

# Four Feet Under.

By Albert Jamae

## SYNOPSIS:

A brother and sister are desperate to keep the family pet funeral business alive, and themselves.

## CHARACTERS

ANNABEL FLYNN: Female 25-30. Feisty, strong.

MAX FLYNN: Male 25-30. Woosy. Hypochondriac.

DOROTHY VAUGHN: Female 60+. Frail and pleasant.

SHAMUS FINNEGAN: Male 35+. A smiling Irish hitman.

KAREN VAUGHN: Female 35-40. Caring daughter.

## SETTING

Pet Funeral Parlour (Foyer). One stage exit to front door. Other stage exit to back room.

## SCENE ONE – PET FUNERAL PARLOUR FOYER

*ANNABEL brushes a DEAD POODLE (Trevor) that lies on a dual shelf trolley with a drawer. A dog sized coffin parked nearby.*

*MAX stands behind the shop counter on the phone.*

MAX: (to phone) Oh no that's fine, pick him up anytime that's convenient. Bye.

*He hangs up the phone and drops the happy act.*

MAX: You can stop prepping Trevor. They've cancelled his funeral.

ANNABEL: That's the third one this month! I hope you reminded them the deposit was non-refundable.

MAX: Well...

ANNABEL: Oh Max!

MAX: But Annie, they were so upset. I didn't want to burden them with talk of...

ANNABEL: What about our burden?! We're completely broke! And unless a miracle happens, we'll have to shut up shop. Not exactly fulfilling dad's dying wish is it?

*She exits to the back room. PHONE RINGS. He answers with a fake smile.*

MAX: Good morning Four Feet Under, Maximus speaking....

*He snaps into panic mode; hiding the conversation from Annabel.*

MAX: Shamus! About that loan, could you give me until...? Today? Um, okay.

*He gently hangs up the phone, comatosed. ANNABEL enters, wary.*

ANNABEL: You borrowed money from Shamus again?

MAX: Well yes but...

ANNABEL: You promised! You know what he's capable of doing! How much?

MAX: Four.

*She's a little relieved.*

MAX: Thousand.

*She goes pale.*

ANNABEL: We are so screwed.

MAX: Yep.

*The DOOR BELL TINKERS as DOROTHY enters carrying a dead cat. Max and Annabel pull themselves into work mode.*

ANNABEL: Hello and welcome to Four Feet Under. Your pets are our pets.

MAX: How can we be of assistance Mrs...?

DOROTHY: Vaughn. Dorothy Vaughn.

ANNABEL: And who's this poor little fella?

DOROTHY: Mister Mangles. I'm afraid he's seen his last days and I wish to have his memory honoured.

MAX: Oh of course.

DOROTHY: In a way that he truly deserves, for his years of loyal companionship.

ANNABEL: Truly deserved.

DOROTHY: I want him stuffed.

MAX/ANN: Huh?

DOROTHY: Stuffed. I want him on my mantle so I can look at his furry little face every day.

MAX: I'm sorry but I think you have us confused with a taxidermist. We'd be happy to provide a premium funeral package...

DOROTHY: I'm willing to pay, whatever it costs.

MAX: Yes but you see we don't...

ANNABEL: ...have a problem stuffing Mister Mangles. In fact, we'd be delighted.

*Annabel takes the cat and eyeballs Max who suddenly clicks with the idea.*

DOROTHY: Excellent. How much?

MAX: All of him.

DOROTHY: I mean how much will it cost?

*Max and Annabel share a hopeful look.*

ANNABEL: Four thousand dollars?

DOROTHY: Oh dear.

MAX: Well maybe we can reduce it to...

*Annabel grinds her heel into his foot and he winces in silent agony.*

DOROTHY: You know what? He's worth every penny. I'll just pop down to the bank and see you in a jiff. (to cat) Bye bye precious.

*Dorothy exits. DOOR BELL TINKLES. Max and Annabel burst with excitement.*

MAX/ANN: Yes!

ANNABEL: All we have to do is stuff it before she gets back and our problems are solved!

MAX: But we don't know the first thing about taxidermy.

ANNABEL: How hard can it be?

*She places the cat on its back on the counter, grabbing a pen to demonstrate.*

ANNABEL: We just cut it down here...

*He starts gagging.*

ANNABEL: I haven't done anything! And you're the one who was studying to be a vet!

MAX: Yes, *was!* You know I have a weak stomach.

ANNABEL: Hopeless! Just get him on the trolley while I find something to stuff him with.

*She exits to the back room. He carries the cat to the trolley, cringing, putting Trevor on the bottom shelf. ANNABEL returns with hand towels and a bucket.*

ANNABEL: This should do it. You rip them into strips while I make the incision.

*He tries to rip the towels by hand but can't. She hands him a pair of scissors and he proceeds to cut the towels into strips. She pulls out a scalpel from the drawer.*

ANNABEL: You might want to turn away for this bit.

*He gags again, turning his back.*

ANNABEL: Here goes.

*She's about to cut it when the cat MEOWS. They freeze.*

ANNABEL: Um Max, did you bother to check if the cat was actually dead?!

MAX: He felt dead.

ANNABEL: Well he's not now! Oh my god.

MAX: So what are you going to do?

*She gives him an icy glare.*

MAX: So what are we going to do?

ANNABEL: Well if we want that money, we have only one chance to make sure we get it.

MAX: With a dead cat?

ANNABEL: With a dead cat.

MAX: But it's not dead.

ANNABEL: Then we have to...make it dead.

*He starts gagging.*

ANNABEL: Correction. I have to make it dead.

MAX: Are you sure you can do this sis?

ANNABEL: No. But we don't have a choice. It's literally us or the cat.

*They take a moment to absorb.*

MAX: I'll just be back here. Let me know when you're done.

*He exits quickly to the back room. She scoffs at him.*

ANNABEL: Alright. So...how to kill a cat.

MAX: (offstage) A blow to the head would do it!

ANNABEL: No!

MAX: (offstage) You could just nick the subclavian artery and let it slowly drain out.

ANNABEL: What?!

MAX: (offstage) Or there's a supply of phenobarbatone in the drawer if you want to euthanize it! You'll need at least 5 mls to be effective!

ANNABEL: (to herself) Who *are* you?

*She rummages around the drawer and pulls out a small bottle and a syringe, then loads it up. Hesitant, she goes to inject the cat. As she gets close we hear MAX GAGGING. Annoyed, she waits, then injects the cat, patting him affectionately.*

ANNABEL: Sorry you've ended up here Mister Mangles. I know this is happening to you because we're desperate, and because I'd do anything to protect my little brother. I don't know who's the bigger idiot. I just hope you can forgive us little fella. Mister Mangles?

*She gives him a little nudge. Nothing. She listens for his breathing, checks his pulse, then lowers her head in remorse.*

MAX: (offstage) Have you done it yet? I'm feeling a bit woozy!

ANNABEL: Yes!

*MAX enters.*

MAX: So is he...?

*She sadly nods.*

MAX: Look, he was clearly in pain so we just helped him move on to a better place.

*She warms to the support. He hands her the scalpel.*

MAX: Now let's get this over with.

*She takes a deep breath and goes to cut when the LIGHTS DIM (a power cut).*

MAX/ANN: Oh come on!/ What?!

ANNABEL: I thought you said they gave us to the end of the week to pay?

MAX: They did! I think.

ANNABEL: Just grab a torch.

*He runs to the counter, rummages around and returns with a torch on.*

MAX: Got it!

ANNABEL: Okay that should do. Now hold it steady while I...

*MEOW!*

MAX/ANN: ARGH!!!

*He drops the torch.*

ANNABEL: Are you serious?!

MAX: Did you use 5mls?!

ANNABEL: I used ten!

*He shines the torch between them.*

MAX: That's enough to kill a human.

ANNABEL: Really?

MAX: Doesn't take much.

ANNABEL: Then this time we use a whole syringe full! Gimme some light!

*He shines the torch as she fills the syringe with the drug.*

MAX: 20 mls?!

ANNABEL: If this doesn't do it, I don't know what will.

*He shines the torch on the trolley. The cat is gone.*

MAX: What the...