

Oatmeal and a Cigarette

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By George Sapio

Cast

Claire: Male, 40s. Possessive, highly protective of Billy. Easily offended.

Billy: Male, 30. Curious and frustrated. Mindset is part three-year-old and part unsophisticated thirty-year-old. Note: Billy is not to be played as a “special” character; he is not intellectually or mentally impaired in any way.

Babysitter Jane: Female, 20s. Aggressive, manipulative. Knows what she wants but lacks foresight.

Set: Single set. Living room of Claire and Billy’s apartment. Seven scenes.

Synopsis: Three-year-old Billy leads a charmed life; he stays home all day, gets his diapers changed, sleeps in a crib, his mommy cooks his dinner every night, tells him nursery rhymes, and he gets to look out the window and color in his books all he wants. Except...Billy is actually thirty years old; he’s never been out of the apartment. His “mommy” is actually his older brother, who fills his head with terrifying nursery rhymes of everything outside. And the babysitter is a grad student. Her thesis topic is Billy. But she hasn’t mentioned that fact yet.

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OATMEAL AND A CIGARETTE

SCENE I

[CLAIRE enters from kitchen with a bowl of oatmeal. He crosses to BILLY's crib and sings softly]

CLAIRE

Mockingbird, little Mockingbird
Gonna buy my baby boy a mockingbird
And if that mockingbird tries to fly
Gonna sit on him and make him cry
If he don't cry and tries to sing
Gonna tie him up in my apron string
And if that apron string don't hold
He's gonna surely break my heart of gold...
Seven ayem, Billy! Time to wake up and face a brand new day!

[BILLY, dressed in a large sleeper onesie, sits up. He yawns, stretches his arms, smiles.]

BILLY

Good morning, Mommy!

CLAIRE

Good morning, little Billy boo-boo. Guess what we have for breakfast?

BILLY

Oatmeal!

CLAIRE

Is it oatmeal? I don't know...

BILLY

Oatmeal! Oatmeal! Oatmeal and raisins!

CLAIRE

Well, let's see...it's hot...it's drippy...

BILLY

Oatmeal!

CLAIRE

Oh, no...I think it's soggy corn flakes.

[BILLY's face draws into a disappointed frown]

CLAIRE

Nooo...it's oatmeal!

BILLY

Oatmeal! Yayy!

[CLAIRE gives BILLY the oatmeal bowl, which is devoured in one long gulp.]

BILLY

More!

CLAIRE

Well, Billy, you know what happens when you eat too fast.

BILLY

Fwow up?

CLAIRE

Let's just see how that bowl sits in your tummy before I get you another.

BILLY

Still hungry!

CLAIRE

Mommy has to go to work now. Maybe Jane will get you some more.

BILLY

Still hungry!

CLAIRE

Why don't you count to five minutes and then we'll see. Just look at the clock on the wall and count five minutes.

BILLY

Can we play the game for five minutes?

CLAIRE

Mommy has to finish getting ready for work.

BILLY

But I wanna play the game! I wanna play the game!

CLAIRE

Billy, Mommy has to [get ready.]

BILLY

Play game! Play game!

CLAIRE

Okay, Billy.

[BILLY runs to window]

BILLY

Come on, Mommy! Come on!

[CLAIRE follows BILLY and sits by window]

CLAIRE

Okay, Billy. Here we go. I spy with my little eye...something that begins with T.

BILLY

I spy with my little eye...umm...a tree!

CLAIRE

And what do we say about trees?

BILLY

Trees have leaves and trees have bark
Lots of trees live in the park
With lots of birds all green and red
That make filthy poop on Billy's head!

CLAIRE

That's right, Billy, bird poop is icky filthy yuck.

BILLY

More! More!

CLAIRE

I spy with my little eye...something that begins with D!

BILLY

I spy with my little eye...[something that begins with]...doggie!

CLAIRE

And doggies...?

BILLY

"Doggies have hair and carry fleas
And pee on fire plugs and big tall trees
They have big sharp teeth you should take note
Just waiting to tear out Billy's throat!"
I'm glad we don't have a doggie.

CLAIRE

Doggies are dangerous, Billy. They look all nice and friendly, but they're really vicious. Mommy has to finish [getting ready for work.]

BILLY

One more! One more! Please!!

CLAIRE

All right, Billy. Last one. I spy with my little eye...something that begins with C!

BILLY

I spy with my little eye...something that begins with...car!

CLAIRE

And what do cars do?

BILLY

"Cars go vroom and cars go fast;
As you can see when they go past;
You should never walk into the street;
'cause cars will mash you into bloody meat."

[SFX: Car horn from outside window]

BILLY

Honk, honk! Honk, honk! Car horn!

CLAIRE

That's right. It's a car horn.

BILLY

Honk! Honk! Wanna go for a car ride!

CLAIRE

Whoa, no car rides for Billy. What did we just say?

BILLY

But I wanna go inside the car! I wanna honk the horn!

CLAIRE

Car rides are dangerous, Billy. Remember what Mommy told you?

BILLY

I wanna honk the horn!

CLAIRE

You have your own car horn, don't you?

BILLY

I want a real car horn!

CLAIRE

Here, honk *your* car horn. *[Brings toy, exits to kitchen]*

BILLY

[Honks the feeble squeak toy. Gets bored, throws toy] This sucks.

CLAIRE

[On re-enter] What kind of word is that? Where did you learn that language?

BILLY

I don't know.

CLAIRE

You learned that somewhere. Where did you learn it?

BILLY

I don't know!!

CLAIRE

I should wash your mouth out with soap, Billy. You want me to do that?

BILLY

No!

CLAIRE

Where did you hear that? Was that from babysitter Jane?

BILLY

No! Babysitter Jane never says bad words!

CLAIRE

Then where did you hear it? I'm getting the soap!

BILLY

No! No soap!

CLAIRE

Where did you hear that?

BILLY

I heard it...I heard it...out the window!

CLAIRE

You heard it out the window?

BILLY

From Mr. Scary Man With the Paper Bag!

CLAIRE

What were you doing listening at the window? You know the window is supposed to be closed when Mommy's not home...Do you remember why the window is always closed?

BILLY

Because Billy could fall out and smash his head open and his brains will leak out all over the sidewalk.

CLAIRE

That's right. So no more open window and no more listening to Mr. Scary Man with the Paper Bag, is that clear? Billy?

BILLY

I made a poopy.

CLAIRE

Well, then we'll just clean you up. Billy made poopy. Billy's oatmeal goes in one end...

BILLY

And out the other! Oatmeal goes into Billy and comes out poopy!

CLAIRE

Go to your crib and I'll get you a new diaper.

[CLAIRE exits offstage]

CLAIRE (OS)

And no finger painting with poopies!

[Apartment door opens, BABYSITTER JANE enters]

BILLY

Babysitter Jane! Mommy, babysitter Jane is here!

CLAIRE (OS)

I'll be there in just a second!

JANE

Good morning, Billy!

BILLY

Good morning! How are you today?

JANE

I'm just fine, Billy. Are you looking forward to us spending the day together?

BILLY

Mommy getting me a new diaper. 'Cause I made poopy in mine.

[CLAIRE enters]

CLAIRE

Good morning, Jane. How are you today?

JANE

I'm just fine, Claire. And you?

CLAIRE

Fine as a frog's hair. And running late for work. *[Gives Jane the diaper]* Take care of this for me? Thanks.

*[CLAIRE crosses to front door; maybe she dons a coat, maybe not.
How cold is it where you are?]*

CLAIRE

I don't know if it's me or not, but it seems like we use fewer diapers on the days when you're here? How often do you change Billy?

JANE

How often? I don't know. I don't count.

CLAIRE

Guess for me.

JANE

Two, maybe three times. More when you give him oatmeal for breakfast.

CLAIRE

Well, it certainly seems strange. It seemed Monday he didn't poop at all. Never mind. Just keep an eye on his backside, okay? We don't want a pileup, do we?

JANE

Of course not, Claire. No problem.

CLAIRE

Good. Like I said, it's probably the wind blowing through the trees of my mind. Now you have a good day, Billy.

BILLY

I will!

CLAIRE

I love you!

BILLY

I love you too, Mommy!

CLAIRE

I'm going to miss you.

BILLY

I'll miss you, too!

CLAIRE

Oh, and Jane...

JANE

Yes?

CLAIRE

I'm sure I'm mistaking it, but you don't ever smoke in the apartment, do you?

JANE

Of course not!

CLAIRE

Because normally I can smell it on your clothes. I don't particularly mind it; it's impossible not to reek of tobacco when you smoke, but I thought there had been a stronger than normal smell the last few times.

JANE

I can assure you, Claire, that I do not smoke here.

CLAIRE

Good. Well I'm just a mass of worries today it seems. Between the poop question, the smoking stench and the new strange and somewhat vulgar words coming out of Billy's mouth which I'm sure he did not hear from you, well, I'm just at a loss for explanations. I just hope it's not going to be one of those days.

JANE

You have nothing to worry about, Claire. I assure you—

CLAIRE

Yes, I'm sure. And I'm not worried. Just running late, that's all. Well you be a good boy Billy and I'll see you tonight at dinner.

BILLY

Bye, Mommy!

[CLAIRE exits. JANE goes to the window and watches. BILLY scrambles out of his crib and joins her]

JANE

And there he goes, out the front door...down the street...and down the subway entrance. Hallelujah.

BILLY

I still have a poopy in my diaper.

JANE

Here's another diaper. Go change.

BILLY

But Mommy....

JANE

Mommy changes you. I know. Do you want to be a big boy? Big boys change themselves.

BILLY

I know. And big boys go on the big boy potty. I forgot again.

[BILLY exits to bathroom with diaper. JANE quickly lights a cigarette, blowing the smoke out the window. She stays at the window.]

JANE

[Sotto voce] It's worth it. It's worth it, Jane. Whatever it takes, it's worth it. We're almost there. *(Normal voice)* Billy?

BILLY

Yeah?

JANE

So have you decided about going outside yet?

BILLY

No...

JANE

(Sotto voce) You wait much longer and I'll be in diapers, too. *(Normal voice)* Billy! You've had weeks to think about it.

[BILLY reenters; JANE hurriedly drops cigarette out window.]

BILLY

Mommy says it's too dangerous for little boys.

JANE

Billy, isn't this what you've been telling me you've wanted? "I wanna go see the world." "I wanna play with other little boys."

BILLY

Yeah, I do, but...

JANE

Then there's only one way to do it. They aren't going to come up here. You have to go to them.

BILLY

But mommy—

JANE

And we have to get Mommy to agree to it. Somehow. I'm on your side, Billy.

BILLY

I like the way you smell.

JANE

And I like your smell, too, Billy. Except when you have poop in your drawers.
[*BILLY cracks up*]

BILLY

That's my diaper. [*He holds up the used diaper*]

JANE

And what do we do with used diapers?

BILLY

We put them in the diaper bin.

[*BILLY puts diaper in the bin*]

BILLY

Can I have a cigarette?

JANE

No, Billy.

BILLY

Big boys smoke cigarettes. I've seen them out the window.

JANE

Smoking cigarettes is stupid.

BILLY

You do it.

JANE

I know. I'm stupid.

BILLY

You're not stupid! You're smart! You go to college! You talk to lots of professors.

JANE

No, Billy, I'm not stupid. But people don't always make the right decision. We make mistakes and I did a bad, stupid thing when I started smoking. I wasn't thinking ahead, Billy, like I should have been. But thank you for saying I'm smart. You're really very sweet. And because I like you very much, I'm not giving you one, [*BILLY tries to argue*] so stop asking.

BILLY

Okay.

JANE

So, what shall we do? Tell some more stories?

BILLY

Uh-uh. No more stories.

JANE

Why not?

BILLY

Because remember you told me a story about Mr. Scary Man With the Paper Bag? And he...he...talks to people only he can see?

JANE

Yeah, and what about it?

BILLY

Well, he wasn't nice like you said. I was looking out the window yesterday and he was screaming! He was in the middle of the street and he was screaming at some little boys.

JANE

Oh, sh--. Brother.

BILLY

And he was really scary.

JANE

Well, Billy, he—

BILLY

And then he threw his paper bag at them and it broke and then he went into the alley and made pee-pee against the wall!

JANE

And Claire let you see that?

BILLY

Yeah, he was making me watch.

JANE

He was making you watch?

BILLY

And he told me that he was crazy and he likes to hurt little boys.

JANE

Did you tell Claire that I told you a story about him?

BILLY

No...

JANE

Because our stories are just for ourselves, right? I haven't told anyone the stories you tell me. It's our little secret. If you go telling our stories, then maybe Claire wouldn't like it.

BILLY

Why not?

JANE

Because Claire, well, ...might not understand that you and I are sharing secrets. Little secrets. Well, why don't we continue with our special project?

[BJ digs out a small handheld camera]

BILLY

How come I always have to talk to the camera?

JANE

You know why. You talk to the camera, we continue making the All About Billy Book. And then I let you watch yourself telling the story. Don't you like it? Isn't it fun?

BILLY

I guess so. Umm...

JANE

Yes?

BILLY

Can I...never mind.

JANE

What is it, Billy?

BILLY

Nothing.

JANE

Billy, come on. Tell me what it is. You can tell me.

BILLY

Can I touch you?

JANE

Billy...

BILLY

Just a little?

JANE

I really want to play this game first, Billy. Just let me ask you a few questions and then we can watch Billy on the tv. Won't that be cool?

BILLY

I wanna touch you.

JANE

I understand why you want to; boys your age start getting these desires, but touching someone else is a very private and personal thing, Billy. People have to be very, very good friends to do that.

BILLY

But we're good friends! You're my best friend!

JANE

Well, Billy, I'm flattered...

BILLY

I mean I don't know anybody else, so that makes you my best friend.

JANE

I know that, Billy, but we're not...that kind of friends. It's different.

BILLY
Why?

JANE
Well...

BILLY
I love you.

JANE
You...what?

BILLY
I love you!

JANE
Oh, god. No, Billy, you don't.

BILLY
Yes I do. I love you! And I would like to marry you!

JANE
You want to...Billy, you are way too young to marry anyone. You are still a little boy.

BILLY
No, I'm not! Look--my weenie is standing straight up! Look!

JANE
BILLY! No! Put that away! Right now!

BILLY
But Mr. Scary Man With the Paper Bag shows his weenie to people!

JANE
Mr. Scary Man...he...holy freakin' Jesus... Look, Billy. Mr. Scary Man with the Paper Bag...is sick. He's sick. He doesn't really know where he is a lot of the time. He thinks he's in a special world, and only he can see it. He gets confused a lot, Billy. And he does things that are okay in his world, but aren't in this one.

[BILLY starts to cry]

JANE
Now, Billy...

BILLY
I did something bad!

JANE
No, Billy, no, you didn't do anything bad. You just think that it's okay to show your...weenie...to people, and really...it's a very private thing. We don't do that. Normally.

BILLY
Will I grow up to be like Mr. Scary Man with the Paper Bag because I showed you my weenie?

JANE

Of course not, Billy. No. Mr. Scary Man...he's sick, Billy. Very sick. And you're not. You're not, okay?

BILLY

Do you still like me?

JANE

Of course, Billy. I will always like you.

BILLY

Always?

JANE

You will always be my very, very special friend.

BILLY

But not the kind of friend I can show my weenie to?

JANE

No, Billy. Now. How about we get some more work done on All About Billy?

BILLY

I don't want to.

JANE

But we've come so far already! We are so close to finishing! It's almost done!

BILLY

Will Mommy read it?

JANE

He can if you want him to. Do you want him to?

BILLY

I don't know.

JANE

Well, if you want him to, I'll get him his very own copy. And we can both sign it to...make it just like you!

BILLY

Like me?

JANE

That's right. What did we say you were? Very, Very...

BILLY & JANE

Special.

JANE

That's right. Very, very special.

BILLY

I...

JANE

Come on now, Billy. Think. Is this really important to you? Remember we talked about how important is it to you to finish this?

BILLY

...okay.

JANE

That's my very special Billy! Now close your eyes...go ahead...that's good...and remember? Try to concentrate on your breathing...just listen to your breaths... nice and slow...that's it...nice and easy...now picture your magic pond in your mind. Your pond is very calm. It's quiet, Billy. Very quiet. You are getting closer to the pond. The water is warm, just like a bath. You get closer...closer. Are you ready to go under? [*BILLY nods slightly*] Then slowly put your face beneath the surface, Billy. I want you to think back, Billy, think back to when you were just a little baby...and tell me what happened to your real mommy. Don't cry! It's okay! Nobody will hurt you, Billy. Nobody will hurt you when I'm around. I'm going to watch out for you and nothing bad will ever get through. Trust me, Billy. Now tell me what happened to your mom.

BILLY

I see pretty lights.

JANE

What kind of lights? What colors?

BILLY

Red ones. Blue ones. Red ones.

JANE

And what else?

BILLY

A bad smell.

JANE

What kind of smell, Billy?

BILLY

Bad smell. Hurts my nose. It burns my eyes!

JANE

What does it smell like, Billy? Have you smelled it before?

BILLY

It stings! My eyes hurt!

JANE

I'm right here, Billy. I'm protecting you. Tell me more about it. Where is Mommy?

BILLY

I don't know...I don't know...

JANE

Try and tell me what's happening. Tell me about the lights...

BILLY

Pretty. Lots of lights. I'm being carried.