

Mothers Grave S3 Ep1 Diane and Anna Transcript

[00:00:00] **Dana:** Well, hello friends, and welcome to the third season of I Swear on My Mother's Grave podcast. And for all you mothers out there who are listening today, happy, happy Mother's Day. And for those of you thinking about someone who's missing today or absent from your life or struggling to become a mother yourself, I am hugging you through this microphone and hoping that you are listening today because you want to, and that this is a good healing choice.

[00:00:46] And know that if at any point during this episode you want to tap out, you want to turn it off, you wanna start it up in a week, great. Please do so. Listen to what feels good for you today. And also remember that I won't even know. So turn it off if you need to. But welcome and know that this episode is special because it's the beginning of our third season.

[00:01:11] Yes. But it's my first time talking to a living mother daughter duo. The mom is alive. She lives in Oregon. And she is extraordinary. I have wanted to talk to a mother child pair for a while now to sit on the mic with them as they talk about legacy together and raising children, their ancestors end of life, and how we talk about our mothers to our mothers.

[00:01:36] And of course, as we know and as this whole podcast has taught me, there are a lot of complicated maternal relationships with many layers, and it morphs over time. Mine sure did, during and after my mom's lifetime. And I am sure I could have chosen hundreds of mother child duos to chat with. Well, maybe not hundreds, because not everyone wants to talk about their own death.

[00:01:57] But it is not lost on me that I chose a mother and daughter duo who are very close and very open with each other and are almost best friends, because that was not my story. But what was lost on me up until the Saturday before I recorded this episode was that I scheduled this interview on April 16th, which is my mom's death anniversary.

[00:02:22] Like what I, I had no idea. And I just put it right there on the Excel spreadsheet, episode one, April 16th, I'll do the conversation. And I had almost completely forgotten about this anniversary until that Saturday night when I remembered, and then I immediately felt this rush of anxiety, like, oh no. Oh no.

[00:02:39] Oh no. Oh no, no. A mother-daughter duo conversation on that day. And they love each other a lot. And it's one of my first larger interviews that I've done since I've decided to come back and I don't know the mother that well. And it's a Sunday evening and I'm tired and Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. I knew I had to shower and look put together for this because a mother was joining the call and my mother would've wanted me to look nice. So I curled my hair, put on earrings makeup, and logged on.

[00:03:08] And immediately the daughter told me that her mother might be a few minutes late as she was putting on her eyebrows for the call because she wanted to look presentable as well. And right then I knew that. Yeah. Yep. This was where I was supposed to be today on my own mother's death anniversary with them.

[00:03:28] In this episode, a mother and a daughter are going to try to remember a fight they had. Yep. They're gonna struggle to find one example. They're gonna discuss suicide and personal end of life together. So please take care while listening. They're gonna talk about making art and teaching children, and they are going to thank the universe that somehow they got to be together in this one lifetime.

[00:03:53] And I, I'm just gonna be along for the ride, a ride that took me through my own internal emotions and made me really miss my mother while being deeply jealous of them. And overwhelmingly happy to witness these two people's affection and support for each other. Yeah, the podcast tagline says, complex maternal loss people.

[00:04:15] So here it is, friends. This is Anna Ardizzone and Diane Kondrat, daughter and mother.

[00:04:34] I just wanted to say thank you for both being here. And.

[00:04:38] **Diane:** It is our pleasure.

[00:04:39] **Dana:** Aw.

[00:04:39] **Anna:** Yeah.

[00:04:40] **Dana:** Amazing. And Anna said that you would do it, Diane, if you didn't have to talk about your own death the whole time. So.

[00:04:46] **Diane:** Oh, super. Super. Yeah. I guess it hasn't happened yet, so I'm not sure. Uh, I'm not sure how that's gonna transpire.

[00:04:52] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah. We'll see how that works.

[00:04:54] **Anna:** This is gonna be a two-parter. We'll have this one and then, you know, 10, 15, 20 years, we'll meet again.

[00:05:01] **Dana:** For the second.

[00:05:01] **Diane:** We'll meet again in the afterlife. Mm-hmm. And will I have things to say.

[00:05:05] **Anna:** You'll have so many dogs, just a fleet of pugs that will follow, follow you like bison.

[00:05:14] **Dana:** But I wanted to ask you both before we started, if, if somebody came up to you on the street today, Anna and Diane, you can answer separately and said, how would you describe your relationship with your mother or your daughter right now today? Quickly, how is your relationship? What would you say to them?

[00:05:32] **Anna:** The best.

[00:05:34] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:05:36] **Diane:** Lucky. So lucky when I talk about Anna, nobody believes that she's that great. I start to talk about her and I describe her and then I describe her more and I can see the veil over their eyes come down. It's like, yeah, because Anna's a superb spirit and a superb human and I am so lucky.

[00:06:02] **Anna:** Mm, thanks Mom.

[00:06:04] **Dana:** What does a superb spirit mean to you? What does that mean?

[00:06:08] **Diane:** Well, once upon a time, long time ago when Anna was a little baby, uh, and I mean literally

[00:06:14] **Dana:** part one

[00:06:15] **Diane:** she could sit up, but she was a baby. I would be at the grocery store and have her in the little bucket there and not, not the carry a baby, cuz I carried Anna and Nick both in my arms and.

[00:06:28] Fuck the carry off.

[00:06:29] Anyway, uh, she would be, she would be in the little basket and she would hear a baby crying at the supermarket and she would perk up her ears like a dog and start looking around for the baby. And then I would say, you wanna go see that baby? And I would find the crying baby and push her over by it, and as soon as she saw the baby, it would stop crying.

[00:06:52] I thought that was a great game. And so we played it all the time and it never failed. Anna is tremendously empathic. Uh, I assumed to her detriment, uh, in some cases. Uh, but I saw that when she was a tiny baby. And the fact that she is, uh, an unconscious healer. I'd say.

[00:07:17] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:07:17] **Diane:** Uh, or are you semi-conscious? Are you semi-conscious, Anna?

[00:07:20] **Anna:** I'm semi-conscious right now. Currently, yes, I am semi-conscious at this moment.

[00:07:24] **Dana:** Anna, do you remember those moments as a kid? No.

[00:07:28] **Anna:** No. It was way before. I was talking way before. Oh yes. Anything I was little, tiny, tiny.

[00:07:33] **Diane:** Hmm. Yeah, she was, uh, I would say probably a year old when I first started to see that happen.

[00:07:38] **Dana:** Yeah. And now you're a teacher. Yeah. So do you think that's part of it? I mean, this yearning, right? Yeah.

[00:07:42] **Anna:** I mean, I still try to find the crying children now and Yeah. And sometimes they've gotta cry it out, but other times it's like, why don't we listen to a little music while you're crying too? And maybe a hug

[00:07:53] **Dana:** Yeah

[00:07:53] **Anna:** would help.

[00:07:54] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah. And when you say lucky, is that for you Diane, like, because your relationship with your mom was complicated?

[00:08:03] **Diane:** Oh no, I, I think the lucky aspect is because most of the people I talk to, they. They're so sassy about, well, you know, mothers and daughters. Oh dear.

[00:08:20] **Anna:** And it's like, oh, she was great until she was a teen then.

[00:08:23] I can't believe her.

[00:08:24] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:08:25] **Diane:** So, so how, how it happened, how we did it, me and Anna, I don't know because I, when people hear me talk about my mother, they often, after a while, will say, oh, I know you hated your mother.

[00:08:41] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:08:41] **Diane:** No, I didn't hate my mother. I feared my mother.

[00:08:46] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:08:47] **Diane:** In an enormous fashion. But I never hated my mother, even when she was nasty. I wished she wasn't like that, but no, I feared her. So, Yeah. Lucky is, wow. I don't know how we did it. We must have arranged it in outer space for it to be this good. Yeah, that's, that's what I have to say about that.

[00:09:10] **Anna:** I've definitely learned not to, as I get older, brag so much and tell the truth about how close I am with my mother.

[00:09:17] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:09:18] **Anna:** Because I have found more and more and more as I grow up that nobody has this relationship with their mom. And you know, you don't wanna hear about somebody else's fantastic relationship, or people just don't believe me.

[00:09:34] **Dana:** Yeah. They're like, come on. Cause they wanna pick it apart. They, they're, come on.

[00:09:36] **Anna:** Yeah. It's oh. Or they're like, well a mother shouldn't be like a best friend. And I'm like, well, but let's take that apart. What does it mean for someone to be your friend?

[00:09:45] **Dana:** I probably fucking said that.

[00:09:46] **Anna:** Right?

[00:09:47] **Dana:** On this show, you know. No, I say like, who calls their mom every day? Who in the world would do that?

[00:09:52] You know? And I have best friends right now who are like, you don't call anyone Dana. Like you're really bad if she's calling anyone back.

[00:09:56] **Anna:** Yeah.

[00:09:57] **Dana:** But like, right. But you would say to those, people...

[00:09:59] **Anna:** Yeah. I genuinely love my mom the most and our relationship is the best. And it's like, why is that?

[00:10:08] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:10:09] **Anna:** Authenticity.

[00:10:11] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:10:11] **Anna:** Because

[00:10:12] **Diane:** yeah. Let's blame, let's blame theater. Let's, let's acknowledge always. Yeah. Yeah. Let's acknowledge that both the children grew up in theaters.

[00:10:20] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:10:20] **Diane:** And around actors.

[00:10:22] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:10:22] **Diane:** Predominantly. So that kind of, um, vulnerability and openness

[00:10:27] **Dana:** mm-hmm

[00:10:28] **Diane:** was part of their lives.

[00:10:30] **Anna:** Yeah. And it's not that, you know, she was truthful and good and it wasn't that growing up.

[00:10:35] She didn't give us things to do. Like we had chores, but also we had expectations. As you know, I'm a teacher and in my Montessori training we've talked so much about limits and helping and loving them. And when I was in the training and starting working with children, I would call my mom and say, mom, how terrible was I in the grocery store as a little kid? Like, when did I, what did I do? What kind of tantrums? How did you deal with it? And my mom would say, what do you mean you didn't act that way in the grocery store?

[00:11:04] **Dana:** You found in the crying baby and soothed them. Yes. And you're like, what?

[00:11:06] **Anna:** And when and when I was older, like I didn't, I knew sugar cereals were for Christmas. That is a Christmas present. You will get Okay. A, a pack of those small sugar cereals. Yeah. But sugar cereals do not belong in the home. So you don't ask your mom for them if you're grocery shopping. Like, don't be ridiculous.

[00:11:24] **Dana:** Duh.

[00:11:24] **Anna:** It's like, I think when people think about, oh, your mom is your friend or whatever they think, they imagine a friend that's really like enabling you in the worst ways.

[00:11:32] **Dana:** Right.

[00:11:32] **Anna:** And it's like, but what if we imagined a friend that took care of you and respected you and loved you as you are? Then a mom as a friend is a pretty wonderful thing to be.

[00:11:43] **Dana:** Okay. Right? All the naysayers, all the people who are pissed are about to turn it off. So, um, yes, no, I'm kidding.

[00:11:47] **Diane:** Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. And good luck.

[00:11:50] **Dana:** Good luck to you. But what, but what would, but but has there been a moment though, in your history when you were a teenager, when you were going through puberty or college? Like, is there a moment of conflict that you had or a moment that you felt either one of you wasn't getting what you needed, and how did you get, how did you get over that?

[00:12:09] How did you work through that conflict?

[00:12:11] **Anna:** I can think of literally two arguments.

[00:12:14] One, one is,

[00:12:16] **Diane:** I hope I can remember these.

[00:12:17] **Anna:** Well, you remember this.

[00:12:18] **Diane:** Hope I can.

[00:12:18] **Anna:** This one. One is, I, it was sixth grade and I wanted to get a haircut and my hair was really, really long and I wanted to donate it to lots of love because that's what was important to me.

[00:12:27] **Dana:** Sure.

[00:12:27] **Anna:** And of course, we just went to this like, Hair clips, whatever. Great clips. Great clips. Is that what it's called?

[00:12:33] **Dana:** Super clips. Great clips, yeah. Mm-hmm.

[00:12:35] **Anna:** Super Clips.

[00:12:35] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:12:36] **Anna:** Something in Indiana. Some terrible hair salon. And I went and got my hair cut this short. It's my chin, chin length. And my mom said before I went, you can't cut it that short. Don't get it. Cut that short. It's going to look bad. And I said, step back mom. I'm doing what I'm doing. Independent woman. Okay. I'm 12 years old. I've had my period for two years. Like this is what I'm doing.

[00:12:59] **Dana:** Oh yeah. You know who you are.

[00:13:01] **Anna:** I've grown. Turns out mom was right. The haircut looked horrible.

[00:13:05] **Dana:** Yeah. I want a photo of that. Yeah.

[00:13:07] **Anna:** I'm gonna get, gonna get you one. They didn't thin out my hair. My hair is really thick. So I had a full like triangular helmet. Then grew out my bangs into what I lovingly referred to as the mustache bangs.

[00:13:17] **Dana:** Sure.

[00:13:19] **Anna:** Side note, this is when Jonathan Bode first met me right after this. My husband.

[00:13:22] This haircut? Yeah.

[00:13:23] **Dana:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

[00:13:24] **Anna:** Friend of the pod, Jonathan Bode. Um, excellent man. But that's an argument I remember. Is her telling me not to get my haircut and being right.

[00:13:32] **Dana:** And then did Diane say like, I told you so or no, because you're not that kind of a mom?

[00:13:36] **Anna:** Oh my God. No.

[00:13:37] **Diane:** No. See, oh no. Oh, no, no. I told you so, Anna, you can tell about the second argument. I don't remember this one. I'm, I'm proud of myself that I was brave enough to voice the opinion. What I learned about Anna when she was, again, teeny weeny, weeny, probably less than three months old, was don't argue.

[00:13:57] When Anna was a baby, if she got mad or upset and she was crying about something, if you tried to comfort her. She got madder.

[00:14:08] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:14:09] **Diane:** And so there are photographs of me sitting patiently next to a little ba, little bassine, little demon screaming her head off, screaming her head off.

[00:14:21] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:14:21] **Diane:** And just waiting till she got tired enough that I could finally pick her up and say it's okay. So I learned very, I avoid argumentation anyway, uh, with everybody, but I learned very early that it was a not a good thing to do with Anna.

[00:14:38] Not a functional thing to say.

[00:14:41] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:14:41] **Diane:** Why I oughta, uh, and so I didn't.

[00:14:44] **Anna:** That actually is what the second argument is. What I remember when I first talked to you about how when we get upset, I am the fight trauma response. And you are the flight. And I was upset about it. Yes. And I said, I don't remember where we were, but you were laying on the ground and I was sitting close by you, and I had a pillow in my lap.

[00:15:04] And I said, I don't, I just don't think it's fair that when you're upset suddenly it's like, oh, you're a little rabbit in a hole and you can't even talk to you anymore. And I'm like, how are we gonna, you know, there have to be arguments. It may have had to do with my brother and his first wife back when she was a girlfriend, and me wanting you to say, this is a bad, this is a bad person.

[00:15:28] I, I, for some reason, I was upset that you were not fighting the good fight. And I, I remember being upset, realizing that you have a different trauma response than I do. And that's literally, those are the two arguments I can remember. And they're not even arguments. They're like,

[00:15:46] **Diane:** I don't remember either of those.

[00:15:48] And, an argument with Anna? I don't do arguments with Anna. When Anna moved to Oregon and we were apart, we were apart for four years, right, Anna?

[00:16:01] **Anna:** Mm-hmm.

[00:16:02] **Diane:** Uh, we cried a lot.

[00:16:03] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:16:05] **Diane:** I

[00:16:05] **Dana:** separately

[00:16:06] **Diane:** knew about

[00:16:06] **Dana:** or together on the phone or separate?

[00:16:08] **Anna:** Both.

[00:16:09] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:16:09] **Anna:** Both.

[00:16:10] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:16:11] **Diane:** Both.

[00:16:11] **Anna:** That was also when FaceTime was first becoming a thing.

[00:16:15] It was like the very first. So video chat for the first time. I think that's why Pop got you a new computer.

[00:16:21] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:16:21] **Anna:** Because then we could actually see each other. And it was a, it was a modern miracle. It was like, we're on Star Trek, this is the holodeck. Like, there you are.

[00:16:28] **Diane:** Yep. Yep. That was huge. That was huge.

[00:16:31] But I knew about the Pacific Northwest. I knew why she was moving here, so there was no argument about that. It was just like, oh no, bye-bye. Oh, bye-bye.

[00:16:45] And not knowing, because I think when I, when I pictured. My children, I pictured them like finishing high school and going to college and then phew. Okay. There's that.

[00:17:01] I never imagined beyond that. I was not a person who was like, oh, I can't wait to dance at your wedding, or I can't wait till you, blah, blah, blah. It was just like, well, whatever you're gonna do, then do. And oh, somebody was making fun of me. Uh, you know, don't go to prison. Don't kill yourself.

[00:17:22] My brother's a suicide.

[00:17:24] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:17:24] **Diane:** And it's just me and him. So that, that reminder, people have criticized me that, oh, you have a low bar for your kids. Don't go to prison and don't kill yourself. Right? But really, uh, I trusted both of them to be good people.

[00:17:43] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:17:43] **Diane:** But farther than that. So I never knew if me and Anna would be together again, like we at in close proximity. Like we were, so.

[00:17:52] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:17:52] **Diane:** Yeah. But not a argument. No. Yeah. I'll tell you an argument. When her teeth were falling out, when she was a little kid and she wouldn't let anybody help her take her teeth out of her head, she would tie the dental floss on her teeth and then say, I'm going alone into the bathroom. And then she would go and rip her teeth out.

[00:18:13] **Anna:** And I was like, I would lock myself in the bathroom and sit up on the sink with some ice cubes and a little bowl, and I worked it out. Okay. I'm a productive, okay, you sometimes you gotta get stuff done. Okay.

[00:18:26] **Diane:** Yeah. Yes. So that was horrific.

[00:18:27] **Anna:** I know how in removing any of my childhood teeth.

[00:18:31] **Diane:** Amazing.

[00:18:31] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:18:31] **Diane:** But I, I, I don't think I would argue with her about that.

[00:18:36] **Anna:** But that's a pretty good one. Good thinking.

[00:18:39] **Diane:** Teeth and distressing haircuts. Distressing teeth and haircuts.

[00:18:43] **Dana:** You brought up your brother Dan, and I was gonna tell you, my mom's sister, also, um, she drowned in her twenties and we, they believe it was a suicide as well.

[00:18:53] She had like,

[00:18:53] **Diane:** oh, my

[00:18:54] **Dana:** learning disabilities. Yeah. They just, they believe that she probably walked into this river. Right. And I think,

[00:19:02] **Diane:** well, that's brave. Very brave.

[00:19:03] **Dana:** Yeah. Right. Very brave. And knew like, I don't want this life. And I, there there's a lot to unpack in that. Like my mom being the oldest and trying to be perfect because she needed to stay perfect for like the only child left, right.

[00:19:16] This rough to be this, this daughter. But I wonder if his death, like, I'm assuming that influenced potentially how, like the fear of people leaving you, I don't know if there that fear of your children going or not being safe or you know, like you didn't think beyond, like, don't die, don't go to prison. But like how did his death influence the way you lived or how you parented?

[00:19:42] **Diane:** I think it made me spoil my son.

[00:19:46] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:19:47] **Diane:** Because he was a boy. And because he wasn't sporty and he was really, really smart, he got bullied at school, you know, cuz he, you know, did the sin of carrying around a book, uh, instead of a, a basketball or something

[00:20:02] **Anna:** and speaking up for himself.

[00:20:04] **Diane:** Oh yes. Oh yes.

[00:20:07] **Anna:** That's something you taught me and Nick from the beginning. And, uh, my father is a writer, and so words, a writer as a father and an actress as a mother, means, means that talking is the skill we have been given. Like, I think some families, it's like, these are expectations of what you need to succeed in this family.

[00:20:26] Like, we expect you to play an instrument.

[00:20:27] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:28] **Anna:** We expect you to be good at sports. We expect you to have a good faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For me and my brother, it's like, no, we expect you to be able to hold a conversation, have a heated debate, and

[00:20:38] **Dana:** be vulnerable,

[00:20:39] **Anna:** speak.

[00:20:40] **Dana:** And maybe a dialect. If you can do a dialect phrase.

[00:20:42] **Anna:** And if you have a good like transatlantic voice,

[00:20:45] **Dana:** right,

[00:20:45] **Anna:** then you're really got something like, we wanna be able to hear you from across the room. Right. Diction diction, please. Yes, please.

[00:20:52] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:20:53] **Diane:** Yeah. Diction please. So I think I spoiled Nick and then

[00:20:57] **Anna:** he's older. He's the older one.

[00:20:59] **Diane:** He's, he's five years older.

[00:21:00] **Dana:** Got it.

[00:21:00] **Diane:** And the reason I've been criticized for this, uh, the reason Anne exists is because Nick asked for a sister.

[00:21:08] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:21:08] **Diane:** When he was four, very specifically said, I want a baby sister. I said, you know, I can do what I can do, but there's no guarantees. It could be a brother. And he said, no, it has to be a sister.

[00:21:22] And I said, yes, sir, I'll try my best.

[00:21:26] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:21:26] **Diane:** And he, yeah, Nick, Nick knew from the moment he was born who was the boss. And it sure wasn't me, it was him. And so he gave me my assignment and I delivered. And as far as David's death, cuz Anna, I was pregnant with Anna when my brother killed himself.

[00:21:45] **Dana:** Hmm. Were you old?

[00:21:46] Are you older? Are you older than him or younger? Oh me? No,

[00:21:50] **Diane:** he's my older brother by two and a half years. Wow. So I was pregnant with Anna when I got the news that David had shot himself.

[00:21:58] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:21:59] **Diane:** And my father wouldn't let me come home to my parents because he thought I would miscarry. And I thought there are women in war zones who are pregnant.

[00:22:12] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:22:13] **Diane:** I'm already six months pregnant, I'm not gonna lose. But they wouldn't let me come home. So I was not a part of the immediate

[00:22:21] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:22:21] **Diane:** The immediate morning for my brother, cuz they wouldn't let me come home.

[00:22:25] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:22:26] **Diane:** My, my dad like drew the line. So, but the thing about my brother and, and whether I felt abandoned, my brother was never nice to me. Ever.

[00:22:37] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:22:37] **Diane:** Uh, uh, uh, except when he was in prison, he was in, he, uh, this is a lesson for everybody who's listening. Know, not only know your dealers, but know your customers. He dealt cocaine to the FBI. And, you know, don't do it.

[00:22:51] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:22:51] **Diane:** Uh, so he was, uh, he was nabbed in a sting and, uh, he went to prison for 18 months, federal prison in, um, in Michigan.

[00:23:00] And that was the only time he was nice to me, cuz I wrote to him all the time and, and I, and he would write me these little letters with, with cartoons. Do you think I saved any of 'em? No. But that was the only time my brother was nice to me.

[00:23:12] So, as far as being abandoned, no. I was begging my brother for his affection my whole life. So I actually feel closer to him now that he's dead than when he was alive.

[00:23:22] **Dana:** How? What is that?

[00:23:24] **Diane:** I'm lucky enough to have predictive dreams and a very active dream life. And David has, has come to be near me in dreams, mostly to save me from monsters.

[00:23:41] **Dana:** Oh.

[00:23:42] **Diane:** I don't dream a lot of dreams like that, but when I'll have a dream, that's big, big trouble coming, David will appear and be like, yeah, I got this very casual. But.

[00:23:54] **Dana:** Does he look like David? Does he look like himself?

[00:23:57] **Diane:** Oh yes. Yes. Yeah. He'll look just like himself.

[00:23:59] **Anna:** But his best self.

[00:24:00] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:24:01] **Diane:** Oh, absolutely. His best self, his sober self. Amazing. You don't see that often.

[00:24:05] But when I also got sober 21 years ago, I had an event that would take a long time to tell, that made it very clear that he was near me and, and helping. So yeah, I have a great relationship with my brother. Now.

[00:24:20] **Dana:** Yeah. That's fascinating though, to think about holding that grief, even if it was a complicated relationship while you were pregnant with the person who's on this call with us. Do you know if that

[00:24:30] **Diane:** Uhhuh

[00:24:30] **Dana:** did anything physically to either of you? Yes. The, I know the law.

[00:24:37] **Diane:** What do you think, Anna?

[00:24:38] **Dana:** Right? What do you think?

[00:24:39] **Anna:** I can't imagine it wouldn't. It has to, it's, yeah, it's somewhere in there, right? Like it. It has to. And I didn't know that story until you just told it.

[00:24:47] **Dana:** Really? Which part? Which part did you know?

[00:24:50] **Anna:** How about that? I didn't know

[00:24:51] **Dana:** that she was pregnant with you?

[00:24:53] **Anna:** That I was in her. I mean, of course every baby is in their mom in some capacity cuz the eggs, da da da. But I didn't know that I was, um, in utero when David left.

[00:25:03] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:25:05] **Diane:** Goodness.

[00:25:08] **Anna:** I also helped with, I helped with all the deaths. So See, you couldn't go and be with David, but I was with you. Then when your father Gene died. I was super close with him. I was only two when that happened. And I was closer to Margaret. Margaret was a better grandma to me than she was a mama to.

[00:25:28] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:25:29] **Anna:** Diane.

[00:25:30] **Dana:** I was gonna ask if you'd talk about that. Yeah, yeah. I'm very close with my Diane. My mom's mom is 96 and she's still alive and is a friend to me.

[00:25:41] But yes.

[00:25:42] And she was, you know, my mom and her had a good relationship overall, but it's complicated. Right? I'm the granddaughter. We get to have a very different journey.

[00:25:50] **Diane:** Yes.

[00:25:50] **Dana:** And we have through the years. Yeah. So yeah. Tell me about Margaret.

[00:25:55] **Diane:** Anna. You should tell about Margaret.

[00:25:59] **Anna:** Margaret Kondrat was, she would like to say, she said, I'm no apple polisher.

[00:26:07] That's something she would tell me. She said it so often that I actually made an illustration of it because I'm also an artist and like watercolors and so she said I'm, I'm not an apple polisher. And to that, she meant I'm not going to compliment you for no reason. I'm not going to say something that is not accurate.

[00:26:24] So she was, uh, hard, hardcore tough, a tough cookie, and also the biggest flirt you've ever seen. We would go, we would walk on the train tracks from her condo to go get Ben and Jerry's ice cream, and she, she would and could flirt with any human we saw along the way.

[00:26:43] We would have elaborate little tea parties on her back deck once a bat was under a, a flower box.

[00:26:50] She also, she was strong and loving and also could cut you quicker and faster than anybody.

[00:26:58] **Dana:** Did you ever, did you see her do that to your own mother?

[00:27:01] **Anna:** Oh, yes, and I saw her do it to me as well. She was, she was as sweet as can be when I was little, but as soon as puberty hit and my body shape started changing because grandma was pretty fit as a fiddle.

[00:27:15] Grandma was thin and, and muscular and, and put together, you know, like a very tennis type of physique.

[00:27:22] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:27:23] **Anna:** And I remember quite vividly at someone's birthday, uh, going to get some ice cream. And she said, are you sure? Are you sure you need some more of that? And, you know, being raised by my mama.

[00:27:36] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:27:36] **Anna:** I said, I sure am. I do. Yeah.

[00:27:40] But you know how those little barbs are.

[00:27:42] **Dana:** Yep.

[00:27:42] **Anna:** They'll stick with you forever and anytime in the rest of your life as you're serving ice cream, you will think to yourself, do you need this ice cream?

[00:27:50] **Dana:** Yes.

[00:27:51] **Anna:** And to those voices, I say, yes, yes, I do need this ice cream.

[00:27:57] **Dana:** Watching your mom and your grandma fight or have a moment of tension is, is stressful.

[00:28:03] I remember,

[00:28:03] **Anna:** yes

[00:28:04] **Dana:** seeing that as a kid too. Like, not even against yourself, but against, you know, your, your elders, your, did you

[00:28:11] **Anna:** We would have family meetings beforehand, um, of kind of like debriefing. Okay. Grandma's coming, you know, for

[00:28:18] **Dana:** mm-hmm.

[00:28:18] **Anna:** Whatever it is. Dinner, anything. And you would need to. I've always been into protecting any underdog or any member of the family who is currently being attacked or friend as well.

[00:28:30] Um, I'm that person at a party who will go up to the stranger that's picking on somebody else and be like, do you wanna say that again?

[00:28:35] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:28:36] **Anna:** Let's talk about it. Why are you saying that? Are you, you must feel really insecure because you're battling them. Um, so we would have like little family meetings because my grandma was the meanest to my father. Then probably mom and Nick were tied, and then me, she was usually very sweet too, unless those little like body image or what it means to be a successful woman, barbs would come up.

[00:28:59] So we would talk about like what to do and I was always like poised and ready to go with like a joke or a story or some sort of like soothing compliment.

[00:29:09] Like grandma would say something awful to my father and I'd be like, but this thing you cooked is so delicious. Like, you know, you try to soothe the abusive family dynamics. And eat mouthfuls of what we now call bitter berry pie. Because as my grandmother aged, her baking abilities, she would hate for me to be saying this.

[00:29:26] She's like, it's healthy. It helped you not be so fat. Thanks Margaret. She would bake amazing pies, but as she got older, she used less and less sugar.

[00:29:34] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:29:34] **Anna:** And would brag to us and be like, can you believe we'd be eating it? And she'd be like, can you believe I cut the sugar in this recipe in half? And we'd all be like puckered and cry and be like, sorry, we can't believe it.

[00:29:46] **Dana:** No, we can't believe this. No.

[00:29:47] **Diane:** So it's still so good.

[00:29:49] I told that, I told that story to somebody and they were like, huh, I never heard of bitter berries. What are they? And I said, oh no. Any berry can be a bitter berry if you just refuse to put the amount of sugar in the pie that is required.

[00:30:05] **Dana:** So she's not berry polisher or an apple polisher.

[00:30:07] She's not doing.

[00:30:08] **Anna:** She's not interested in polishing.

[00:30:11] **Dana:** Was she a big cook? I mean, it sounds like food and body images is an, is she an issue? Beautiful. But did she love to cook? Yeah.

[00:30:17] **Diane:** Yeah. She did beautiful work when, when my father was alive and he was an a retail executive when I was, um, sixth grade till junior in high school, they used to have these parties and just the, the hor d'oeuvres she would make, she never hired anybody.

[00:30:40] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:30:40] **Diane:** To do that kind of work. And she would, they were exquisite and so many, I mean, so I don't know that I never got the impression that she liked to cook or bake.

[00:30:53] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:30:53] **Diane:** But that she fucking did it.

[00:30:57] **Dana:** I'm gonna loosely transition into some end of life talk.

[00:31:02] **Anna:** Great.

[00:31:02] **Dana:** But because I wanted to talk about the fact that you said you lived apart from each other.

[00:31:07] You were in Indiana and you were in Oregon, and now you're both in Oregon. And Diane, Anna said that you chose Oregon partly, or maybe both of you had a discussion because of the end of life laws.

[00:31:18] **Diane:** Mm-hmm.

[00:31:19] **Dana:** And I just thought I had asked you to speak about that and why that's important to either of you.

[00:31:25] **Diane:** Well, for me, uh, my father died when he was 62 and he asked me if I would help kill him. He, uh, had prostate cancer. He had become a poster boy for recovery from prostate cancer. And then my brother killed himself and he went completely downhill. And three years later he was dead. So he was in a lot of pain and he asked me if I would help him and I said yes.

[00:31:57] And then before the kit, the suicide kit, uh, which at that time, uh, came to you from the Hemlock Society and now, uh, that organization is known as Compassion and Choices. Before the kit came in the mail, he died.

[00:32:15] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:32:16] **Diane:** I was with him. I, I was, had the honor of being with each of my parents as they died. Uh, and I was so relieved that I wasn't gonna have to put a plastic bag on his head and wait. Right?

[00:32:29] So I knew because of that experience, and my parents had been members of the Hemlock Society for years, so I had understood the importance of that option.

[00:32:41] **Dana:** And where were they living?

[00:32:43] **Diane:** Uh, they were living, uh, they were, they had lived in, uh, in New Jersey, um, in Rhode Island in Ohio. So no places that, that was an option.

[00:32:54] And Oregon, we moved to, only for the Pacific Northwest itself and its exquisite glory. And for Anna and Nick.

[00:33:08] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:08] **Diane:** That was it. So, okay. If it had been, if she had been somewhere else, yeah, I would've moved somewhere else.

[00:33:12] **Dana:** You would've moved somewhere else. Right. It just worked out that it's like how perfect. It's beautiful. My daughter's here and end of life, and end of life.

[00:33:19] **Diane:** I have done my research because my, when my mom was dying, the plan was that we would get her here.

[00:33:25] And I found out that you could indeed get someplace, figure it out, get the doctor's stuff you needed, and it's gonna take some time, but you could transfer somebody from another state to living here and be able to take advantage of those laws.

[00:33:41] Uh, as it turned out, my mother was too ill to travel by the time I got to her. And so that plan went down the drain.

[00:33:50] But knowing, I mean, that's like check plus, that's like check plus for Oregon among its many other, Liberal leanings. That's, it's really important because, wow, being in a traumatic situation and knowing you have zero capability to exit is

[00:34:15] **Dana:** mm-hmm

[00:34:15] **Diane:** an awful place to be.

[00:34:18] **Dana:** You said you had the privilege of being with both of your parents when they passed. Do you?

[00:34:23] **Diane:** Yes.

[00:34:24] **Dana:** The last moment with your dad.

[00:34:27] Um, do you remember that even though, cause you thought it was gonna go a certain way and it, it wasn't what you had thought?

[00:34:33] **Diane:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. I was, uh, it was the morning. He died on Halloween. He died on Halloween, one of my favorite holidays, holy days. And it was me and my mom and him. He was in a chair. I was sitting on the, the arm of the chair with my arm around, not under his neck, but around the chair. My

mother was on her knees in front of him. We knew he was going. And he asked us not to call the hospital cuz he was so, he was so tired. He had been in so much pain.

[00:35:05] And I just kept saying the things to him that I had learned from both Tibetan Buddhism and the Edgar Cayce teachings, which my father had shared with me from the time I was in high school. Uh, that's E-D-G-A-R C-A-Y-C-E. Edgar Cayce is a American psychic who's often known as the father of holistic medicine.

[00:35:30] There's a lot of, lot of, uh, information about the readings he gave. And one of the things he talked about a lot was what it was like to be on another plane of existence. So I was telling my father as quietly as I could in his, in his ear, you know, to go toward the light. Toward the light. Everything's fine. We're all fine. Don't worry about it. So I was talking him through and then he was gone. And we stayed with him for a while.

[00:35:58] I learned at that time that I like to, I as a person, like to hang out with a corpse for a while rather than call the people. Right. Call the people and have them take, take them away.

[00:36:14] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:36:15] **Diane:** I was sitting, I made some tea for my mother cuz she was out of her mind with grief. And then this is, I like to say that my, my, my parents played jokes on me when they were dead. Uh, this was Jean's joke. He was, he was still sitting up and I thought, oh, I would love to hold his hand again. And I, I got the tea and I put it in his hand.

[00:36:40] And he wrapped his fingers around it, and then I moved it, and then I held his hand. And I didn't realize that you have to be alive for your blood to rise to the surface from a warm thing. So even though I had put the teacup in his hand, he still had cold dead people hands, right? Uh, yeah. So that was, that was a big unfortunate, well, fortunate to run. That was a big surprise. That was a shot, that was a punch in the face, death shot. But then, you know, uh, after we were with him for a while and we finally called the, whatever, the mortuary, and they came, I did get to shake the guy's hands and say, happy Halloween. I did get to watch the little kids walking to school, seeing a hearse go by and watching them go little.

[00:37:29] **Dana:** Right.

[00:37:30] **Diane:** It was, uh, it was, you know, a real, a real treat.

[00:37:34] **Anna:** I can remember another fight.

[00:37:36] **Diane:** Yes. What?

[00:37:36] **Anna:** After the death for many, many years, my mother on Halloween, we love Halloween in our family, my mother would only dress as death for Halloween. And she dressed as death every year for my whole tiny childhood. And if we're talking about arguments we've had, one of the first arguments I can ever remember having with my mother is when I asked her to stop dressing as death for Halloween.

[00:38:01] **Dana:** Hmm. What did

[00:38:02] **Diane:** and I did it

[00:38:02] **Dana:** what did she say? What did she say?

[00:38:04] **Diane:** Okay. Okay.

[00:38:06] **Dana:** What did she look like as death?

[00:38:08] **Diane:** Oh, well, do tell.

[00:38:10] **Anna:** Look at my mother's face. Okay, let's not, let's not mince words here. She's got cheekbones for days.

[00:38:16] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:38:17] **Anna:** A pointy chin like has the moon come to life? She is angles, she is glamor. So you put a bunch of white clown face on there, and then you take that black and make the death skulls.

[00:38:31] **Dana:** Oh, the skulls. And you're going in the cheekbones, the,

[00:38:34] **Anna:** and then she can wear anything.

[00:38:35] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:38:36] **Anna:** Like just spooky dark bags. Like just layers of like black lace. Black.

[00:38:42] **Diane:** Just all black. I've had people cross the street to get away from me and I'm not doing anything but walking down the street with that makeup on, which only take, I don't have a good hand at makeup.

[00:38:53] I can put that skull death makeup on in three minutes and everybody's like, holy shit.

[00:39:00] **Anna:** But she's also an actress. She's also an actress, and she's also got her own despair. So she also would do this horrific little spooky moan where she would walk along and be like, oh. And like, oh my stars. So I, I mean, I don't know how old I was.

[00:39:16] Eight. It was till you were six. It

[00:39:17] **Diane:** was six till you were six or seven it when you were the angel. It scared. So.

[00:39:20] **Dana:** Do you think you're a child, so it scared you as a child, but do you think there was some, you know, you're older than your years, you're scared of her actual death. Do you think that's underneath, or is it just a child being scared of spooky things we're not?

[00:39:36] **Anna:** I think it was more like, come on mom, you gotta get a new costume.

[00:39:40] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:39:41] **Anna:** Five years of the same.

[00:39:43] **Dana:** Yeah. Diane, what is your ideal death? Do you have an ideal death?

[00:39:49] **Diane:** Oh, oh my. I think, I think the standard, uh, going in your sleep.

[00:39:55] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:39:57] **Diane:** I would imagine is the, I like things that are easy. So easy and painless. Easy and painless is my way of getting through life.

[00:40:06] Yes. And so, yes. Having people who have that have a chance to say goodbye, I think that's really it. Right. For the people who are still alive. I think the, the tr a a real trauma comes when you don't see it coming.

[00:40:24] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:40:24] **Diane:** And then it happens. And Oh my God, oh my God. How awful it is. So if people get to say goodbye or get to know that someone's ill, And, and then you die in your sleep, then that'd be sweet.

[00:40:40] Yeah.

[00:40:41] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah. I wish we could have living funerals. I mean, I, that's something

[00:40:44] **Anna:** mm-hmm.

[00:40:44] **Dana:** That I just think is extraordinary. If we could get to hear what they're saying, you know, before we go and or a party feel. A good food music, um, you know, be able to be together. That's incredible. I wish there were more living funerals.

[00:40:59] I don't know if you guys talk about that, like your, your last wishes or what, what you'd want to be.

[00:41:05] **Diane:** The whole family knows that Malcolm Dalglish is my choice for, for a musician. If he, uh, if he's still alive, we're around the same age. If he's still alive when I go, it's like, find Malcolm. Can he still travel?

[00:41:17] **Dana:** What kind of musician or music is he?

[00:41:20] **Diane:** Oh, he's, uh, he's um, he's centered in Bloomington. Uh, he's a hammer dulcimer, okay. Player. And a, um, writer of choral music. He's a stupendous musician.

[00:41:32] **Dana:** So Malcolm's on the list. What else? What else?

[00:41:34] **Diane:** That's it, right, Anna?

[00:41:37] **Anna:** I think we haven't, yeah. I think when it comes to the idea of a living funeral, it's like I don't see as much of a need for one with my mom because we always tell each other what we think of each other.

[00:41:51] Like e even though I certainly would not want her to die later this afternoon. I also feel like it's not that I, I, I wouldn't have unfinished business like I tell her

[00:42:03] **Dana:** business.

[00:42:04] **Anna:** Yeah. I tell her things. We, we haven't kept secrets.

[00:42:07] **Dana:** At the end of every call. Like you Yeah. You make sure you, when you wrap up a call, you're still like?

[00:42:12] **Anna:** Oh yes. And the in between, like if you're driving and you see a certain street, you're gonna call your mom and leave her a voicemail where you're just singing and going like, and you're doing the, the silliest jokes and love. And we are pretty, we're pretty transparent with our feelings and emotions towards each other.

[00:42:34] And because she's an actress, we've already kind of had a living funeral because I have watched rooms full of people stand up for standing ovations with my mom.

[00:42:42] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:42:42] **Anna:** Literally as she's had shows about herself. Yep. She put on Hamlet for her 50th birthday.

[00:42:47] **Diane:** Yeah. That's how I got to forget that I was turning 50. It was super duper.

[00:42:51] **Dana:** Wow. What did playing Hamlet teach you about turning 50 or about life?

[00:42:57] **Diane:** You know, playing Hamlet? I think the response of people to my Hamlet let me know how important being a comedian is, having comic timing, and being aware of, of the benefit of humor in what is, you know, a tragedy. The tragedy of Hamlet, prince of Denmark.

[00:43:22] There were scenes, uh, that people came up to me. I mean, Bloomington's a pretty, uh, sophisticated, intellectually sophisticated, um, town and.

[00:43:32] **Dana:** Yes, it's a university town and up. Yeah. We've got the college and yeah.

[00:43:35] **Diane:** People came up and said, I never, I never got that scene before I, and it was only because Thank you God and thank you Margaret, I'm funny.

[00:43:46] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:43:47] **Diane:** Because one of the things that my life with Margaret taught me was that if she was laughing, everybody was safe.

[00:43:56] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:43:56] **Diane:** So, make no mistake, I know how to make people laugh and I rely, I mean, whether. There are no other performers in my family, how I got comic timing, cause it can't be taught, I don't know.

[00:44:13] Was it a survival mechanism? Or the book that my mother had in the hospital when she had me was the encyclopedia of Modern American humor. They took it away from her cuz she was busting her stitches laughing. And in that, in that fat book, were a bunch of accented dialect radio scripts. And so one of the things that I, as soon as I could read and I could read really early, I would sit in my mother's laundry basket and read these vaudeville scripts to her, these vaudeville radio scripts out loud to her with all of the immigrant at that time, accents.

[00:44:57] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:44:57] **Diane:** So maybe I learned it from that. Um, I don't know. But what I, what I learned in Hamlet was how valuable it was to let humor into tragedy.

[00:45:08] **Dana:** Absolutely.

[00:45:08] **Diane:** And how revealing it is.

[00:45:10] **Dana:** Absolutely. Oh my God. I want those scripts right now I want to do a three hander right now. Right. They're pretty...

[00:45:18] **Diane:** they're amazing.

[00:45:19] **Dana:** Oh my gosh.

[00:45:20] **Diane:** Interesting.

[00:45:20] **Dana:** I wish we had those. No, I feel the same. I mean, obviously Anna knows, but there's so much levity through this work that I do. I have to, um, I wouldn't have made it this far without laughing.

[00:45:33] **Diane:** Mm-hmm.

[00:45:33] **Dana:** And even when my mom, I try to make jokes about addiction or her pain or divorce, and it was hard to, to get her to laugh. Obviously she's the one in it, but I'm the one who's also, it's like, um, ricocheting off of her. Her trauma is still hitting me. And I would be like, yeah, I have to make a joke or I have to have some levity, or we're never gonna get through this. Right. And.

[00:45:56] **Diane:** Yep.

[00:45:57] **Dana:** Yeah. Uh, I love that. I would've loved to have seen you play Hamlet, but in terms of like wills and trusts and objects and inheritance, how do you guys talk about. That stuff. I mean, the logistics, the boring stuff. It's so important to talk about it now while we're living because we can really fuck our family if we don't talk about it. Right?

[00:46:18] **Diane:** Yeah. Anna, do you have a living will? No. No. Okay. I do. And, and her father does. And I know that I put Nick in charge as my, uh, uh, healthcare power of attorney because I thought,

[00:46:34] **Anna:** thanks a lot.

[00:46:34] **Diane:** He'll kill me quicker. Is what? Is what I, is what I thought.

[00:46:39] **Anna:** I dunno if that's true.

[00:46:40] **Diane:** I know. See,

[00:46:41] **Anna:** I don't know if that's true.

[00:46:42] **Diane:** I think about that now. It's like, is it really in the right hands?
Uh, would would

[00:46:46] **Anna:** No

[00:46:46] **Diane:** he be up to the game?

[00:46:48] **Anna:** It's not.

[00:46:48] **Dana:** You think it's you? You Yes. Over your

[00:46:50] **Anna:** Put me

[00:46:51] **Dana:** over your brother. Yes. Yes. Why? Yes.

[00:46:53] **Anna:** Put me on the field.

[00:46:54] **Dana:** Why, why should you be in that coach over your brother?

[00:46:57] **Anna:** I, well, let me tell you, coach. I have a lot of anxiety. I have a lot of nerves. I have a lot of, uh, you know, I have so much anxiety that I have this, uh disease. I have a condition where occasionally my hair will just fall out in clumps. It's alopecia areata, and it just means you, you don't think about it so much and maybe your hair will grow back.

[00:47:18] Anyway, what all this is to say in terms of daily life, I'm a very anxious person. But when it comes to the big moments, like someone has died, you need to make a decision. Someone's bleeding from their head, then I'm really good. I'm not nervous. I'm able to be a solid,

[00:47:37] **Dana:** steady hand. Yeah.

[00:47:38] **Anna:** Mover and a shaker.

[00:47:40] **Dana:** If your, if your mom though, like this, it it, if your mom was like, end my life. I'm in pain. This is my wish. This is what I want. Would you try to talk her out of it? Do you know, have you thought that through for your

[00:47:54] **Anna:** No.

[00:47:54] **Dana:** I know it's so complicated.

[00:47:56] And you said no, sadly.

[00:47:58] **Anna:** No, I don't, I don't think would. I think we'd write, I think we'd write a little letter together probably.

[00:48:05] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:48:06] **Anna:** I still have all the notes she put in my lunchbox. I keep them in a drawer.

[00:48:12] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:48:12] **Anna:** And I think it would bring me great joy to just have more words from her. But I know that if she, if she was sick enough that she needed to go, we'd, we'd do it. We'd go to the ocean and we'd make it happen.

[00:48:31] **Dana:** Hmm. And what would happen at the ocean?

[00:48:34] Remember when I told Diane that her daughter Anna said that, oh yeah. My mom would totally do this interview as long as she didn't have to talk about her own death the whole time. Yeah. Maybe subconsciously Diane really did mean that.

[00:48:47] Cuz right here, her mic goes out.

[00:48:50] During this moment in the interview, Diane gestured to the two of us on camera that she had to move her position and she got up from the camera frame and started moving around the room, adjusting her mic and her chair while Anna and I chatted about her death. And taking her body out to the ocean at the end of her life.

[00:49:07] It was only about a minute of time that Diane was moving around, but when I downloaded this file, her mother's voice had dropped out of the rest of the episode.

[00:49:17] Diane was gone from the conversation.

[00:49:21] This witchy woo woo glitch happened at this specific and otherworldly moment, a delicate personal and intimate exchange between a

mother and a daughter, and the mother's voice had vanished. Woo woo, or just a weird microphone connection.

[00:49:41] Who knows? But luckily, iCloud exists and we had a backup. Diane, the mother was back.

[00:49:50] **Diane:** This was cause even though my computer was all juiced up, now it's telling me it's tired. So I just had to plug in and I'm just gonna shift where I'm standing. Can you still see me and hear me?

[00:49:59] **Dana:** Of course. The fact that your computer did that right as your child was talking about your end of life.

[00:50:05] **Diane:** Of course I couldn't,

[00:50:06] **Dana:** it's not lost on me. I could, but Uhhuh, it's not lost on all of us. The computer was like, Nope, nope, nope.

[00:50:13] **Diane:** Okay. Yeah, we're still, we're still groovy.

[00:50:15] **Anna:** We're still groovy for now, mom.

[00:50:18] **Dana:** For now.

[00:50:19] **Anna:** Yeah.

[00:50:20] **Dana:** Yeah. For now. Take me to

[00:50:22] **Anna:** We're groovy for now.

[00:50:22] **Dana:** We're talking about taking you to the beach.

[00:50:25] **Diane:** Oh. Potentially.

[00:50:26] **Dana:** If you,

[00:50:27] **Anna:** if you were knock knocking on the cosmic door, yeah. We'd take you to the beach because the ocean is bigger than us. And my mama loves the ocean. I love the forest. And we'd get her some fresh sea and then hopefully give her some high quality drugs. I would love her to leave, leave Earth in a in a joyful bubble.

[00:50:50] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:50:51] **Anna:** Um, or sleep. Sleep would be best, but.

[00:50:54] **Diane:** I would love it if it, if I was completely conscious and not drugged. I don't know if that's even a possibility. Right? To be, if you were indeed bringing about your own demise, is it possible to have it both ways? We're back to easy and comfortable again. Um, whether it's possible to be pain free and dying and still completely

[00:51:23] **Dana:** awake yeah. And conscious. Yeah. And clear, yeah. Oh, maybe in oregon.

[00:51:29] **Anna:** Yeah. And then you just wink and say That's that's all folks.

[00:51:33] **Dana:** To be or not be she's out.

[00:51:35] **Anna:** She just goes.

[00:51:36] **Diane:** Yes.

[00:51:37] **Dana:** To be clear, to be conscious or not conscious. She's out. Yeah.

[00:51:40] She's here. Yeah.

[00:51:42] **Diane:** Yeah. It's like, look at that wave.

[00:51:45] **Dana:** Hmm.

[00:51:47] **Diane:** I mean, I just have to say pretty spectacular that through no machinations of your own that we're talking today on the anniversary, the first year anniversary of Joe Black's departure from this plaintiff of existence. Getting through that first year for anyone who is in mourning is an exceptional, an exceptional trip through everything that time is for us.

[00:52:19] Every sunrise, every sunset, every, I wish you were here or I wish you were different or, I wish, I wish, I wish, I wish is, um, I hope everything is easier for you now after the first year has, has come and gone, it's really something that

[00:52:37] **Dana:** thank you.

[00:52:38] **Diane:** Today is the day.

[00:52:40] **Dana:** It is.

[00:52:40] **Anna:** And how many years has it been, dana?

[00:52:42] **Dana:** It's seven years today. Yeah.

[00:52:44] **Anna:** Six. Seven.

[00:52:44] **Dana:** Yeah. Seven. Yeah. 2016. And that first year, I talk about this a lot too. My first year was full of logistics and I liked that a lot of that. It was like, well, I can check this off. I can, I can focus on the to-dos. Right? I don't have to fucking think about the fact that she's never coming back.

[00:53:00] **Diane:** Yes, yes.

[00:53:00] **Dana:** Um, I can think about the, the will and the trust or the this or the that, or selling her furniture. I don't have to deal. And, and it's weird. I have a podcast around the loss of my mom and grief, and yet I, I now kind of forget the date.

[00:53:18] I never thought about April 16th. I just forgot. I was like, oh, her death, which means, Diane, that the weight is shedding and it, it's, it's becoming less burdensome and it's more joyful, and I'm happier and I miss her, but I, it's a lightness, there's a lightness to, to my grief anyway.

[00:53:36] How do you have advice, Diane, for, for anybody listening about that first year? I mean, I know complicated relationship with your mom and your, but you lo you still lost her. You, you lost your mom, you lost your dad. Talk. Talk to me about that and talk to our listeners.

[00:53:49] **Diane:** I just watch it happen over and over again.

[00:53:52] I've, I've had a lot of experience with astrologers. I've had a lot of experience with psychics. My mind is very open to what happens when somebody ceases to inhabit the body that they are given, uh, in this lifetime. And because of my almost casual. And incredibly optimistic by some people's, uh, standards, ideas about death.

[00:54:21] I mean, I got big plans for when I'm dead. I, I really do have, uh, big ideas for what I'm gonna do on the other side.

[00:54:29] It allows me to celebrate more easily with someone and also be open to seeing what the depths of mourning can do to a person, to a family. I have a friend who has lots of people die on her, lots of people.

[00:54:49] And then her father finally died in her arms on her birthday, and her sister was really mad that her father had died on the other child's birthday.

[00:55:05] And it was like, wow, if you wanna talk about making trouble where there isn't any, what I see with people and death is often it just serves as a kickstart to all kinds of, but why aren't you like this? And why aren't you saying that? And they never were that good to me and they were better. Instead of finding gratitude everywhere you can. So know that in that time of coming to grips with the death of someone close to you, the more you can say Thank you. To that person, to whoever you think is in charge.

[00:55:54] If you think a higher power is in charge, then thank you that I ever knew them. Thank you for the way they looked at me that day. Thank you. I mean, I really think that we underestimate the functionality of the tool of gratitude. So if you can find something to be grateful for, go after that and not so much about, oh, I forgive so-and-so.

[00:56:21] For something, it's like forgiveness. You can't go at straight on. It's a hand gentle enterprise. But gratitude, you can go right for it and it will reward you in peace or more peace. And now, Now we'll hear a commercial for toothpaste and also denture cream.

[00:56:47] **Dana:** You also, I wanna, you said you have big plans for when you're dead.

[00:56:50] Can you share one of them?

[00:56:51] **Diane:** Oh, I do. Oh, sure, sure, sure. Because once I'm dead, I get to do the entire Shakespeare cannon and I get to cast anybody who's dead already through the ages. And I, and I get to do all those shows because I haven't gotten to do enough Shakespeare in my life, and I'm mad about it, still really pissed off.

[00:57:10] So that's only one of the many things I'm going to do. Um,

[00:57:14] **Dana:** love it.

[00:57:14] **Diane:** On the other side.

[00:57:16] **Dana:** Did you want your daughter to follow in your footsteps? I mean, you seem obviously, like you're, you're very loving and you say you do whatever you want, Anna, go live your dreams. But is there a part of you that wanted her to continue acting?

[00:57:27] **Diane:** I. Well, I think everybody thought when Anna graduated high school that she would become a professional actress, right? Anna? Anna can sing, uh, like Jesus on a good day. And, uh, I mean, I was grabbed by, uh, singing teachers when Anna was like six years old. Uh, somebody was doing their PhD in, um, vocal work. And this lady, uh, came and dealt with all the kids, took samples of the voices of all the kids in Anna's choir. And she grabbed me.

[00:57:58] I mean, Anna was like eight years old, nine years old. And she said, do you know that your daughter has the mature voice of a 35 year old at age eight? And I said, Okay. She's a good singer. And the lady was like looking at me like I was supposed to do something and I was like, I don't know.

[00:58:15] I'll, I'll tell her. You thought she did good. So people were surprised that Anna wasn't gonna be, um, a professional performer. But also Anna doesn't like to be told 'No.' And if I know something about being a performer, uh, in America, you better like being told no. And being a woman? Dear God, in heaven. So sure, it would've been great, but Anna's work in Montessori is, mm. Gotta say I think it's holier work. And I'm all for

[00:58:49] **Dana:** mm.

[00:58:50] **Diane:** I'm all, I'm all for the holy thing. So yeah, I think she's doing more important work.

[00:58:56] **Anna:** But in the, in a way, it's the same because we're being authentic moment to moment. In the moment, every moment.

[00:59:07] **Dana:** Hmm. Is that like, um, I mean, what is the mission?

[00:59:10] **Anna:** It's that whole authenticity thing.

[00:59:13] **Dana:** What is the Montessori like mission? What would, how would you sum it up?

[00:59:19] **Anna:** Peace. Uh, Maria Montessori was, uh, almost won the Nobel Peace Prize. She was a real agent for peace and independence and respect for children. So in the smallest little bundle, it is a, it is a child focused neurologically sound curriculum and pedagogy based in peace, independence, love, and all of the myriad of ways that children grow and develop and honoring their own way.

[00:59:50] **Dana:** Do you consider teaching mothering?

[00:59:52] **Anna:** Yes. Especially when they call you mama by accident. And dad too. But it's about you. Like when you're com, when you're comfortable, this is true for everybody, right? Like hierarchy of needs. When you're comfortable, when you're safe, you're able to do more difficult things and be challenged.

[01:00:08] And so the whole idea for Montessori is we're going to make an environment and cultivate a little culture where you are loved and supported and respected, and then we can teach you how to read. Cuz you'll feel safe and you'll feel ready. So that's what I do.

[01:00:24] **Dana:** We all deserve that. Yeah.

[01:00:26] **Anna:** I think so. And write notes to each other.

[01:00:29] **Dana:** We all deserve that.

[01:00:29] **Anna:** That's also what I teach. I teach good cursive.

[01:00:31] **Dana:** Yeah.

[01:00:31] **Anna:** So that you can write notes. So when you're dead, the people that are still alive can go, oh, here's a thing I really appreciate.

[01:00:39] **Dana:** Yeah.

[01:00:40] **Anna:** Yeah.

[01:00:42] **Dana:** On that note, Anna knows what happens now, but I'm usually am talking to one person, Diane, and I say, tell me your mom's name and how you're feeling about her right now in this moment after this conversation, what is coming up for you?

[01:00:56] And it's the last question and stuff can happen, right? It's like people will say, I didn't cry the whole call. I did it. I made it. And then I'm like, well, we're not done yet. Right? But, and sometimes it's just a moment right? Of, of reflection. So to me, because I've never done it with two living mother, you know, a, a mother and a child, I wanna hear, I want you to hear your child say your name and how she's feeling about you right now in this moment.

[01:01:23] She can talk right to you. She can tell us how she feels, however you wanna do it, Anna. And then I want you to say your daughter's name and how you're feeling about her right now, today, in this moment. What's coming up for you? So I'm gonna start with you, Anna.

[01:01:38] **Anna:** Thank you. Diane June Kondrat, I am proud of you every day and I love you so much.

[01:01:47] How I feel about you is I can't wait to play board games and eat something good with you soon. Maybe cheese or onion, potato based.

[01:01:59] I love that you are strong and you are funny and you stand up for what's right. Thank you for being my mama. I really appreciate it.

[01:02:12] **Diane:** Okay, must be my turn then. Anna Kondrat Ardizzone is my daughter and how I feel about her is that it's hard to believe I deserve to be associated with her for all these years.

[01:02:36] Her goodness and energetic commitment to this world is so great. People just don't even appreciate it enough and think that I exaggerate when I talk about what Anna is, I would be honored to assume that I was a good enough spirit that somebody said, we'll send Anna to her this time.

[01:03:09] And I say, yes. What a treat I get to be with Anna. Oh my God. Yeah.

[01:03:16] So that's what I have to say about Anna cuz she's top of the line. Top of the line.

[01:03:36] **Dana:** Ever since I've heard it from the first time I heard it on the microphone to now, and every time I've had to listen to this episode as I've been working on it. That last line by her mother, Diane, is just extraordinary. And I haven't stopped thinking about it. And I, and I wasn't sure how to articulate it cuz I don't think I knew in that moment.

[01:03:59] The, the day I did this call on the anniversary of my mom's death, I, I, I was so moved and, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. And, and I think today for me, when I hear that line that her daughter is top of the line, top of the line, she gets to be with Anna. What a trip. I think in that moment when I first heard it, I was deeply moved because I thought, yeah, I think my mom would say that about me.

[01:04:33] And I was like, am I under the illusion of that or am I disillusioned? Am I assumptions? Am I re-imagining this relationship? Am I erasing all of the bad? Am I just missing all of the, the, the, the trauma and our complicated relationship? And I was like, no, no. Yeah, sure, I didn't call my mom on enough. And we got into fights and I started a whole podcast about our complicated relationship.

[01:05:00] But I still think if you blew off all the dust and you looked at the core relationship that we had, we were not best friends. And we certainly had conflict and we didn't start out as best friends, and we certainly didn't end as best friends, but. I think my mom would've said, Dana, I get to be with Dana.

[01:05:23] Dana is top of the line. Top of the line.

[01:05:32] So funny when I cry on the mic, cuz I always feel like you think I'm, you might, I might be being performative and I'm like, should I cut it out? Should I keep it in? Is it real? Is it right? Vulnerability? But it's real. I, I love imagining my mom saying that to me. And I'm not re, I'm not saying that Diane was saying this line to me.

[01:05:53] She was saying it to her daughter and I wasn't trying to pretend to be the person receiving it. And yet the more I hear it, the more I think about my mom. And I want to go back to the days where she left me notes in my lunchbox and she left me notes in my sleepover bag for summer camp, and she told me I was a lover of her life on a cake for Valentine's Day, and she kept all my theater programs and she just loved me.

[01:06:20] Dana, I get to be with Dana. She's top of the line. And if I could blow the dust off and go back and look at my mom and say, I also think you're

top of the line, and I'm so grateful I got to be with you and that you are forever a part of my legacy. The good, the bad, the messy, the dark, the light, the shadows, all the phrases you want to use. She's mine in this one lifetime.

[01:06:50] That's what I got and uh, I'm grateful for it and I'm so grateful for Anna and Diane. Happy Mother's Day. Thanks for being here. I'll talk to you soon, but before I leave you, I wanted to play a recording that Diane did of a dream she had many years ago about the theater being the ultimate mother, her life in the theater.

[01:07:19] And underneath it, you're gonna hear original music composed by the Malcolm Dalglish, the musician that Diana and Anna talked about earlier in this episode. When Diana imagined her perfect death. She knew she wanted Malcolm's music playing, and lucky for me, he's alive and lives in Bloomington, Indiana. And I called him on the phone and we had an amazing conversation, and he loves the idea of the podcast, and he had just gone back from Australia.

[01:07:43] He was jet lagged, but he was pumped. And he said, I love Diane and Anna and I would be honored. Let me make you something to play underneath her dream. So this is Diane and Malcolm Dalglish. Enjoy.

[01:08:00] **Diane:** I had this dream early in the year 2000. The first scene was practicing for a curtain call. It seemed like the theater for my high school.

[01:08:09] We practiced and started to exit, and I choked right into the wall. As I saw that my face was nearly knocked into the cinder block wall stage left.

[01:08:18] Then all the people disappeared, and I was alone in the theater, no lights. I was backstage just inside the curtain. On stage left, I saw a door outlined in light from the outside.

[01:08:32] It was in the backstage wall stage, right, and I headed for it. I got to center stage. The curtain was closed, and I remembered all the happinesses I had had in theaters, and I practiced a dance pose from Bye bye birdie, which I did as a senior in high school.

[01:08:48] Then. Poof. I was back at my starting point.

[01:08:51] Downstage left near the curtain's edge. I started toward the door again. There was no work light, so I walked, scooting my feet forward along the floor, holding my hands out in front of me in case there was something I might

run into At center stage, there was a rope hanging from the grid or the flies. I grabbed it and started to swing.

[01:09:14] My body was completely relaxed and I swung very slowly in a way that defied gravity stage right to stage, left diagonally, upstage to downstage like an incense burner being swung. I felt as if I were in the arms of the most perfect mother. I was so relaxed, completely happy, very safe. I wondered how I was doing it since I remembered only the single rope that was hanging there, and then I saw that what I was actually in, was a bag made out of a white quilt from my daughter Anna's bed.

[01:09:53] It was shaped like a raindrop, and that's what I was inside of. The gravity defying slow swinging went on for a while. That feeling in the blanket swing in the arms of the theater, my best mother was one of the clearest, richest feelings I've ever experienced, and Anna was part of that.

[01:10:53] **Dana:** The third season, which is crazy to say of I Swear on My Mother's Grave podcast would never be possible without our editor Amanda Mayo from Cassiopeia Studio. I also wanna thank our music composer, Adam Ollendorff, our graphic designer and illustrator Meredith Montgomery, our copywriter Rachel Claff and Tony Howell and Jonathan Freeland for all of their work on our beautiful website.

[01:11:15] And as always, thank you to Heather Bodie for her emotional, spiritual, social, physical for well, for all of the help over all of the years. Thank you and all of you. Thank you for listening, for subscribing, for reaching out, for telling all of your friends. I know that this club, this complicated, messy club isn't fun to be in.

[01:11:37] But I'm so glad that you're here. I couldn't do this without you, so thank you for being a part of this community. And if you haven't signed up for our newsletter, please do so at our website, which is dana.black.org. Not just because I wanna sell you stuff, but because I wanna keep talking to you and you talking to me.

[01:11:53] So go check that out. There's personal stories, I'll tell you about the season, and you'll learn about some live retreats that we're curating. One retreat at a time. So, yeah, thanks for being here. I hope you'll come back. Will you come back? Don't leave me like my dead mom. You know what I mean? Come back, please.

[01:12:11] I'll talk to you soon.