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Painting Over the Poop

A Short Comedy By

Rusty Harding

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Painting Over the Poop

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1F/1M

SYNOPSIS

A young couple discovers the pain – and panic – of parenthood.

CHARACTERS

DON: *Male, mid-20's to early 30's*

MARCIE: *Female, mid-20's to early 30's*

SETTING

The living room of a modest home

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SETTING: *The living room of a modest home. A couch sits in front of a curtained window. An empty playpen sits nearby, along with scattered baby and dog toys.*

AT RISE: *A young woman, MARCIE, paces anxiously back and forth with an anguished expression. She wears a bathrobe and bedroom slippers and has the disheveled appearance of someone just out of bed. She turns sharply to face a young man, DON, as he enters. DON wears a t-shirt and pajama pants, along with a worried expression similar to MARCIE's.*

MARCIE

(Hopefully) Anything?

DON

(Shaking his head) The doors and windows are all shut and locked. There's no way he could have gone outside.

MARCIE

Somebody must have taken him!

DON

I just told you, everything's locked tight. The alarm system is still on.

MARCIE

Then where did he go, Don?

DON

Sweetheart, he's got to be somewhere here in the house. We just have to keep looking.

MARCIE

Oh, God, my baby's gone!

DON

Marcie, he's not gone. Tell me again what happened.

MARCIE

I told you; I got up to go to the bathroom and I thought I'd look in on Bobby.

DON

And he wasn't in his bed?

MARCIE

No! Bingo was there, but Bobby wasn't.

DON

The dog was in the baby's bed?

MARCIE

Yes. *(With a look of sudden horror)* Oh, my God! Bingo! Bingo was in Bobby's bed!

DON

So?

MARCIE

So? Don't you see? Bingo was there, but Bobby wasn't. *(Wailing mournfully)* Bingo ate my baby!

DON

(After a long beat) Marcie, Bobby weighs twenty-two pounds. Bingo is a two-pound Chihuahua. Unless he's lying there gorged like an anaconda, I really don't think he ate our baby.

MARCIE

Then where did he go?

DON

I don't know, but I promise we'll find him. Look. I've called the police, just to be on the safe side, but I'm certain he's somewhere here in the house. I mean, where could he go? He's only two years old.

MARCIE

That's just it – he's so little! He could go anywhere. He could crawl through an air conditioning vent, a crack in the plaster. *(A beat)* He could be in the swimming pool!

MARCIE starts to rush offstage.

DON

Marcie, we don't have a swimming pool.

MARCIE stops suddenly, pondering this. She spins around to face DON.

MARCIE

But if we did, he could be in it!

DON

Marcie, please, calm down. We'll find him, just keep looking.

MARCIE

(Grimacing) This is all my fault!

DON

Your fault? Why?

MARCIE

Because I'm a terrible mother!

DON

No, you're not.

MARCIE

Yes, I am. A horrible, selfish, ungrateful mother. *(Sits down heavily on the couch)* I brought all of this on myself.

DON

(Obviously puzzled) Okay, aside from the fact that has to be one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard, I'm still going to bite. Why do you think you're horrible?

MARCIE

Because I wanted to get rid of him!

DON

What?

MARCIE

Last week. I found him the dining room. He had taken off his diaper and was smearing poop all over the wall. With both hands. Oh, it was so disgusting. I had to repaint the entire wall.

DON

(Glancing offstage) I thought that room looked brighter.

MARCIE

I was hoping you wouldn't notice. Anyway, I was absolutely furious. I spent the next two hours talking to myself while I painted the wall. I kept saying; "For this I spent two years in grad school. For this I gave up my own career." I kept thinking about how much easier life would be if I'd never had a child. I had a chance to start my own design business, make a real name for myself, and I threw it all away; just to paint over poop!

DON

(Grudgingly) For what it's worth, you did a terrific job.

MARCIE

(Glaring at him) Don, please. Don't you see? I was more upset about my own selfish wants than my own child. *(Shaking head bitterly)* This is karma, Don. This is God, the universe, *something*, paying me back for being so self-centered. I have sinned, and now they've taken away my baby!

DON smiles slightly and sits down next to her. He slips an arm around her shoulders.

DON

Marcie, look, I'm not an expert in these things, but I'm pretty sure it doesn't work like that.

MARCIE

(Wailing) Our baby's lost! It's two-thirty in the morning and our baby's lost!

DON

Sweetheart. he's not lost, he's just... *(A beat)* ...misplaced?

MARCIE

Don, you don't understand! I wanted to get rid of him! At that particular moment I wanted to get rid of my own child!

DON

You don't think every other parent in the entire history of parenthood hasn't felt like that? There's a reason they call it the terrible twos, Marcie. Two days ago I caught him trying to put Bingo in the diaper pail. Not a happy dog, let me tell you. *(A beat, frowning)* Oh, wow, maybe he *did* eat him.

MARCIE

(Chuckling slightly) He's got a thing about diapers and poop, doesn't he?

DON

Yeah, we should probably have that checked. My point is, there are times that I've been willing to trade him for a hot dog and a Heineken. And I don't even like Heineken.

MARCIE

(Staring at him tearfully) Does that make us bad parents, Don?

DON

No, it makes us normal parents. If there even is such a thing. Look, my Dad threatened to kill me virtually every day of my life. It wasn't until I was thirteen that I felt reasonably sure he wouldn't. Even then it was still precarious. It wasn't until Bobby was born that I finally understood why he acted the way he did. Kids drive parents nuts. In fact, if there really is punishment for sins in this life, it's got to be parenthood.

MARCIE

So what do we do?

DON

I don't know. I guess we do what our parents did. Muddle through, improvise, love... *(A beat)*
Drink. And we paint over the poop.

MARCIE

That could get expensive.

DON

(Dryly) No poop.

FX: SOUND of CAR DOOR CLOSING

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes