



DEAR REBECCA – A MOTEL PLAY

by Art Shulman

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CHARACTERS: DALE Male or female, 25-60
 BROOK Male or female, 25-60

TIME: Evening/night

PLACE: The patio at a motel

AT RISE: DALE sits at a table reading a newspaper. A vial of pills is on the table.
 BROOK enters, not too happy seeing anyone else, notices the pills. The
 two don't know each other. DALE laughs.

BROOK

Something funny?

DALE

Riotous.

BROOK

What is it?

DALE

The Dear Rebecca advice column. "Desperately Disappointed Grandma" is upset because her grandkids don't send her thank you notes for the birthday presents she gives them.

BROOK

Right! Her column deals with trivial nonsense like that while some people have really serious life-threatening issues, real life-threatening.

DALE

(Recognizing import in what BROOK said) Yeah, some people do have life-threatening issues.

BROOK

What does Dear Rebecca advise Grandma?

DALE

Let's see. *(Referring to the newspaper)* She says, "Chill out and get over it. Lots of folks have much more important problems than you."

BROOK

She doesn't really say that, does she?

DALE

Nah! She really says, *(Pretends to read)* "Dear Desperately Disappointed Grandma, Your problem is so devastating and hopeless that you should seriously consider offing yourself. But

before you do, I suggest reading my book, 'When It's The Right Time To Get It Over With', available for purchase on Amazon or go to www.DearRebecca.com slash offing yourself.

BROOK

You're kidding, right?

DALE

Of course I'm kidding. Dear Rebecca seems to have gotten more vanilla over the years in her choice of letters to publish. I guess readers nowadays don't care to be exposed to serious personal issues.

BROOK

I know what you mean by people having problems.

DALE

Though offing yourself isn't really a laughing matter. Is it?

BROOK

I don't really like the word 'offing'. It makes it seem like an execution.

DALE

That's what killing yourself is, isn't it?

BROOK

Suicide is not an execution. An execution is some sort of punishment, and I don't think people are punishing themselves when they do it.

DALE

Know what Dear Rebecca really says? (Beat) Grandma should tell her daughter to train her kids better.

BROOK

Your answers are much more fun than hers. (Beat) So, if someone wanted to take their life, a pill overdose would be the most effective method, right?

DALE

Right! Rather than pull a trigger or jump off a bridge. No time-consuming clean-up. And it's so easy to get a prescription these days. (Beat) You know, some people say that suicide is the cowardly way out. But I don't think that people who go through with it reason that way. I think people who do it believe they are being proactive.

BROOK

Proactive?

DALE

Yeah. They have a situation they can't deal with, they find a way out. They make it happen. Poof! It puts them in control. Some say that suicide is the most extreme expression of liberty.

BROOK

Suicide is liberating?

DALE

It liberates the mind.

BROOK

And, of course, the body.

DALE

Obviously, there are negatives about it, but sometimes things are really tough, people are dealt such a bad hand, there's just one way to wipe the slate clean.

BROOK

People who can't deal with their lives anymore. They've tried and nothing works to change things for the better. So, poof!

DALE

You got it! Can't ever hope for a way out, so That recognition is what most suicides have in common. Loss of hope. I can understand that.

BROOK

I can too. No way out. Except one.

DALE

You know, there's a certain etiquette to committing suicide. People planning it should really be aware of some of the right and wrong things to do. Imagine if before you departed the world, you made what knowledgeable scholars of suicide would call mistakes.

BROOK

Scholars call mistakes? Like what?

DALE

First, I think it's only courteous to leave a note. If you don't, then no one would know for sure if your death was intentional, an accident, or a result of a crime. They'd have to guess, and that might play havoc with the suicide statistics.

BROOK

I can see where that might screw up the statistics.

DALE

And, more than just statistics, imagine if you committed suicide and the police couldn't rule out you being murdered, and detectives spent hours and hours on the case, keeping them from solving other cases, like finding missing children. How would that make you feel?

BROOK

Very guilty. So, I definitely should leave a note. Uh ... if, hypothetically, ... you know.

DALE

Definitely. I would do the same, if hypothetically ... (Beat) Know what else might screw up crime statistics in some parts of the world?

BROOK

What?

DALE

In some areas suicide *is* considered a crime.

BROOK

What are they going to do, put the deceased on trial? Well, maybe they could try him in absentia. And even if the late person is found guilty, at least the government won't have to worry about increasing the prison population.

DALE

Hey, you have a pretty good sense of humor -- trying dead people in absentia, not increasing the prison population.

BROOK

I really didn't mean to be funny at this time.

DALE

Oh, come on now. Admit it. You probably have been complimented hundreds of times on your sense of humor. (Beat) But we shouldn't make light of this issue. Suicide, I mean.

BROOK

We shouldn't. It's a real issue. Sometimes discussions like this can hit close to home, right?

DALE

Another mistake concerns the method used to end it all. In consideration of others it shouldn't be too messy. Obviously killing yourself in an explosion might bring others to an end with you, which should cause you plenty of guilt.

BROOK

I wouldn't want that. I'd want to go out with a clear conscience.