

The Crying Child
A One Act Play
By Harry Adelman

Time: The present

Cast: Jake An older man
Marcia An older woman

Set: Center Kitchen table and chairs

Props: Coffee pot, coffee cups, tray, drink glasses, black armband, liquor bottle

Scene 1 2:30 AM one morning

Lights come up on a kitchen table and chairs center stage. From off-stage comes the sound of a baby crying. After a few seconds Jake enters from stage right wearing a bathrobe. He looks around, trying to locate where the sound is coming from. He finally exits stage left and is heard from off-stage.

Jake: "Why, it's a baby! What's the matter, little lassie? How did you get here? Here, let me pick you up. There, there little one. There, there." *The crying settles down and turns into the sound of thumb sucking, and then stops. After several seconds of silence, Marcia enters from stage right, also wearing a bathrobe.*

Marcia: "Where has that old fool gone to now? I know he came down here. Hmm, the light's on outside. He must be out on the back porch." *She exits stage left and is heard off-stage.* "What are you doing out here at three' o'clock in the morning?"

Jake "I'm trying to settle this baby down, and I guess I nodded off"

Marcia: "What baby? What are you talking about? There's no baby here, and nobody that lives around here even has a baby. Come on back inside." *They both re-enter from stage left.*

Jake: "There was a baby here. A little girl, not more than a year old. I picked her up at the bottom of the stairs."

Marcia: "Are you sure you didn't dream up the whole thing? Where did the baby come from and where did she go?"

Jake: "I don't know, but look at this footprint on my robe." *He points to the spot.* "Where did that come from?"

Marcia: *(exasperated)* "Oh, I don't know. Maybe it's from the stork that brought the baby to you in your dream. Most likely you spilled something on yourself again. Come on and get back to bed; we'll talk about this in the morning." *They both exit stage right.*

Blackout

Scene 2 8:00 AM the same morning

Lights come up on a kitchen table and chairs center stage. Sitting at the table is Marcia, drinking a cup of coffee, and staring off into space with a furrowed brow. Jake enters from stage right, pours himself a cup of coffee, and sits down at the table with her. No one speaks for a minute or so.

Marcia: “I looked at the stain on your robe, and I agree that it looks like a baby’s footprint. I also went outside, and found a bunch of little footprints in the flower bed. The morning paper didn’t say anything about a missing little girl, but I have a theory about what you saw last night. I think it was a banshee.”

Jake: “A banshee, eh? I didn’t know that they came over here from the old sod. How do you think they got here from the old country?”

Marcia: “How should I know? They probably came over in steerage like your whole Irish trash family did.”

Jake: “You still think you married beneath yourself, eh? I for one don’t believe the family lore about your ancestors coming over on the Mayflower. If they did, it was as indentured servants.”

Marcia: “Ha, you’re just jealous of my family.”

Jake: “Yeah, your father being a drunk and dying of alcoholism. I’m jealous of that. At least no one in my family ever went to jail, like your brother the eminent doctor.”

Marcia: “He was a victim of circumstance. It wasn’t his fault.”

Jake: “Right; he didn’t know writing prescriptions for pain killers to anyone that wanted them was illegal, did he? Nor was insisting on cash for the appointments, and keeping all the money off the books was wrong either, was it?” *Marcia just sits there fuming and Jake finally continues.* “Well, anyway, how did we get so off topic? Let’s get back to your theory about the baby. If it was a banshee, then I guess someone we know is going to die very soon.”

Marcia: “Probably you. After all, you’re five years older than I am, and in much poorer health.”

Jake: “So, you think I’m going to be checking out soon? Well, I’ve lived a good life, and got in my threescore and ten years, plus a couple of bonus ones. We better make sure that all our accounts are in order today. I’ll call our attorney and have him check our wills and such to see if they are up to date. And I’ll show you where all the utility meters and shut-offs are, and where I keep all our important records.”

Marcia: “Good idea. Perhaps we can also stop at the bank, and go over what’s in the safe deposit box as well.”

Jake: “We’ll make a day out of it, and then go out to eat to cap it off. It will be like old times again.”

Marcia: “You wish!”

Blackout

Scene 3 8:00 PM the same day

Lights come up on a kitchen table and chairs center stage. Sitting at the table is Marcia. Jake enters from stage right, carrying a tray with two glasses on it. He sets the tray on the table, and sits down.

Jake: “Well, we had a good day today. Everything is taken care of, so I mixed us a couple of drinks to celebrate.”

Marcia: “You know I’m not supposed to drink alcohol after taking my medicine.”

Jake: “C’mon, the doctor said an occasional drink won’t hurt you. Besides, it’s a special occasion; after all these years, you’ll finally be rid of me. Here’s to whatever comes!” *They both raise their glasses and clink them together.*

Marcia: “I’ll drink to that!” *They sit for a few seconds looking at each other.*

Jake: “Will you miss me when I’m gone?”

Marcia: *(laughing)* “Yeah, like missing a toothache!”

Jake: *(to the audience)* “I thought so....”

Marcia: “What was that you said?”

Jake: “Just ‘I’ll miss you too.’” *They finish their drinks in silence, and then Marcia gets up.*

Marcia: “We’ll, I’m feeling really sleepy. I’m going to bed. Will you be up soon?”

Jake: “I’ll be up in a few minutes.” *Marcia exits stage right. Jake sits for a few seconds, and then the sound of a baby crying is heard from off-stage.*

Blackout (slow fade)

Scene 4 8:00 PM one month later

Lights come up on a kitchen table and chairs center stage. Jake enters from stage right, wearing a black armband and carrying a drink glass and a liquor bottle. He sets the bottle and glass on the table, and then sits down.

Jake: "Well, the mourning period is over." *He takes off the armband and tosses it on the floor.* "No use pretending anymore. I think I made a good show of it to all our friends; the devoted husband losing his life-long companion. What a sad story. Boo hoo." *He pours himself a drink from the bottle.*

Jake: "Here's to you Marcia. *He first raises the glass, and then points the glass to the floor.* "Hmm, you're probably down there, not up above. You *should* be after the way you treated me for the last twenty five years." *He sips his drink, really relishing it.*

Jake: "Ah...that's good stuff. I guess you didn't expect the doddering old fool to poison you, did you? No one but the banshee knew what I was planning. Natural causes my friend the coroner said, and because of your age, there was no autopsy. Well, it was just an overdose of your medicine, which combined with the alcohol was enough to carry you off, so they wouldn't have found anything suspicious anyway. Good thing you left instructions to be cremated; that took care of any possible remaining evidence. Yes, I committed the perfect crime. Now I can live my remaining years in peace." *He takes another drink. From off-stage comes the sound of a baby crying. Jake looks off to stage left, and then rises to his feet.*

Jake: "No...no! Not me!" *He heads for stage left, and then collapses holding his chest.* "It's not fair....I committed the perfect crime...got away with it...."

Blackout

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