

HARRIET BY THE SWINGS

(a 5 minute stage drama)

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Characters

Harriet:	30-60s, dressed in black.
Tam:	Late teens - dressed in leggings and sloppy T shirt that reveals her heavily pregnant bump.
Sam:	20-40s, a yummy mummy, well-dressed, impeccable make-up, carries her baby in a front sling.
Pam:	20-40s, a harassed mum, dressed in a hurry, pushes baby in pram.

Set

An open set with no furniture. The action takes place outside a toddler's play area.

Props

A pram; a baby sling with swaddled doll; a realistic baby; soft toy, baby pillow and blanket.

Opening Scene

Spotlight on Tam, centre stage. She feels the contours of her bump, supports her back with her hands, then smiles and starts to sing a children's playground song.

Tam	“One elephant began to play, upon a spider's web one day. He thought it such tremendous fun, that he called for another elephant to come.”
Sam/Tam	<i>(enters from stage right, stands behind Tam and places her hands on Tam's shoulders. Still linked, they march round in a cheerful circle, both singing)</i> “Two elephants began to play, upon a spider's web one day. They thought it such tremendous fun, that they called for another elephant to come.” <i>(they stop and look expectantly off stage right)</i>
Pam/S/T	<i>(Pam dashes on from stage right, pushing her pram)</i> Sorry. <i>(Pam takes up position behind Sam, one hand on the pram, one hand on Sam's shoulders, then all three of them march round singing, with the pram making up the final 'carriage')</i> “Three elephants . . .
Tam	<i>(interjects)</i> And a pram.

Pam/S/T “. . . began to play, upon a spider’s web one day. They thought it such tremendous fun, that they called for another elephant to come.”

(Harriet appears from stage left, stops and watches them. The others look expectantly towards stage right, but no-one appears)

 “‘That they called for another elephant to come.’” *(Harriet moves longingly towards the unsupervised pram, but the others still stare towards stage right)* “‘They called for another elephant to come.’” *(they continue to stare hopefully)*

Harriet *(Harriet reaches the pram, looks inside and sighs)* Ohhh. *(The others jump at the sound, spin round, spot her and exclaim)*

Pam No! *(rushes to the pram)*

Sam Christ!

Tam You what?

Sam *(points at Harriet)* You!

Tam What?

Harriet *(as they stare at her in horror, Harriet turns and addresses the audience)*
Harriet is a monster . . .

Pam *(Pam pulls the baby from the pram)* Quick!

Sam *(calls out)* Thomas!

Tam *(calls out)* Lianne! Shane! Darren! *(they race around collecting ‘children’)*

Harriet *(closing in on Pam and the baby)* . . . hoovering up the skin of newborns with an opening as wide as . . .

Pam *(Pam panics)* Sam?

Sam Quick! *(Sam holds out her hands as if to catch. Pam throws the baby above Harriet’s head to Sam)*

Harriet *(Harriet leaps but fails to catch the baby)* . . . Ahhhh!

Sam *(holding the baby, Sam dodges Harriet with several netball moves)* Tam!

Tam No! *(Sam throws the baby to Tam, who has no choice but to catch it)*

Harriet *(leaps and fails again)* Ahhh!

Tam *(Tam clutches the baby and backs into the wall. Harriet moves with menace towards her) Fff fff ff fu u u*

Sam *(pointing at Harriet) You!*

Tam . . . u u u . . .

Harriet *(about to seize the baby) Monster.*

Tam *Quick! (hurls the baby in a high arc over Harriet's head)*

Harriet *(Harriet leaps but fails again. She lets out a wail of anguish. Pam clutches the baby protectively to her chest, Sam quickly positions the pram and they put the baby back inside, making comforting sounds. The three women retreat downstage right)*

(Harriet pauses to regain some composure, then faces the audience) Harriet is a monster, with an opening as wide as . . . she curls her tongue around each succulent umbilicus, slurps it ravenously through sinuous lips, crunches nitty gritty on pith of clavicle and rib, then lets out a mighty belch of un-lived lives and stirrups her knees to squeeze the emptiness out.

(gradually the others relax enough to turn their backs on Harriet, and one by one, start moving their arms as if pushing swings)

Harriet hides her shame under night's black burka, slithers under midnight cots and with her claw, strokes slumbering cheeks of pink-flushed escapees. Lullabies them sweetly with her two faced grace . . . *(a tender but sinister hum as she rocks an imaginary baby)*. . . mm maa mmm maaaa. So warm their downy heads, so good to hold against her vacuum-packed heart and swaddle the softness inside her nutcracker palms . . . *(she mimics crushing a head with her hands)* . . . CRRRRRRRRRAAAAAACK as the roar of Krakatoa wrenched the heavens inside out like the snap of a latex glove.

(Pam, Sam and Tam continue pushing swings and making encouraging 'weeeee' sounds to their 'children')

Harriet is a crawling lava flow, thick oozing others' fertile slopes. Her breath, the death that lurks in bull bars, ligatures, leukaemia and the silent knife that ribs fit boys.

(Pam turns anxiously to the pram and starts to unbutton her blouse. Sam takes the baby out of the pram and Tam makes kissing sounds to the baby)

Take care you hopscotch girls to leap the cracks, you mothers all despair. You cannot be too safe from Harriet's fish-eyed stare.

(Pam takes the baby from Sam and slips its head inside her blouse, rocking as she breast feeds. Tam turns to Sam's baby in the sling and makes kissing sounds. Harriet moves, unnoticed, towards the empty pram)

Look for her there where prams are filled with glistening fruit and read behind that cut-glass smile, the truth . . .

(riffing the pram, she pulls out a soft toy, then a pillow, then a baby blanket) . . . the clicking stylus tongue, the howling riff, the prayer:

(Harriet shakes the emptied pram in despair. The others look up, see her and freeze. She falls to her knees beside the pram)

Fill me with child, with child, WITH CHILD!

(Lights fade to black out)

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