie to me?

PHILIP

I don't know. Because you're really funny when you're angry.

LANEY

You suck!

PHILIP

It was all James' idea. I swear.

LANEY

Now that I believe.

(Yelling offstage to JAMES)

James, get your ass in here right now!

JAMES

Laney, are you feeling better now?



PHILIP  
She knows.

JAMES  
Oh, shit! Laney, it was all Philip's idea.

LANEY  
God, I can't believe you two are exactly the same. And you're still blaming each other.

PHILIP  
We're really sorry.

JAMES  
Yeah. It was wrong.

PHILIP  
And I'm even more sorry than James.

JAMES  
No, I'm more sorry!

LANEY  
Grow up. I can't believe you're still torturing me. And I'm still letting you.

PHILIP  
You're right Laney, I'm sorry. We both are.

JAMES  
Yeah, this was so immature and stupid of us.

LANEY  
Why? Just tell me why you guys always do this.

JAMES  
We can't help it. It's you, Laney.

PHILIP  
Yeah, you're always so nice, no matter what we do-

JAMES  
We can't help but try to destroy you.

PHILIP  
You know we're both madly in love with you.

LANEY  
You're gay!

JAMES  
I'm not.

PHILIP  
Anymore.

JAMES

Shut up. How long are you going to spread that damn rumor. It was a handjob, I was on the receiving end, and we were fourteen, okay? Enough. What's important now is our friendship.

PHILIP

The handjobs were mutual, trust me. But James is right about our friendship. You are the only woman I could ever love, Laney. I may be gay, but you are my mother figure, you are my shining example of how perfect the female of our species is.

LANEY

Enough!

JAMES

Okay. We're sorry. That's what's important. We're adults now, we never should have treated you like that when we were teenagers.

PHILIP

And we certainly shouldn't have now. I'm so, so, sorry. You are such a wonderful friend and I love you.

JAMES

I'm really truly sorry and I love you.

LANEY

(gets weepy)  
You guys are always just so mean to me.

PHILIP

I swear Laney, we've changed.

JAMES

Yeah, Laney, just give us one more chance. You've changed so much since high school, too. You're so mature.

PHILIP

And intelligent. You're the only one who didn't believe I was dead. You knew! No one knows me like that.

LANEY

Okay, okay guys. I forgive you. Enough with the mushiness.

PHILIP

Thanks, Laney, you're such a doll.  
(PHILIP kisses LANEY on the cheek)

JAMES

Yeah, thanks.  
(JAMES hugs LANEY)  
We really should get out of here and go somewhere-

PHILIP

Where I'm not dead!

LANEY

Yeah, we do have a lot of catching up to do. Are ya'll hungry?

JAMES

I think there's a Denny's just up the road with our name on it. Who's up for spending five hours

drinking coffee and annoying a waitress.

PHILIP

I could go for that! But I don't have any money on me. Damn, faking your own death is expensive. I'll just get some water.

LANEY

Don't worry about it, Philip. I've got you covered.

PHILIP

Thanks, sweetie. Well, I kind of have to surprise a few people with the news of my resurrection.

JAMES

I'll help you, since I'm technically an accomplice. Your mom was always easier on you when I was around.

PHILIP

Why don't you go on, Laney and we'll catch up in a few minutes.

LANEY

Sounds great. So to our old haunt?

JAMES

You bet.  
(LANEY hugs both of them.)

LANEY

I love you guys, I sure missed you.  
(LANEY exits.)

PHILIP

Wow, it's like she was frozen in a time capsule at 17 and just popped back out.

JAMES

Yeah, she is still so naive! Hey, we're not really meeting her are we?

PHILIP

Of course not! She's not getting very far without these.  
(Holds up LANEY's keys)

JAMES

Awesome! Want to go hide in the bushes and watch her cry?

PHILIP

That's my man!  
(They give each other high fives)

JAMES

Ah, smells like high school!