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# GOOD GRIEF

by Frank Wilkie

EXTRACT

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## CHARACTERS

*EVELYN BARGE: a manically energetic woman, aged 40 to 60 plus. (Cockney accent works well).*

*PETER MILLER: A down-to-earth tradesman, aged in his mid 30s to 40s.*

## SETTING

*The action takes place in Faith Care, a church-based counselling service. The set consists of two comfortable armchairs set either side of a low table with a box of tissues, a large bible and a good-sized crucifix.*

*EVELYN is pacing the room, pen in hand, manic smile on her face, reading from a clipboard folder. There is a knock at the door. She puts down the clipboard, kisses the large crucifix, before ushering in PETER, who hugs a framed photograph (a Styrofoam-backed prop) to his chest*

EVELYN: Oh yes, come in, come in. Peter Miller isn't it?

PETER: Yes

EVELYN: Evelyn Barge. Team leader, Faith Care support service. Wonderful to see you. Yes, please come in and sit down. Make yourself comfortable.

PETER: Thank you

EVELYN: Oh, not at all. That's all part of a counsellor's job isn't it, making people feel comfortable?

PETER: Yes, thank you

EVELYN: No, no, don't mention it. I've had a bit of therapy myself over the years. I know how much I appreciated that warm, lovely feeling you get when a trained professional makes you feel at home.

PETER: Yes. Thanks.

EVELYN: Oh, think nothing of it, really. All part of the service. Care for some water? A glass of water?

PETER: Oh, ah, no.

EVELYN: Water? (Enunciating) W-a-t-e-r

PETER: (*Firmly*) No, thank you

EVELYN: Tap, bottled, filtered or rain? Your choice.

PETER: No, thanks I've just....

EVELYN: They say you can't tell the difference, but you can you know

PETER: (*Steadfast*) It's ok, really

EVELYN: I love the bottled water myself. (*Produces a bottle of water, pours him a glass and places it next to him*) I've had this lot specially blessed by the Minister. Here you go. Holy Water. Ha, ha, ha. Just in case. For later.

PETER: Thank you

EVELYN: No thanks necessary. We're here for you.

PETER: Thank you

EVELYN: So lovely to be thanked isn't it? I mean, we're all volunteers here so we do it for the love, but I can't begin to tell you how far a simple "thank you" goes. (*Directing raised voice offstage*) I wish a few people in this organisation could learn those two simple words. "Thank You". Not hard is it?

PETER: I was wanting to...

EVELYN: (*Looking at her clipboard*) Now, you were referred here by Fay Rutherford from community solutions for further counselling on some heavy grief and trauma issues, is that right?

PETER: Yes. About a year ago I...

EVELYN: Lovely woman Fay. Quite a competent counsellor in her own right but distinctly lacking in empathy I'd have to say. I mean we're all volunteers here, but the heavy stuff is definitely not her forte.

PETER: She was helpful

EVELYN: Don't get me wrong. Fay's coming from the right place and I take my hat off to her for all the work she's done on moving through her own stuff, I really do, but you have to be almost psychic when it comes to helping someone transition through heavy grief and trauma. And Fay, she, well, let's just leave it at that.

PETER: She's a very good *listener*

EVELYN: Well she can't help that. Ever since that botched hysterectomy. It's as though that butcher ripped out her tongue as well as her uterus. "Get a second opinion," I said. "Is it really necessary," I said. Just because you get a female gynaecologist doesn't mean they're going to be any less brutal- especially the childless ones. Vicious. They'd have your insides out quick as look at you some of them.

PETER: Fay recommended I come and see...

EVELYN: Especially that withered old witch, whatshername, big medical practice downtown, does shifts in Emergency at the hospital...?

PETER: I don't (know)....

EVELYN: Dr Damage we call her, after what she did to my friend Susie. (*Getting emotional*) Tireless Susie was, tireless. Then just one week before Christmas, Susie fell awkwardly at croquet and went into Emergency with a bruised anus. We found her 24 hours later, dead as a dodo on a gurney in the hospital corridor.

PETER: That's pretty terrible

EVELYN: (*Teary*) Susie was the only one I could trust to organise things here at Faith Care, and at Red Cross, and the Quilters. Now I have to do the lot myself. (*PETER hands her the box of tissues*) Oh, don't worry about me. My father walked out on us when I was just a child, so I know all about being alone. Oh look at me. We're here for you after all aren't we.

PETER: Here (*Gives her his glass of water*)

EVELYN: Thank you. (*Quickly drains glass and continues cheerily*) You can definitely tell the difference you know. Rain water always tastes metallic to me. Right, here on the middle of the tongue. Tap water- full of chlorine and those filters never get all the chemicals out do they? This