

Baby Brain

by Michael Olsen

Characters: SARA, a painter, 30s (F)
 BEN, a public servant, 30s (M)
 DR BROWN, a child therapist, 30s, (F)

Setting: Sara's apartment

Lights come up on a messy living room. In the middle is a coffee table, and on it is a collection of shoes, boxes, and books. Ben, a fully grown young man, is trying to build a tower. He is dressed only in a large nappy. The tower collapses. Ben cries. Sara rushes in, followed by Dr Brown. Sara is a woman in her 30s, frazzled but forgiving; Dr Brown is younger, wears a white lab coat and carries a clipboard and bag.

SARA: There there baby. It's OK. Mummy's here. It's OK, it's OK.

Ben calms down and starts sucking his thumb.

SARA: So what do you think?

DR BROWN: He could have it.

SARA: You sure?

DR BROWN: We call it neuropaedorelapseathon

SARA: Neuro what?

DR BROWN: Baby Brain for short. Allow me.

Dr Brown approaches Ben.

DR BROWN: Hello Ben. How are you?

Ben blows a raspberry at Dr Brown.

DR BROWN: May I?

Sara lets Dr Brown take Ben in her arms. Dr Brown inspects Ben.

DR BROWN: He seems happy, don't you think?

SARA: Why wouldn't he be? He's getting all his needs met, and someone's wiping his bum. You'd be happy too.

DR BROWN: I am sensing some resentment there.

SARA: Well one day he was a happily overworked and underpaid public servant and the next—like this.

Ben starts poking Dr Brown's breasts.

DR BROWN: Very good, Ben. It's false advertising. There's nothing there. You say he just woke up like this?

SARA: Yes. What can you do?

DR BROWN: Well we have a very strict set of protocols to follow in cases like this. First we have to establish the cause, whether it's physiological or psychological.

SARA: You mean whether he's really crook or just putting it on?

DR BROWN: Exactly.

SARA: And how will you do tht?

DR BROWN: I have a battery of tests for him, from a standard American set of tests.

SARA: OK.

Dr Brown takes out a pen, moves it back and forth in front of Ben, who watches it for 2 seconds then snatches it out of her hand.

BEN: Mine. Mine.

DR BROWN: So he's talking.

SARA: Like a 3 year old. "Mine" is his favourite word.

DR BROWN: Perfectly normal at age 3. How old is he actually?

SARA: 29.

DR BROWN: Does he use the toilet at all?

BEN: Potty potty potty.

SARA: Not yet. Hence the industrial-size nappy. I learnt pretty quickly to always make sure he's got one on.

Dr Brown takes out a wooden spatula and begins checking out Ben's mouth, but he's not very compliant.

SARA: He can't sit still for a second. He's into everything. He never gives me a moment's peace. And his tantrums! He's uncontrollable! I mean, if he was a real baby I could just throw him into a bedroom and shut the door.

DR BROWN: Well, yes.

Dr Brown steps back, watching Ben, who is now chewing on the wooden spatula.

DR BROWN: There doesn't seem to be anything I can pinpoint physically.

SARA: Are you saying it's psychological? That there was no—accident?

DR BROWN: Possibly. I think I need to have him confined at the Institute for closer observation.

SARA: Confined? What—in a nuthouse?

DR BROWN: I told you I'm from The Baby Institute. It's not a “nuthouse.” It's a research facility dedicated to making babies happy.

SARA: What about an institute to make mothers happy? Isn't there anything else you can do here?

DR BROWN: *(drawing Sara out of Ben's earshot)* There is one test left—to work out if it's in his mind.

SARA: OK.

Dr Brown pulls out a couple of latex gloves.

DR BROWN: They say a lot of male behaviour is connected to the prostate gland, which I think explains a lot about men.

SARA: You're not going to—

DR BROWN: I'll just have a feel around, see if everything's shipshape. Hey, Ben? Do you know where I'm going to put these?

Ben plays with Dr Brown's fingers.

DR BROWN: OK then.

Dr Brown has her hand on the back of Ben's nappy.

DR BROWN: Can you distract him with something?

Sara looks around a second, then her hands start climbing the waterspout.

SARA: Ipsy wipsy spider climbed the waterspout.

DR BROWN: That's good. That's good. Here we go!