



COVER SHEET

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His ... or Her ... Suicide.

By Bruno Starrs. Copyright 2004.

Elderly husband, FRANK, and wife, DOROTHY, are in their steamed up bathroom. FRANK is shaving his face while DOROTHY is shaving her legs in the shower. They are both using old-fashioned “cut-throat” razors. They’re in no particular hurry, indeed, they display the characteristics of old age and forgetful senility.

DOROTHY

Frank, darling, I think we need to be ...

(Raising her voice over the noise of the shower)

Frank!

(DOROTHY turns off the shower)

I have something I think we should discuss ... Dwell upon ... Even ...

(Adopting a serious tone)

... attempt to explain.

(She gestures towards FRANK with a bundle of papers)

FRANK

(Lifting the tip of his nose as he continues to shave)

Now, now, Dorothy, dear. Don’t blow a fuse. What is it? Are they Bills?

DOROTHY

No, they’re from, um. Chase. The police just delivered them. They want us to come down to the Morgan. Something about identifying a Bodey. But I am a bit confused. I think it’s some kind of ... suicide note.

FRANK

Dotty, Dotty, Dotty ... now just who is this Chase? I thought we only had Bills. So who does our family actually consist of now? Bills or Chases? Or both? And which, really, is which?

DOROTHY

Never could tell with all that black make-up on. But unlike “Bill”, “Chase” is a unisex name.

FRANK

Our Chase not a virgin!?! Why wasn’t I told? She’d have been out on the streets in no time flat! I refuse to keep a tramp in my house!

DOROTHY

Unisex, darling. Frankly, it means they only have it off with themselves.

FRANK

Still, I hope she ... or he ... was of age. Um, what is the legal age in this state?

DOROTHY

In this state of continual flux, parallel universes, ever-changing politics, rabid clergy and super-powerful lobby groups, one can never be sure. However I’m fairly certain

we are of age, Frank, darling. But then there's the question of his ... or her ... orientation.

FRANK

Why, what way was he ... or she ... leaning?

DOROTHY

Face down in the gutter, it seems. But there's still the question of these.

FRANK

Ah, yes, Bills. But wait a minute - there was no need for our Bills or Chases to kill themselves - we always pay on time. It's what sets us apart as stalwarts of our modern, progressive society. That and our high level of disposable income; I'm assuming he ... or she ... had an enviable allowance?

DOROTHY

Well, stalwarts of society perhaps, were it not for the possibility that our child has killed him ... or her ... self. As, um, indicated to some extent, by these letters. Which are written on quite expensive looking paper. But they're not Bills - they're Chases.

FRANK

Well, that's a relief - don't want it getting around that we don't look after our Bills.

DOROTHY

Or our Chases. But I think they're more than Bills. I do think they're a suicide note.

FRANK

Humph. When are they dated?

DOROTHY

New Year's Day.

FRANK

Ah, always a popular time for suicides - or Letters of Demand. Goddamn bills - always chasing after our money! But wait a minute - those letters are blank!

DOROTHY

Except for the following:

(She reads)

"From the Desk of Chase. Things To Do. Number One: commit suicide. Number Two: write note to Frank and Dorothy."

FRANK

Hmm, bit of a give-away, that is. Still, Dotty, at least we don't have to worry about Bills.

DOROTHY

Bill's what?

FRANK

Bill's suicide ... Unless they were lovers and made a suicide pact together. There's nothing there from the Desk of Bills? I mean, it looks like there's a few there ...

DOROTHY

Four pages. All blank. Except for the header on the first, which I've already read, and this last one's a footnote or something. It's foreign: "amici sincere".

FRANK

Oh ... "the sincerest of friends", I think. It's French or Greek ... or the name of a restaurant in Lygon Street.

DOROTHY

He ... or she ... must have been ... getting around to filling in the rest of the letter.

FRANK

So, it was meant to be a suicide note.

DOROTHY

A four-page suicide note? Very ambitious!

FRANK

But he ... or she ... failed. Suicide, you know.

DOROTHY

Maybe it was his ... or her ... life-long goal.

FRANK

Then he ... or she ... succeeded!

DOROTHY

I always knew our Chase would be a success!

FRANK

But the blank pages. They must represent something ...

DOROTHY

Yes, something unfinished. Yet hinted at ... like Sylvia Plath ... or Thomas Chatterton.

FRANK

Of course! I've got it! He ... or she ... left it like that for us. For us to fill in the blanks! Like an epitaph! After all, who would know him ... or her ... better than his ... or her ... own parents!

DOROTHY

You're right, of course! You frequently are. Nearly 50% of the time!

FRANK

And it'd have given us, the grieving parents, some closure. He ... or she ... would have wanted that.

DOROTHY

Unless he ... or she ... hated us.

FRANK

Unlikely, Dotty: “amici sincere”.

DOROTHY

Sarcasm?

FRANK

He was your son ... or daughter. I doubt if he ... or she ... was capable of sarcasm.

DOROTHY

(Bitchily)

Well, you certainly are.

FRANK

Alright, let's start this. I'll dictate and you adopt a suitable writing style ... “Dear Frank and Dorothy... Ah ... Suicide is painless; it brings on many changes. And you can take or leave it if you want.”

DOROTHY

(Singing)

“Suicide is painless; it brings on many changes. And you can take or leave it if you want.” Was he ... or she ... a theme song writer?

FRANK

Hmm, not likely, we'd have more to show financially if he ... or she ... was.

DOROTHY

But we've no problems with Bills.

FRANK

Never-the-less, let's try a different tack. How about: “Dear Frank and Dorothy. Black hole sun, won't you come, and wash away the rain.” Or should that be “tears”? Or what about “Pardon me, while I kiss the sky”, or should that be “Excuse me, while I kiss the sky”?

DOROTHY

Who's “Skye”? That's definitely a girl's name. I wonder if Chase was a heterosexual boy or a lesbian girl? There's that orientation question again. And Bill's an unknown quantity, too. Oh, by the way, The Bill's on tele tonight.

FRANK

Mmm ... I know, I know; How's this; “Dear Frank and Dorothy. This is the end, my ... my ... something ... friend.”

DOROTHY

(Singing)

“This is the end, my ... something ... friend, the end.” Oh, dear! That's it! I just

realised. We weren't his ... or her ... parents; we were his ... or her ... friends. Hence "amici sincere". Not "Your loving son ... or daughter." Rather, the sincerest of friends.

FRANK

And we let him ... or her ... our sincerest of friends ... down! Oh, God! We didn't even see it coming! Too pre-occupied with Bill after Bill after Bill. As if chasing after Bills is the only thing that matters in life!

DOROTHY

I feel so guilty. Read the suicide note back to me. Let me hear it from your lips. I must know why our best friend killed himself ... or herself.

FRANK

(Reading, tearfully)

"From the Desk of Chase. Things To Do: 1. Commit suicide. 2. Write note to Frank and Dorothy." Blah, blah, blah; three pages of blankness, then "amici sincere".

DOROTHY

(In tears)

Our best friend ... gone forever.

FRANK

We failed him ... or her. We can't fill in the blanks. We don't deserve to occupy the space his ... or her ... beautifully poetic shape once so joyously occupied but which has now become ... an inexplicable void. He has fused with the cosmos while we mere husks are left alone and cold.

(After a long pause, FRANK and DOROTHY look hard at each other through their tears. They wipe the foam from their razors simultaneously and position them at their wrists. They each whisper "amici sincere". The lights fade to black)

CURTAIN