

the Dear Departed

By
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INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY

An elderly female butler turns on a huge TV with a remote.

Behind her, a long oval table, surrounded by chairs.

At the far end, a door opens. Three men, all dressed in black, file in, wearing barely concealed hand guns.

ALFRED, about 30, tall, scruffily dressed, giggles.

BILL, late 30s, well built, calm, sneers at the others.

STEPHEN, early 40s, medium height, mean looking, sneezes.

They sit down, eye each other up.

The butler pops a flash drive into a slot under the TV. The remote control CLICKS. She slides it into a pocket, turns around, eyes the others, leaves, shuts the door behind her.

All face the TV. An old, thin, bald man appears on screen.

Alfred jumps up.

ALFRED

Daddy! Daddy Joe! Sing us a song!

Bill grabs him by his belt, hauls him back to his seat.

Alfred hums to himself.

DADDY JOE

Hello, my dear, dear children, it's good to have you together again! I wish I were there to see it myself.

His audience smirks.

DADDY JOE

It's such a shame the only way to get you all in the same room is to appeal to your one shared love.

Stephen blows his nose with a handkerchief. His hands shake.

DADDY JOE

So, at a wild guess, the question on everyone's mind, my ever loving children, is ... who gets it all?

STEPHEN

Get on with it, you old --

DADDY JOE

At first, my thoughts turned to
Bill, groomed to take over.

Alfred claps twice.

ALFRED

Wee Willy!

DADDY JOE

You've learned so much, I'm very
proud of you. However, when I heard
you ratted me out to the cops, my
pride diminished somewhat.

BILL

I learn from the best, dear father.

DADDY JOE

So then I thought of Stephen,
always my little golden boy.

ALFRED

I love you, Stephen!

Stephen bites his fingernails, smiles up at the screen.

DADDY JOE

It was a great joy for me to
finally see you married. It was
less of a joy when Alfred told me
how you tried to steal the proceeds
from our last business transaction.

Stephen springs up, draws his gun. Alfred beats him to it.

He cackles, turns his gun on its side, back to vertical.

DADDY JOE

Now let me guess ... you're sharing
a loving embrace after that little
revelation? But wait, there's more!

Stephen and Alfred sit down, reholster their guns.

DADDY JOE

That leaves ... Alfred! We all know
about Alfred, don't we? Maybe I'll
leave him everything. Just for fun!

ALFRED

Yes, Daddy, yes! Give it all to me!

Daddy Joe cracks up in laughter.

STEPHEN

You bastard! You bloody bastard!

BILL

I wouldn't put it past him. Why --

DADDY JOE

I can't imagine the love in the air after that! It is so very tempting.

BILL

He's just messing with us.

DADDY JOE

Or should I give it all to charity? No, the only fair solution is to give everyone an equal share.

BILL

Wait for it ...

DADDY JOE

As you know, all my assets are safely hidden away in trust. You all get an equal share of the profits. There is one condition. Just a small one. It's a tontine.

The trio stare at the screen in confusion.

DADDY JOE

What's a tontine, you ask? It's where the last one alive gets it all. I know, such a cliché! But appropriate for our family, yes? Where nobody in living memory has ever died of natural causes?

The children gaze at each other.

Stephen COUGHS.

They leap up, draw their guns. Two chairs fall to the floor.

ALFRED

Danger! Danger!

BILL
Guys, let's not fall for this. It's
not going to be a happy ending.

The others consider his words.

DADDY JOE
Let me guess. You love that idea!
How about ... if, for some strange
reason, nobody survives the first
year, it all goes to my butler!

STEPHEN
To Chuckles? Shit.

BILL
How stupid does he think we are?
Don't give him the satisfaction.

STEPHEN
What do you mean? He's dead! Why
should I cut you two any slack?

They switch their aim from one to another, in a macabre
dance. Stephen draws a second gun. The others follow suit.

ALFRED
Double danger! Double danger!

BILL
You want Chuckles to get it all?
They probably set this up together.
Why do you think she left the room?

They look around for the butler.

The lights go out.

STEPHEN
Oh, shit. OH, SHIT!

RAPID BREATHING.

BILL
Let's just ... sit ... down.

A loud SNEEZE.

A dozen SHOTS ring out, flash brightly in the darkness.
Screams and grunts, chairs break, three heavy thuds.

Silence.

A door CREAKS open. Slow footsteps. The light flips on.

Next to the switch stands DADDY JOE.

He surveys the carnage on the floor.

LAUGHTER rings out.

DADDY JOE

Oh, no, how sad. And unexpected! I
never realized how much fun it
would be to fake my own --

Bill manages two more SHOTS, expires.

Both hit Daddy Joe in the chest. He staggers backwards.

DADDY JOE

-- death.

He collapses, dead.

The door opens. The butler peers around it.

She checks the bodies, glides into the room, to the TV.

Removes the flash drive, pockets it.

Unpockets the remote control, points it at the TV.

CLICK.

CUT TO BLACK.