

The Live Funeral at the Chicago Podcast Festival 2018

Obituary Writer: Hello. I am the Obituary Writer of this lovely town of Crestfall, Idaho, and this is *Death by Dying. LIVE*.

[*organ music*]

Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the Funeral. It's heartening to see such a turnout for today's memorial. It's encouraging, really. Just when it seemed funerals were losing their zest, perhaps they are making a comeback. In Crestfall it used to be that going to a funeral was like a night out. Teenagers would make a date out of it. Sure, that new hot film was screening at the local theater, but what thrills could the latest cars-turning-into-robots movie give you, that you *couldn't* get from going to a random person's funeral? It was... an event. There were concessions for those who wanted to eat their grief. Folks could book primary seating. Was this morbid? Perhaps. But what else are you going to do on a Saturday night? Realistically. Be honest with yourself... You're here right now.

But much like Life itself, all good things come to an end, and the appeal of Crestfall's funerals died off. Maybe it's good that funerals aren't a spectacle anymore. Maybe it distracted from who the person actually was. But it sure was fun... I don't mean to be rude, seeing as this evening is about the deceased and not We The Living, but I'm a little disappointed you all didn't seem to get the dress code. I mean... we dressed for the occasion. This man in the front row is wearing a baseball cap... A little disrespectful, don't you think?

[*man takes off hat*]

Thank you, sir.

I assume you all knew Samuel Plunk since you're here, but who ever turned down some backstory. Samuel Plunk was 100 years old when he died, and was still one of the busiest men in town, right up until he passed away and assumed room temperature. He was the secret handyman, you see.

Death by Dying Official Transcript

OW: The people of Crestfall, Idaho are hardworking people – And so naturally the last thing anyone wanted to admit was that they didn't know how to fix something. This is where Samuel came in. With great discretion in mind, he would be welcomed into people's homes in the dead of night to fix leaky pipes, backed-up plumbing, flickering lightbulbs. During the day neighbors would exclaim to one another, "My, you sure know how to keep up a house!" And they would reply, "Oh, you know, I do what I can, I learned from the best. I learned from my father." And of course they learned from their father, because he used to call for the secret handyman as well. He will be missed. There will forever be a Samuel-Plunk-shaped hole in our hearts... and a broken furnace in our basements.

Well, before we all get too depressed, let's get on with it. Tonight we have three delightful *living* speakers here to give some insight into Samuel's compelling life. I would like to welcome Leroy Jones to say a few words about our departed friend. He was the last person to see Samuel before he died, so he is going to grace us with a look into that final day.

Leroy: (*awkwardly fumbling to the podium*) Ahem, thank you there, Obituary Writer... lemme see here, sorry, I wrote my eulogy down on napkins because I used all my stationary to make paper hats for everyone to cheer you up! But I didn't realize it was raining outside. That was one wet wanton of a surprise. So if you'd like a mushy paper hat made from a place of pure love, grab one on your way out.

Anyways, The Final Day, lemme sees. I woke up late, around 11:30 in the morning. My sleep schedule has been thrown off ever since I started playing Bridge with my buds Pete and Chandler. It's very addicting and I have lost A LOT of money. [*Chuckles*] Don't tell the Mrs! Just kidding, I don't have a Mrs... I'm alone. Oh! But I fed my pet iguana, Leroy Jr., I fed him an avocado for breakfast. He loves his avocados. He sure does get violent if he doesn't get his greens. All bite and all bark with that one, am I right?

[*sigh*]

Death by Dying Official Transcript

Leroy: I'm so sorry I killed Samuel... I mean... I'm so sorry he's dead! As in – I'm sorry for your loss, I have nothing to be sorry for. It's just that he fixed things, ya know? He really knew how to fix things. How to make things right, make them better, make them okay. Because mistakes happen, right? We all goof up. We can be major-league goofballs. Like sometimes we might just have a runny faucet and all we have to do is tighten the nozzle a little, and OTHER times there's no stopping that runny faucet, and the water keeps pouring out and pouring out and pouring out and we don't know what to do and then water is flooding the entire room and there's no escape and you're just drowning in your own remorse! ... Anyhow, that morning I called up Samuel to help fix a burned-out lightbulb and it was a good... yeah it was a good interaction... Real nice guy. Thank you.

OW: Thank you, Leroy. What a wonderful eulogy. I really feel like that spoke volumes about Samuel's life. Up next, we have the local Butcher, who was recently promoted to town coroner. Give him a big round of applause: The Butcher everyone!

Butcher: Yeah yeah yeah, thanks and all, it's nothin' really. Just doin' my job. I've been guttin' and slicin' up pork and beef for a while now, so it feels really refreshing to finally try my hand at human corpses.

Chester: Bahhh.

Butcher: Oh, right, that's my pet goat, Chesta. He's my partner in crime, ain't that right, Chesta?

Chester: Bahhhh.

Butcher: Heh heh. That's classic Chesta for you.

Chester: Bahhh.

Butcher: Right, let's talk about why we're really here. What can be said of Ol' Sammy P? The Plunkster, Handy Mandy... He was a kind man, the best. He was dedicated and hard-working. He made all of our lives brighter, whether we are ready to admit it or not. He was a lady's man... He fathered at least half of you in the audience... and he had a century to work his magic.

Death by Dying Official Transcript

Butcher: Eh let's see here... what else about Sammy? He was generous, warm-hearted, had multiple contusions on his left temple and upper arm that suggest an abrupt blunt impact at a 45 degree angle. Further inspection of his internal organs suggested severe vascular rejection in the allograft.

Chester: Bah, Bah, BAHHHHH...

Butcher: I'm getting there, Chesta geez! This led to severe heart dysfunction with chronic passive congestion of the lungs and liver. Chesta was mentioning how the presenting symptoms likely resulted in heart failure. Real nice guy.

Chester: Bahhhh.

Butcher: You're right, Chesta, you're absolutely right... That being said, there is a suspicious crater formation of flash burns on his hands, suggesting possible electrocution. Could be an accident, but I'm a sucker for foul play being involved... even... murder...

OW: Wow... thank you for those words. I am sure that was incredibly impactful, and highly educational to Plunk's loved ones. Let's move on, shall we? Here to lift your spirits with the Holy Spirit is none other than Pastor Jeff. Pastor Jeff, take it away.

[*organ music*]

Pastor Jeff: Hi, uh, I'm Pastor Jeff. Pastor of the Church of Right Here Right Now. It's not actually right here. It's about 8 blocks which a way, kitty corner to Lulu's Hair Salon. So... If you're ever getting your hair done, and you wanna talk about... Jesus. I'm there. I live there... At the church, not the hair salon. Living at a hair salon would be... itchy. Well... welcome to the sermon. Samuel Plunk. I knew him quite well. I've got a Sammy story for ya. As a boy, I was camping out in the Dark Woods with my mother and father. And, you know, my father was having a titch of trouble getting the fire going. And my mother said it's probably because of his impotency. And then she called Samuel Plunk and that man came and started our fire... and he left with my mother.

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Pastor Jeff: And that fire kept us warm. He fixed that. He comes at night. He sneaks in and repairs that one floorboard your father smashed all your mother's dishes upon after the Philadelphia Eagles lost the football game. He repairs the hidden things beyond your repair. You invite him in, and he mends the broken things that you can't fix... sounds a lot like Jesus. A man who mends your brokenness. You fail. You try to be good and kind, but ultimately you are broken. You find you cannot fix yourself. You need to invite someone in who can fix you. You need a Samuel Plunk.

OW: Inspiring as always, Pastor Jeff. Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, we have Samuel Plunk's one and only apprentice, Alexander Thud.

Thud: Hello. Hi. I'm Thud. Alexander Thud. Apprentice to the Secret Handyman Samuel Plunk. We, uh, we worked together for many years. He would hold the hammer and I would hold the nail. It was a hazardous job... But he was a good man... and also my father. He never really, he never acknowledged it. I saw an ad in the paper for a job, and I, I just knew he was my dad. He met my mom on a job, when he fixed the garbage disposal. I applied and well, he gave me the position.... We never, we never acknowledged it to each other. But we both knew. I worked with him for 11 years because I thought, maybe next year, he'll feel close enough to me, and he'll maybe just, slip up and call me: Son... He didn't though. He was really, I mean really great with a pneumatic nail gun. I just, yeah... I'm not sure why we never, we never talked about those sorta things... And I just wanted to say now, I love you, Pa. I admire your caulking skills.

Leroy: ALRIGHT! I can't take it anymore! I *murdered* Samuel Plunk!

Everyone: (*GASP!*)

Chester: BAHHHH?!?

Thud: You murdered my illegitimate father?

Leroy: Look, look, I'm sorry, okay?! Let me explain. When I called up Samuel to fix that burned-out lightbulb – that wasn't the end of the story. In fact, that was just the beginning.

Butcher: Yeah, we kinda figured... what happened?

Death by Dying Official Transcript

Leroy: Well, he had to climb up a ladder to reach the bulb, and he asked me to turn off the circuit from the fuse box just to be safe. What a safe man! So unlike myself, I'm a regular Stumbles McGillicuddy. Uh, anyway... just as he was changing the bulb, a Raven appeared near me and said:

Raven: Caw! Caw! All of your life choices have been a mistake! Caw!

Leroy: And that startled me because birds aren't supposed to... ya know... be indoors. I was so startled I toppled over and accidentally hit the fuse switch, just as Samuel was tinkering with the open circuit. I heard a "BZZZTT"! And a "Whoa whoa" and then a "Krrsshhh KaPloomp!" He hit his head on my hand-me-down armoire, the whole shebang blew a fuse, and suddenly the lights were out... and so were his.

Butcher: I knew it! I knew there was foul play involved! You murdered ol' Sammy P! My instincts are always on the nose.

OW: Is your armoire okay?

Leroy: I'm sorry everyone, I truly am, oh please forgive me.

Chester: Bahhhh.

Butcher: You're right, Chesta, nothing short of the death penalty for Leroy.

Leroy: Ohhh, not again!

Pastor Jeff: My dearest companions, calm your tushes! Leroy has done no wrong.

Leroy: Rea- really?

Pastor Jeff: Of course you did something wrong! You killed a man. But it is no matter. A raven had no right to be so rude to you like that. You are forgiven in the eyes of the Lord, as you should be by your fellow men. Accidents happen.

Death by Dying Official Transcript

Leroy: Thank you, Mr. Pastor, that sure means a lot. I think I'm gonna go make some more paper hats to calm down, this has been one heckuva doozy.

Pastor Jeff: Certainly, my dear child. Go rest your weary brow.

OW: Ah, what pageantry. I love a good funeral. Thank you all for congregating here to celebrate Samuel Plunk's life. I can't help but think about what he meant to us as a secret handyman. Truth be told... *I* called Samuel once. The doorknob on my front door fell off and I couldn't leave my apartment. And so I waited until the middle of the night to ask for help. I don't know why I didn't just admit I couldn't fix it myself and call for a regular handyman.

Appearances, that's what it was. The daily facades we all like to put up, to make it look like we know what we are doing in this life. But 100 years... Samuel was alive for 100 years... he saw a century's worth of stories in this town and after a while, those facades start to fade, they start to go away... and then when you die, they really go away. Living a life with facades is a life closed off. When your doorknob is broken, you need to let people in so they can see the mess. It's the only way things ever get cleaned up.

When you die, all that's left is you and the people you let in. When you're alive, you need to worry about jobs and relationships and the leaky pipe you don't know how to fix, but when you die, it's just you. It's just you and those you've shown yourself to. I think at a time like this, there is only one thing left to do. Enjoy a classic song written by Crestfall's very own: the Bally-Go-Backward Boys.

[guitar strumming, tuning up]

Eugene: Hello. My name is Eugene Portage and I'm going to play you a Crestfall, Idaho anthem. You know the weird lyrics.

[song commences]

Death by Dying Official Transcript

Lyrics:

[Chorus]

*Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land
Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land
And he knocked, and he knocked
But no one did come
And now his life is over And his afterlife's begun*

[Verse 1]

*Well Johnny was like you and I
Dead and wonderin' what to do
He asked if the angels would like some coffee
And God said "Ha, that is cute"*

*So he set out straight
For those pearly gates
But forgot to leave it cracked
He got shut out
He tried to shout
But there ain't no goin' back*

And you know the worst of it?

[Chorus]

*Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land
Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land
And he knocked, and he knocked
But no one did come
And now his life is over
And his afterlife's begun*

Death by Dying Official Transcript

[Verse 2]

*Well folks, what's a fella to do?
Johnny out there with no straps on his shoes
Oh Mr. God! he died in vain*

[THUNDER]

And that's about when it started to rain

*With a thunderous clap
And a flickety flash
Johnny's rocketing down
To a hellfire crash*

*With a bump and a skip
And a tear and a rip
Sweet Johnny was on A devilish, devilish trip*

[Bridge]

*He tried to escape with a heavenly stealth
But Johnny was standing before the Devil himself
Well Johnny looked up
Tremblin' with fear
As the Devil chuckled...
"There's plenty of coffee down here."*

And you wanna know the worst of it?

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[Chorus]

Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land

Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land

And he knocked, and he knocked

But no one did come

And now his life is over

And his afterlife's begun

Everybody!

Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land

Johnny left his bootstraps in the Promised Land

And he knocked, and he knocked

But no one did come

And now his life is over And his afterlife's begun

[*slows down*]

And now his life is over And his afterlife's begun

OW: Thank you all again. Live life to the fullest. Don't forget to drink the foam off your moscato. Smell *every* rose - even the pokey ones. And don't be afraid to leave your doors unlocked.