

LESSON PLAN

By Carl L. Williams

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A Dramatic Duet

by Carl L. Williams

SYNOPSIS: A retired teacher, recently widowed, finds himself challenged by his daughter to shake off his depression and become active again. At least he still has his sense of humor and a sense he should be doing more with his life.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

MAX (m) A retired teacher, trying to find meaning again after the death of his wife. *(67 lines)*

EVIE (f) His daughter, determined to lift him out of his lingering sense of futility. *(67 lines)*

SETTING: A room in Max's home.

TIME: Present day.

SET: A table and chair(s).

PROPS

- Laundry Basket
- An assortment of Towels and Hand Towels

PRODUCTION NOTE

Max should not be played as hopelessly morose. He is depressed naturally, not clinically, and displays sardonic humor.

AT RISE: *MAX sits unmoving at a table, staring at nothing. EVIE enters carrying a laundry basket full of towels and hand towels. EVIE stops and gives MAX a look of concern before coming over and setting down the basket.*

EVIE: What are you thinking about, Dad?

MAX: *(Not looking up.)* Nothing.

EVIE: Have you reached any conclusions about it?

MAX: *(Nods.)* It's not worth thinking about.

EVIE: Why don't you think about helping me fold these clothes?

MAX: Your mother always folded the clothes. For 37 years she folded clothes.

EVIE: Probably got pretty good at it.

MAX: Your mother always enjoyed your sense of humor. Me, not so much.

EVIE: I'll try to do better. In the meantime, help me with some of these. *(Dumps the towels on the table.)*

MAX: These aren't clothes. They're towels.

EVIE: Can't put anything past you.

MAX: Was it a test? Like I don't know the difference between towels and clothes?

EVIE: It wasn't a test. I misspoke. Like the politicians do.

MAX: Meaning you did it on purpose.

EVIE: Just fold, will you? It'll take your mind off...things. *(Starts folding towels, putting them in the basket.)*

MAX: Like this being the anniversary.

EVIE: In five months it'll be the anniversary.

MAX: Every month it's an anniversary. And if I want seven months to be an anniversary, it'll be an anniversary.

EVIE: All right, all right. Gee.

MAX watches EVIE fold a hand towel.

MAX: You folded that wrong, Evie.

EVIE: There's no wrong way to fold towels. If they're folded, they're folded.

MAX: No. There's a certain way to do it. *(Picks up a hand towel, spreads it out on the table.)* You folded it in half, then half again,

and half again. But it's supposed to go this way. First in half, then a third this way and a third back over that, and finish by folding it in half. That's how your mother always did it.

EVIE: You helped her?

MAX: I watched her.

EVIE: And I repeat, folded is folded.

MAX: The way you do it, the towel is too wide. Our linen closet is narrow. Madelyn knew how to fold things so they fit together on the shelf.

EVIE: I'm well acquainted with that closet, Dad. And you know what? It's got more than one shelf.

MAX: Fine.

EVIE: But hey, fold them however you want to.

MAX: I don't care if they're folded or not. They're clean, aren't they? You came over and washed them, didn't you? That's good enough.

EVIE: (*Trying to cheer MAX up.*) Listen, why don't we get out of the house and go somewhere?

MAX: And do what?

EVIE: I don't know. Just to be out and around, to get a change of scenery.

MAX: Scenery. We're not in the mountains. We don't have a beach. I should go outside to look at houses and shopping malls?

EVIE: Not to mention fast food restaurants and supermarkets. And, of course...schools.

MAX: Don't start up again.

EVIE: Dad, you were a teacher for forty years—

MAX: Forty-one.

EVIE: A long time. You know you miss it. Why don't you admit it?

MAX: I don't miss it. It's your mother I miss.

EVIE: She's gone and that can't be changed. But the schools, they're still here, with a new batch of kids every year. Kids who need someone like you to give them a little extra help.

MAX: Teachers today can't teach anymore? Besides, I'm retired. They don't let you back in.

EVIE: They would love to have you come back as a volunteer tutor. You always said you wished you could get the kids one-on-one so you could make some real progress.

MAX: A volunteer. Working for nothing. You think I'm worth it?

EVIE: You're a great teacher.

MAX: I can't even teach you how to fold towels.

EVIE: And you wouldn't be working for nothing. You'd be earning a lot of self-satisfaction, not to mention gratitude from the kids and their teachers.

MAX: So you've said...several times, if my memory is still working, and it is.

EVIE: You can ignore what I'm telling you, but you can't dispute it. You'd be helping yourself as much as them. You'd be making yourself useful.

MAX: You want me to be useful? Here—I'll fold more towels. *(Grabs a towel and starts folding.)* There, now. I'm being useful.

EVIE: The towel won't thank you for folding it.

MAX: Lousy ungrateful towel.

EVIE: If you don't do it...if you don't go down there and volunteer...you'll end up helping nobody.

MAX: Who says I have to help anybody? Am I guilty of something if I don't?

EVIE: You'll feel guilty. You're already miserable. Why make yourself feel any worse?

MAX: *(Heartfelt.)* Evie, I couldn't feel any worse.

EVIE: I'm sorry, Dad. I miss her, too.

MAX: It's not the same.

EVIE: No, not the same. But it's still hard.

MAX: So how do you manage?

EVIE: Isn't it obvious? I help take care of you.

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