

LIKE A BABY

© By Greg Vovos

CHARACTERS:

MOM: A new mother who hasn't slept in a long time.

DAD: He also hasn't slept; he talks fast, and he's closer to the breaking point than Mom.

SETTING

Middle of the night. Just outside the baby's bedroom.

SYNOPSIS

Two sleep-deprived parents are at their wits end as they try to find a way to get their crying baby to sleep through the night.

LIKE A BABY

Lights up as a MOM and DAD stand outside a closed door. The sound of a baby crying is heard from within. And it's not a whimper; it's a strong relentless cry.

MOM

We have to go in there.

DAD

We can't go in there.

Baby wails.

MOM

I can't just let him cry like that.

DAD

I can't either. But we have to. We have to. Otherwise he will never learn to sleep.

Baby wail.

MOM

I think he's hungry.

DAD

He's not hungry.

MOM

That sounds like his hungry cry.

DAD

It's not Chewbacca enough to be his hungry cry. *(He roars like Chewbacca.)*

MOM

You're right. But he needs us. Look I'm leaking.

She indicates a wet spot on her T-shirt caused by leaking breast milk. The cries intensify.

DAD

Well, maybe, he is hungry. I don't know.

MOM

He's not hungry.

DAD

Are you sure? That cry does sound a bit—

MOM

He's not hungry I was just saying that—

A REAL LOUD WAIL. DAD grabs the door handle. MOM grabs DAD.

What do you think you're doing???

DAD

I can't take it anymore. We have to do something.

MOM

You just said a second ago that we can't.

DAD

It seems like an hour ago. I'm losing my mind. Sometimes I wonder if we're even capable of being parents. Maybe we should drop him off on our neighbor's doorstep.

She slaps him.

MOM

Pull yourself together. We'd be the first people they suspect.

More crying.

DAD

But he just keeps on crying. When will he stop crying?!?!?

The baby stops crying. Silence. More silence.

MOM

Do you think he's done?

DAD

I think he might be.

MOM

I think you're right.

The baby whimpers.

DAD

Oh shit.

MOM
Shhh. It's nothing.

SILENCE. SILENCE.

Oh thank god. One more second and I would have gone in there.

DAD
Finally, we can get some sleep.

MOM
I love that smell.

DAD
What smell?

MOM
Him. I love how you can smell him in the house. It's like now our house smells like a home.

DAD
It is a nice smell. *(He puts his arm around her.)* See? Being a parent really isn't that hard. I don't know why people make such a big deal about it.

MOM
I feel like a completely new person. Now that he's not crying, it's like all the world is at peace.

DAD
Resting in peace.

MOM
What?

DAD
Resting in peace.

MOM
Why did you just say that?

DAD
What?

MOM

Resting in peace. Resting in Peace. Why would you say RESTING IN PEACE!?!

DAD

Because everyone's resting. The whole world's resting. We can rest.

MOM

Yeah, but resting in peace?! That's weird. Macabre.

DAD

It's late. It means nothing. Let's go to bed.

Silence. MOM looks spooked.

What's wrong?

MOM

(Concerned) He's very quiet.

DAD

Yeah, that's a good thing.

MOM

Strangely silent.

DAD

He's sleeping. The door is closed. He's silent.

MOM

You said resting in peace. You don't think—

DAD

You have got to be kidding me?! You definitely need to sleep.

MOM

I can't sleep now.

DAD

You've slept four hours in the last three days. How could you not sleep? I might be sleeping right now for all I know.

MOM

I can't sleep when I think my son might be dead thank you very much.

DAD

Oh for the love of God he is not dead. He's sleeping.

MOM

I'm going in there.

DAD

You can't go in there.

MOM

I have to go in there.

DAD

You'll wake him up.

MOM

You don't know that. I'll be quiet.

DAD

It doesn't matter. He'll smell you. He'll smell your milk. Look at you!

SHE looks down at her T-shirt which has two big circles on her chest from milk leaking from her breast.

MOM

He won't smell me.

DAD

He has a very keen sense of smell. You can't deny that.

MOM

I just want to check in on him. It will be okay.

DAD

And if you wake him up he may never fall asleep again and we will die if not by natural causes than by chewing off our own limbs or from leaping from the roof of the house because we were instructed to do so by that spooky bird in the tree!

MOM

What are you talking about?

DAD

(On the verge of tears.) I don't know. I don't know. I'm losing all sense of reality. I can feel the lobes of my brain rubbing against each other, please, please, please let us go to sleep while we still have the chance.

MOM

You are really losing it, aren't you?

DAD holds onto her for dear life.

DAD

Yes, I am!

MOM

Okay, let's get you to bed.

DAD

Thank you.

As they walk toward their bedroom, she runs back towards the baby's door; he turns and tackles her just before she reaches the baby's door. He has her pinned to the ground.

What the hell are you doing??

MOM

I have to get in there. I have to make sure he's alive! Don't you care about him?

DAD

Of course I care, which is why I can't let you in there. We can't wake him up. Let him sleep. Let the boy sleep. Let me sleep. Let you sleep. Let sleeping dogs lie...a...sleep.

MOM

I can't breathe with you on top of me!

SHE pushes him off. HE rolls over, maybe into the fetal position sucking his thumb.

DAD

We need to get control of the situation. Somehow we lost control.

MOM

(A realization.) You're right.

DAD

What?

MOM

You're right. Let's go to bed.

DAD

What are you up to?

MOM

Nothing. I agree with you. We have lost control. We're overtired, and probably entertaining hallucinatory thoughts. If we don't have control of ourselves, how the hell do we expect to control the situation well enough to raise a six-month-old baby? Let's go to bed.

MOM tries to lift him off the floor. DAD doesn't budge.

What's wrong?

DAD

Nothing.

MOM

Then let's go.

DAD starts to sniff the air like he's a bloodhound. He keeps sniffing.

What are you doing?

DAD

Do you smell it?

MOM

What?

DAD

Him?

MOM

Him?

DAD

Yes, him. Our son. Do you smell him? I don't smell him. I just smell your perfume.

MOM

That's because I'm wearing perfume and I'm right next to you.

DAD

That's disturbing. I should be smelling him too.

MOM

He's in his room. I'm right next to you. It's not that odd. Let's go to bed. Quit flip-flopping on me.

DAD

Why do you have to wear that damn perfume anyway?

MOM

You bought it for me!

DAD

I don't care. I hate that perfume. If you ever wear that again we're getting a divorce.

MOM

Fine. Let's go to bed.

DAD

Are you sure it's okay?

MOM

Yes, I smell him.

DAD

Really?

MOM

(Slight pause.) Yeah.

DAD

You hesitated.

MOM

Only because I was making sure. *(She sniffs)*. But yeah, I smell him. I think.

DAD

You're not sure?

MOM

Well, this perfume is strong. It's kinda —

DAD
I'm going in.

MOM
WAIT!

DAD
Why?

MOM
It's just that – Well – Are you sure this is the right thing?

DAD
Of course I'm not sure. I'm a sleep-deprived maniac. But I don't care. I have to be sure my son is still alive or I will never sleep again. Except in death.

MOM
Okay, you go. I'll wait outside. You'll be less likely to wake him.

DAD
Okay.

HE begins to go to the door.

MOM
Shhhhhhh!

DAD
I didn't say anything.

MOM
Your knee cracked. Don't let your cracking bones wake him up.

DAD
I'll just open the door and see if I can see his chest moving.

MOM
You won't be able to tell that from the door. You'll have to go all the way in. Just be quiet.

DAD
I'll be quite like a mouse.

MOM

Mice aren't that quiet.

DAD
I'll be quite like a dead mouse.

MOM
I'm coming with you.

DAD
Why?

MOM
Because I said so and I'm his mother and that's all the reason I need.

DAD
Okay, okay. We'll do it together.

DAD looks worried.

MOM
What's wrong?

DAD
If we walk through this door and wake him up we might never sleep another day in our lives.

MOM
Well, that's the sacrifice we'll have to make. I'm going in.

SHE reaches for the door handle and opens the door. DAD follows right behind. We hear a FART. They stop in their tracks with their heads inside the doorway. They stay like that for a moment and then come out without ever having stepped a foot inside.

Did you smell that?

DAD
(With pride) Did I smell that?

MOM
You know what it is?

DAD
What kind of father would I be if I didn't know the smell of my own son's poop? I'm so proud of that kid.

MOM

Me too. I'm so happy I could –

He cups her mouth.

DAD

Shhhhhh. *(Trying to control his enthusiasm.)* The best part is we did it together.

MOM

And we took control of the situation. We did not let the situation control us.

DAD

Let's smell it again.

MOM

Okay.

They open the door again. They smell and look back into each other's eyes.

DAD

He's alive!!

MOM

HE'S ALIVE!!!!

They hug each other and dance in celebration, making so much noise that they wake the baby, and he starts to SCREAM! They look each other in horror as lights fade to black.

END OF PLAY