

**MOTHER KNOWS BEST
BY ANDY PAYNE**

Characters

Damien - 50ish. Angela's irritating husband.

Angela - Late 40s. Conventional and easily offended.

Dorothy -Late 70s. Angela's fun loving widowed Mother.

Griffin - Ageing motorcyclist, fun loving and irreverent.

SCENE 1 INTERIOR A SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM 2023

AUDIO: DOMESTIC CLEANING/TIDYING VACUUM

ANGELA

(Sighs loudly) Are you just going to sit there and read that book?

DAMIEN

Is there something you wanted?

ANGELA

I'm waiting for an apology.

DAMIEN

I don't believe in apologies. They are usually shallow and meaningless.

ANGELA

I don't believe you, I really don't. You are so infuriating.

DAMIEN

What have I done now?

ANGELA

You really can't see it, can you?

DAMIEN

Why don't you enlighten me, you usually enjoy doing that.

ANGELA

You're so insensitive. You might as well say you don't love me. Our marriage is over.

DAMIEN

Because I didn't apologise to you?

ANGELA

Yes.

DAMIEN

I'm sorry. May I read my book now?

ANGELA

You do what you want! I'm not staying in this house a moment longer, I'm off to my mother's and I don't know when I'll be back!.

(Storms out)

AUDIO: MUSIC (IRONICALLY ROMANTIC)

SCENE 2 INTERIOR DOROTHY'S HOUSE

ANGELA

.. .. He's so infuriating Mum, he just sat there reading. All I wanted was a simple apology.

DOROTHY

Would you like some more cake?

ANGELA

It's always the same, I'm the one who has to apologise. Sometimes I think I'd be better off without him.

DOROTHY

Don't say that dear, not unless you mean it.

ANGELA

Oh I mean it. I've had enough. I really have.

DOROTHY

Divorce is relatively easy these days. I could give you the name of a good solicitor.

ANGELA

Mother, I'm shocked. I thought you were supposed to be helping! I can't divorce Damien.

DOROTHY

Why not? He is not exactly making you happy is he? I've never liked him.

ANGELA

We've been married 25 years!

DOROTHY

And you could be married another 25 if you don't do something about it.

ANGELA

Did you really never like him?

DOROTHY

Not since the day I met him. I knew he wasn't right for you.

ANGELA

You might have said something.

DOROTHY

Not my place darling and I'm not sure you would have taken much notice.

ANGELA

What about Dad, he liked Damien didn't he?

DOROTHY

Your father was never a good judge of character, far too trusting.

ANGELA

I miss Dad.

DOROTHY

Well you didn't have to live with him for 50 years.

ANGELA

I don't know what's come over you. First you are encouraging me to break up my marriage and

now you're telling me that you and Dad weren't happy. What's wrong with you?

DOROTHY

Nothing's wrong with me Angela, I've just decided that I'm far too old to be polite anymore. It's about time for me to speak my truth.

ANGELA

Do you really think I should leave Damien?

DOROTHY

As long as you don't come back here to live, yes.

ANGELA

That's a horrible thing to say.

DOROTHY

Perhaps yes, but I missed far too much of life looking after you when I was young and I don't propose to miss anymore. Now, do you want the name of this solicitor or not?

AUDIO: MUSIC PLAYS AND FADES

SCENE 3 THE SAME A FEW DAYS LATER

Angela returns from her visit to the solicitor.

AUDIO: FRONT DOOR OPENING

ANGELA

(Coming in from Outside) Hello, it's only me..

DOROTHY

I'm afraid I've had tea, I didn't realise you were going to be this late.

ANGEL

I've already eaten thanks, I had something at the wine bar with Penny.

DOROTHY

Is she looking for a flatmate?

ANGELA

Mum I've told you I'll be gone as soon as I can get things sorted.

DOROTHY

It's not that you're not welcome. It's just that I like my own space. Having you here cramps my style, that's all. I can't be spontaneous.

ANGELA

Spontaneous? You're nearly 80!

DOROTHY

Griffin says I should live a little more.

ANGELA

Griffin? Who's Griffin?

DOROTHY

He's a gentleman I met last year when I was in Mackay.

ANGELA

You've kept that quiet.

DOROTHY

I don't need to tell you everything I do dear.

ANGELA

Griffin, what sort of name is that?

DOROTHY

It's his handle, everyone in the club has one.

ANGELA

Handle? Club? What are you talking about? You've not gone and joined some strange cult have you?

DOROTHY

No darling, it's a motorcycle club. Our motto is adventure before dementia.

ANGELA

You never cease to amaze me! This Griffin, what are his intentions?

DOROTHY

Well, you'll meet him tomorrow, he's in Melbourne for a convention. He's coming over at six. By the way, how did things go at the solicitor's, he's quite charming isn't he?

ANGEL

Not great I'm afraid. It's going to be hugely expensive and he says he doesn't think I'll walk away with much, and certainly not the house. It looks like I could be here a little longer than I expected.

DOROTHY

Then we are going to need some house rules. So for tomorrow I'm happy for you to meet Griffin for half an hour or so but then I'd like you to go out.

ANGEL

For the whole evening?

DOROTHY

Until the morning would be better. Griffin likes to have sex after we've eaten, he says my cooking makes him horny.

ANGEL

Stop, mother stop! I don't need to hear this!

DOROTHY

You don't, which is why I want you to go out tomorrow. Now, be a good girl and put the kettle on would you. There's something I want to watch on the television.

AUDIO: TELEVISION PROGRAMME (SBS DOCUMENTARY?)

SCENE 4 THE NEXT DAY INTERIOR

AUDIO: EXTERNAL. A LARGE MOTOR CYCLE APPROACHES, THE ENGINE

REVS HARD AND STOPS.

DOROTHY

That'll be Griffin. (Calling upstairs) He's here, you can come down now, just remember not to stay too long.

AUDIO: FRONT DOOR OPENING

(Griffin enters)

GRIFFIN

Hello gorgeous, give us a kiss. (they embrace passionately). Here, I bought you a present.

DOROTHY

Thank you handsome. What is it?

GRIFFIN

It's some of that Black Moroccan, one of the guys at the club let me have some. We can smoke it later.

DOROTHY

I'll put it in the kitchen.

GRIFFIN

She's still here then?

DOROTHY

Can't get rid of her. She won't go back to the house as long as he's there.

They're both as stubborn as each other. Neither can afford to buy the other one out, so on they go. Sometimes I'd like to knock some sense into the pair of them.

GRIFFIN

Could be arranged.

AUDIO: FOOTSTEPS COMING DOWN INTERNAL STAIRS.

ANGELA

Hello, you must be Mr Griffin. I'm Angela, the daughter. I'm afraid I can't stay, I have to go out. I may not be back till mourning.

GRIFFIN

Don't worry on my account. Your mother and I have got plans. She's cooking me a meal for me and after that ..

ANGELA

(cutting him off) I'm sorry I can't stop. Nice meeting you. Mum, you will be careful won't you.

DOROTHY

Of course dear, now you have a lovely time and I'll see you about 11 tomorrow?

ANGELA

Not a moment before Mother, not a moment before.

AUDIO: FRONT DOOR SLAMMING.

GRIFFIN

What's up with Miss Twisty knickers?.

DOROTHY

She doesn't approve, she thinks I should be more sensible 'at my age.'

GRIFFIN

Well, be sensible and put the grub on will ya. You can't make a man wait all night.

DOROTHY

We could always skip the meal if you're that desperate.

GRIFFIN

Now don't you go changing our plans, you know how important routine is at our time of life.

DOROTHY

Poor yourself a beer then and take your tablet while I get the dinner on.

GRIFFIN

Come here you gorgeous thing. I could manage a little entree before the main course. (chases her out of the room, they are both laughing and giggling)

SCENE 5 INTERIOR AFTER DINNER

AUDIO: MUSIC (MUSIC TO SMOKE DOPE TO)

DOROTHY and Griffin are enjoying a post coital 'cigarette.'

GRIFFIN

Are you going to bogart that joint all night?

DOROTHY

Sorry, I was just thinking about something you said earlier about persuading Angela's husband to move out of the house. Do you think it can be done?

GRIFFIN

Of course it can be done. I know a couple of people who'd be prepared to move him out in a box, for the right money.

DOROTHY

I wasn't thinking of going that far. Maybe just scare him a little.

GRIFFIN

Sure, whatever you want. I'll get on to it first thing in the morning.

DOROTHY

Would you? I'm really looking forward to getting my house back, I was thinking of doing something special with one of the rooms, you know, for us.

GRIFFIN

I've a mate who could help with that. He does all the brothels in Melbourne, lots of fixtures and fittings if that's what you want.

DOROTHY

It is. Nothing tacky mind, just tastefully erotic, and lots of handles.

GRIFFIN

Seniors playroom with plenty of grab rails for balance. I'm sure Jeff can manage that. We might even get a grant from Aged Care for the grab rails.

(indicating the joint) Do you want the last bit of this?

DOROTHY

Yeah, give us a puff.

AUDIO: MUSIC (HUMOROUS: MARIJUANA THE BUSHWACKERS?)

SCENE 6 INTERIOR, TWO WEEKS LATER.

AUDIO: FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

ANGELA

(Calling out) I'm back.

DOROTHY

How did it go?

ANGELA

Oh he's almost recovered, physically anyway, I think he's still struggling with the psychological side of things, apparently a home invasion can be quite upsetting.

DOROTHY

I know.

ANGELA

The police are no closer to finding out who was responsible. They said it looked like a professional job.

DOROTHY

And is he any closer to moving out?

ANGELA

No, quite the opposite, he's determined to stay in that house until the day he dies.

DOROTHY

And you're no closer to reconciling. You don't want him back?

ANGELA

I do not. I so want to live in that house again, just not with him. I wish there was something I could do.

DOROTHY

Well, maybe there is. Have you you heard of Diane Montford-Johns?

ANGELA

The author?

DOROTHY

She gave a talk at Probus last month, she was promoting her new book, 'Getting Away with It - a study of women and their murderous intentions.' It's very good. I could lend you my copy if you like.

ANGELA

You're not suggesting that I ..

DOROTHY

Don't rule it out before you've read it. The chapter on poisonings is particularly interesting. She identifies at least two that are completely undetectable in an autopsy.

ANGELA

I can't believe I'm hearing this. Are you seriously suggesting I should poison Damien?

DOROTHY

I considered poisoning your father on several occasions.

ANGELA

This is awful! I can't stay here a moment longer. I'm not going to stay in a house with

someone who is plotting murder, even if it is my mother. I'm going back to Damien. He might be a selfish and opinionated but he has never suggested murdering anybody.

AUDIO: FOOTSTEPS RUNNING UP STAIRS, BEDROOM DOOR SLAMMING, NOISY AND ANGRY PACKING

AUDIO: PHONE DIALLING

DOROTHY
(on the phone) Griffin, that builder friend of yours, Jeff wasn't it?. Tell him he can start work next week.

AUDIO: MUSIC (UPBEAT)

End