

What do you mean you're dead?

A ten minute play

By Gwennyfar

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## Characters

Ford	A snobbish English major with no hope of passing French
Mr. Windbag	A middle-aged married lawyer with a crush on Ford
Mrs. Windbag	Married to Mr. Windbag, can be played by the same actress who plays Mommy
Mommy	Ms. Ford's Mother, middle aged, enjoys her nightly cocktails
Officer Daniels	Late 30's just trying to get a job done

(Lights up on a kitchen table covered with books & home work. Two people wearing bathrobes are clustered around the table one of them - Ms. Ford - is holding a telephone receiver. SQ: telephone ringing. In another section of the stage lights up on an easy chair with an end table covered in papers, an answering machine and a phone. A middle-aged woman comes on stage with a drink in her hand and answers the phone.)

Good Evening?  
Mommy

Hi mommy I got a message to –  
Ford

What do you mean you're dead?  
Mommy

Um, I'm sorry... Um, I'm not dead – what do you mean?  
Ford

Mommy

Someone called here and told us you were dead! We've been worried sick!

Ford

I'm sorry.

Mommy

Some one called here from the police and told us you were involved in an accident and were dead.

Ford

Well I'm not, what do you mean some one told you I was dead, I've been at the Windbags all night.

Mommy

Are you sure?

Ford

Yes, I'm sure.

Mommy

Well you are alive that's all Mommy and Daddy care about, go back to sleep.

Ford

Is Grandma OK?

Mommy

Grandma? Well she fine, she's dying, but she's no different than the last time we talked, have a good night dear.

(Mommy hangs up)

Ford

(Replacing the receiver and turning to an astounded Windbag couple.)

My grandmother's not dead, but someone called my parents and told them I was.

(Mommy picks up phone and dials, phone on Ford's side of stage rings, Mr. Windbag answers.)

Windbag

John Windbag here.

Mommy

This is Ford's mother calling back.

Windbag

Hold on one moment – it's your mother again.

Ford

Yes Mommy?

Mommy

You died in Salisbury - what were you doing in Salisbury when you were supposed to be in Charlotte?

Ford

I had to drive through Salisbury to get to Charlotte, maybe that's it. But I didn't die there.

Mommy

Well were you in an accident?

Ford

No, I came straight through and nothing happened.

Mommy

Whose car are you driving?

Ford

Mine... the only one I have, why?

Mommy

Well they said you were in a green sedan, which doesn't make sense because you drive a white thing.

Ford

Jimmy, GMC Jimmy, yes much larger than a sedan, I really don't know where this is coming from. I'm sorry.

Mommy

Well we got called because they ran the plates and came up with daddy's name. Hold on a second I have a phone number for you ...

(She trails off looking for the piece of paper that had disappeared under the answering machine on the end room table.)

This is some sort of police department. You ready? OK 704-638-5333. Officer Daniels. Good Luck on your French Final,

(She hangs up on M again.)

Windbag

(Taking the number and dialing)

Let me. Yes, Good evening, this is John Windbag, I am calling regarding a message we received this evening that our house guest had died. What? No she's right here and other than looking confused seems to be fine. I'm supposed to ask for Officer Daniels, it is regarding license plate LXM 9794, yes, I'll hold. Yes, I'm still here. What? You're kidding, unh, and he's off duty till when? Yes, thank you, thank you good night.

(He hangs up the phone.)

Well, it's kind of strange. (beat) Would you like a glass of Orange Juice? (Calling off stage) Dear, will you please bring Ford a glass of Juice?

Ford

What's going on? How bad is it?

Windbag

Well it seems that there is a warrant out for your arrest in Salisbury for manslaughter

Ford

What?

(Mrs. Windbag enters holding glass)

Windbag

There is a warrant for your arrest in Salisbury for manslaughter. Apparently earlier this evening a fatal hit and run accident occurred, and the perpetrator fled the scene. The license plate number given was yours.

(M Takes OJ drowns it like a shot and hands the glass back to Mrs., who looks at it and leaves again.)

Ford

Oh my God!

Windbag

However, the car was described as a dark green sedan and that obviously doesn't match yours.

Ford

Ok, that explains the thing Mommy was saying about the Green car..... But how did they get my license plate?

Windbag

Made it up. It's not true anyway, is it?

Ford

What?

Windbag

I mean you didn't do it, did you?

Ford

No! I was here studying French!

Windbag

Oohlala.

Ford

Well, what do I do about it?

Windbag

Well the problem is that the officer in charge of the investigation has gone off duty and will not be back on duty until Tuesday night.

Ford

So?

Windbag

So there is nothing you can do without him.

Ford

Oh, God!

(Heaving a couple of deep breaths, trying not to hyperventilate)

What am I going to do? I have to drive back through Salisbury tomorrow!

Windbag

You can't wait?

Ford

And miss my French final?! Have you ever met a French professor who considered your liberty more important than their class?

Windbag

I think we should go to bed.

Ford

I'm sorry - I don't know - I was asleep. Oh God, what am I going to do?

Windbag

You are not going to worry about it. You are going to go to sleep, get up, go to go back to school, and everything is going to be fine.

(Puts an arm around M and gives a squeeze.)

Ford

Don't worry? I'm Jewish! That's like saying don't breathe! 5,000 years of Cultural Tradition can not be denied!

Windbag

OK, Ok. Take a deep breath, everything is going to be fine, and besides there is nothing you can do about it now. So go get some sleep.

(Ford exits, carrying her books.)

Mrs. Windbag (calling from off stage)

Is everything alright with Ford dear?

Windbag

Yes dear, she's fine.

Mrs. Windbag

Then come to bed, it's late.

(He reluctantly heads off stage.)

Lights out

Lights up on Ford and Windbag, Ford is holding a suit case

Ford

(Terribly melodramatic) This might be the last time I see you without bars between us.

Windbag

Don't speed, don't get caught, stop for traffic signs and lights, wear your seat belt and if something happens, call me.

(They embrace, he kisses her full on the mouth and she runs off stage)

Lights out.

Lights up on Ford working at a desk a phone rings. Lights up on Officer Daniels at a desk on the other side of the stage. He is in a basic police uniform.

Ford

Good Evening.

Daniels

Yes, Ms. Ford please.

Ford

Who may I say is calling?

Daniels

This is Officer Daniels, Salisbury PD.

Ford

Good evening officer. How may I help you?

Daniels

I am calling to apologize ma'am. I have been in touch with your lawyer and we have resolved the case.

Ford

My lawyer?

Daniels

Uh, yes, Ma'am, a, uh... Mr. Windbag, he just left - came up here visiting today on your behalf and we have resolved the case and the warrant for your arrest has been canceled.

Ford

Well I certainly am relieved to hear that.

Daniels

Yes, ma'am, you never were in the car at all.

Ford

Yes sir, officer, I know that.

Daniels

And there was no green sedan. Someone was making that up, in fact, the gentleman driving the car that hit the post, he made all that up. Seems he didn't want his wife to know about what he was doing with his girlfriend. When he, uh, hit the post and killed the girlfriend, he had uh, been distracted from driving by, um, their other activities, um, uh... he made up a story about another driver instigating the crash by forcing them off the road and fleeing the scene. So you see ma'am it had nothing to do with you at all.

Ford

Well thank you officer, I am sure am glad to hear that.

Daniels

I owe you an apology, and I sure hope you will accept it. I will be writing to your parents to apologize to them in writing for any undue stress I have caused them by my badly worded message on their answering machine. And again, I sure am sorry Ma'am.

Ford

Well thank you officer, I can't tell you how happy I am to have talked with you and I hope you have a wonderful day.

Daniels

Thank you Ma'am, well, by the way, that's one damn good lawyer you have. Good night.

Black out