

QUIET MISTY MEADOWS

Bart, twenties, has come to Quiet Misty Meadows Cemetery to make arrangements for his recently deceased pet fish, Moo Moo. Annette, thirties, the director of Quiet Misty, has just had all four wisdom teeth removed and has taken some heavy-duty medication to ease the pain. As the scene begins, Annette is beginning to explain the ceremonial options to Bart.

CHARACTERS

Annette: 30s, director of Quiet Misty Meadows Cemetery

Bart: 20s, a client

SETTING

A pet cemetery

TIME

The present

ANNETTE: *(Holding her cheek, trying not to move it.)* Hello. My name is Annette Hope and I'm the director here. On behalf of Quiet Misty Meadows, I want to extend our deepest sympathies for your loss, Mr. Martin.

BART: Thank you. Are you OK?

ANNETTE: Oh, I'm fine. I'm fine. *(Cries out a little.)* Ahh! No problem. I just, I just moved my cheek is all. I had a little oral *(Sucks in air in severe pain.)* surgery today. They just yanked all my wisdom teeth, but I'm fine. *(Cries.)* Ah-hah! Just moved things wrong again. But I'm fine. I'm fine. I took some heavy-duty medication right before you came in. I'm sure it'll kick in any minute. Now, Mr. Martin, the real question is, *(Looking meaningfully at him.)* how are you?

BART: I'm OK. As best as can be expected for —

ANNETTE: *(Cries out.)* Ahhhh! *(Trying to be at ease.)* Go on.

BART: For someone who lost my very best —

ANNETTE: *(Yells.)* Yahh! *(Beat.)* I'm sure that little Vicadin pill should be kicking in any minute now. Excuse me.

BART: No problem.

ANNETTE: *(Holding her cheek.)* Now, do you require pick up at your home?

BART: No, I brought her in myself. I gave her to one of your staff persons.

ANNETTE: *(She nods.)* OK. I want to assure you that we have a very careful group here. We've been providing lasting memorials for the last thirty-four years, so we have a great deal of experience. And we do our best to care for your loved one in a respectful manner. Gosh, I seem to have a pool of blood gathering in here. *(Tongue touching her cheek.)*

BART: Oh.

ANNETTE: No worry. No worry. You're just not supposed to spit. *(She swallows. She makes a disgusted face.)* Uhh. *(Beat.)* Now, why don't you take a seat? There are several things we should discuss. *(He sits.)* When we spoke on the phone, you told me that she passed away last night, correct?

BART: Well, it's hard to tell. *(She looks a bit surprised.)* You see, I wasn't home. I was in Milwaukee for vacation and my idiot brother who was watching her said she turned all brownish-blue at some point and started flopping about on her stomach and this stuff —

ANNETTE: I see no reason to replay those painful moments. *(Touching her tummy.)* Feelin' queasy anyway. We'll just say it occurred last night for the paperwork, OK? *(She writes.)* Uh, firstly, what was your dear pet's name?

BART: Moo Moo.

ANNETTE: *(Taking in.)* Moo Moo. Umm. *(He nods.)* What a unique name.

BART: It was because of how she opened her little lips toward me.

ANNETTE: Uh-huh.

BART: *(Does imitation.)* She'd look right at me and her lips

seemed to be saying, "Moo moo. Moo moo." She was just my Little Minnie Moo Moo.

ANNETTE: Would you like Little Minnie included on the headstone, plaque, and memory table?

BART: No, no. We'd want to be formal.

ANNETTE: Yes, of course. So then that would read Ms. Mrs. Moo Martin then?

BART: No, um, Moo Moo *Mary* Martin. Mary was her middle name.

ANNETTE: OK. *(She writes.)* And Moo Moo is spelled M-O-O and then again M-O-O, as in a cow saying moo moo.

BART: Are you making fun of this?

ANNETTE: No. No, Mr. Martin. I have to get this correct for the paperwork so that we can talk about the services available for your dear . . . pet.

BART: *(Tearful.)* I'm sorry. It's just . . . my Moo Moo was so wonderful to me in every way.

ANNETTE: I bet she was. I bet she was a lulu of a Moo Moo, wasn't she?

BART: Yes. And my stupid friend Susie said I was like this big goofball for making such a fuss.

ANNETTE: *(Gasps, opening her mouth too wide causing pain.)* Ahh! *(Beat.)* No. Well, sometimes friends are insensitive because they don't understand the bond that forms between people and their pets. Maybe your friend has never known that bond or is incapable of any kind of bond, Mr. Martin, which is really sad. Really, really sad! *(Bart nods.)* Maybe Susie's a big pathetic, rotten loser who no one even likes! Ever think of that?

BART: Well, I, I think that might be over —

ANNETTE: I'm sorry. I don't know where that came from. These drugs sometimes make one a little . . . woo-oooh — exaggerated. I'm sorry. Obviously, we're talking about you and Moo Moo here. Look, my point is that we know how you feel at Quiet Misty Meadows. We know it well. This is a very difficult time for you.

BART: Umm-hmm. It is.

ANNETTE: So we try to make you feel at ease. We even have a bereavement counselor available to help you through this. For another small fee. Everything costs money these days. You're sad, they bilk ya for all ya got. Anyway, there's nothing unusual about how you feel, and this I can assure you. I can pass your name onto the bilking, I mean, bereavement counselor and she can call you later today if you'd like. Would you like?

BART: *(He nods.)* Yeah. Moo Moo was so smart. She loved me so much. She was cute and good.

ANNETTE: I know. I know she was. I too have lost several pets that I loved through the years. Misty was the reason I started Quiet Misty. I also have Bandit, Fluffy, and Lead Belly buried here.

BART: My gosh, you've had so much loss.

ANNETTE: Yeah, well Fluffy and Lead Belly I was kinda getting sick of anyway. I mean, they were kinda sick. I mean . . . never mind. I'm just saying that I understand your pain, Mr. Mootin.

BART: Martin.

ANNETTE: Right.

BART: It's so great that you offer this service. I mean, even my mother laughed at how emotional I got over my little fish.

ANNETTE: I know that's *terrible* that even family members — fish?

BART: Yes, I know Mom didn't mean to laugh. She apologized right after.

ANNETTE: *(Beat.)* We're talking about Moo Moo, the fish?

BART: Yeah. Why?

ANNETTE: *(High-pitched.)* No reason.

BART: And she wasn't just a *fish*. She was a *zebra* fish.

ANNETTE: Riiiiight. Which explains why you named her Moo Moo then.

BART: What do you mean?

ANNETTE: Nothing. I just think it's a very unique and clever name.

BART: Is this a problem that Moo Moo's a fish?

ANNETTE: No, no. Of course not.

BART: Haven't you ever had a fish here before?

ANNETTE: Well, I wouldn't — I don't have all the records but — look, I admit that we more frequently deal with the loss of cats and dogs, but we have dealt with countless different types of pets. We're professionals here even if we do sleep around with each other. (*Shocked at herself.*) My God where did that come from?

BART: You haven't had one fish?!

ANNETTE: We've had rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs —

BART: But those aren't fish?!

ANNETTE: (*Angry.*) Well, duh! I realize that Mr. Martin OK? But we've had a penguin, an octopus, a turtle, a tarantula —

BART: You had a turtle?

ANNETTE: Yes! Yes, we did! We did have a turtle. Todd Todd the ugliest turtle we'd ever — I mean, the mug on that thing, only a mother — (*Realizing.*) we loved Todd like a mother . . . in a very sweet way.

BART: You're acting very strangely, Ms. Hope.

ANNETTE: Well, well, well and you're Mr. Normal with the kissy-lips-moo-moo thing? Who's calling the fishy striped, huh? (*Snapping out of it. Pausing in horror.*) Oh, dear God, I'm sorry.

BART: Well, if this is how people who are mourning get treated here at Quiet Misty Meadows, I am appalled! I am taking my little Moo Moo and going somewhere —

ANNETTE: (*Grabbing his arm.*) I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Mr. Martin, this is highly unusual. I don't know what's come — it must be this medicine. I assure you I'm a professional. And I don't think you had any weird thing with your little Moo Moo Zebra fish even if it sounded fishy. (*Laughs.*) Forget that. I know that you loved her very much, and we, the only

pet cemetery in a seventy-mile radius, want your moola — Moo Moo, I mean we want to take your Moo Moo to her resting place. So please, please, I'm sorry. Take a seat, buddy, please.

BART: All right.

ANNETTE: Thank you. Now, why don't we discuss the kinds of services we have here at Quiet Misty Meadows. We offer several options for the lasting memorial of Moo Moo. We have a cremation service, with a full line of urns —

BART: No, no, I couldn't just put her in an urn.

ANNETTE: OK, well, your pet's remains may be entombed in our mausoleum instead or we could bury her.

BART: I'd like to bury her.

ANNETTE: OK. We have several options in a private burial service with a nondenominational ceremony held here in the At Peace Room.

BART: Oh, that sounds nice. Is it nice?

ANNETTE: Nice? It's so nice. Okey-dokey-smokey. Whew. Isn't this fun? What we would like to do then is hold the ceremony and then do a short procession up to the Hilltop Gazebo for a final blessing.

BART: Final? Final sounds so . . . final, you know?

ANNETTE: (*Rubbing his arm, doing baby voice.*) Aww, well we can call it the semifinal then. Hell, we can call it the plover-in-the-ground thingy. Whatever you'd like. The point is she's gone, dead, vamoose. Headin' to the big fishbowl in the sky!

BART: No!

ANNETTE: Could be worse. She could be swirling down the toilet bowl in your brother's john.

BART: I don't think this is funny in the least.

ANNETTE: Who's joking?

BART: Would we be able to view her before we take her to her final resting place?

ANNETTE: You want to embalm Moo Moo?

BART: Could we?

ANNETTE: Oh, sure, we could embalm her, we could stuff her, we could freeze-dry her and put her on a pizza. Whatever you want, Mr. Marmoo. Whatever you can pay for. You come first. You, you, you. Whatever your wishes are, we will do for you, Moo Moo.

BART: I would love to have an open casket, but she's so disfigured and *(Tearful.)* it's all my fault. I let my stupid brother watch her and he has cats. I told him to keep her away from them, I told him, but those nasty little beasts pulled her out of the tank and started to —

ANNETTE: That's all righty, let's movey onie.

BART: But it's my fault that she's, that she's . . .

ANNETTE: Oh, Mr. Martin, we always blame ourselves at times like these even when it's totally, completely our fault.

BART: I know, I know I shouldn't . . . *(Realizing.)* What did you say?

ANNETTE: Me? I didn't say. What do you say? We've been told not to say. *(She's in utter confusion.)*

BART: I'm having second thoughts about the burial. I don't think it's natural for her.

ANNETTE: We could plop her into the serenity pond. Let nature take its course. *(Dancing.)* Free Moo Moo — free!

BART: And let her rot out in the open?

ANNETTE: You're right. You're right. We could sink her? We could get fin-size cement blocks? What do you think about that?

BART: I think it's sick! I think you're sick!! I think this whole place is sick!!!

ANNETTE: Wow! You've got a theme going there. Look, Bud, she was a fish! Got it? A smelly, rotten fish, not a lover or something!!

BART: She was exotic!!

ANNETTE: Whoa! So are the dancers on Fifth and Green. That doesn't mean I want them in my living room.

BART: *(Angry.)* Can't you understand?! You evil witch! *(Breaks down in tears.)* It was terrible to die like that. Those

cruel monsters tore her from my bosom. And now I have to live and go on without her. I have to return home to her things. To her little treasure chest and her little snorkle guy and her little seahorse and . . . her little . . . net. I loved her, Ms. Hope. We had a connection. And every time I walk past her fish flakes, I think of us. She won't nibble or moo moo anymore! Do you understand that? And the question remains, what will I do with all the little pebbles at the bottom of the tank? I can't just throw them out. What will I do with them?

ANNETTE: You know, Barty, I don't think that's a good question to ask me. *(She snaps her fingers.)* 'Cause I'll tell ya. I know, I haven't been right to you, Mr. Moo Flakes. I can tell you're really hurting. The thing is, the thing is, Mr. Martin . . . I don't care. And you know what? Neither would you. Neither would you if you just had your wisdom teeth yanked out today. Ripped right out from your gums, just like the cats ripped your little Moo Moo to shreds. But you know what? Now, I'm feelin' good. You know, goooooood! *(She holds out her hand.)* So what I suggest, is this. You take one of these. Here. Take it. *(She hands him a pill.)* Take this little Vicadin pill and forget about the damn fish. You'll feel a whole hell of a lot better. Trust me.

BART: You are the most disgusting, deranged funeral home director I have ever come across.

ANNETTE: *(Sexy.)* Oooh. I like your alliteration! You're not so bad yourself, Barty. *(Pulls him into her and kisses him hard.)* Let's go make peace in the At Peace Room! *(She drags off the speechless, shocked Barty.)*