

JEANNETTE. Neil isn't going to wait for the disease to kill him. He's going to end the journey before the pain gets to be too much.

DINAH. Oh my gosh, Neil.

BILL. Does this doctor of yours know about this?

NEIL. Yes. She's aware of my decision.

BILL. And is she going to be the one to put you down?

DINAH. Oh, Bill.

NEIL. No, I appreciate the phrasing. That's exactly what it is. Kindest thing you can do to a dying dog. But no, Bill, she won't be a part of it.

BILL. Because of the legal issues.

NEIL. That's right.

DINAH. Oh Neil, are you absolutely sure you have no hope? Have you gotten other medical opinions?

JEANNETTE. Of course we have, what do you think? We've been to every frigging specialist there is.

DINAH. Oh, Jeannette, I'm just saying that if there was a chance, just a chance that Neil might pull through —

NEIL. The building is condemned, dear Cousin. I have to vacate. It's full of termites and dry rot, the foundation is crumbling, the electrical wires have crossed and I can smell smoke...got to get out before I get trapped and I burn to death.

DINAH. Neil, this is so awful.

NEIL. No it isn't. We all have to die. Presidents do it, garbage men do it, lawyers and poets and certified public accountants do it. Billions of people before me have done it, most of them horribly. So the fact that I get to design my own end, that I can slip out of my flesh gently, sweetly, with my beloved by my side, the fact that I'll be able to cherish my very last breath, I see this as nothing but a privilege and a gift.

DINAH. That's a lovely way to put it, I guess.

BILL. Now wait a minute, let's not start soft-selling suicide.

JEANNETTE. This isn't suicide. Suicide is an act of self-destruction. This is an act of self-release.

NEIL. And what about my responsibility to the world I'm leaving behind?

BILL. What about it?

NEIL. How much medical trash do you think I'd produce if I decided to live to the bitter end?

BILL. I don't think that should even be an issue.

NEIL. But take a guess — how many rubber gloves, rolls of plastic tubes and gauze, how many needles and saline pouches, vials and bottles with all their requisite double-seal packaging? How many spit cups and straws and tissue and wipes? How many double-ply plastic bags would it take to cart my misery away?

BILL. I'm sorry, but you can't euthanize sick people just to cut down on their trash.

NEIL. Come on, you know that's not what I meant.

BILL. But what if the wrong people got a hold of that argument?

JEANNETTE. The wrong people usually don't make it up this hill, Bill.

BILL. Well, you're lucky you're not a Christian.

NEIL. How's that?

BILL. In my world, suicide is a sin.

NEIL. Ah.

BILL. Look, there're a lot of very intelligent people who don't like to hear the word sin. I didn't want to hear it either. But once I stopped trying to cherry pick my way through my faith I was willing to face the reality of hell.

DINAH. Oh Bill, stop, you don't believe in that.

BILL. Well, I don't believe in the fiery pit per se but I think there's such a thing as eternal darkness.

JEANNETTE. That's pretty harsh.

BILL. Well it is. But once you accept God's love, there's nothing to fear. And God doesn't shut the door on anyone. Especially good people like yourselves who's hearts are in the right place.

NEIL. I'm glad to hear that.

BILL. Are you?

NEIL. Absolutely. I'm all for fluidity.

BILL. Well Neil, let me ask you...would you like to take Christ into your heart?

NEIL. I appreciate the offer, Bill, but my spiritual plate is pretty full.

BILL. There's always room for more.

NEIL. True. But I think I'll chew on what I have for now.

BILL. Jeannete?

JEANNETTE. No thanks, I'm good.

BILL. But you still can't ignore the possibility of damnation.

NEIL. As we said, Bill, we don't believe in that. So enough.

BILL. Well, my daughter wasn't given any mercy by that twisted maniac and I'm more than glad that my God has a hell for monsters like him.

DINAH. Let's talk about happier things.

JEANNETTE. I agree. Have some more wine, Bill.

BILL. Thanks, no. One's my limit.

JEANNETTE. Well, it isn't mine.

BILL. Excuse me, I need to use the outhouse.

JEANNETTE. There's a bucket of peat moss next to the throne. Just throw in a scoop when you're done.

BILL. All right.

(BILL leaves.)

DINAH. I apologize for Bill.

NEIL. No, what for?

DINAH. He's still in a lot of pain.

JEANNETTE. You both are, Hon.

DINAH. Well, yes. There's never an end to this kind of grief. But what can you do?

JEANNETTE. (to NEIL.) Babe, how're you doing? You need some more relief?

NEIL. I wouldn't turn it down.

(JEANNETTE sets up the vaporizer)

DINAH. Listen, if you two have had enough of us and need some time to yourselves...

NEIL. Why, have you had enough of us?

DINAH. No, not at all.

NEIL. Then stay. I'm enjoying your company.

DINAH. Thank you. Anyway. I just hope you weren't offended by all his religious talk.

NEIL. Not at all. I like hearing from the other side.

DINAH. Well, this new church that we've joined has given us a lot of support. Bill couldn't function at all for a while and this minister really helped him get back on his feet. So I'm grateful for that. And we're both moving forward.

(JEANNETTE hands the vaporizer bag to NEIL.)

Bill wants to sell our house and buy a condo in one of those adult communities. I think we're a little young for that but he says that by the time we get old, all the good places will be filled up.

NEIL. Sure.

(NEIL takes a discreet hit.)

DINAH. He's also concerned about the Alzheimer's in our family - the fact that Grandma Henley and both of our mothers had it. And we won't have Cindy to look after us. We found a young estate attorney who'll hopefully still be in business by the time we need looking after.

(JEANNETTE takes the bag from NEIL and takes a hit.)

We both want to be buried next to Cindy so he'll take care of that when the time comes. So, we have our plans. And that's that.

(JEANNETTE offers the bag to DINAH.)

JEANNETTE. Dinah, would you like to try some?

DINAH. Oh. I'm not really a smoker.

JEANNETTE. You don't have to be. It's very mild.