

BABYHEAD

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who (Double Casting is Encouraged.)

DEBORAH – woman, 41.

SIMON – man, 68, slight southern accent.

FERNANDO – man, late 20s, Brazilian with an accent.

SID VICIOUS – a bird incarnation of the famous British punk rocker.

SAGE – a wise bird.

POOPER – a simple, lovable bird.

FRIEND ONE – 30s or 40s, male or female, partnered with Friend Two, concerned.

FRIEND TWO – 30s or 40s, male or female, partnered with Friend One.

DOCTOR – adult male, comic timing.

MORGUEMAN – adult male, comic timing.

BABYHEAD – a disembodied voice.

COWBOY – adult male, southern accent.

1.

(Three birds onstage, floating over a hospital bed. They address the audience.)

SAGE

There's a town in central Texas, just off the Llano, named Babyhead.

POOPER

It's near the mountain, it's named after the mountain really

SID VICIOUS

It's named after the cemetery.

SAGE

The story goes

SID VICIOUS

It's probably not true. It's "oral" history. You can't check your sources.

SAGE

The story goes that during the time of settlement of Texas, when everyone was traveling in covered wagons

SID VICIOUS

Hiding from us – the pussies.

POOPER

I would have shat on their heads.

SAGE

Texas – and most of the country really – was still pretty wild, and still in the process of being taken from the Indians. One of the main military forces at the time was the settlements, because they could fill up the territory of many of the mostly nomadic tribes. Also, once there's a settlement, the settlement demands to be protected, so killing is justified.

SID

Your killer comes out in the name of defense.

SAGE

The story goes that the Comanche, in order to send a clear message to the settlers, a clear message that they were not welcome in Indian country, stole a baby girl from one of the settlement camps before they settled.

POOPER

Savages. Baby-Stealers.

SID VICIOUS

That's war.

SAGE

They chopped off the baby's head and put it on a spike on top of a mountain. As a symbol.

SID VICIOUS

GET THE FUCK OUT! Right?

POOPER

Right.

SAGE

Right. And that mountain became known as Babyhead Mountain.

POOPER

Unbelievable, right? They named the mountain after that? I would have named it Sunshine Hill or something like that. Happiness Grove, not Babyhead.

SAGE

The land was fertile there, so many ranches started to sprout up. Eventually, it became a town of sorts. They didn't have a post office for years, but, they found that they did need one civic institution – a cemetery.

SID VICIOUS

BABYHEAD CEMETERY!

SAGE

Right. And from that, the town got its name.

POOPER

From a baby's head on a spike.

SAGE

From a cemetery named after a mountain named after a baby's head on a spike.

SID VICIOUS

Fuck me.

POOPER

No thanks.

SAGE

This is the stuff that floats in the air in Texas.

POOPER

I would have named it Happy Happy Sunshineville Cemetery. Why would you build your life around a terrible event like that? Don't take the Indian name. Why let them win? They're baby-killers.

2.

(The birds clear to reveal Deborah in the hospital bed. Deborah is holding the bruised and disfigured carcass of her stillborn child. She holds it to her breast, with love.)

FRIEND ONE

Deborah.

DEBORAH

Get a picture.

FRIEND ONE

What?

DEBORAH

Get a picture of me with my son.

(Friend One and Two look at each other. Friend Two goes to take the picture.)

FRIEND TWO

Ready?

DEBORAH

Yes. *(Friend Two takes picture.)* I want you to get one up close too.

FRIEND TWO

Can you still feel the drugs?

FRIEND ONE

She didn't have any drugs.

TWO

They were talking about drugs.

ONE

She said she didn't want any.

DEBORAH

Take some more pictures. It's digital, so you don't have to worry about wasting any film.

ONE
Deborah.

DEBORAH
What?

ONE
Can we let the doctor back in the room?

DEBORAH
Not yet.

ONE
I think they should take him now. It's been three hours.

DEBORAH
Say his name first.

ONE
What?

TWO
I'll go get the doctor. (*exits.*)

ONE
You're probably hungry sweetheart. Let's get something to eat.

DEBORAH
The doctor's an idiot. Say his name?

ONE
The baby?

DEBORAH
Yes.

ONE
Why?

DEBORAH
Just do it.

ONE
Fernandinho.

DEBORAH
'Dino. He exists.

ONE
Existed.

DEBORAH
He exists.

ONE
Maybe somewhere. Somewhere else.

DEBORAH
Did Fernando come?

ONE
He's in Africa, sweetheart.

DEBORAH
I thought he'd come.

ONE
He couldn't have. *(beat)* C'mon, Deborah. Deborah Dearheart. We're going to help you get on the other side of this.

DEBORAH
You couldn't possibly understand.

ONE
It doesn't matter whether I do or not, I'll help you.

DEBORAH
It matters.

(Two returns with the Doctor, who is comically drunk.)

DOCTOR
(He burps a small burp.) Hi. *(He pulls out a bottle of booze and offers them a taste. They all just look.)* Babies are always a disappointment. Whether they're born dead or alive. There's no way your child can live up to your expectations. Especially if you're someone who has wanted one, someone who has thought your whole life about the child you'd someday have. The child is a fantasy. A kid that will have and be everything that you were not, who will do everything that you couldn't do. You've disappointed your mother. Think about it. She wanted you to be a great dancer. She wanted you to be Nureyev. Instead, you're just who you are. And your mother has had to change her expectations of you as you've grown up. She's had to change what it is that makes her

DOCTOR

proud – what she wants for you – all to be a supportive, good mother. But you haven't given her what she really wanted and that's why she wants grandkids so badly. She's given up on you. You're hopeless. *(He drinks.)* When children die young, we always talk about the potential that was lost. What could have been. It's better to lose them this way. They remain a fantasy. They are great dancers, great poets all.

DEBORAH

No one who has a baby talks that way.

DOCTOR

They're cowards. They get overwhelmed by those baby googilee eyes. That doesn't make it the truth.

DEBORAH

I suppose you could argue the same about doctors.

DOCTOR

What's that?

DEBORAH

They're always a disappointment. All they ever do is give you a prescription and allow your health to get worse and worse.

DOCTOR

(scribbles a prescription and tosses it to Deborah.) Here. Take these when you feel like it. It will help with the swelling and it'll kill the milk production. Anyone else need drugs?

(Friend One and Two shake their heads no.)

DEBORAH

Doc.

DOCTOR

Yes?

DEBORAH

Do you still have to pay if you're baby dies?

DOCTOR

Oh yes. Gotta pay. Everybody's got to pay.

DEBORAH

You're all sons of bitches. I should sue you.

DOCTOR

It's time for me to take the baby to the morgue.

DEBORAH

Say his name.

DOCTOR

I don't do that kind of thing.

DEBORAH

You just kill them. You don't say their names?

DOCTOR

Give me the baby, please.

DEBORAH

You're a drunkard.

DOCTOR

I'm, uh, conducting an experiment. Give me the baby.

DEBORAH

No.

DOCTOR

Give me the baby.

DEBORAH

No.

ONE

Deborah.

DEBORAH

You fuck off.

DOCTOR

Give me the baby or I'll get a nurse in here to restrain you.

DEBORAH

I'd like to see the nurse who's gonna rip this child from my arms, you mother fucker.
You're welcome to give it the best goddamn shot you have.

(pause)

TWO

The body doesn't matter, Deborah. It's just a dead body. He exists. He just doesn't exist in that body. It's a nutshell. *(beat)* This, in your arms, is not your baby boy. This is the package he didn't come in. Loosen your grip, Deborah. Give him a chance to breath. *(Two takes the baby and hands it to the doctor, who exits with it.)* Let's go home.

3.

(Deborah's cell phone rings. After a few rings, she hits ignore. Fernando appears in a pool of light with his cell phone. He is calling from Africa and leaving a message.)

FERNANDO

Happy birthday! Happy Happy Birthday! Was it today? Haaaaappppppyyy first birthday doo-doo-doo dooooo! Minha Querida. *(he sighs.)* I hope you are well and that you are experiencing your happy mama baby after-glow. I don't know the right way you say that. Things are going well here, we haven't begun construction yet, but I am meeting good people. I met a woman yesterday who has been a refugee in eight different countries in her lifetime. Isn't that amazing? In Europe and in Africa. The people here – they have been through such incredible things in their lives. It's like the favelas in Brazil, except it's totally different because it's Africa and not Brazil. Oh. And the coffee. The coffee here is amazing – it's so much richer than anything you can get in Texas. I'm not sure what else to say. I hope that the first days of motherhood agree with you. You have something to be proud of. You did it, and you did it without my support. Not everyone could have such an accomplishment. I wish you congratulations from the bottom of my heart, Meu Bem. I will try you again in a few days. I can check email usually twice a day, so let me hear from you. Goodnight dear. Get some sleep.

4.

(Sid Vicious and Pooper are carrying in boxes of printed paper. The boxes are labeled from eras in Deborah's life, things like "Teenage," "After the break up with Richard," "The Port Arthur Project," "Meeting Fernando," "Memories of Playgrounds," etc. While Sid and Pooper lug in the heavy boxes, Sage speaks to the audience.)

SAGE

(to audience)

Birds are dirty scavengers that will do anything for food. This is why you can see us around the city, chewing on gum wrappers, old hot dogs, soda cans. We don't give a fuck. Sometimes you might think a bird is brave, the way you'll catch one inside a public building, flying around inside a train or a bus station, boldly going where birds don't go. It's not bravery. We're just hungry. Always hungry. It's for this reason that we're on every street corner, every bus stop, every spot you leave trash in your wake.

SID VICIOUS

Oy! You want to help us with these boxes?

SAGE

(to audience, twisting her head in the quizzical way that birds do)
Maybe you think we don't see you?

SID VICIOUS

Oy! You gonna keep blabbing on?

POOPER

(from offstage) She not helping?

SAGE

I'm helping.

SID VICIOUS

You're running your gob.

SAGE

I'm organizing.

SID VICIOUS

Organizing?

SAGE

Someone's got to make sense of it.

SID VICIOUS

So you organize while we do all the lifting?

POOPER

(Enters, grunting and out of breath, and puts a heavy box down.)

Oh man. This sucks. I hate carrying heavy stuff. Let's go shit on someone's car.

SID VICIOUS

Brilliant.

POOPER

Really? I saw a black caddy out front. We could bomb the hell out of it.

SID

Right on. *(to Sage)* You want to come along, or should you stay behind and "organize?"

(Sid and Pooper exit. Sage looks quizzically at the audience then follows along.)

5.

(Later, Deborah visits the morgue. The morgue should be designed with either large hanging slabs of meat – like a butcher’s freezer – or with an open packet of ground chuck under a heat lamp. Deborah looks nervous and out of place.)

MORGUEMAN

First time in the morgue?

DEBORAH

Yes.

MORGUEMAN

And you’re Deborah?

DEBORAH

Yes. I came to identify the body.

(A dead baby falls from the ceiling.)

MORGUEMAN

Is this your baby?

DEBORAH

That’s him.

MORGUEMAN

You want to take a closer look?

DEBORAH

Yes.

(they walk over to the body.)

DEBORAH

Is the cause of death known?

MORGUEMAN

He hung himself.

DEBORAH

I’m sorry?

MORGUEMAN

He’s hung himself.

(pause)

MORGUEMAN

Nah, I'm just playing. It looks as though he probably choked on the umbilical cord. It's unfortunate. Often, the doctors can catch this kind of thing and induce labor so the baby doesn't choke, but I suppose that wasn't possible in this case.

DEBORAH

Right.

MORGUEMAN

You see the marks around the neck? And the discoloration? That's how we know his oxygen was cut off.

DEBORAH

Oh. That's the, uh, reason he's all bruised-looking?

MORGUEMAN

Right. *(beat)* Is your husband going to want to come by and have a look as well, or....

DEBORAH

My husband?

MORGUEMAN

Sometimes, especially when it's children for some reason, more family wants to have a look. If not, I can get started with the work – it's not a problem. You ordered cremation, right?

DEBORAH

That's right.

MORGUEMAN

So... Should I hold off or go ahead?

DEBORAH

I'm not married. His father is in Rwanda. So, you can go ahead.

MORGUEMAN

Rwanda?

DEBORAH

(Attempting to restrain her emotion, she tries not to speak, but this leaks out in drops.)

Yes. He's a diplomat. He oversees development projects for the Brazilian government. He's Brazilian. We met when he was here, doing some work with the consulate. But, he's in Rwanda now. The Brazilian government has struck a deal with the leaders of one of the provinces in the Northeast. They're building a milk factory. Uganda, Rwanda's neighbor to the north, has made a good deal of money by increasing its milk production and exporting milk to other countries within Africa. Rwanda is hoping to move into this

DEBORAH

competitive milk market. It's actually quite complicated, but... I won't bore you with it... It's very important work though. Could be a step towards, "releasing the country from the shackles of poverty," as they say. Through milk production. Which would be great, considering the suffering they went through in '94 with the genocide. And we're not married, he's not my husband, so he couldn't be here. And I understand that, the baby was my decision, and he's doing important work. And he never made me any promises, so he's not breaking a vow or anything like that. Anyway...

(After a long pause, the Morgue man bursts out laughing.)

MORQUEMAN

Lady, you are too much.

DEBORAH

What?

MORQUEMAN

That was rich. Milk production? Look – thanks for coming in and identifying the body...

DEBORAH

What do you mean?

MORQUEMAN

Was there something else?

DEBORAH

No. Like what?

MORQUEMAN

I don't know, Lady, that's why I'm asking you. Did you need something else from me?

DEBORAH

I don't think so.

MORQUEMAN

You alright?

DEBORAH

I'm confused.

MORQUEMAN

There's a place for coffee right around the corner.

DEBORAH
I don't drink coffee.

MORGUEMAN
Well maybe you want to sit and grab a cup right now?

DEBORAH
Are you asking me on a date?

MORGUEMAN
(laughs) You gotta stop with the jokes. You're killin' me. Seriously.

DEBORAH
-

MORGUEMAN
Not with me. I'm saying maybe you want to just go and sit for a minute before you get in your car.

DEBORAH
Why would I want to do that?

MORGUEMAN
I don't know, Lady. Maybe because you're thirsty.

DEBROAH
What the fuck are you trying to do to me?

MORGUEMAN
Okay. Listen. Most people, when they come in here – it's an emotional experience for them. I don't care. I work here, okay? All I'm saying is, cars weigh many tons and when they get into crashes people die. So, if you feel your head is not exactly screwed on right – maybe you want to sit down in one place for a few minutes, watch the world go by and get your bearings. But, if you don't want to do that, you don't have to. You can do whatever you want – it's not like we're in Rwanda, or wherever it is. Okay?

DEBORAH
Right.

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!
TO READ THE REST OF THE PLAY, PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR :
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