

The beginning of

**BIRTHIN' BABY** (from **PLAYING DOCTOR**)

a comic fantasia in one act

by Rich Orloff

*Place:* A hospital room

*Time:* The present

*Characters:* MOM, a very, very, very, very, very expectant mother  
DOCTOR, her overworked obstetrician (female or male)  
GRANDMA, her opinionated mother  
MINISTER, a man of the cloth, clearly childless  
HUSBAND, her easily distracted husband  
MIDWIFE, her dependable caregiver (well, until...)  
BABY, a manipulative brat – and very skillful at it  
(female or male, to be played by a puppet)

As the play begins, MOM sits in her hospital bed. She is *extremely* pregnant and already looks fatigued from labor. She looks at her pregnancy.

MOM

Hello?... Hello?... Hello?!...  
How are you? Are you ready?...  
Come out come out wherever you are...  
Testing, one-two-three, testing...

Mom sighs. The DOCTOR enters. The Doctor looks like he or she has been on call for about two weeks without rest but is overcompensating.

DOCTOR

So how's my favorite patient doing?

MOM

Oh, Doctor, I'm so glad you're here. I feel like I've been here for hours, days even, and my husband hasn't gotten here yet, and I called my mother, and she hasn't gotten here yet, and and –

DOCTOR

Relax. There's nothing to be afraid of.

MOM

I'm not afraid. Well, not *too* afraid.  
But it's my first baby and –

DOCTOR

Well, it's not my first baby. I've delivered –  
(starts a huge yawn, then stifles it:)  
Sorry.

MOM

When was the last time you got  
a good night's sleep?

DOCTOR

Undergrad. But I didn't become a doctor  
to *sleep*. Sleeping's for dentists. So I see  
on your chart, Gladys –

MOM

That's not my name.

DOCTOR

Of course it is. It says so on the chart.

MOM

It's not my name.

DOCTOR

When did you change your name?

MOM

You've been my OB/GYN for nine months now.  
Don't you recognize me?

DOCTOR

Sure I do. You're the pregnant lady.

MOM

Am I having a bad dream?

DOCTOR

Of course not. Open wide.

The Doctor places a red lollipop in Mom's mouth as if it were a thermometer.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Close.

The Doctor checks Mom's pulse and takes out the lollipop.

DOCTOR (cont'd)  
Aha! You have an overheated cherry.

MOM  
I *am* dreaming.

DOCTOR  
I had a dream once. To cure the sick  
and serve humankind. Then my accountant  
talked some sense into me.  
(looking at another chart:)  
So now, Ethel –

MOM  
That's not my name either.

DOCTOR  
Are you sure you're pregnant?

MOM  
(highly nervous by now:)  
Oh my God, oh my God, you have no idea  
who I am, do you?

DOCTOR  
(forcefully)  
Stop whining!

MOM  
(cowered)  
Don't yell at me.

DOCTOR  
Well I can't reassure you; your insurance  
doesn't cover it. Now then –

The Doctor gives another loud, long YAWN.

MOM  
Are you going to be alert during the delivery?

DOCTOR  
I'll be fine. I just took an amphetamine  
with a double espresso chaser.

MOM  
Why did you do that?!

DOCTOR

I didn't want the antihistamine I took  
to make me drowsy.

(gives a hearty sneeze, then:)

Sorry.

MOM

You don't have a cold, do you?

DOCTOR

It's nothing; I'm just susceptible to germs  
when I'm hungover. Now then, Louise –

MOM

That's not my name either!

DOCTOR

Is this going to be a problem delivery?!

MOM

It's just –

The Doctor is about to sneeze again but then falls asleep and SNORES.

MOM (cont'd)

Doctor? Doctor?... Doctor!

The Doctor is startled awake.

DOCTOR

Let's order tests!

MOM

I'm beginning to have my doubts about this.

DOCTOR

About what?

MOM

I'm putting my baby's life literally in your –

DOCTOR

Don't worry. We always use hand sanitizer.

The Doctor sneezes.

MOM

Okay. Now I'm scared.

DOCTOR

There's *nothing* to be scared of. Giving birth is as natural as passing a pumpkin through a quarter-inch pipe.

(about to sneeze:)

Ah, ah, ah –

(impulse controlled, then:)

Okay, now let's do a pelvic exam.

(sneezes)

*Choo!!!!!!*

MOM

I'm not letting you sneeze between my legs!

DOCTOR

Stop worrying! I'm Board-certified!

Mom closes her legs. The Doctor tries to pry them open.

MOM

Get away from me!

DOCTOR

I've got a job to do!

(suddenly woozy)

Whoa!

The Doctor's legs turn all rubbery.

MOM

What's wrong?

DOCTOR

The antihistamine just kicked in.

MOM

You're definitely not delivering my baby.

DOCTOR

Well, I'm not driving home in this condition!  
Okay, now spread those legs.

MOM

No.

DOCTOR

Spread `em!

MOM

No!

By now, the Doctor is trying with full effort to spread Mom's legs.  
Mom is resisting with all of her strength.

DOCTOR

Spread `em!

MOM

No!

DOCTOR

You want a C-section?!

Mom grabs a bed pan and conks the Doctor on the head.  
The Doctor wobbles all over the room, ending up by the door.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

I knew I should've become a dermatologist.  
Ah-ah-ahh..... choo!

The force of the sneeze pushes the Doctor out of the room.  
From the hallway, we hear a crash. Mom leans back and sighs.

From under the sheets by Mom's legs, the BABY (to be played by a puppet)  
emerges, looks around for a moment to make sure the coast is clear,  
and then springs out to surprise Mom with:

BABY

I'm gonna get you! I'm gonna get you!  
(to us, with mischievous glee,  
a kind of machine gun rat-a-tatta:)  
Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh.

The Baby quickly disappears back into the womb.

MOM

What the - ?

GRANDMA enters.

GRANDMA

Oh, there you are! Hello, precious.

MOM

Mom! I'm so glad you're finally -

GRANDMA

I wasn't talking to *you*.

(to Mom's belly:)

You're so cute, you're so cute, you're so cute.  
I love you already! And if there's anything  
Mommy does which you don't like, just come  
to Grandma and complain! Complain all you  
want! I remember when I took your mommy  
home from the hospital, I told her, "One day,  
you'll be a mommy, too, and I'm going to  
have to second-guess every thing you do."

You're so cute, you're so cute, you're so cute.

(to Mom:)

You look awful. How many times have  
I told you: When you leave the house –

GRANDMA and MOM

Wear makeup.

MOM

Why do I need to wear makeup?

GRANDMA

What if one of the doctors is single?

MOM

I'm married. *Happily* married.

GRANDMA

You're in a hospital. Here's your chance to trade up.

MOM

Mom, I know you weren't thrilled when I married –

GRANDMA

I have nothing against him as your husband,  
just as a person.

MOM

Mom, enough. I need your help.

GRANDMA

And that's what mothers are for – to let  
their children know they need help.

MOM

I'm going to be a mom soon and  
I'm not sure I'm really ready –

GRANDMA

Don't worry. Billions of women have raised children, and you're just as competent as half of them.

MOM

It's not just mothering. It's giving birth.

GRANDMA

There's nothing to be afraid of. Giving birth is as natural as passing a small pig through a garden hose. I remember when I carried you. I used to call you my little –

MOM and GRANDMA

tumor of love.

GRANDMA

Your father had impregnated me on New Year's Eve, which is why I throw up now whenever I see champagne. It also meant I was forced to have my last trimester during –

MOM and GRANDMA

the hottest summer on record.

GRANDMA

But did I complain?

MOM and GRANDMA

Never.

GRANDMA

Because I knew that the first lesson of motherhood is that you have to sacrifice *everything* for the child, so that when the child grows up, it knows how to be miserable.

MOM

You succeeded completely.

GRANDMA

But when my water broke in the kitchen and I thought, "Oh my God, the cleaning woman just waxed this floor", and your dad drove me to the hospital, accelerating and braking, accelerating and braking, till I thought my baby was going to ricochet onto the dashboard –



MOM

Mom –

GRANDMA

– and they wheeled me into the operating room and insisted I stay awake during the delivery, I thought, “Just kill me now.” But, but when you finally emerged out of my “female area”, I took one look at you and you were so... messy. Covered with slime, head to toe, like you’d been shrink-wrapped in *gunk*. I’m surprised they didn’t kick you out of the hospital for being unsterile.

MOM

All children are –

GRANDMA

At least when they sell you a new car, they wash it first. And then more gunk came out. It was like afterbirth of a nation. And more and more. Who knew women had that much polenta?

MOM

Placenta.

GRANDMA

To this day I can’t eat Tex-Mex food.

MOM

It’s European.

GRANDMA

Then I read that in Austria, children ate placenta for breakfast. And I finally understood World War II.

MOM

Mom, I really could use –

GRANDMA

And after you were born, my “female area” was never as tight again as it used to be.

MOM

I really don’t need to hear this.

GRANDMA

I could tell your father wasn’t happy. Sex began taking him longer and longer.

MOM

Can we change –

GRANDMA

And nobody knew then that you could  
tone up that area with kugel exercises.

MOM

Kegel!

GRANDMA

It's not kugel?

MOM

No!

GRANDMA

So the Jewish woman who offered me  
kugel at a dinner party wasn't a lesbian?

MOM

Mom!

GRANDMA

I just hope your baby isn't born dead, or  
horribly deformed, or with that gene that  
makes some kids go "you know" all the time.

MOM

I, I –

GRANDMA

Or retarded, or with extreme artism.

MOM

You mean "autism"?

GRANDMA

I mean like that boy down the block who  
used to lip-sync Judy Garland songs.

MOM

I don't care if my child is gay.

GRANDMA

Just make sure they never touch themselves, so  
they'll know they need other people to feel complete.

MOM

Mom, could I have your attention – for a mo –

GRANDMA

You're not still planning to hire a caretaker and go back to work, are you?

MOM

Yes, Mom.

GRANDMA

Great. You're leaving your own flesh-and-blood with some illegal alien, and then you'll *never* be appointed Attorney General. And when I visit, my grandchild will have an accent and ask me to cook fajitos\*.

(\*She probably means "fajitas" but mispronounces it.)

MOM

It's *my* child, Mom.

GRANDMA

Well, you're entitled to your opinion.

MOM

Mom, I was really hoping I could get some *useful* advice from you.

GRANDMA

Darling, if you want advice, just ask. What is it?

MOM

Well... well, I've read all the books.

GRANDMA

(dismissive)

Books, eh.

MOM

And I've taken classes.

GRANDMA

Classes, eh.

MOM

I'm still afraid that when the baby arrives, I won't know what to do.

GRANDMA

Parenting is easy. Just remember: Whatever you do, don't be too strict. And whatever you do, don't be too lenient. Don't give a baby a bottle for the first two weeks, but make sure to give them a bottle the first day, or they'll never accept it. When you make a decision, stick to it, but always be flexible. And definitely use *cloth* diapers, because paper diapers waste trees and because your second cousin's neighbor used paper diapers on *her* children, and one of them became dyslexic. But be sure to use *paper* diapers instead of cloth, because you don't want to risk your baby's bottom rubbing against a poorly sterilized cloth that's already had another baby's butt rubbed against it. Unless you want them to end up artistic.

MOM

Mom, that's not how it –

GRANDMA

So is there anything else I can help you with?

MOM

Well, I certainly wish there was *some way* –

GRANDMA

Have you decided what to name the baby yet? I think you should name the baby "Grandma".

MOM

What if it's a boy?

GRANDMA

"Mr. Grandma".

(to the belly:)

I love you so much! Yes I do, yes I do!  
When you visit me, I'm going to feed  
you chocolate and candy and cookies  
and ice cream – and sugar through IVs  
and then hand you back to Mommy!

MOM

(in pain from a contraction:)

*Ehhh!!!\**

(\*or whatever sound the actress feels natural saying during contractions.)

Grandma immediately runs to the door.

GRANDMA  
(calling down the hall:)  
Get the drugs!

MOM  
I don't want drugs!

GRANDMA  
I do!

MOM  
I want a completely natural birth.

GRANDMA  
Having a baby is about as natural as passing  
the Goodyear blimp through the Holland Tunnel!  
Get the drugs!

MOM  
Ohh – ohh – I'm feeling another contraction.  
(in pain from a contraction:)  
*Ehhh!!!*

GRANDMA  
(during the contraction:)  
Well, I see there's nothing for me to do here.

MOM  
Can't you offer me *any* sort of help?!!

GRANDMA  
(tossing a prescription vial from her purse:)  
Here, have some Vicodin.

MOM  
I want to feel the full experience!

GRANDMA  
I had the full experience once, and I still  
haven't recovered! Call me when my  
grandchild has been hosed off!

MOM  
Goodbye, Mom.

GRANDMA  
The full experience – *bleccchhh!*

Grandma exits. The Baby once again emerges from between the sheets, looks around to see if it's safe, and then approaches Mom.

BABY

Psst... Psst... Hey.

MOM

Huh?

BABY

You ready to negotiate?

MOM

Negotiate?

BABY

Here's what I have to offer: After a couple of months, once I figure out how to use my eye muscles, occasionally I'll look at you and smile.

MOM

Oh, good.

BABY

In return, I'm going to suck on your boobs till they become so sore you'll stop drinking milk out of solidarity with cows. Half the milk I'll spit up, but I'll still poop so often you'll swear I'm sneaking off to suck another woman's tits. However, I do promise to sleep through the night.

MOM

I'm so glad.

BABY

I define "night" as 11:30 p.m. till midnight. Oh, and I'm going to be one of those fussy babies, too. You know what "fussy" means?

MOM

Well, I think it means -

BABY

It means when I'm crabby and crying and  
company comes over, they'll look at me and say:

(in the icky sweet way  
one talks to a baby:)

"Oh, he's just being fussy."

(letting her have it:)

And then they'll go to their baby-free, germ-free,  
poop-free homes and you're stuck with me!

(to us, with mischievous glee:)

Heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh.

MOM

(beginning to feel tormented:)

What do you want from me?

BABY

Total responsibility, 24-7.

MOM

My husband plans to share the workload with me.

BABY

*Have you read the fine print?!!!*