

Seven Words to Live By

A script for a short film

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INT: Front room in a nice house where relatives are gathered. Four adults (TIM, RACHEL, AMANDA and JASON) and one child (SALLY) are talking quietly and inaudibly. SAM, a nicely dressed man with a stethoscope around his neck steps through a door from the bedroom and motions for the people to enter.

TIM

I guess this is it.

Rachel

He's been talking about this for 30 years.

JASON:

Seven words to live by, that's what he calls it.
He wants it on his headstone.

All follow Sam into the bedroom.

INT: Bedroom. GRANDY lies in bed, on his back, propped up at about 45 degrees, eyes closed.

GRANDY

Water.

Rachel quickly gets him a glass of water. Grandy opens his eyes and takes a sip.

GRANDY
(Acknowledging family members)

Rachel... Amanda...

(Gestures toward others)

Tim...

The family gathers round. Sally places her hand on his.
Close-up of her young smooth hand on his old wrinkled hand.

GRANDY
(With special affection)

Sally.

SALLY

Hi Grandy.

GRANDY

I have something I want to tell you all.
My final words. Seven of 'em.

We see the faces of some of the family members.

GRANDY

You know...all my life...most of it, anyway...
I've been a law-abiding citizen.

AMANDA

We know you have, Grandpa.

GRANDY

Well, save for that thing
down in Florida.

RACHEL

We don't need to talk about that.

TIM (low, to Rachel)

Let him talk about what he wants.

(The following is delivered by Grandy with generous pauses as he gathers his last thoughts. Opportunity for interesting angles and close-ups, interspersed with faces of family members.)

GRANDY

But the laws I've followed are not
the laws of man. Those are just words.

Words blathered in some pompous marble
buildings somewhere by a bunch of "guys."

Guys I've never met.

(Sips water)

And never will.

(Pause)

Except for old Tom Brandon.

(As an aside to himself)

But he was a damn crook.

JASON

(Very low, to himself)

You got that right.

Amanda nudges Jason with her elbow, with a disapproving look.

GRANDY

Sure, I've played the part, I've hit my marks.
I've tried to placate the Romans. But The laws I
live by are from...a higher authority.

He raises finger slowly upward (as if toward heaven).
Then his finger crooks and takes a turn toward his forehead.

GRANDY

In here.

(Taps forehead. Closes eyes.)

The legislature between my ears.

AMANDA (low)

Oh, I thought he was talking about Jesus.

Grandy turns his head toward Amanda and opens one eye, eyebrow raised.

GRANDY

He was one of those "guys."

Tim smiles slightly, nodding as if thinking "Typical Grandy."

Grandy sips water.

SALLY

Were those your final words, Grandy?

RACHEL

Sally!

GRANDY

No.

These are.

The people wait in anticipation, leaning slightly forward.

Close-up of Tim holding a small notebook and pen, at the ready to jot down Grandy's final words. We see his hand, the pen and a blank page.

Grandy

Life...

Close-up of Tim jotting "Life."

Grandy

Is like...

Tim jots "is like."

Grandy: A box of...

Amanda

(low)

That's from a movie!

Grandy

(having heard her)

Movies, philosophers, Bibles, Korans,
totebags, bumper stickers...

I grab truth wherever I can find it.

Tim marks out the words he wrote.

GRANDY

Give me a minute.

Grandy collects his thoughts.

GRANDY

I've got it.

More anticipation

GRANDY

Joey ... Do you like movies about gladiators?
No, wait...

RACHEL
(low)

Is he delirious or doing shtick?

JASON
(low)

I've been asking myself that question for 30 years.

GRANDY

OK, this is it. Here it is...

Grandy holds up a finger.

GRANDY

Always remember...

Tim jots in his notebook as Grandy speaks.

Be...Excellent... To each other.

Grandy mouths the words again, counting the words on his fingers as he touches his thumb to his forefingers.

GRANDY
(To himself)

Yes, seven. That's it.

Grandy takes a final look at his family.

GRANDY
(Lips barely moving, inaudible)
Always remember, be excellent to each other.

RACHEL
You were excellent to us, Grandy.

Grandy gently closes eyes. His head falls slightly to one side. The family begins to turn away.

JASON
You know, he's right. Truth IS truth.

AMANDA
If you think about it, it really is just as profound as anything Socrates ever said.

The family members are starting to walk out of the room.

TIM
Yes. If we could all just I've by that.

Suddenly Grandy's eyes pop open!

GRANDY

Water.

A low gasp from crowd as they turn around.

GRANDY

Water.

Someone hurriedly hands him water. He sips,
then regains composure and looks around the room.

GRANDY

I'm feeling better now...

...Dammit!

EXT: Cemetery. Pan across gravestones to the family gathered at a
grave. Sentimental music plays.

The saddened family looks upon the grave site. Sally, the young
girl, lays a single rose on the grave and says "Grandy, your
final words will live forever."

Camera pans up from the rose to reveal the epitaph engraved on
the headstone:

Water

Water

I'm feeling better now

Dammit

Fade out as music plays.

* * *

[Technical note: With a print-out adhered to an actual headstone,
and careful panning, a convincing illusion of an engraved head-
stone can be achieved.]