

The Visitor

Arthur Keyser





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THE VISITOR

It is never too late to give up our prejudices.
~Henry David Thoreau

CAST

HARRY GOLDSTEIN: Seventy-seven years old.

ROSE GOLDSTEIN: Harry's wife, seventy-two years old.

SAM JACOBS: Harry's lawyer, sixty-three years old.

DIANA QUINN- GOLDSTEIN: Late thirties, daughter-in-law of Harry and Rose.

Place

A bedroom on the second floor of an upper middle class suburban home.

Time

Mid-afternoon on a weekday.

At Rise: HARRY is sitting in bed, wearing pajamas. There is a small chair in the room. He leans over to an end table, pulls out a drawer and after fumbling through its contents, he closes the drawer without having found what he was seeking.

HARRY: *(calling out in a loud voice)* Rose! *(hearing no answer, he calls out in a louder voice)* Rose! I need you! Now!

(ROSE walks into the bedroom)

ROSE: I heard you. You don't have to yell.

HARRY: If I didn't yell, it would take you six hours to get up here.

ROSE: I was busy.

HARRY: You'll have plenty of time to be busy after I'm dead. Did you take my cigarettes from the drawer?

ROSE: Of course I did. Do you think they just walked out by themselves?

HARRY: Put them back.

ROSE: You heard what the doctor said. Cigarettes cause lung cancer.

HARRY: I'm dying from pancreatic cancer! If I'm lucky, I have five, six weeks. Who cares if I get lung cancer after I'm buried in the cemetery?

ROSE: I'm not listening to that talk. The doctor is trying a new medicine--and don't tell me it's not going to work. You shouldn't be smoking when you're on a new treatment.

HARRY: If I knew, fifty years ago, when I asked you to marry me, that you would take away my cigarettes when I would be too sick to fight back---

ROSE: You would what?

HARRY: I don't know. I'm too sick to think of a good answer.

ROSE: For fifty years, you've been saying you're sick when you can't think of a good answer.

HARRY: I can't understand why I haven't heard from Sam. I called him and left a message.

ROSE: He's here. Downstairs.

HARRY: What's he doing downstairs? I said I wanted to see him.

ROSE: He only got here fifteen minutes ago. He's talking to Pauline and Marvin.

HARRY: Why are they here?

ROSE: What's the matter? You don't want your daughter and son-in-law to say goodbye?

HARRY: Why are they saying goodbye if you think I'm not dying?

ROSE: I didn't want to take any chances, so I asked them to visit.

HARRY: They can visit...but I don't want Marvin talking to my lawyer. Sam charges by the minute and he'll bill me for his time, talking to Marvin. Tell Sam to come up here now. By himself!

(ROSE walks over to the doorway and in a loud voice, she calls out)

ROSE: Sam? Could you please come up here? Harry wants to talk to you.

(After a brief moment, SAM walks into the bedroom)

SAM: Hello Harry. You have nice color in your cheeks.

HARRY: Don't bullshit me. I'm dying. We have to talk. Sit down.

(SAM sits down on a chair)

SAM: So talk.

HARRY: *(pointing to ROSE)* Not with that cranky woman listening. Go downstairs, Rose. Talk to your idiot son-in-law. And close the door.

(ROSE walks out of the room, shutting the door behind her)

SAM: What's so important?

HARRY: What are you? Some kind of a crackpot? I'm dying. Maybe to you, that doesn't sound important. If I made you miss a golf date, I apologize.

SAM: Don't be obnoxious. You know I don't play golf. I understand you're upset. Nobody wants to die.

HARRY: Everybody dies. I'm seventy-seven and I can't complain. When I was young, they said we should expect to live till sixty-five. I got twelve extra years. *(pause)* Do you have something to write on? I want to change my will.

SAM: Tell me what you want to change. I have a writing pad.

HARRY: Before we talk about my will, I want to get something straight. I don't want to be billed for your conversation downstairs with my genius son-in-law. You're my lawyer...not his. If you include that time on your bill to my estate, I'm instructing my Executor to refuse to pay it.

SAM: Did you forget already that I'm your Executor?

HARRY: I didn't forget. If you send a bill to yourself for talking to Marvin, don't pay it. He doesn't need any legal advice. He needs a brain scan. *(pause)* How God could make a grown-up man that stupid, I'll never understand!

SAM: So how come you made him Vice President of your company?

HARRY: I did it for Pauline. Marvin isn't even capable of working as a checkout clerk in a supermarket. What could I do? Let Pauline and my grandchildren starve?

SAM: Enough about Marvin. What changes do you want to make?

HARRY: First, I want you to sell the company as soon as possible after I'm gone. Marvin wouldn't have the slightest idea of how to run it. The business would go bankrupt and Rose would have to sell her jewelry for food.

SAM: Stop making up crazy stories. You're not a poor man and you also have a very large pension plan. Rose isn't going to go hungry.

HARRY: Even so...I want the company sold. I want enough put aside so that Pauline will have an independent income without depending on that good-for-nothing husband she lives with. The rest, I want for Rose. When Rose dies, what's left of her money should go to Pauline.

SAM: What about Eddie?

HARRY: Eddie who?

SAM: Don't be such a smart ass. I'm talking about your son.

HARRY: I don't have a son. He's dead.

SAM: I just spoke to Eddie, downstairs. He looks pretty good for someone who's dead.

HARRY: There's a stranger downstairs? Tell Rose to make him leave.

SAM: His wife is here, too. They'd like to see you.

HARRY: I'm too busy dying. I don't have time to waste on strangers.

SAM: When are you going to get over him marrying a gentile girl?

HARRY: A Jewish son, who respects his father, doesn't marry a shiksa. When he did that...for me, he was dead. Did you forget? I sat Shiva for five days.

SAM: I didn't forget. You sat in a room by yourself the whole time and no one came to see you. Shiva is when friends and family visit. Rose wanted to send you to a mental institution. Then maybe you would have had visitors.

HARRY: Stop trying to be a comedian. You shouldn't tell jokes, when someone is in a sickbed.

SAM: I was trying to cheer you up. But seriously, Harry, did you ever meet Eddie's wife?

HARRY: Why should I want to meet her? She killed my son.

SAM: Diana didn't kill anyone. She's very nice and they seem very happy together. He just got tenure at the University. After trying for years, she's expecting and they already know, *(pause)* it's a boy.

HARRY: Why are you wasting my time, talking about things that don't interest me? Did you finish my new will yet? I have to sign it before I die.

SAM: Finish your new will? What am I? A magician? I'll go back to my office and give the changes to my secretary. I'll have it for you tomorrow.

HARRY: So go. And tell Rose I want to see her. Right now. Not in six hours.

(SAM gets up and walks out of the bedroom. A moment later DIANA walks into the bedroom.)

HARRY: Who are you? I didn't ask for a nurse. I asked for Rose.

DIANA: I'm not a nurse. I'm Eddie's wife--your daughter-in-law.

HARRY: How can I have a daughter-in-law if I don't have a son? Excuse me for being rude, but I would like you to leave. Right now.

DIANA: I know this isn't a good time for me to be doing this, but I'm not leaving. I just want five minutes of your time. After that, if you want, I'll go.

HARRY: There's no good time for you to talk to me, but I'm not strong enough to stop you. Say whatever you want to say. I don't have to listen.

DIANA: Eddie misses you. You were so important in his life. He loves you.

HARRY: If he loves me, why did he marry you? We've got a whole city full of Jewish girls and if he couldn't find one, I would have found one for him. And why did someone like you want him? Did your mother tell you that Jewish men make good husbands?

DIANA: No she didn't--and if she had, I would have told her she was crazy. I love Eddie...because he's Eddie.

HARRY: I'm not a prejudiced man. *(pause)* I just wanted my son to bring home a Jewish wife.

DIANA: I'm sorry you're disappointed. But, if you ask him...if you'll only take the time to talk to him...I think he'll tell you how much we love each other. *(pause)* There's something else. In case you haven't noticed, we're having a baby.

HARRY: I'm not blind. I noticed. Besides, Sam already told me it's a boy.

DIANA: We want to name him Harry.

HARRY: That's my name! Who said you can use it?

DIANA: We'd like your permission.

HARRY: Didn't Eddie tell you that, in the Jewish religion, you don't name a baby after a living relative?

DIANA: I was raised as a Catholic. We often name our children to honor a living parent. We want to honor you.

HARRY: I'll probably die before the baby's born.

DIANA: I don't want you to die. I want you to live to spend some time with your grandson.

HARRY: Can I ask you a personal question?

DIANA: Of course.

HARRY: Do you smoke?

DIANA: The doctor said I shouldn't during my pregnancy, but sometimes I sneak one.

HARRY: Close the door.

DIANA: Why?

HARRY: Don't ask questions! Just close the door.

(DIANA closes the door)

DIANA: Okay. Now what?

HARRY: Do you have any cigarettes?

DIANA: Almost a full pack.

HARRY: I'll buy whatever you have.

DIANA: You don't have to pay for them. I'll give them to you.

(DIANA takes a pack of cigarettes out of her purse and hands them to HARRY. He hides them under his pillow.)

HARRY: You're pretty nice--for a girl who's not Jewish. I don't know why Eddie wouldn't let me meet you.

DIANA: I think you have things backwards. He tried. Not that it would have made any difference if you had been willing to meet me. From all the things Eddie's told me, you're not very easy.

HARRY: He should have insisted. Maybe you should teach him to be more forceful...like you. When you walked in here a few minutes ago, I told you to get out, but you wouldn't listen to me.

DIANA: We all made mistakes. I'm sorry I waited so long to talk to you. We've lost five years of getting to know each other.

HARRY: If the doctor's right, we still have five weeks. *(pause)* Can I tell you something you should keep to yourself?

DIANA: I can't promise. I never keep anything from Eddie.

HARRY: Okay, but only Eddie. You're not what I expected. You have a lot of guts coming in here this way. I would really like it if you could visit me once in a while.

DIANA: I will, Harry...if you don't mind me calling you that. I'll get here as often as I can.

HARRY: One more thing. When you go downstairs, please ask Rose to call Sam and tell him I have some more changes for those papers he's writing for me.

THE END