

## Death Comes to Us All, Mary Agnes

by Christopher Durang

**The Play:** A bizarre, biting, darkly humorous look at the Pommés, a family on the periphery of life.

**Time and Place:** The Pomme's decaying mansion. The present.

**The Scene:** Margot conjures up a painful memory with Grandma, who has just suffered a bad episode herself.

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MARGOT: (*Bringing Mrs. Jansen-Hubbell to sofa.*) Grandma, do you remember me? It's your little Margot. Sit down, let me look at you. Do you remember me? I remember you, way back before you first feigned madness. Do you remember that summer I was fifteen, and Daddy and I came to visit right after he'd found the French orphanage my mother had put me in? And Grandad had just got the first of his secretaries. Remember? It was Miss Willis, then, I think. And I asked you why Mama had put me in an orphanage like I didn't belong to her, just so she could go to Italy with her two boys, her two sons, my twin brothers! She left me there for five years! (*Getting teary and hysterical.*) And I said to you, Grandma, will there ever be anyone in the world who will love me? Love me for what I am, and love me and not pity me? And you looked at me and you said, "No," and I said, "But Grandma, Why?" And you said, "Because there never was for me!" Do you remember, Grandma? There never was for me!

**The Scene:** Margot tells her father about one of her disturbing dreams.

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MARGOT: Last night I had that awful dream again.

[HERBERT: Margot, you work yourself up over nothing. Lots of girls dream they're Joan of Arc.]

MARGOT: (*Angry.*) I don't mean the Joan of Arc dream. This is the one where I'm in the orphanage and I see my mother in a field with my two brothers, canoeing. And rather than feeling angry at her for putting me in the orphanage, I just feel this terrible longing to be accepted by them, by her. And then I find that I'm dressed like a boy and that I've even grown a mustache, and I go out to them to show my mother that I'm a boy and then I notice that I'm still wearing lipstick, and I try to wipe it off but there's so much of it I can't get it off, and I keep wiping it and wiping it, and the three of them just laugh and laugh at me, and then they steer their canoe at me and it comes racing toward me to crush me, and a great big oar from the canoe hits me on top of the head, and then the oar starts to beat me repeatedly, ecstatically. And then I wake up. Trembling.

[HERBERT: What do you want me to say? The oar's a phallic symbol. You should stay away from boating. Don't grow a mustache.]

MARGOT: (*Takes his book, throws it across the room.*) I feel such anger and unhappiness all the time! When you rescued me from the orphanage, I thought I was finally saved and that things would be all right. But they weren't. You don't hate mother. And you don't like me. What am I to do? I've been seeing my psychiatrist for three years now, four times a week, and I don't feel any change. I feel such a prisoner to my past. And I have such a longing for normality. I see people on the street who eat in cafeterias and have families and go to parks and who aren't burdened with this terrible bitterness; and I want to be like them. So much I want to be like them.