

WOODEN OVERCOATS

EPISODE 1 - "THE BANE OF RUDYARD"

(REVISED VERSION)

Written by

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A podcast sitcom

We swoop above the unassuming island of Piffling. Opening narration from MADELEINE (the canny middle-aged voice of experience - we'll hear more about her later).

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Now, hidden in the English Channel is an island called Piffling. On the island is a village: Piffling Vale. And the village has a square, and the square has this lovely little antique's shop, but opposite the antique's shop... is a funeral home. Which is where much of this little chronicle will be set, I'm afraid. You see, I want to tell you about a man named Rudyard Funn.

Thunder brewing.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

He owns the funeral parlour. He's responsible for all the funerals in Piffling Vale. And today he experienced what was undoubtedly the worst day of his life - which, to be honest, was probably long overdue.

Roll of thunder into THEME TUNE and OPENING CREDITS.

It's raining. A funeral is in progress. REVEREND WAVERING (50s, twinkly) is halfway through a standard eulogy.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

It all began with a funeral. The antique dealer, Stanley Carmichael had led a life of peace and ordered calm for some eighty-nine years, and been subsequently crushed to death by a granite sundial.

REVEREND WAVERING

... I confess that I never actually bought anything from him, his prices being quite steep actually...

Murmurs of agreement from the MOURNERS.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

While nearby - his grey eyes sunken
and his skin pale and drawn - stood
Rudyard Funn, checking his watch
and wishing strongly that the
Reverend wasn't an agnostic.

RUDYARD (30s, short of stature & patience) stamps his feet.

REVEREND WAVERING

... Stanley's spirit is undoubtedly
looking down at us from his place
with God. Unless you don't believe
in that sort of thing, which I
won't hold against you.

Beat.

REVEREND WAVERING (CONT'D)

Mind you, God probably will. Unless
he doesn't exist, in which case he
won't have anything to complain
about, really.

RUDYARD

(coughs)
Reverend.

REVEREND WAVERING

Oh hello, Rudyard.

RUDYARD

You're rambling.

REVEREND WAVERING

Sorry?

RUDYARD

You're rambling again.

REVEREND WAVERING

... Oh God, am I?

RUDYARD

Yes.

REVEREND WAVERING

So sorry - where was I?

RUDYARD

His spirit looking down on us-

REVEREND WAVERING
 - from his place with God, yes,
 right - and so we must all...

He trails off in thought. Then with determination:

REVEREND WAVERING (CONT'D)
 No, actually, I don't suppose we
 could have a quick show of hands?

RUDYARD
 No, no, come on-

REVEREND WAVERING
 If you believe in God, could you
 put your hand up - can we do that?

Mourners mumble, some put hands up.

REVEREND WAVERING (CONT'D)
 Yes, about half... So what I might
 do is carry out the service twice-

RUDYARD
 We don't have time.

REVEREND WAVERING
 Once with God in it, and the other-

RUDYARD
 No, we're over-running.

REVEREND WAVERING
 Could I read out a few Psalms?

RUDYARD
 Which ones?

REVEREND WAVERING
 I don't mind, I'd be happy to take
 requests if anyone's got any-

RUDYARD
 No no no, we're sixteen minutes
 behind schedule! Georgie!

Rudyard snaps his fingers at his assistant, GEORGIE CRUSOE
 (18, pretty chill), who's leaning on a shovel and napping.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Wake up!

GEORGIE
 I don't want to.

RUDYARD
We need the coffin in the ground.

GEORGIE
It's a very heavy coffin, sir.

RUDYARD
What's your point?

GEORGIE
I'm the only pallbearer.

RUDYARD
Oh stop moaning and put your back
into it.

GEORGIE
Fine...

Georgie grunts as she struggles to pick up the coffin by herself, while Reverend Wavering leans over to Rudyard.

REVEREND WAVERING
Do we have time for a few psalms?

RUDYARD
Which ones?

REVEREND WAVERING
I don't mind, I'm happy to take
requests if anyone's got any.

RUDYARD
No! We're late as it is and it's
pissing it down - wrap it up!

MAN
(from crowd)
You're ruining everything!

RUDYARD
There you are, Reverend, you're
losing them.

REVEREND WAVERING
Oh, I thought they were rather
getting into it.

The man calls out from the grumbling crowd.

MAN
Not him, you!

RUDYARD

Me?!

Another mourner joins in:

WOMAN

Yes you horrid little man! Stop hurrying things along!

RUDYARD

(snaps)

Don't you know what a schedule is? This isn't my only gig today, you know, I've got Mr. Askey to measure up in half an hour.

MAN

He's not dead.

RUDYARD

He doesn't look healthy, though, does he?

Mourners gasp and murmur unhappily.

WOMAN

Stop this! We're trying to honour Stanley.

RUDYARD

Oh come on! Honour Stanley? You didn't even like him!

WOMAN

(gasps)

How dare you!

RUDYARD

I noticed at the shop you slipped that carriage clock down your blouse when you thought no one was looking!

Loud gasps from the crowd.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

And the dressing table!

This really sets the crowd off. A riot's brewing.

MAN

I knew it! Tanya how could you?

WOMAN

Oh shut up Jerry. Bill swiped the portrait of Eva Braun.

MAN

Bill! I wanted that portrait!

OTHER MAN

Well you can't have it!

Bill punches Jerry in the jaw - thwack! The crowd silences.

OTHER MAN (CONT'D)

(shocked)

I... I'm so sorry, Jerry, I just lost control-

He's interrupted by a punch from Jerry - thwack! The crowd gets boisterous. Arguments and physical fights break out.

REVEREND WAVERING

Oh now, now come on, everyone, stay calm! Jerry, put that shovel down!

'Clonk' of somebody hit with a shovel. The fight escalates, as Rudyard turns to Georgie.

RUDYARD

(sighing)

All right, Georgie, get the body in the ground.

GEORGIE

They don't look very happy, sir.

RUDYARD

Of course they don't look happy. It's a funeral. Off you go.

Georgie heaves the coffin into the grave, and the two of them beat a sharp retreat from the rioting mourners.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Their service completed, Rudyard Funn and Georgie Crusoe fled the cemetery and hurried back to the funeral home.

A dusty and miserable interior. Nobody would come here by choice. It's always raining outside.

MADELEINE (V.O.)
 Established by "local character"
 and serial bigamist Gilbert Funn in
 the fifteenth century, Funn
 Funerals had always maintained a
 solid reputation for being the only
 funeral home on the island.

The front door opens and the bell tinkles as Rudyard and
 Georgie saunter inside.

RUDYARD
 We could be onto a good thing back
 there. You saw Stanley's widow?

GEORGIE
 That sad old lady breaking out the
 kung fu?

RUDYARD
 Yes, when she took a swing at her
 son-in-law, she fell into the grave
 instead. I don't know if it was
 fatal but it looked promising to
 me.

He removes his coat, beating it to get the rain out.

GEORGIE
 Do you think we'll ever have a
 quiet funeral?

RUDYARD
 Asking for the impossible never
 helped anyone, Georgie.

GEORGIE
 I'm not sure that every funeral
 should end in violent conflict.

RUDYARD
 Georgie, once you've been here for
 a few more months you'll realise
 that funerals always bring out the
 worst in people and there's nothing
 we can do about it.

GEORGIE
 Yeah, maybe you're right.

The phone rings. Rudyard answers it with his usual brisk and
 aggressive efficiency.

RUDYARD
Now look here! Yes?... How funny,
we were just talking about her!

GEORGIE
(sotto)
Is she dead?

RUDYARD
Very. Fetch the measuring kit.

Georgie exits to the back of the premises. Rudyard calls after her.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
And a dry jacket!
(on phone)
Right, would six o'clock suit? I'd
leave her in the ground if I were
you, save time in the long run...

Jotting down notes, making idle conversation.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
... No, she shouldn't have been
brawling at her age... I blame the
parents... Great. See you at six.

He slams the phone down and calls after Georgie.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
(calling)
We've got a full day ahead of us!
Where's Antigone?

GEORGIE (O.S.)
She's in the mortuary!

RUDYARD
Ask a stupid question.

Rudyard begins banging relentlessly on the mortuary door.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
(calling)
Are you in the mortuary, Antigone?
Antigone? Are you in the mortuary,
Antigone? Antigone? Are you in the-

The door is violently yanked open, revealing his sister
ANTIGONE FUNN (30s, vintage Goth vibe, frustrated passions).

ANTIGONE
WHAT?

RUDYARD
I want to talk to you.

ANTIGONE
I'd rather look at the corpses!

Slams the door.

RUDYARD
You can't hide in there forever!

ANTIGONE (O.S.)
I can do anything I like!

Rudyard knocks impatiently.

MADELEINE (V.O.)
That's Antigone, Rudyard's twin
sister despite actually being born
one week afterwards. The poor dear
had been diagnosed with depression
within twenty minutes of being
born: a world record which gave her
no consolation at all.

The door again flies open.

ANTIGONE
(emerging)
Alright alright! Does rest in peace
mean nothing to you?

RUDYARD
You're not dead.

ANTIGONE
That's a matter of opinion.

She slams the door closed before Rudyard can look inside.

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)
So how was it today?

RUDYARD
The vicar's getting worse, and of
course it was raining, and it ended
with a punch-up over a picture of
Eva Braun, but personally I found
it all very moving.

ANTIGONE
(exasperated)
So that's another grieving widow
we'll have to apologise to!

RUDYARD

No we won't. She fell into the grave and died before I left.

ANTIGONE

Christ. You really have no concept of what "good service" is, do you?

RUDYARD

Rubbish! Think of Mr Askey. I've been round to see him every day for the last four weeks, and I don't have to do that you know.

ANTIGONE

You're only checking to see if he's dead yet. Tapping at the window, peering through the letterbox. Once you fell down the chimney and nearly killed the man.

RUDYARD

I'd try a second time but he's begun to light a fire.

ANTIGONE

Now, you look at me: I have been in the mortuary all morning mixing formaldehyde, methanol and clementines. And a tiny - a tiny - dash of cinnamon. That's what I've been doing. For five hours.

RUDYARD

Should I ask why?

ANTIGONE

To try and make our embalming fluid smell nicer. So the bodies will smell nicer. Because have you ever really smelt a body, Rudyard?

RUDYARD

Why do we still talk to each other?

Antigone is enraptured by her own words.

ANTIGONE

Thanks to me they'll smell brighter - fresher! Not like bodies at all. That's the sort of service I'm striving for, Rudyard. I want them to forget that the body is a body.

RUDYARD

Oh yes, that'll work. "Our grandad's dead but don't worry because he smells like Christmas."

ANTIGONE

It's attention to detail, Rudyard. It's how to run a business. You wouldn't know.

RUDYARD

We get them the body in the coffin in the ground on time, and that's all we need to do!

Georgie re-enters.

GEORGIE

Sir, your other jacket's been eaten by moths. I saw the whole thing.

RUDYARD

Not now. Georgie, how long did it take to get the coffin in the ground this morning?

GEORGIE

A couple of seconds.

RUDYARD

Now that's a good service.

GEORGIE

Because I dropped it.

RUDYARD

But it got where it needed to be, and that's what they pay us for.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard, for the very last time: they don't want chaos, they don't want stress, and they don't want a relative dead before the first has even been buried!

RUDYARD

Oh how do you know what they want?

ANTIGONE

In the name of sanity, Rudyard, we've got to turn this business around before people decide-

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

Look, I've got a very busy day ahead so will you just get back into that mortuary-

The front door opens and a stranger comes in out of the rain.

ERIC
(affable)
Hello!

The door closes behind him. There's a silence. This is Eric
(30s, handsome, charming, perfect).

RUDYARD
... Yes?

ERIC
Eric! Eric Chapman! I'm new to the
place! Just arrived!

GEORGIE
Good morning.

RUDYARD
Georgie, leave it to the
professionals.
(to Eric)
Good morning.

ERIC
And you.

RUDYARD
We've not met.

ERIC
No. Because I'm new. To the place.

RUDYARD
You don't need to brag about it. I
have met people before.

ERIC
You're Mr Rudyard Funn aren't you,
of Funn Funerals?

RUDYARD
That's correct.

ERIC
Terrific name. I suppose you put
the Funn in Funerals?

He chuckles politely. Rudyard stares, horrified.

RUDYARD
... No, of course we don't. That's
obscene.

Beat.

ERIC
Sure. Never mind, well-

Antigone pops up near him, as if out of nowhere.

ANTIGONE
(really close)
Hello Mr. Chapman.

ERIC
Argh, Jesus!

ANTIGONE
Is this too close?

ERIC
A little bit.

Antigone hops back.

ANTIGONE
Sorry.

ERIC
Don't mention it.

ANTIGONE
Sorry. I'm Antigone. Sorry. Pleased
to meet you.

ERIC
Likewise.

ANTIGONE
I'm the mortician. Where the action
is!
(shrill)
Ha ha ha!

It's clear Antigone rarely meets people. Eric styles it out.

ERIC
(polite)
Ha ha. I bet there's not much you
don't know about the body, eh
Antigone?

Beat.

ANTIGONE
That sounded like a double meaning.

GEORGIE
It's called flirting.

ANTIGONE
Oh! Gosh! Is it?

ERIC
(embarrassed)
Well now-

ANTIGONE
No! It was lovely, smashing, do it
again. Have I made it awkward? Damn-

RUDYARD
(clears throat)
Haven't got all day.

ERIC
Sorry. So, that's Rudyard,
Antigone, and-?

GEORGIE
Georgie, hi.

ANTIGONE
(snaps)
That's enough.

ERIC
I saw you at the funeral didn't I?

GEORGIE
Yeah, helping out. It's a job.

RUDYARD
Georgie, don't give away company
secrets.

GEORGIE
I was only-

ANTIGONE
(interrupting)
Hang on. Were you at the funeral
this morning?

ERIC
Yes, I was.

RUDYARD

(impatient)

And I'm sure you were impressed with what you saw, Mr Chapman, but we really are frightfully busy so-

ERIC

I wasn't entirely sure it came off.

Deadly beat.

RUDYARD

What?

ERIC

For a start, it got a little bit violent, didn't it?

RUDYARD

(cold)

Did you think so?

ERIC

At the end, yes.

RUDYARD

I'm not sure what funeral you were watching, Mr Chapman, but all I saw was good clean mourning.

ERIC

Didn't someone die?

RUDYARD

A very convenient place for it to happen. Georgie?

GEORGIE

I'm not convinced-

RUDYARD

There you go. Don't let us keep you, Mr Chapman.

ERIC

And I thought there could have been a greater attention to detail.

ANTIGONE

Really?

ERIC

Stop me if I'm getting too critical.

RUDYARD
OK, I'll stop you there.

Antigone hits Rudyard in the chest without even looking.

ANTIGONE
Shut up. Carry on, Mr Chapman.

ERIC
Eric.

ANTIGONE
(blushing)
Gosh.

ERIC
I have to say, it all looked a little bit grim. I mean, it's a funeral, hardly party time, but even so - I always think these occasions should be a celebration of life rather than going on about death. You know what I mean?

RUDYARD
No.

ERIC
Ah. I mean I don't want to be made even more miserable. I want to remember those happy, magnificent memories; I want a cheerful atmosphere. Bright flowers, music, funny recollections...

ANTIGONE
Sweeter smelling fluids?

ERIC
Exactly! Fluids?

ANTIGONE
I think they're very important.

ERIC
Sure thing - that's what I mean, sorting out those little details. Pushing the boat out. Or the hearse out, ha ha. That's just my two cents, for what it's worth.

Beat. Rudyard is just about keeping calm.

RUDYARD

Well. I don't know what planet you live on, Mr Chapman, but-

ANTIGONE

Thank you, we'll bear those things in mind! Won't we, Rudyard?

RUDYARD

What?! Over my dead-

ANTIGONE

Smashing.

ERIC

Anyway, I thought I'd swing by-

ANTIGONE

(with meaning)

Any time!

ERIC

Thank you - you see I was just swinging by to see the competition.

RUDYARD

Competition?

ERIC

Yes.

ANTIGONE

You mean like a raffle?

ERIC

Not exactly.

RUDYARD

I hate raffles.

ERIC

That's a strange thing to hate. No, I meant you lot. Funn Funerals, the local competition. In funerals.

Another deadly beat.

RUDYARD

You're an undertaker?

ERIC

Clients prefer "funeral director."

ANTIGONE

(nervous)

You're just visiting, though?

ERIC

Oh no, I live here now. Setting myself up.

ANTIGONE

Your own funeral home?

ERIC

Yep! Chapman's. Not quite as catchy as Funn Funerals but there we are. Heh.

ANTIGONE

Where are you going to be?

ERIC

You know the antique dealer you buried? Stanley Carmichael? I'm taking over his premises.

ANTIGONE

Just across the square?

ERIC

That's right. Opposite you. We'll probably see a lot of each other! Compare notes, swap stories! Down the pub. Mine's a light ale, by the way. Ha ha. Yes.

What little atmosphere there was has totally vanished.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(clears throat)

Er. Did someone die in here? Ha ha!

RUDYARD

Goodbye, Chapman.

ERIC

Oh, sure. Um. Glad to meet you, Rudyard. Antigone.

ANTIGONE

(cold)

Chapman.

ERIC

Georgie.

GEORGIE
See you later-

ANTIGONE
(snaps)
That's enough.

Eric awkwardly heads for the door.

ERIC
OK. Um. Enjoy yourselves.

He opens it. The rain's stopped. It's warm and sunny - almost heavenly. Birds twitter. 'Morning Mood' classical music.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Ah! The sun's come out!

He exits. After the door closes, the silence is stifling.

RUDYARD
... Well! If he thinks I'm going to buy him a light ale, he's very much mistaken.

Antigone starts pacing anxiously.

ANTIGONE
Oh shut up, Rudyard! This is actually very serious!

GEORGIE
He seemed fine.

ANTIGONE
No he didn't, Georgie! Coming over here, waving his credentials in our faces - giving us feedback! My God!

GEORGIE
I thought you liked him?

ANTIGONE
Liked him? Liked him?!

GEORGIE
Yeah. You were talking about fluids and everything.

ANTIGONE
That's professional chit-chat, for God's sake! Do you think I like gorgeous handsome men, do you?

GEORGIE

Um...

ANTIGONE

Exactly! It's disgusting!
(tremor of excitement)
It's disgusting.

RUDYARD

(in his own world)
I can't think of a scenario where I
would buy someone a light ale.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard! Focus! Chapman is serious
competition!

RUDYARD

Him? Competition? Were you even
listening to the man?

GEORGIE

(teasing)
No, she wasn't! She was gazing into
his eyes-

ANTIGONE

Georgina! Go and make some tea.

GEORGIE

We haven't got a kettle.

Quick as a flash, Antigone opens the till, grabs some notes,
and stuffs them into Georgie's hand.

ANTIGONE

Buy one.

GEORGIE

Fine...

Georgie exits through the back.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard, what do we do?

RUDYARD

We're an established firm, going
back centuries. Nobody round here
is going to book a funeral with a
complete stranger!

Antigone is looking out the window. She jumps.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard! Look at his shop! He's
already changed the sign!

RUDYARD

(note of worry)

I'll admit he's working quickly...

ANTIGONE

That does it. You've got to see the
Mayor. Tell him this village isn't
big enough for two funeral homes.

RUDYARD

Alright. I'll see him now.

He opens the front door. It's bucketing down with rain.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

... Could you pass me some money
for an umbrella?

ANTIGONE

I just spent it all on the kettle.

6 **EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - MORNING**

6

Rudyard leaves Funn Funerals and heads across a rainy square.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Rudyard scuttled across the village
square and up the steps leading
into Piffling Hall. He was shown
into the office of the Right
Honourable Mayor Desmond Desmond, a
man who felt that the most
wonderful words in the English
language were, "I'm sure it's going
to be fine."

7 **INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING**

7

The door opens. Rudyard is shown in by the Mayor's secretary
MARJORIE (20s, no-nonsense, overworked).

MARJORIE

Mr. Rudyard Funn to see you, sir.

The Mayor's voice floats from an unseen point.

MAYOR
(distracted)
Oh, thank you, Marjorie.

Marjorie exits, closing the door.

RUDYARD
Your Worship, I'm most desperately
sorry to... er, where are you?

MAYOR
Down here, Rudyard. Under the desk.

Rudyard crouches. MAYOR DESMOND DESMOND (60s, cuddly, usually
excitable) slowly rocking back and forth under the desk.

RUDYARD
Er... why?

MAYOR
Oh, I'm just... sitting here. You
know. Doing a bit of thinking...
Big world out there.

RUDYARD
Yes... Well I came in to ask you-

MAYOR
Do you know what the difference is
between a village... and a town?

RUDYARD
(confused)
Um, a town has a greater area...

MAYOR
(confirming suspicions)
Yes.

RUDYARD
A higher population.

MAYOR
Mmhmm.

RUDYARD
More amenities.

MAYOR
Amenities, yes.

RUDYARD
A Mayor.

MAYOR

Yes - oh God - well, exactly, yes.

RUDYARD

I actually came to see you about-

MAYOR

We have to do something with our lives, haven't we, Rudyard? Don't you think?

RUDYARD

(impatient sigh)

Yes.

MAYOR

I look at my seal sometimes, and all my envelopes, and I read my name and "Have I done enough?" I ask myself. Am I even Right Honourable? Because I don't feel it.

RUDYARD

Well to call yourself Right Honourable you have to be a judge or a Privy Councillor.

Beat.

MAYOR

Really?

A further moment of solemn self-reflection.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

... I've got to change all my stationery now... You see, this is just the sort of thing I'm talking about. What have I earned? What have I achieved? And then what with my sister passing the bucket last week - oh, top drawer send-off you chaps gave her, by the way.

RUDYARD

Oh! Thank you!

MAYOR

Pity it rained.

RUDYARD

Yes, well.

MAYOR

Can't help that. Or the ground subsidence. Still, we all laughed. Seeing her flopping about like that...

Chuckles then abruptly segues into:

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Do you know what I've decided to do, Rudyard? I'm going to turn this village into a town. That's what I'm going to do. I mean, things must improve, mustn't they?

RUDYARD

(sees his chance)

On that point, I've got a problem, actually.

MAYOR

Have you? Can I help? Because I'd really like to be useful.

RUDYARD

You can, your Worship. You see... there's this man.

MAYOR

He's not worth it.

RUDYARD

Yes - what? - no, I mean, this man is opening a new funeral home. Directly opposite mine.

MAYOR

Is that a problem?

RUDYARD

We can't have two funeral homes, can we?

MAYOR

Can't we? Why not?

RUDYARD

Well. It'd be ridiculous.

MAYOR

Oh. I don't want to look ridiculous.

RUDYARD
 Exactly. If we had two funeral
 homes, why not two fire stations?
 Two hospitals? Two Mayors?

MAYOR
 (terrified)
 Two Mayors? Could it really get
 that far?

RUDYARD
 I'd hate to speculate.

MAYOR
 Help me up, would you?

A grateful Rudyard helps the old man to his feet.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 Yes, I think we'd better stab this
 in the bud immediately. Thank you,
 Rudyard.

RUDYARD
 Thank you, your Worship.

MAYOR
 Gets me out of the office anyway!

RUDYARD
 Out from under the desk!

MAYOR
 (serious)
 We won't talk about that.

He opens the door.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 (calls)
 Marjorie! Cancel my appointments
 for today!

MARJORIE (O.S.)
 There aren't any.

MAYOR
 Thank you! Off we go, Rudyard.

They exit with renewed purpose.

8

INT. FUNN FUNERALS - MORNING

8

Antigone and Georgie carrying an old lady's body over the dusty shop floor to the counter.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

And so Rudyard set out with the
until recently Right Honourable
Mayor Desmond Desmond - while back
at Antigone's mortuary...

ANTIGONE

Easy easy easy...!

With effort, they place the body down.

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on her, I'll clear a
bit of space in the mortuary.

(to body)

You're in safe hands now Mrs
Carmichael.

The head falls off -

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)

Catch it!

- squelch.

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)

Augh! Georgie!

GEORGIE

You can stitch that back on, right?

ANTIGONE

I'm surrounded by incompetents...

GEORGIE

You'd rather leave her in the grave
like Rudyard wanted, yeah?

Antigone scowls and starts prepping.

ANTIGONE

My brother is an idiot.

GEORGIE

Still in charge though.

ANTIGONE

Not forever... One of these days
he'll push me too far, and then...

GEORGIE
You'll kill him?

ANTIGONE
What? No!
(beat to consider)
Probably. I meant 'and then I'll
take over.' Wrest control.

GEORGIE
You?

ANTIGONE
Yes me! What's wrong with me?

GEORGIE
I mean, like, you're great and
everything-

ANTIGONE
(cuts her off)
Exactly! I'm great! And everything!

The telephone rings. Antigone jumps in fright and stares at
it. It rings. And rings.

GEORGIE
You gonna get that?

ANTIGONE
No.

GEORGIE
Shall I get it?

ANTIGONE
It'll go away if we leave it alone.

GEORGIE
But someone wants to talk to us.

ANTIGONE
I know that, Georgie, I understand
what's at stake.

GEORGIE
(realises)
You don't like talking to people on
the phone, do you?

ANTIGONE
It's weird! It's really weird! You
can't see their lips move.

Georgie sighs and goes to the phone.

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)
No don't be a hero!

GEORGIE
(picks up phone)
Morning. Funn Funerals... Sorry,
what was that? ... Oh come on.

ANTIGONE
Who is it?

GEORGIE
(to Antigone)
It's Mrs Carmichael's family. They
want their body back.

ANTIGONE
They can't have it back, it's ours!

GEORGIE
(on phone)
You can't have it back, it's our-
(to Antigone)
I can't say that!

ANTIGONE
Why do they want it back?

GEORGIE
They've just heard about... Eric's
funeral home.

ANTIGONE
Chapman? No! He can't have my body!
(tremor)
Have my body...

GEORGIE
Eh?

ANTIGONE
(snaps out of it)
Tell them it's impossible! I mean,
he only just got here - he's not
even open! His place will be an
absolute shambles.

SNAP TO:

9

INT. CHAPMAN'S, FOYER - MORNING

9

More like a hotel foyer than a funeral parlour. Light colours. Upbeat vibe. The contrast to Funn Funerals couldn't be greater. Quiet jazzy piano music.

Rudyard and the Mayor are stunned.

MAYOR

Wasn't this place an antique's shop a few hours ago?

RUDYARD

... I don't understand... How has he managed to do all this?

MAYOR

Bit flash, isn't it? Not a patch on your set-up. Look, there's not a speck of dust anywhere.

He sits on a sofa.

MAYOR

(CONT'D)

Comfy though.

He bounces gently. Something catches his eye.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Is that a coffee machine?

RUDYARD

(still stunned)

Yes.

MAYOR

Does your place have one of those?

RUDYARD

We bought a kettle this morning.

The 'bing' of an elevator. Doors slide open as Eric exits.

LIFT VOICE

Doors opening.

ERIC

Hi, sorry to keep you waiting! As you can imagine - all go here!

RUDYARD

Is that a lift?

ERIC

Yep. Mr. Mayor, it's a pleasure to meet you. Eric Chapman. There's some chocolate truffles in the bowl there, help yourself.

MAYOR

Oh, lovely.

The Mayor unwraps and eats a truffle from a bowl.

ERIC

Would you like the tour? I'd love to show you around! It's still not quite finished-

MAYOR

(eating)

Perhaps another time, Mr Chapman.

RUDYARD

(stunned)

You've got a lift.

MAYOR

Now, er, I don't know quite how to say this, but, er...

ERIC

How to say what, Mr Mayor?

MAYOR

Well, it's very naughty of you to have done all this. Without permission, I mean.

ERIC

But you gave me permission.

MAYOR

Did I?

Eric looks through a folder.

ERIC

Before I arrived, here we are - there's your signature.

MAYOR

Yes... The smiley face in the O there; it's definitely mine... You must understand, I don't always read everything I'm given. I'm usually kept very busy.

ERIC
Don't worry about it!

MAYOR
Even so, I am the Mayor, aren't I?
And I have the perfect right to
change my mind. Correct, Rudyard?

RUDYARD
(still stunned)
It's a really nice lift.

MAYOR
Rudyard.

RUDYARD
(snaps out of it)
Sorry, er... Now look here.

ERIC
Yes?

RUDYARD
We've already got a funeral home.

MAYOR
Exactly. And with the best will in
the world, we can't have two
funeral homes, can we?

ERIC
Why not?

MAYOR
Because then we'd apparently have
to have two hospitals. You see.

ERIC
That's a great idea.

MAYOR
Is it? Oh! Good, I'll get onto
that.

RUDYARD
(taking charge)
But you still feel a village cannot
sustain two funeral homes. Yes?

MAYOR
Absolutely.

ERIC
 You could be right there, Mr Mayor.
 But you know what could sustain two
 funeral homes?

MAYOR
 No.

ERIC
 A town.

The Mayor's eyes light up.

MAYOR
 ... A town, you say?

RUDYARD
 No. No no no.

ERIC
 Don't get me wrong, this is a great
 village - but I think it's going to
 be an even greater town. And I want
 to help you do that in the only way
 I can: with a funeral home.

MAYOR
 Can I ask a question?

ERIC
 Go for it.

MAYOR
 If we had two funeral homes, would
 we need two Mayors as well?

ERIC
 No. That's ridiculous.

MAYOR
 In that case, I hereby pronounce
 this funeral home: open!

RUDYARD
 What?!

A burst of applause from a crowd outside.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 What are they all doing there?

ERIC
 We're taking advance orders. Just a
 service we provide.

RUDYARD

Advance orders?!

MAYOR

I won't take up any more of your time, Mr Chapman. If you're ever at a loose end, do pop by the Hall. Sometimes we have movie nights!

ERIC

I'll remember that! And if you need our services - it's on the house.

MAYOR

Oh, tremendous! Looking forward to it now. TTFN!

The Mayor exits through a pair of sliding doors and speaks happily to the crowd.

RUDYARD

Now - now look here - !

ERIC

I better see to that queue. Sorry I can't stay and chat, Rudyard! Have a coffee, on the house.

RUDYARD

But but but - !

ERIC

Enjoy yourself! Don't forget the truffles!

He exits outside to address the crowd.

ERIC (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Good morning everybody - oh, er, afternoon now!

Crowd chortle agreeably.

ERIC (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm delighted to say: welcome to Chapman's! And remember: We put the fun in funerals!

The crowd applaud enthusiastically; whistling, cheering.

RUDYARD

(seething)
Chapman...

10

INT. FUNN FUNERALS - AFTERNOON

10

A few hours later. Rudyard is sitting by the window.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

After a coffee and a couple of truffles, Rudyard stormed out, seething with resentment. He kicked a small dog and got bitten by its owner. Having gotten back to Funn Funerals, Rudyard set down a chair by the window and stared out across the road, muttering out loud to his only real friend in the world.

RUDYARD

Look at them all... Smiling... Happy... It's a funeral home! Who the Hell do they think they are?

A mouse squeaks.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

Exactly... I give him... a week.

Squeak?

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

Alright. Maybe two.

Squeak.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

He might have Gold Blend and lounge music, but you can't put a gloss on the mechanics. Get the body in the coffin in the ground on time...

Squeak squeak.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)

And I bet his corpses don't smell of cinnamon... We'll see who runs this village.

Squeak. Antigone exits from the mortuary.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard! You're talking to that mouse again, aren't you?

RUDYARD

Her name is Madeleine.

ANTIGONE

It's not normal.

RUDYARD

You spend twenty-three hours a day in a mortuary; don't tell me what's normal. Off you go, Madeleine, we'll continue this later.

The mouse squeaks and skitters away.

ANTIGONE

You haven't moved all afternoon.

RUDYARD

I don't need to move. I'm plotting.

ANTIGONE

Where's Georgie?

RUDYARD

Don't care. No work. Plotting.

ANTIGONE

Rudyard, I know we've never had competition before, but you've got to pull yourself together.

RUDYARD

(mumble)

I'll do it tomorrow.

ANTIGONE

No, do it now! Have you at least checked up on Mr. Askey?

RUDYARD

Who?

ANTIGONE

(gritted teeth)

The man you've been waiting to die for six weeks. Because, so help me, I need to embalm somebody, and it could quite easily be you.

RUDYARD

(snapping)

Look, Mr. Askey's immortal, he'll never die, so what's the point in talking about it?!

The telephone rings. Rudyard grabs it.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 (phone)
 Now look here! Georgie? What?
 Right. I'll see you there.

Slams phone.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Mr. Askey's dead.

ANTIGONE
 Is he?

RUDYARD
 Yes.

Beat.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Oh my God, Mr. Askey's dead!

ANTIGONE
 How?

RUDYARD
 Heart attack! Half an hour ago!
 It's all round the village!
 Antigone, I'm... I'm so happy!!!

ANTIGONE
 Took him long enough.

Rudyard dances around the room.

RUDYARD
 He's dead he's dead he's dead-

ANTIGONE
 Rudyard! Stop being happy and get
 over there, now!

RUDYARD
 Sorry, yes, get over there! I'm
 gone! Rudyard is back in the game!

Rudyard yanks open the front door. It's raining heavily

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Rudyard is going to get wet! Have
 the mortuary ready.

ANTIGONE
 And Rudyard-

Rudyard exits, slamming the door.

ANTIGONE (CONT'D)
Don't cock it up.

11 **EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERNOON**

11

Rudyard joyfully hurrying through the rain.

MADELEINE (V.O.)
Now, before you judge Rudyard too harshly at his delight at an old man's demise, I should tell you that Mr. Askey was Rudyard's old P.E. teacher - so his delight is almost entirely justified.

12 **INT. MR ASKEY'S RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON**

12

A standard domestic hallway.

MADELEINE (V.O.)
Rudyard met Georgie at Mr. Askey's bijou residence at five-forty-five.

Frantic knocking at the door. Georgie goes to answer it.

GEORGIE
OK, OK!

She opens the door and Rudyard falls in, out of the rain.

RUDYARD
Georgie! Georgie!

GEORGIE
Sir.

RUDYARD
Say it again for me, won't you? Say it again!

GEORGIE
(sigh)
Alright. "Mr. Askey's dead."

RUDYARD
YES!!! Get in there my son, whatever that means!

GEORGIE
Yeah, but listen-

RUDYARD

God I've been looking forward to putting him in the ground. Can't mock me for losing the two hundred metre dash now, can you, Mr Askey?

GEORGIE

Before you get excited-

RUDYARD

Right, got to straighten up, yes.
(calms down with effort)
Think 'grave'. How do I look?

GEORGIE

Miserable.

RUDYARD

Great. Let's go.

GEORGIE

But sir-

A bedroom door opens to reveal NURSE DIXON (40s, severe).

NURSE

Could we please have some quiet out... oh. It's you, Mr. Funn.

RUDYARD

Afternoon, Nurse. May I take this opportunity to convey my most profound condolences?

NURSE

(doesn't like him)
Thank you, Mr. Funn.

RUDYARD

I'm sure my apprentice Miss Crusoe has already carried out our preliminary duties, so I think we should let the dog see the rabbit. If you'll take me through please?

NURSE

Well, this is actually rather embarrassing...

RUDYARD

(heart sinks)
Oh don't say it's a false alarm.

NURSE
You've had a wasted journey.

RUDYARD
Georgie, you said he was dead!

GEORGIE
He is dead!

RUDYARD
(exasperated huff)
Nurse, one of us in this corridor
is deeply confused and I'm
beginning to think it might be you.

NURSE
No-!

RUDYARD
She's mad; grab her, Georgie.

NURSE
I'm not mad!

RUDYARD
That's what a mad person would say -
Georgie!

GEORGIE
(advancing on the nurse)
OK, let's do this.

Nurse Dixon cries out in panic - but Eric Chapman smoothly
exits from the bedroom.

ERIC
Oh hello Rudyard! Great to see you!

A deathly pause.

RUDYARD
Chapman?

ERIC
Never stops around here, does it!
Hello Georgie!

GEORGIE
(neutral)
Hey Eric.

RUDYARD

Stop flirting! Nurse, I demand that Mr Chapman be told to vacate this bijou residence immediately.

ERIC

Look, Rudyard, this is my bad, and I've really got to apologise for this one, but-

NURSE

(with grim relish)
Mr. Askey requested it.

RUDYARD

He did what?!

NURSE

With his final words he said he "couldn't bear to get buried by such a feeble little weed as Rudyard Funn."

RUDYARD

But... but...

ERIC

Such an interesting man! He wanted to see my gold medals in the two hundred metre dash.

RUDYARD

(angry sigh)

ERIC

I wasn't expecting business to take off quite so quickly!

NURSE

(approving)
You're doing a most proper job, Mr. Chapman.

ERIC

Thank you, Nurse. I'll collect him first thing tomorrow. Anyway, must run - good to see you Rudyard, Georgie! Enjoy yourselves!

He opens the front door: sunshine and birdsong.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(inhales)

Ah!

He exits, door shutting behind him.

NURSE
Isn't he charming! I hear he's
still a bachelor!

RUDYARD
So am I.

NURSE
Well. Hardly surprising, is it?

She exits back into the bedroom.

GEORGIE
Ah well. Can't win 'em all, eh sir?

But Rudyard is seething to an alarming degree.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
Sir? ... You alright?

RUDYARD
(barely suppressed rage)
... I... am... so...
(suddenly)
Six o'clock.

GEORGIE
Six o'clock?

RUDYARD
Six o'clock. The cemetery! Stanley
Carmichael's widow in the cemetery
at six o'clock!

GEORGIE
Oh yeah, I forgot to say-

RUDYARD
What time is it?!

GEORGIE
Five to, but listen, I need to-

RUDYARD
No time!

Rudyard yanks open the front door; it's raining heavily. With barely a moment to register this, he runs off.

GEORGIE
No! Sir! Oh for God's sake -
Rudyard! Come back you stupid-!

Thunder and lightning obscures the end of her sentence.

13 **EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERNOON**

13

Rudyard running down a hill and through the square, the rain beating down on him.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Rudyard raced down the cliff, past the trees and through the streets, with the speed that would have finally impressed Mr Askey had he not already been dead. His lungs aching for breath, his limbs trembling with the effort, Rudyard tumbled into the cemetery at exactly one minute past six to discover...

14 **EXT. CHURCHYARD - AFTERNOON**

14

Sunshine and birdsong. The unmistakable sound of a crowd of people having a lovely time. Chatting. Laughing. Children playing. Almost utopian. Rudyard stares in shock.

RUDYARD

It's... it's all...

Reverend Wavering wanders over.

REVEREND WAVERING

Ah, there you are, Rudyard!

RUDYARD

Reverend... What's going on?

REVEREND WAVERING

Well, I arrived to oversee the preliminaries on Mrs Carmichael's transferral to a better world - if such a place exists - which I'm not certain about one way or the other - and it turned out her family and friends had already been gathered! And since the deceased was already here and sensibly dressed, he just got it done and out the way.

RUDYARD

(growing suspicion)

'He'...?

REVEREND WAVERING

Mm! New fellow, named Eric. Got his own funeral practice. I'm hearing marvellous things about it. He's got a coffee machine, you know.

RUDYARD

(seething)

Chapman.

REVEREND WAVERING

He led them all in a couple of sing-songs, actually. Even had my speech prepared for me. Very succinct it was too. Breezed through it all in no time. First time for everything!

RUDYARD

(seething)

Chapman...!

Off, the sound of a splash and some laughter.

REVEREND WAVERING

Oh, he also found a lake. Over there. I think we're all going boating in a minute. He owns a boat, you know.

RUDYARD

(still seething)

Chapman...!!!

REVEREND WAVERING

Anyway, I ought to get back to it. We're having jelly and ice cream. Bags of fun! Goodbye, Rudyard - or, er, should I say: enjoy yourself!

He shambles away, leaving Rudyard alone to his seething. The undertaker takes a moment to compose himself.

RUDYARD

I see... I see... Well.

Beat. Then:

ERIC

Hello Rudyard.

Rudyard yelps. Eric is suddenly standing right behind him.

RUDYARD

Oh. It's you.

Eric looks at Rudyard, expression unreadable.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 (forcing himself)
 You did a fair job, I hear.
 Congratulations... But don't go
 thinking it's always like this.
 They won't hand it you to on a
 plate, you know. They won't do
 that. This is very much the
 exception.

Eric doesn't respond.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Well? ... What?

Rudyard can't read him. It's a little eerie.

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 ... What? You can talk, can't you?
 ... Well say something!

Beat.

ERIC
 Rudyard...

Long beat.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 Have a nice evening.

Pause. Eric turns and awalks away towards the others. Rudyard
 stares after him, agitated.

RUDYARD
 (calling)
 What do you... what do you mean,
 have a nice evening?... What did
 you mean by that remark? Chapman!
 ... What if I don't want to have a
 nice evening? Eh? What if I don't?
 Chapman! What did you mean?
 Chapman!!!

Beat. Then, quietly to himself:

RUDYARD (CONT'D)
 Chapman.

As the clouds gather above Rudyard, while the sun still
 shines upon Eric and the others...

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Today had been the worst day of Rudyard's life - until tomorrow came along and topped it. I was there to jot it all down, from first hand observation, and a little bit of gossip I picked up later. And, of course, being his only real friend in the world, Rudyard tells me everything.

Beat. We notice the presence of a mouse.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Yes. My name is Madeleine. I'm going to be the first mouse to write a Sunday Times Best Seller. And I know for a fact that Rudyard wants to revenge himself on Eric by... well, we'll burn that bridge when we come to it.

CREDITS