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# By the Way, I'm Dying

A Full-length Comedy in one Act

by

**Greg Freier**

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# By the Way, I'm Dying

by Greg Freier

## CHARACTERS

**HARRY:** *Early 50's; a kind hearted hypochondriac. Harry has a habit of scratching his head where he thinks his soft spot might be which he does throughout the play.*

**ELLEN:** *Early 50's. Harry's wife of 25 years.*

**SARA:** *Mid 20's; Harry and Ellen's daughter and mother of their new grandson.*

**ROGER:** *Mid 20's; Sara's Husband.*

**GRANDMA:** *An elderly, diminutive woman with a distinct feel of class. She is just one centimeter short of being totally mad.*

### PLUS THE FOLLOWING "CHARACTERS" NOT PLAYED BY ACTORS:

**ELMORE:** *Grandma's invisible friend... and therefore unseen and unheard*

**DEATH:** *Another invisible, unheard character and more than likely fictitious*

**LITTLE ROGER:** *The baby...played by a "doll" or other appropriate prop.*

## SETTING

*Harry and Ellen's living room*

## By the Way, I'm Dying by Greg Freier

### SCENE ONE

*(AT RISE: a single SPOT on HARRY standing alone center stage. HARRY, a kind-hearted man in his mid-50's; a hypochondriac, and as such, has been known to claim to suffer from any of a wide range of ailments. He seems to also display a strange obsession with the soft-spot on his head, or at best, on that of his new infant grandchild.)*

#### HARRY

*(To AUDIENCE)* In spite of what you might have heard, I'm not mentally unstable. I'm inquisitive; at least that's my take on it. I'm just one of those people that like's to know what the end results of certain actions might be. It's human nature. The only problem is that I can be somewhat compulsive about it as well, and that tends to scare people every once in awhile. Not scared in the, "damn the loony's going to kill us," scared, but more in the overprotective scared. The, "don't come too close, we're not sure where he's been," scared. That kind of scared... But on a positive note, I just became a grandfather for the first time, so I suppose congratulations are in order. You can clap if you want. It's sort of interactive at this juncture. So go ahead if you have the urge. Oh hell, just clap, that way we can get on with this thing. *(Pause for clapping)* Thanks... much appreciated. It's my daughter's child, by the way. Only daughter I have if you must know. Her husband's okay. He works, doesn't drink. He's mildly ambitious, the kind of guy that if he sees an opportunity, he'll at least make an attempt to see if it's a viable option before completely ignoring it. That kind of guy... your basic, everyday, average guy. I mean he's a nice guy and all, I just wish she had of set the bar a little higher. She has a college degree. *(Beat)* It was a boy, the baby that is, I forgot to mention that. They named him Roger. Roger Jr. actually, since her husband's named Roger as well. Apparently they were too lazy to think up a new name. But then again, Roger didn't go to college. Not that there's anything wrong with not going to college. I mean I never went to college, but that's because I didn't have too. I played minor league baseball right after high school. A pitcher. Was pretty good too. Got as far as double A. Then one beautiful afternoon, I got hit in the head by a line drive, and that sort of ended it all. Screwed up my vision. Knocked my brain around too I would imagine. Not that you could ever tell. But...

*(HARRY turns to walk into his living room then turns back to AUDIENCE.)*

#### HARRY, *Continued*

By the way, I'm dying.

*(SPOT OUT ON HARRY; Transition directly into next scene.)*

## SCENE TWO

*(LIGHTS UP ON HARRY and ELLEN's living room. ROGER and SARA, holding LITTLE ROGER, are seated on the couch. ELLEN stands behind the couch cooing at LITTLE ROGER. HARRY enters directly into the scene joining his wife, ELLEN behind the couch.)*

ELLEN

Isn't he the cutest little baby you've ever seen?

HARRY

Of course, how could he not be.

SARA

*(To LITTLE ROGER)* Who's my little sweetheart? Who's my little monkey?

HARRY

Little monkey you say? I can see that. That's exactly what he looks like, a cute little old monkey.

ROGER

*(Mildly confused)* I'm sorry, but did you just call my son a monkey?

HARRY

A cute little old monkey, yes, I mean that's what Sara just called him.

ELLEN

That was just a figure of speech. She wasn't implying he looked like a monkey.

HARRY

Oh, I see. I'm just not used to these little baby games anymore.

ROGER

But you're still implying that our son looks like a cute little old monkey?

SARA

Of course he's not, are you Daddy?

HARRY

Nothing could be further from the truth. He's a fine looking lad, doesn't look anything like a cute, little old monkey.

*(HARRY begins to stare intensely at the baby's head.)*

SARA

See Roger, you just need to be a bit more patient with Daddy until he can acclimate. No need to be so overprotective.

ROGER

(*To HARRY*) Sorry Harry, this is just all new to me too.

HARRY

Not another thought. We're all in this together. (*Still staring at baby's head*)

SARA

Daddy loves our little Roger, don't you daddy?

HARRY

(*Still staring*) Of course I love him. He's the best baby ever.

SARA

(*To ROGER*) See, I told you Daddy loved little Roger.

ROGER

I never questioned his love, what I questioned was....

ELLEN

(*Finally notices HARRY staring at the baby's head*) What exactly are you doing if I might ask?

HARRY

(*Stops staring*) Who me?

ELLEN

Yes, you.

HARRY

I was merely wondering about the soft spot on his head.

SARA

(*Cuddles LITTLE ROGER tight to her chest*) Well then you best stop wondering.

HARRY

Don't worry I wasn't planning on touching it.

ELLEN

And you're not going to either. You know how you get sometimes.

ROGER

Exactly, because the last thing we need are your accidental fingerprints all over my son's brain.

HARRY

Once again, no need to worry. I promise I won't go anywhere near his soft spot. I was just wondering, that's all.

SARA

Well stop wondering this instant. This is my baby, and no one is touching his soft spot. Are they Roger?

ROGER

Definitely not, the soft spot is off limits until it becomes hard. (*A LOUD THUD is heard off stage.*) What was that?

SARA

(*Matter-of-factly*) Grandma, I would imagine.

ELLEN

She must have fallen out of bed again. Would you mind Harry?

HARRY

Of course not darling. Should I bring her out, or just put her back in the bed?

ELLEN

I would imagine do whatever the situation dictates.

HARRY

That's very sound logic. That's exactly what I'll do then.

(*HARRY exists to Grandma's bedroom off stage left.*)

ROGER

That's one thing I don't think I'll ever get used to.

SARA

What's that?

ROGER

The sound of your grandmother falling out of her bed; scares me if you must know.

SARA

Would you like a hug?

ROGER

(*Thinks for a moment*) No, I think I'll be okay this time.

SARA

That's very adult of you then. *(To ELLEN)* You don't think Daddy will really touch little Roger's soft spot, do you?

ELLEN

I would imagine he'll be fine...as long as we give him constant adult supervision.

ROGER

Are we talking about your father or little Roger?

SARA

My father silly, why would little Roger need adult supervision.

ELLEN

Oh yes, before I forget—your father thinks he's dying again.

SARA

What is it this time?

ELLEN

I'm not sure. He's being rather evasive this time around.

ROGER

Hopefully it's not the cerebral aneurism again.

ELLEN

I agree; that one did get rather trying.

SARA

Yes it did. The living in constant darkness to avoid his light sensitive headaches was a nightmare.

ROGER

That and the constant walking into furniture while your eyes adjusted from the outdoors.

SARA

Maybe we'll luck out and it will be something stomach-related this time.

ELLEN

One can only hope.

HARRY

*(As enters)* She seems to be awake now. Do you think I should bring her out?

ELLEN

What does she want to do?

HARRY

I'm not sure. She was talking to her invisible friend again.

ELLEN

Which one?

HARRY

The one with the nice hat I think.

ELLEN

That would be Elmore.

SARA

I thought Elmore was the Indian.

ELLEN

No, Elmore's the one with the nice hat. The Indian went away a few months ago.

SARA

Really...did she say where?

ELLEN

Baltimore if I recall correctly. *(To HARRY)* The Indian, he went Baltimore, didn't he?

HARRY

Baltimore certainly sounds right, although it might have been the fourth dimension. Hard to say, but I do recall her saying something about one of her invisible friends going to the fourth dimension about the same time.

ELLEN

It might be best if we write these things down going forward.

HARRY

Good idea. It's getting rather difficult to keep track anymore.

ROGER

I guess if I had my choice, I'd have to say I was always partial to that one she called Benjamin.

ELLEN

I have to agree, Benjamin was nice.

SARA

Quiet too.

HARRY

*(Slight pause)* So do you think I should bring her out?

ELLEN

I suppose you might want to check with Elmore first.

HARRY

*(Matter-of-factly)* But he's not really there.

ELLEN

I know he's not really there. What I meant by that, was pretend to ask Elmore and then see what Grandma wants to do.

HARRY

Oh, right. I'm with you now. I'll go and see what Elmore says then. *(Exits)*

SARA

Should we get the bar stool out in case Elmore wants to come out as well.

ELLEN

That's not a bad idea. Roger would you mind?

ROGER

No, not at all.

*(ROGER exits off to kitchen.)*

SARA

How long do you think it will be before Daddy starts letting on that he's dying again?

ELLEN

I suppose it depends on what he thinks he's dying of.

SARA

I hope it's nothing too serious this time.

ELLEN

You just never know with your father.

ROGER

*(Returns with the stool)* Where should I put it?

ELLEN

*(Points to single overstuffed chair)* Next to the comfortable one over there...and on the right side...she always likes Elmore on her right for some reason.

SARA

I think it's because she's hard of hearing in her left ear.

ROGER

Plus it's easier for her to smack him when he gets fresh. She is right handed after all. *(Places stool beside chair)*

SARA

And Elmore does have a habit of getting fresh from time to time.

HARRY

*(Enters)* Elmore decided that they both want to come out. Did someone get the bar stool?

ROGER

Already by the chair.

HARRY

And on the right side?

ROGER

Right side it is.

HARRY

Very good then. *(Turns and speaks rather loudly into the door way)* Elmore's chair is ready.

ELLEN

*(To SARA)* And let's do our best to make sure that the baby doesn't scare her this time.

SARA

*(Matter-of-factly)* I'm sure little Roger will do his best. But we have to remember that he is still a baby.

ELLEN

And a wonderful baby he is.

HARRY

Here she comes.

*(GRANDMA enters. She is a diminutive woman, dressed fashionably and wearing a tiara. She possesses a distinct feel of class, but is just short of being totally mad.)*

ROGER

Can I give you a hand Grandma?

GRANDMA

No thank you young man, but if you would be so kind as to help Elmore up on his stool.

ROGER

*(Looks at everyone; has no clue how to react)* I um...uh...

HARRY

Allow me. I'll gladly give Elmore a boost.

*(HARRY reaches down and pretends to put ELMORE on the stool.)*

GRANDMA

*(To ROGER)* Elmore is a dwarf you see, but not by birth. *(Sits in her chair)*

ROGER

*(Somewhat confused)* I wasn't aware of that.

SARA

That's because you've never been properly introduced to Elmore, has he, Grandma?

GRANDMA

*(To HARRY)* His hat fell off when you picked him up, could you please fetch it for him?

ROGER

*(Still somewhat confused)* I'll get it?

GRANDMA

What a nice young man you are. But be very careful with the hat. It's extremely old.

*(ROGER pretends to pick up the hat. He puts it on ELMORE.)*

GRANDMA, *Continued*

You seem to have it on backwards there. The feather should always be pointing towards the rear.

ROGER

Sorry. *(Adjusts the hat)* How's that?

GRANDMA

Absolutely delightful. Elmore would like to shake your hand now.

ROGER

I um...

SARA

Shake Elmore's hand Roger, that's what polite people do.

ROGER

*(Slightly embarrassed)* But I...

GRANDMA

Elmore's waiting, young man.

SARA

Go on Roger, shake Elmore's hand.

HARRY

Here, let me show you. It's quite simple really. (*Shakes ELMORE's hand*) See, now you try it. (*ROGER shakes ELMORE's hand*) See...nothing to it.

ROGER

(*Slowly*) I guess that wasn't too bad.

GRANDMA

(*To ELMORE*) I'm sorry, what was that?...I see. (*To ROGER*) Elmore was less than impressed by your grip. It was very effeminate he said.

ROGER

(*Somewhat offended*) Effeminate? Well then you can just tell Elmore—

SARA

(*Curtly*) Roger.

ROGER

But she said Elmore said—

SARA

(*Calmly*) Why don't you take a deep breath and then think about what just happened.

HARRY

Elmore used to get me all worked up for a time too. Then one day I came to the realization.

ROGER

(*Long pause*) I think I'm over it now. In future I'll refrain from taking Elmore's comments personally.

SARA

That would be for the best.

GRANDMA

Harry, you do realize that Death is standing just off to your left. You might want to consider choosing a new spot.

HARRY

Death you say...to my left?

GRANDMA

To your left, yes. He doesn't appear to have his sickle though, so my guess is that it's just a friendly visit.

ROGER

I didn't realize Death had just friendly visits.

GRANDMA

Death is very complex young man. There are many sides to it that most don't see.

HARRY

*(Looking to his left)* Is he still there?

GRANDMA

Why of course he's still there.

HARRY

What exactly is he doing?

GRANDMA

He seems to be giving the appearance of one who wishes to Merengue, which is very odd, as truth be told he's more the Waltz type.

ELLEN

Then I'd have to say that he's out of luck, as Harry can do neither.

HARRY

That's very true. Although I suppose I can box step if the need should ever arise, but that's hardly in the same league as the Merengue or Waltz. I hate to disappoint.

*(SFX: BABY CRIES.)*

SARA

I think little Roger needs his bottle.

GRANDMA

My goodness, is that a baby?

ELLEN

That's little Roger, grandma. You remember little Roger.

SARA

Roger, could you get little Roger's bottle?

ROGER

I'm right on it. *(Exits to kitchen)*

GRANDMA

Now you say I've met this little Roger before?

ELLEN

Many times.

GRANDMA

And whose baby might this little Roger be?

SARA

Why he's my baby.

GRANDMA

And who might you be my darling?

ELLEN

That's Sara, Grandma. She's your granddaughter.

GRANDMA

Is she now?

HARRY

She has been since birth.

GRANDMA

*(With mild surprise)* Really? That long you say. Odd that I don't remember.

ROGER

*(Enters holding bottle over his head)* I've got the bottle.

SARA

Is it the proper temperature?

ROGER

It is according to my arm.

SARA

But is it according to my arm?

ROGER

I don't know. You'd best check with your arm then.

*(SARA taps the bottle so that the formula drips onto her arm.)*

SARA

Seems to be about right.

ROGER

*(With relief)* That's certainly a relief.

SARA

Little Roger's very fussy about his bottle. It has to be the exact temperature or he'll have none of it. Sends it right back to the kitchen.

ELLEN

Knowing exactly what you want is very important in life. It's a trait that will make a strong man out of little Roger.

HARRY

And a strong man is a decisive man.

GRANDMA

Elmore would like to touch the babies soft spot if that's alright.

ROGER

Absolutely not. No one is touching the baby's soft spot until it's hard.

GRANDMA

But when the soft spot is hard, there's very little urge to touch it. So kindly move aside so Elmore can get on with his business.

ROGER

*(Calmly)* I said no.

SARA

It'll be alright Roger. I'm sure Elmore is kind-hearted and means well.

ROGER

But even still, this is our baby we're talking about.

HARRY

Would it be possible for me to watch? I've always been fascinated with the soft spot.

SARA

You can watch daddy, but you have to put your hands in your pockets so you don't get the urge as well.

ELLEN

I think it might be best if I held his hands, that way we all have a feeling of comfort.

*(ELLEN grabs HARRY's hands.)*

GRANDMA

Elmore's waiting.

ROGER

(*To SARA*) But what if Elmore's hand touches little Roger's brain and he can't go to college?

GRANDMA

Nothing to fear young man, Elmore doesn't have any hands.

ROGER

Thank God.

GRANDMA

He has claws.

ROGER

(*In horror*) Claws?

ELLEN

I'm sure they're very soft claws.

GRANDMA

Soft claws? Nonsense, these claws are razor sharp.

SARA

Once again Roger, you need to take a deep breath and then think about the dynamics of the situation.

ROGER

I understand the dynamics of the situation. But his claws are razor sharp she said.

HARRY

But if you recall, you didn't hurt yourself when you shook Elmore's hand, now did you?

ROGER

I guess not.

HARRY

So then logic would dictate that little Roger's brain would be safe from Elmore.

ROGER

I suppose.

GRANDMA

*(To ELMORE)* What's that you say...I see... *(To OTHERS)* Elmore no longer wishes to touch the baby's soft spot as he says it's taking too long. Instead he wishes to take a nap. Would you be kind enough to take him down from the stool, Harry?

HARRY

Absolutely. Would he like it if I walked him to bed as well?

*(HARRY takes ELMORE off stool.)*

GRANDMA

*(To ELMORE)* Elmore? *(Beat)* Elmore would be delighted if you walked him to bed. And he would like to nap in his own bed he said, not mine. You know how much he loves his own bed.

HARRY

Then his own bed it shall be. *(Holds ELMORE's hand)* Shall we Elmore? And maybe if you're good I'll read you a nice story.

*(HARRY and "ELMORE" exit.)*

SARA

I think it might be best if we put little Roger down for a nap as well. It is about that time.

ROGER

Would you like me to do it?

SARA

Why don't we both do it, that way we can watch him drift off together?

ELLEN

You might want to stay with him until we know exactly where your father is. He still might get the urge to touch the soft spot, especially after spending some quality time with Elmore.

SARA

But Elmore doesn't really exist.

ELLEN

Yes I know, but it's always best to proceed on the side of caution.

ROGER

*(Slowly and quietly to ELLEN)* Harry knows that he really doesn't exist, correct?

ELLEN

*(Softly)* He knows alright, it's just that from time to time he gets a tad caught up in Grandma's world, and then things tend to happen.

ROGER

What kind of things?

ELLEN

*(Referencing GRANDMA)* Nothing that needs to be discussed at this particular moment.

SARA

*(Stands)* Are you coming Roger?

ROGER

*(Looks at ELLEN then back at SARA)* Coming? Yes...wouldn't miss it. Wouldn't miss it for the world. Shall we?

SARA

*(To LITTLE ROGER)* Is my little boogie-boo ready for his naptime? Of course he is. He's a tired little man isn't he?...A tired little man. Who's my little boogie boo? Who's my little boogie-boo?

*(SARA and ROGER begin to exit.)*

ROGER

Do you think he likes being called little Boogie-boo?

SARA

Shut up, Roger. *(THEY exit.)*

GRANDMA

You don't think Harry will touch Elmore's soft spot?

ELLEN

I wasn't aware Elmore still had one.

GRANDMA

Yes, and it is even softer than that baby's.

ELLEN

I doubt it. But I'm sure if he tries, Elmore can just rip his colon out with his claws.

GRANDMA

I hadn't thought of that.

ELLEN

Would you like me to make some tea?

GRANDMA

Some tea would be lovely.

*(HARRY screams off stage.)*

GRANDMA

Oh, dear. I was afraid of that. I certainly hope Elmore didn't make too big of a mess.

ELLEN

I'll go and get us that tea. We can deal with whatever that was later.

*(END SCENE: LIGHTS OUT.)*

### SCENE THREE

*(AT RISE: a single SPOT on ELLEN standing alone center stage.)*

ELLEN

*(To AUDIENCE)* The one thing you can say about Harry is that he's well-meaning. There's not a spiteful bone in his body. I think the only fault you could find with him is his compulsiveness. It's something he can control for the most part, but every once in awhile you have to beware, because once the urge strikes, he tends to get off task and do something that he knows he shouldn't be doing, but he'll do it all the same. For the most part it only happens when he's alone. And by alone I don't mean it's something perverted or anything like that, just more the type of thing that one would consider harmless, yet annoying, especially if you happened to be around. It's what we like to think of as closet compulsiveness that everyone knows exists, but tends to ignore, unless of course it has ramifications to another person. Like that thing with little Roger's soft spot. He'd never intentionally hurt little Roger, but the thought of his finger, poking repeatedly at the soft spot, and for the most part unintentionally, is just something that has to be monitored at all times. I suppose in hindsight it was that compulsiveness that led to SARA, because if you must know the truth, I certainly didn't want any children. *(Slight pause)* Now as far as this nonsense about him dying, that's been going on for years, with the exception of the first year we met...we were sixteen I believe...or maybe it was seventeen. We were teenagers; that much I do know...no, it was seventeen, I remember now; because it was the year I went up a bra size. Anyway, he seemed rather normal. He had a nice family, clean hair, and could throw a baseball faster than anyone I'd ever seen...at least that's what he told me. Then one day, whack... baseball right in the head. He's had vision problems ever since. Brain was knocked around too I would imagine. It was right after that, that he began to think he was dying...but never from the same thing. My favorite was the one he diagnosed himself with on our tenth wedding anniversary; disorders of the penis. I mean, how would you die from that? And for that matter, what the hell was it?...I mean his penis always looked fine to me.

*(SPOT OUT on ELLEN: TRANSITION TO SCENE FOUR.)*

## SCENE FOUR

*(LIGHTS UP ON LIVING ROOM; HARRY lying on the couch with an ice bag on his head.)*

ELLEN

*(Transitioning directly into scene)* So you want to tell me again exactly what happened?

HARRY

*(Removes the ice bag)* I tripped and fell.

ELLEN

I understand that part. It was the ‘how you tripped and fell part’ that I want to hear again.

HARRY

*(Sits up)* It’s simple really; when Elmore and I got into the bedroom I tried to lift him into his own bed – you know how much he loves his own bed – but this time for some reason there was a chair in front of his bed. Rather than move the chair I thought it would just be easier to lift Elmore over the chair and then put him in the bed. What I didn’t count on was losing my balance. So before I had a chance to put Elmore down I fell forward and smashed my head in the dresser that was next to the bed. Luckily I managed to toss Elmore into grandma’s bed before it was all said and done. *(Beat)* I certainly hope he’s alright.

ELLEN

Elmore doesn’t really exist, remember.

HARRY

I know he doesn’t exist, but I’d still like to think he’s okay? I’d hate to think that I’d hurt him.

ELLEN

You can’t hurt Elmore. I would imagine only grandma could hurt Elmore if you think about it.

HARRY

*(Beat)* I suppose that’s true. But even still that’s not something I’d like to have that hanging over my head.

ELLEN

I wouldn’t imagine you have much to worry about there.

HARRY

That’s certainly a relief.

*(HARRY lies back down.)*

ELLEN

How's your head feel?

HARRY

A bit sore, but I doubt it's anything fatal.

ELLEN

So there's no need to worry about you dying all of a sudden.

HARRY

Not from the head wound, no.

ELLEN

So judging from that comment, should I assume then, that you think you are in fact dying yet again?

HARRY

What it boils down to when you really think about it, is the fact that we're all dying a little more every day. So from that perspective I would have to say yes.

ELLEN

That's not exactly what I meant.

HARRY

I'm sorry then. Of course I did just suffer a serious blow to the head, so my not being fully cognizant is completely understandable one would think.

ELLEN

I'll rephrase then. Should I assume that from your previous comment, the one in regards to you not dying from the head wound, that you do in fact, think you are dying from something else? Better?

HARRY

Much one would think.

ELLEN

So should I take that as a 'yes'?

HARRY

Quite possibly...although I'm not sure I'm in the proper frame of mind to delve into that at the moment. You might want to address that again with me once my head seems to be in the proper order. Tomorrow for example.

ELLEN

But what if you are dying, don't tell me, and then die during the night. How will I know?

HARRY

I would imagine by my lack of breathing. (*Beat*) I take it you're implying something here?

ELLEN

Not so much implying as asking.

HARRY

About my dying you mean?

ELLEN

Yes, about you're dying.

HARRY

What is it you would like to know?

ELLEN

Exactly what it is you think you're dying from this time.

HARRY

Well to be quite honest, if I were in fact dying, which I'm not technically saying I am, the diagnosis as it were, might be, and this is totally hypothetical you understand, a tad on the confidential side.

ELLEN

(*Matter-of-factly*) But I'm your wife. Why exactly would your hypothetical dying be something you couldn't share with me?

HARRY

For one thing I'd hate for you to worry. Because when you worry you don't sleep very well. And then when you don't sleep very well, you tend to get sick. And the last thing we need around here is you getting sick, and then possibly getting sicker and sicker, and then you in fact dying. That's why my hypothetical diagnosis should remain confidential. It's not that I don't want to tell, it's just that I must think of your well being as well. So if you truly think about it, I'm doing this all out of love.

ELLEN

So you do in fact think you are dying?

HARRY

I never said that. You're the one that said that.

(*SFX: BABY CRYING.*)

ELLEN

Little Roger must be up from his nap.

HARRY

Do you think there's the odd chance that his soft spot is now hard?

ELLEN

I would imagine only if his head was made of quick drying cement.

HARRY

I'll take that as a no.

ELLEN

That's very wise of you.

*(CRYING continues.)*

HARRY

Shouldn't Sara or Roger be doing something about the crying?

ELLEN

They've gone out for a bit.

HARRY

Then shouldn't we be doing something about the crying?

ELLEN

I was just on my way to get him. A little crying is good for babies. Gives them a sense of what the real world is all about.

HARRY

But what if he wakes Grandma?

ELLEN

Grandma took one of her pills so she'll be out for awhile.

HARRY

Good, because I'm not sure I'm in any type of shape to lift Elmore at the moment.

ELLEN

You really need to remember that Elmore doesn't exist.

HARRY

*(Matter-of-factly)* Yes I know; we've been through that before.

ELLEN

Then you also need to realize that you don't have to put forth so much effort to lift something that really isn't there.

(*More CRYING.*)

HARRY

Would you like me to go and get the baby?

ELLEN

No, I think it might be best for you to just lie there and rest. I'll go and fetch little Roger.

HARRY

But I promise I won't touch his soft spot.

ELLEN

Yes, but what you promise here doesn't always translate to a promise someplace else. Besides, you might have a concussion, so I think rest would be best for you at this juncture.

HARRY

(*Sighs*) I suppose you're right. Resting probably would be for the best.

ELLEN

Then on that note, I'll go and fetch little Roger. (*Exits*)

HARRY

(*Attempts to get comfortable on the couch*) I think when my heads come back around, I need to inform Ellen that we need a new couch, this one's awful... Although I suppose I could just tell her when she comes back with little Roger... I wonder if I ever thought this couch was comfortable to begin with... Because if I did, I was certainly wrong... one lump after another. A cement board would be more comfortable than this thing. Even these throw pillows need to be thrown. It's a wonder I've ever napped on this couch before without wanting to stab it or bite it or something. It's not fit for humans. (*Finds a comfortable position*) Wait a minute... maybe I was being a bit hasty... this spot seems to be somewhat inhabitable... not only inhabitable, but downright comfy... damn comfy... now only if I had a nice warm blanket to fight off the chill.

ELLEN

(*Enters with LITTLE ROGER*) You're such a good little boy, aren't you? You're not a Mr. Boogie-boo, no you're not. I don't care what your stupid mommy says... Mr. Boogie-boo is a stupid name, isn't it... isn't it a stupid name... yes it is... yes it is... isn't it, Harry, isn't Mr. Boogie-boo a stupid name?

HARRY

Stupid as they come if you want to know the truth. (*Beat*) You know what would work better? Mr. Biggie-boo. We might want to suggest that one to Sara; sounds a tad manlier than Mr. Boogie-boo. (*Speaks with authority*) Mr. Biggie-boo. Mr. Biggie-boo. (*Beat*) That's much better. Definitely like the sound of that one. Mr. Biggie-boo. (*To ELLEN*) We'll have to mention Mr. Biggie-boo to Sara when she gets back. Much more dignified than Mr. Boogie-boo. Don't you agree?

ELLEN

Actually they're both quite stupid.

HARRY

Well I know that, but if given the option I think Mr. Biggie-boo is more fitting of little Roger's status.

*(ROGER and SARA enter from the front door. THEY carry large shopping bags in both hands.)*

SARA

Wait until you see all the clothes we bought for little Roger. I don't think I've ever run into as many sales as we did today.

*(SARA crosses and sets bags on one side of couch.)*

ROGER

And we paid cash for all of it.

*(ROGER sets down his bags as well.)*

SARA

*(Reaches into a bag)* You've got to see this one outfit I found. It's a little suit. Cutest thing I've ever seen. *(Searches through her bags)* I don't see it. Is it in one of your bags Roger?

ROGER

I don't know. I don't remember seeing a suit.

SARA

Just because you didn't see it doesn't mean it's not there.

ROGER

*(In all seriousness)* Well it could.

SARA

*(Grabs one of his bags)* Oh just give me the damn bag and I'll find it myself.

ROGER

I'm sorry I just don't remember seeing a suit is all.

SARA

*(Searches through bag)* That's because I bought it when you went off by yourself.

ROGER

Well I didn't know that.

SARA

*(Finds suit)* Here it is. *(Removes a tiny suit; holds it up)* Isn't this the most darling thing you've ever seen?

HARRY

Looks like one of those suits a tiny monkey would wear.

ROGER

You're not calling my son a little monkey again I hope.

SARA

Of course he's not. It's just the way he talks sometimes.

HARRY

That's very true. Things don't always come out of my mouth as planned.

ELLEN

I can attest to that. And it is a very cute suit at that. Little Roger will look adorable. *(To LITTLE ROGER)* Won't you? Won't you look adorable in your new little suit?

ROGER

I bought some things for me too. Would anyone like to see?

SARA

But I'm not done showing off all little Roger's new clothes. You'll just have to wait your turn.

ROGER

But it's only three shirts.

HARRY

I'd like to see his new shirts.

ROGER

*(To SARA)* You see, it's not always about little Roger.

SARA

Oh fine, show daddy your new shirts if it's all that important to you.

HARRY

Yes, please do.

ROGER

And you want to know the nice part; all three are the exact same model as my three favorite shirts. So now if one of my favorite shirts is in the wash I have a duplicate one to wear. How often does something like that happen?

*(ROGER reaches into the bag and removes three hideous dress shirts.)*

ROGER, *Continued*

Aren't they great?

SARA

*(Long pause)* Where exactly did you buy those shirts?

ROGER

At that little consignment shop, the one right next to the baby store.

ELLEN

*(To SARA)* You don't think?

SARA

They've got to be.

ROGER

They've got to be what?

SARA

*(Beat)* You remember a few days ago when I told you we needed some extra room for the baby's things?

ROGER

*(He nods)* Of course, you said you were going to move some of my clothes to the basement closet.

SARA

And we did.

ELLEN

We also thought it might be nice to get rid of a few things.

SARA

So we decided to clean out all the closets that day.

ROGER

I'm with you so far.

SARA

Anyway, once we were done cleaning we found a few things that we thought might be best someplace else.

ELLEN

A consignment shop for example.

ROGER

I see.

SARA

I'm not sure you do.

ROGER

Sure I do, you gave some things to the consignment shop to sell. What's not to understand there?

ELLEN

So you understand that the shirts you're now holding are yours.

ROGER

Of course they are I just bought them.

SARA

What she means is that the shirts you bought were the shirts we gave.

ELLEN

So in reality you bought your own shirts twice now.

ROGER

*(Finally gets it)* So I don't have duplicates is what you're saying.

SARA

I'm afraid not.

HARRY

*(Slight pause)* Didn't I once do that with a car?

SARA

Don't be silly, Daddy; they don't sell cars at consignment shops.

ELLEN

He did actually—buy his own car back that is.

ROGER

*(With disbelief)* No you didn't.

HARRY

Quite unintentionally of course, but all the same, I did.

SARA

Why don't I remember any of this?

ELLEN

You weren't born yet.

ROGER

How does one manage to buy one's own car back?

HARRY

It's quite simple really; one day we decided we needed a new car, so like most people I traded in our old car to buy the new car. Six months later, we decided we needed two cars since Sara was about to be born. So I went back to the dealer, told him I was looking for a nice, cheap used car, and before I realized it, I was driving home in our old car.

ELLEN

Which ended up costing five hundred more dollars than we got back on the trade, and if that wasn't bad enough, the transmission still slipped.

HARRY

There was that... but the tires were still good, and most importantly, not a chip of paint on the entire body.

*(A LOUD THUD is heard offstage.)*

SARA

Sounds like Grandma's up.

ROGER

Would you like me to, Harry?

HARRY

If you don't mind, thanks.

ROGER

It would be my pleasure. *(Starts towards the bedrooms off left)*

HARRY

And you might want to consider moving the chair in front of Elmore's bed if she wants you to lift him out.

ROGER

I'll do that.

HARRY

Plus be mindful of his claws. They're quite sharp.

ROGER

Razor sharp if I recall.

ELLEN

*(Matter-of-factly)* There's nothing to fear Roger, as I will once again reiterate, Elmore doesn't exist. Now if you would, please go and help Grandma off the floor.

SARA

And why don't you move the chair all the same, just in case?

ROGER

*(Looks at HARRY)* Yes...that probably would be for the best. *(Exits)*

SARA

After Roger's done with Grandma, I think I'll go and try this new suit on little Roger.

ELLEN

He just woke up from his nap, so he might still be a tad fussy.

SARA

Has he had his bottle?

ELLEN

Not yet. He just got up right before you came in.

SARA

Then why don't I go and get him one.

ELLEN

That might be a good idea before he starts crying again.

SARA

*(To LITTLE ROGER)* Mommy's going to get Mr. Boogie-boo his baba. You be a good little boy for Gram-Grams. Mommy will be right back. *(Exits)*

ELLEN

*(To LITTLE ROGER)* So you be a good little boy until your mommy gets back with your baba. A baba is a bottle, but you're smarter than your mommy so you know that...don't you...don't you...?

HARRY

We forgot to mention that Mr. Biggie-boo thing too. Remind me when she gets back, because this Mr. Boogie-boo catastrophe just doesn't work when you get right down to it.

ROGER

*(Enters)* Grandma doesn't want anyone but Harry picking her up.

ELLEN

Then pretend you're Harry. She'll never know the difference.

ROGER

I already tried that.

ELLEN

Well, try it again. Twice usually fools her.

ROGER

She said Elmore would attack me if I tried it again.

ELLEN

Elmore doesn't exist.

ROGER

Yes, but even still, I don't want to upset her any further.

HARRY

I'm sure it'll be fine if I helped just a tad. I don't feel that awful.

ELLEN

Best not take the chance. The last thing we need is for you to hit your head again. I'm sure Roger and I can do it.

*(ELLEN places LITTLE ROGER in his basinet.)*

ROGER

You think she'll go for just the two of us?

ELLEN

I'm sure by now she's completely forgotten about Harry.

ROGER

I certainly hope so. I'd hate to be attacked by Elmore.

ELLEN

*(Matter-of-factly)* Elmore doesn't really exist.

ROGER

Yes I know.

*(ROGER and ELLEN exit. HARRY looks around. It occurs to him that he is all alone with LITTLE ROGER. HARRY starts to scratch his head. Slowly he gets up and moves towards the basinet. The closer he gets, the more he scratches his head. When he is directly over LITTLE ROGER, he looks both ways to make sure no one is looking then gently puts his hand in the basinet. LIGHTS FADE OUT. END SCENE.)*

## SCENE FIVE

*(AT RISE: a single SPOT ON SARA alone center stage.)*

SARA

What in the hell were they thinking is all I want to know? They had to have known he was going to touch his soft spot. It's like leaving an open bottle of vodka alone with an alcoholic. He's not going to drink it so much because he has to, but more because it's there...it's what he does. It's the same thing with Daddy. He never does anything intentionally to hurt anyone or anything, he just does sometimes. It's like he has these premeditated accidental events that are completely innocuous but at the same time scary as hell. I'm not even sure he knows what he's doing half the time. *(Beat)* But I suppose in his odd defense, it's at least all based on a harmless curiosity...never any intent of malice or anything. I mean there's not a spiteful bone in his body. He's wonderful...he just has that odd moment or two when you wonder, "what the hell...?"

*(SPOT OUT: Transition to next scene.)*

## SCENE SIX

*(LIGHTS UP on living room. ROGER is seated on the couch, with LITTLE ROGER in his lap, dressed in his new suit. ELLEN is seated in a chair nearby. SARA transitions directly into the scene.)*

ROGER

*(Looking at LITTLE ROGER's head)* Is that a finger print? I think he has a finger print on his head. *(To SARA)* Is that a finger print? It certainly looks like a finger print.

SARA

*(Sits beside ROGER)* It's not a finger print, that's just his head.

ROGER

*(With certainty)* I'm sorry, but that looks like a finger print.

SARA

He's a baby. Baby's have funny heads sometimes.

ROGER

But you said your father touched little Roger's head when we were helping Grandma off the floor.

SARA

No I didn't. What I said was he was just about to touch little Roger's head.

ELLEN

It's probably a good thing you came out with his bottle when you did.

SARA

*(To ELLEN)* And what might I ask possessed you to leave little Roger out here all alone with daddy? Do you have any idea what might have happened?

ROGER

That was kind of my fault.

SARA

*(To ROGER)* Then do *you* have any idea what might have happened?

ELLEN

You can't blame Roger. It was all just an unfortunate act of bad timing, and besides, little Roger is just fine.

SARA

He's fine this time, but what about next time, and the time after that?

ELLEN

We'll just have to make sure that next time Grandma falls on the floor there's someone else out here to leave little Roger with.

ROGER

*(With some guilt)* Grandma wouldn't let me help her up, she wanted Harry.

SARA

Then next time Daddy should go, bad head or not.

ELLEN

There won't be a next time, so I think we can move on now.

SARA

And speaking of Daddy, where exactly is he?

ROGER

He's reading Grandma a story... "Through the Looking Glass," I believe.

ELLEN

That was always one of her favorites.

ROGER

That's because she thinks she's been there a few times.

SARA

*(Slight pause)* Once again speaking of daddy, any idea what it is he thinks he's dying of this time?

ELLEN

Not a clue. He's being rather evasive this time around.

ROGER

Maybe he doesn't want to worry you is all.

ELLEN

That's exactly what he said. He said when I worry I don't sleep.

SARA

That's very true, you don't.

ELLEN

Yes, but he's not really dying, so for the most part it's a moot point.

SARA

For you maybe, but not for him, he thinks he's really dying.

ROGER

That's quite the quandary when you think about it. Harry won't tell you what's wrong with him so you can sleep even though you're sleeping since you know nothing's really wrong even though he thinks something really is.

ELLEN

And in the end Harry's the one not sleeping.

SARA

Do you think he should go and see a doctor?

ELLEN

Should he?—yes. Can I say something?—no. Because the minute he thinks that I think there's something wrong with him he'll start to worry that I'm worrying and he'll worry himself into one of those states where his compulsive tendencies increase tenfold.

ROGER

And by that you mean he'll want to touch little Roger's soft spot more.

*(HARRY enters)*

ELLEN

So much so he'd need a little helmet.

HARRY

So what are we talking about? Miss anything good did I?

ELLEN

Not a thing.

ROGER

She's right actually, we weren't talking about anything.

SARA

In fact all we were doing was just standing around admiring little Roger's new suit.

ROGER

Your name never even came up once. It was all about the new suit.

HARRY

He's got his new suit on does he? (*Crosses to LITTLE ROGER*) Well let's just have look shall we.

ELLEN

He just woke up from his nap so be extra careful.

HARRY

And by that, I assume you mean don't touch his soft spot.

ELLEN

That would certainly be part of it.

HARRY

Nothing to fear there, I'm fine now. Not sure what came over me awhile ago, probably something to do with the bump on my head.

SARA

(*To HARRY*) So what do you think of his little suit?

ROGER

We paid cash for it.

HARRY

So you said. What do I think of his little suit? (*Strokes his chin while thinking*) It's a very small suit for starters.

ELLEN

That's because he's a baby.

HARRY

Yes I know. What I meant, is that there's little room for growth. I mean he's not always going to be that size. Now if I had bought the suit, I would have gotten it a tad larger... given him something with some room to grow... that way you'd get more mileage out of it...something where he has room to adjust himself. But then again, that's just me.

ROGER

He wears a diaper...I don't think he could adjust himself.

HARRY

*(Slight pause)* That's not quite what I meant by adjust himself. I was thinking more along the lines of a comfort level while he's working a room. A suit that says, I'm going to fit into this one day and be a big boy. One day I'm going to rule the world—that kind of thing.

SARA

*(Slowly)* He can't even sit up yet.

ELLEN

I have to agree there, he's still a tad young to be working a room, let alone rule the world.

HARRY

Nonsense, he's working the room right now. I mean look at all of us fawning over him. He's working us to perfection.

ROGER

*(Pause; looks at little Roger)* He is, isn't he?

HARRY

Of course he is. Look at him. A true master if ever I've seen one.

ROGER

*(Proudly)* That's my son.

SARA

That's our son.

HARRY

And a good son he is. He's a much better baby than that one we had.

SARA

But that would have been me.

HARRY

*(Thinks for a second)* That's true, it would have. *(Beat)* But you ended up fine and that's all that matters.

SARA

What was wrong with me as a baby?

HARRY

You were very loud if I recall.

SARA

That's because I was a baby. All babies are loud.

ELLEN

But you were extra loud.

SARA

How was I extra loud?

HARRY

Something to do with your crying...it had a special way of cutting through the air.

ELLEN

We were always afraid it was going to break some glass.

ROGER

My little Roger doesn't do that. He cries like a normal baby.

HARRY

And a good baby he is.

ELLEN

*(Puts her arm around SARA)* It's nothing to fret over dear, we still love you. It's just that we don't have many fond memories of you as a baby.

HARRY

I remember at one point Grandma thought it might be wise to put you up for adoption.

ELLEN

I thought we promised never to mention that.

HARRY

That's right, we had. I'm sorry, I'd completely forgotten that.

ELLEN

Probably shouldn't mention the other things then as well.

SARA

What other things?

HARRY

Well for one, your mother didn't want any children.

SARA

(*To ELLEN*) What do you mean you didn't want any children?

ELLEN

(*Matter-of-factly*) Well for starters, children can be annoying. Take you right now for example.

SARA

I'm not being annoying right now. I'm in shock if anything.

ELLEN

It's still annoying.

HARRY

(*Beat*) I suppose then while we're being forthright and all, we should probably also tell you that you were an accident.

ROGER

Kind of like little Roger.

SARA

Little Roger was not an accident.

ROGER

Actually he was. I didn't want children either.

SARA

What do you mean you didn't want children either?

ROGER

(*Pause*) Well to be quite honest... I don't like children.

SARA

Don't like children... (*Reaches for baby*) Then get your filthy hands off my baby.

(*SARA grabs LITTLE ROGER away from ROGER.*)

ROGER

He's my baby too.

SARA

Not anymore he isn't. You don't like children, so I think it might be best if you left.

*(GRANDMA enters.)*

GRANDMA

Do you people have any idea how boisterous you are out here?

HARRY

Sorry Grandma, we didn't mean to wake you.

GRANDMA

Sorry my boney ass.

SARA

I'm not in the least bit sorry.

ELLEN

*(To GRANDMA)* It might be best to ignore her. She's not having a nice day.

GRANDMA

*(Crosses to couch and sits)* Oh and I am. I mean you should hear you people in there, noise after noise after noise. And if that's not bad enough, Elmore got so fed up that he moved off planet. So now I have to find a new imaginary friend. *(ALL look at her.)* What, you all think I'm so far gone that I don't know that my invisible friends are imaginary? I mean get real here... of course I can see them...but that doesn't mean that I don't know that they're not really there. What kind of demented fool do you take me for?

HARRY

*(Beat)* So then all this time you've just been playing along with us while we played along with you?

GRANDMA

Of course, it's one of the advantages of being slightly mad.

SARA

*(To ROGER)* I thought I told you to leave.

ROGER

But I don't want to leave. I love little Roger.

ELLEN

*(To ROGER)* And I'm sure you do.

SARA

*(Pouting)* I'm sorry, that's not good enough anymore.

ELLEN

(*To SARA*) You on the other hand just need to give it some time. Time has a funny way of turning unwanted love into unconditional love.

HARRY

Absolutely, I mean just look at you. Over time we came to love you just like Roger has come to love little Roger.

SARA

But that's different, this is my baby.

ELLEN

And you are my baby, so it's no different at all.

(*HARRY sits on the couch and scratches his chest.*)

SARA

Yes but....

ELLEN

There is no but. Roger loves little Roger and most importantly he loves you. Don't you Roger.

ROGER

(*Beat*) Over time, yes...I can honestly say I love both of you.

ELLEN

You see, so throwing him out would only do more harm than good. Not only to you, but think of little Roger. He needs his father for better or worse.

SARA

(*Slight pause*) I suppose that's something I'll just have to think about it.

GRANDMA

(*To HARRY*) You might want to watch out over there, Harry, Death seems to be back. And this time he appears to have brought his sickle.

HARRY

That's rather inconvenient one would think.

GRANDMA

He says it's your time.

HARRY

Well then tell him I've changed my mind. Tell him I'm feeling much better now.

ROGER

What is she talking about?

GRANDMA

Death is here.

ELLEN

*(Matter-of-factly)* No, Death is not here.

HARRY

*(Holding his chest)* It wasn't supposed to be this. It was supposed to be in my lower intestines.

ELLEN

It's just heartburn.

HARRY

It can't be my heart...that doesn't make sense...it's the only thing I've ever had that was right....

ELLEN

*(She sits next to him)* Take a deep breath you'll be fine in a minute.

ROGER

But what if Death is invisible like Elmore?

GRANDMA

Of course Death is invisible. How else could it do its job?

SARA

Could we please change the subject? I'd hate to scare little Roger.

GRANDMA

*(To HARRY)* Death has his hand on your shoulder now.

ELLEN

I have to agree with Sara, let's talk about something cheery.

HARRY

*(To GRANDMA)* Please inform Death that I'm feeling perfectly well. As a matter of fact, I'd like to go for a walk. *(He stands and then sits.)* But first I think I need to catch my breath.

ELLEN

That sounds like a wonderful plan. You catch your breath. And then you go and take a nice long walk.

HARRY

That's exactly what I'm going to do. Take a nice long walk after I catch my breath.

*(SFX: BABY CRIES: Everyone but HARRY gathers around LITTLE ROGER.)*

GRANDMA

Will you listen to that baby cry. He's even louder than Elmore.

SARA

It's okay baby. Mommy's here.

ROGER

And don't forget Daddy is too.

SARA

*(Looks up at ROGER and smiles)* And Daddy's here too.

ROGER

He's the best baby ever.

SARA

I think he's just hungry. I'll try giving him a bottle.

ROGER

That's my boy. Giant hunger, means giant son.

HARRY

*(Mumbling)* Mr. Biggie-boo.

**This is Not the End of the Play**

**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**