

The following is excerpted from

“SHE DIED WITH HER PUMPS ON”

A Ten Minute Dark Comedy

By Ken Levine

A funeral service takes a crazy turn when the only thing the Minister can say about the dearly departed is that she always wore nice shoes.

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SHE DIED WITH HER PUMPS ON

A One Act Dark Comedy by
Ken Levine

SYNOPSIS -- A funeral service takes a crazy turn when the only thing the Minister can say about the dearly departed is that she always wore nice shoes.

CHARACTERS

MINISTER -- Any age. Formal.

HOWARD -- Middle Aged. A little bitter

WALTER -- Elderly. Indignant

LORRAINE -- Elderly. Somewhat prim.

SETTING

A funeral chapel. Present day.

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INT. CHAPEL - DAY

A funeral in progress. The MINISTER at the pulpit. If you've got some flowers that would be nice. A little organ music wouldn't be bad either. Behind him are three people who are scheduled to speak -- HOWARD (middle-aged), WALTER (elderly) and LORRAINE (elderly).

MINISTER

Good morning. Today we gather together to bid a final farewell to our beloved Blanche Hollister. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Blanche Hollister. (beat) Yes... Blanche Hollister.

He's hedging, not sure what he wants to say next. Finally:

MINISTER

A proud member of our congregation. I stand before you now with a heavy heart, made even heavier with regret. I must confess I did not know her all that well. Blanche would only come to church on rare occasions. It was my failing to not reach out to her. Oh yes, we spoke several times, all too briefly and all too infrequently. But one thing I remember about Blanche Hollister -- she always wore beautiful shoes. They were stylish and --

Howard stands up and approaches.

HOWARD

Wait. Did I just hear you right? Her shoes? That's your take-away from my mother's eighty-year life? Her friggin' shoes?

MINISTER

Well, I said I didn't know her well.

HOWARD

Obviously, if you never looked above her ankles.

MINISTER

She rarely went to church.

HOWARD

Still! You could say "She was very kind. She was very generous."

MINISTER

I don't really know if she was. She used to hog the sacramental wine. I once saw her elbow a child.

HOWARD

Then LIE! This is a funeral. Everybody lies. No one's as wonderful and giving and compassionate as people say in eulogies. But that's the game. You don't reduce someone's entire life to her choice of footwear!

MINISTER

But they were reeeeeeeally nice.

HOWARD

I don't care!

MINISTER

Listen young man, I conduct a lot of funerals. It's not easy to keep everyone straight. You look for distinguishing characteristics.

HOWARD

Thank goodness she wasn't a hunchback.

MINISTER

Now that I could have built upon.

HOWARD

Have you ever heard of George Jessel?

MINISTER

Of course, the old Vaudeville entertainer. A little schticky for my taste.

HOWARD

He was also renown for giving eulogies. Hundreds of them. Touching, funny, heartwarming tributes. One day he's going on and on. (a la eulogy) "No one gave more to charity, no one was a better father, husband, friend." Then he glanced down at the casket and said, "Hey, I know this man!" The point is: LIE.

MINISTER

So is that what you're planning to do in your speech? If so, then why bother since everyone in attendance now knows you'll just be blowing sunshine up their skirts?

HOWARD

All right. Fine. I can be honest. A person's dignity can still come through if you acknowledge their faults and weaknesses.