

Foriegn Bodies
By Dana Hall

Dana Hall
MagnoliaWrites120@gmail.com
60 Silo Ridge Road
Orland Park Il 60467
7086919577

Cast:
4 women, 1 man

ACTOR A

Woman 1

Nurse 1

Therapist

ACTOR B

Woman 2

Bank Manager

ACTOR C

Women 3

Nurse 2

HOLLY

DOCTOR

Production Notes: Words or phrases in italics are what Holly says to herself, heard by the audience but not by other characters in the scene.

Synopsis: Holly shares her experience with reproductive care and the standard of care that often leaves women feeling like their bodies are not their own.

WOMAN 1: So, when are you having another?

HOLLY: Before the ink dried on the signature line of my new business account, the bank branch manager, a tall-blond woman with a collection of tiny pyramid awards covering her desk, had taken an exciting moment of entrepreneurship and turned it into one latent in deep emotional turmoil.

BANK MANAGER: It would be great if he could have a brother close in age! Wouldn't you want another?

HOLLY: Did I mention that I loathe "small talk?" Is she really asking me this? A thousand words lingered on the tip of my tongue, all just out of reach. She had no idea of my history, or how these seemingly harmless quips could shatter/

BANK MANAGER: Better hurry up. You know, women like us aren't getting any younger!

HOLLY: As she finalized my account. My body was transported back in time. There I was sitting in my OBGYN's office again. My feet dangle off the side of the patient exam bed. I kicked them nervously as the paper underneath me crinkled. Awkwardly, I tried to maintain some sense of dignity in a pale-blue paper gown.

NURSE 1: Take everything off sweetie. The doctor will be in soon.

HOLLY: I pulled up my mix-matched socks to hide my unshaven legs. Finally, I crossed and uncrossed my legs, reaching the conclusion that it is impossible to present as "casual" in one of these things. Just then, the doctor came in and slouched into his chair as though he was settling in for the duration.

DOCTOR: Hi Holly. I have your chart here.

HOLLY: I got the vibe that this news was going to be one that he'd later tell his colleagues was, "hard for him to deliver." I almost felt bad for *him*. He shut the

door and cleared his throat.

DOCTOR: How are we today?

HOLLY: As he slid up closer, I heard his words, but it was as though he was talking to someone else/

DOCTOR: We sent your bloodwork to the Mayo Clinic.

HOLLY: He paused as if that said it all, as though I could fill in the blanks, and I felt sick. Time does seem to warp in moments like this and everything is muffled. His mouth kept moving. His body language and extensive notes indicated this was not going to be the routine visit I had thought it to be/

DOCTOR: We found something abnormal.

HOLLY: In my head I was screaming, What? No! I was supposed to be getting the 'all clear' today after my miscarriage, my second miscarriage in eight months. Also, I don't know if you know how this works, but I cannot be getting more bad news. I am here alone/

DOCTOR: Holly, did you hear me? Preliminary tests show this was likely a molar pregnancy.

HOLLY: Let's back up a moment. When I was miscarrying my doctor suggested that I allow/

DOCTOR: Nature to take its course. The body knows what to do.

HOLLY: Nature? I was to sit at home and wait for the baby to pass. Had he any idea what he was suggesting? This wasn't about nature. Every pregnant person should have control over the decision of how to end a pregnancy - and in this case a non-viable one. But state bans on certain surgical methods for abortion

limit the treatment options offered for pregnancy loss. He continued/

DOCTOR: Though the D & C went well/

HOLLY: *the procedure you didn't think I needed/*

DOCTOR: Sometimes in rare cases, cells can travel in the blood and begin to multiply . . . it could be cancer . . . could go anywhere: heart, lungs, brain. . .

HOLLY: If I didn't advocate for the D & C those cells would have killed me and as a bonus because I had a D & C my miscarriage will be counted amongst the inflated abortion statistics. It isn't routine to do an ultrasound until 12 to 18 weeks of pregnancy- that means my condition could've caught sooner but wasn't.

DOCTOR: You didn't just have a miscarriage.

HOLLY: *No shit.*

DOCTOR: Do you understand that the mass was abnormal?

HOLLY: I understood- but I was frozen. On top of everything else, this was supposed to be one of those appointments you make because they tell you to follow-up in two weeks with your doctor, just so they can squeeze an extra visit out of your insurance, kind of appointment/

DOCTOR: molar tissue may remain and continue to grow... This is called persistent gestational trophoblastic neoplasia (GTN)/

HOLLY: Gestational what? Was this guy reading from a textbook? What I thought was my baby- is reduced to a mass. A mass that could still kill me. *This is not happening. I'm going to hear some good news today. We need some good news today...*

DOCTOR: We need to monitor you closely. You need to repeat blood work for several months.

HOLLY: My body feels foreign.

DOCTOR: Here take this and get dressed. You'll want to read it over. I'm sorry. The nurse will book your next appointment.

HOLLY: I was given a brochure. The doctor patted me on the back as if I nailed a three-pointer at the buzzer.

My prize?

I was put on a schedule to monitor my hormone levels and have blood drawn every two weeks for six months. No crowd, no cheers, just a long walk through the corridor where a few nurses diverted their eyes as I passed. I made my way to the front desk/

NURSE 1: Has anything changed with your insurance? Still at the same residence? Great, let's book you for next week. Have a lovely day.

HOLLY: The air was heavy, and no one knew what to say. Tears welled up when I hoisted myself into the phlebotomist chair on that first blood draw day.

NURSE 2: Which arm do you prefer?

HOLLY: Do you have to tie that rubber band so tight?

NURSE 2: Sorry sweetie.

HOLLY: We both knew why I was there but our conversation consisted of/

NURSE 2: Rain, again? Good thing I didn't invest in that sprinkling system.

HOLLY: We were two women getting their nails done, or strangers stuck in an elevator together. Week after week. Then one day I noticed something was

different in her workspace.

NURSE 2: Ohh, I cleaned up a bit around here- it was getting crowded.

HOLLY: There was a blank space where an advertisement once hung that offered a heartbeat recording from your ultrasound in a teddy bear keepsake. I saw it in her trash. She saw that I noticed it.

NURSE 2: Sometimes we need to make room.

HOLLY: It struck me how these offices are only decorated for one outcome- for one *single* choice. My eyes said, “thank you.”

NURSE 2: I heard the traffic on I294 was terrible. Which way did you take?

HOLLY: Weeks went by like this, I entered the doctor’s office waving to familiar faces, asking if so-and-so was on vacation or out to lunch, and then took “my seat.” Today was different- as I waited, my doctor stopped in the room. He didn’t bother to look up.

DOCTOR: No elevation in the last six weeks, that’s good.

HOLLY: Ok good. I’ve been meaning to ask you about a tubular ligation.

DOCTOR: This situation has made you too emotional to decide what you want. Have you talked to your husband about it?

HOLLY: About what?

DOCTOR: If *he* wants more children. Bring him in one day so we can all discuss it.

HOLLY: My body continues to feel foreign to me. I feel like a human pin cushion. Can we switch arms today?

NURSE 2: Of course. Have you told anyone/

HOLLY: I swallow hard. We were supposed to talk about the weather. I had just gotten through the “un-telling” of our family about the pregnancy. I could not imagine piling on news that it was a molar pregnancy, no baby, and a lump of malignant cells. My body was done going through all this- I never wanted to repeat this and knew I was done having kids. So, I shake my head indicating a slight ‘no.’

NURSE 2: You’ll be fine. Just a few more vials.

HOLLY: I heard it was going to rain this weekend.

The women's voices are almost on top of one another but we can hear each of them. They can be on or off stage.

WOMAN 2: Well, at least it was early.

WOMAN 1: It’s a good thing actually because something was wrong with the baby.

WOMAN 3: It’s God’s will.

WOMAN 2: You can always have another.

HOLLY: What would people say now, knowing it was not a baby at all? I felt selfish to grieve the miscarriage because it “being for the best” left my emotions no room to exist. Hearing there was no baby and that I may have cancer, well, I was just about out of space and room for more condolences. My therapist's words made sense now.

THERAPIST: There is no right way to grieve; there is only your way to grieve and that is different for everyone.

BANK MANAGER: How would you like your checks to look? We have embossed logos!

HOLLY: On the desk before me, the perky branch manager had laid out my check and bank book options. I selected the standard option. I did not want to follow-up or come back to pick-up a special order. I thanked her for her time and packed up my things like a high school student that just heard the bell.

BANK MANAGER: Good luck with your business and next time I see you who knows maybe we'll have a little one on the way!!

HOLLY: I have replayed that day at the bank many times. There was a part of me that wanted to hand it to her for being presumptuous. I wish I could've said something feminist, something big, powerful, and beautiful with all the bells and whistles — full of sound and fury —

The women's voices are almost on top of one another but we can hear each of them. They can be on or off stage.

WOMAN 1: It's my body and none of your business!

WOMAN 2: How dare you assume what is best for me or anyone else for that matter!

WOMAN 3: You don't know how your assumptions can hurt others.

WOMAN 1: My reproduction is not your concern!

WOMAN 2: My body means MY CHOICE!

HOLLY: But I said none of that-I responded "we'll see."
All the while concealing the truth.

-End Play-