

# **Doris, Darling!**

By

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### **Characters**

- DORIS: Tired, grumpy and intentionally frumpy. 82. An ex-academic; the equivalent of writing “GO AWAY” on a doormat—hostile, resentful but ultimately obliging.
- CYNTHIA: A wafty steamroller. 84, Doris’ sister. All the pretention of a classical Hollywood star with none of the genuine grace or glamour.
- HAROLD: Doris’ husband, 90. A duffery professor. He has enough sense to make eggs in the morning, but not enough to tell apart his slippers from Doris’.

### **Setting**

Doris and Harold’s kitchen, a modest suburban house, at 3AM.

### **Set**

The furniture for a small, simple kitchen. On one side, there is a door, another, a window. In the kitchen there is a table draped in a doiled table-cloth with an opaque jar on top, a box of tea and a box of tissues.

**DORIS, DARLING!**

*A rumbling growl sounds. It fades... then—growl...*

*Lights up on a small kitchen: a table, two chairs, a cupboard, a trashcan. A jar on the table on a doiled tablecloth.*

*DORIS enters from the bedroom, wearing a nightgown and wielding a broom.*

**DORIS:** Hello? ...Hello?

*The GROWL sounds again, but this time, the creature (CYNTHIA) begins clearing its throat. The growling fades as, off-stage, CYNTHIA clears her throat.*

*CYNTHIA enters, dressed formally and wearing a loud hat. She knocks on the door. DORIS approaches it... opens it...*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling!

**DORIS:** Jesus Christ!

*DORIS slams the door shut. CYNTHIA hammers on it.*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, it's me, Cynthia! Open up!

**DORIS:** Go away! You're not wanted!

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, Doris, darling, it's cold!

*CYNTHIA knocks a few more times, then stops.*

*DORIS walks over to the door again... eases it open to peek...*

*CYNTHIA strides past DORIS into the kitchen, plucking the broom off her.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** Doris, darling! Tea?

**DORIS:** (*annoyed*) What are you doing here?

*CYNTHIA takes off her hat and puts it in DORIS' hands. She begins to make tea.*

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, why, I thought it would be nice to make one last goodbye visit to my dearest little sister.

*DORIS takes the tea-bags out of her hands and throws them away.*

**DORIS:** I already said goodbye to you.

**CYNTHIA:** But I couldn't say goodbye back, you see. So here I am!

**DORIS:** Okay. Goodbye.

*Beat.*

**CYNTHIA:** But also—

**DORIS:** What.

**CYNTHIA:** Well. Do you remember your prom night?

*DORIS crosses her arms, exasperated.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** And do you remember how beautiful you looked? And do you remember borrowing my dress? Do you remember borrowing my makeup?

**DORIS:** Do you remember borrowing my date?

**CYNTHIA:** He borrowed me. And remember, I wasn't the first one in line. You were so head-over-heels you didn't have a clue! Ha!

**DORIS:** Cynthia, get out.

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, please. That was years ago. It's in the past.

**DORIS:** If it's "in the past" it should stay there. Goodbye.

**CYNTHIA:** But Doris, darling—This is getting us nowhere. Let me explain.

*CYNTHIA sits, then gestures to the chair across her. DORIS does not sit—but she does stay.*

*As CYNTHIA chatters and they argue, at several moments she fiddles with the décor: e.g., she adds potpourri to her outfit; puts a curtain tie on as a sash; ties a napkin as a bracelet. DORIS always takes the items off CYNTHIA and puts them back.*

*At one point CYNTHIA lifts the doiled tablecloth out from under the jar and wears it as a shawl; DORIS takes it off her and puts it back, over the jar.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** Well after my little (*with French accent*) ‘celebration’, which, by the way, was very elegant, thank you.

**DORIS:** Uh huh.

**CYNTHIA:** Although—Doris, darling, those lilies did nothing for my complexion. You should have chosen carnations or hydrangeas! But, fashion faux-pas aside, after some hovering around in the darkness, I found myself at this big river, and some man in a cloak—called himself Sharon, I think, an odd sort of man...

**DORIS:** Might it have been “Charon”?

**CYNTHIA:** Have you met him? How strange!

**DORIS:** No, I just read books.

**CYNTHIA:** This man, Sharon—

**DORIS:** Charon.

**CYNTHIA:** “Charon” asked me for my fare, to cross the river. And I said to him, “excuse me, do you know who I am?”

**DORIS:** And you told him you were a “world-renowned actress”, i.e., a drama-school dropout.

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, shush! Just listen! He said—Charon—said, “Madam, who you are is of no matter”. The gall! When has anyone said that I am of no matter?

*DORIS opens her mouth, raising a finger to count.  
CYNTHIA grabs her fingers; DORIS yelps.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** I tried to turn on a little bit of the old charm, you know, but he just wouldn’t have it. Of course, some 20-year-old vixens with barely anything on get in no problem, something about their deaths being “so tragic”, boo hoo. But me, I had to pay! So I said, “I’d like to talk to your manager”, and he said, “that’s not possible, they’re ineffable”—can you believe such a flimsy excuse? So I said, “I’ll complain! I’ll leave you a very bad review on Yelp”, and he said “we don’t have Yelp here”, and I said “well, what do you have?” and he said, “you can yelp the old-fashioned way, if you can be heard over the screams of the eternally damned”—

**DORIS:** Cynthia, just get to the damn point.

**CYNTHIA:** —I was almost there, but now you’ve interrupted, you’ve made this twice as long!

**DORIS:** Twice as long?!

**CYNTHIA:** Now three times.

*DORIS makes a frustrated noise.*

**DORIS:** Just—go on.

**CYNTHIA:** Thank you. This other floaty thing with a clipboard came up to me and said, “excuse me, ma’am, you’re making quite a fuss and it’s distressing the other souls”—hardly, they were all screaming in agony before I got there—but this floaty creature said “we don’t usually do this, but we’ll lend you some more time and you can come back with your fare, or you can wait in line”—and it was an awfully long line, you understand—

**DORIS:** So you’re here because you need money.

*Beat.*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, it’s not like that—

**DORIS:** Ask someone else, Cynthia.

*DORIS exits to the bedroom.*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, if our dear mummy could see you now, denying her poor little Cynthia her passage into the pearly gates—

**DORIS:** *(off-stage)* Of Hell!

**CYNTHIA:** *(outraged)* Doris, darling!

**HAROLD:** *(off-stage)* Doris, darling?

*DORIS rushes back in.*

**DORIS:** Leave.

*DORIS pushes CYNTHIA towards the door.*

*CYNTHIA pushes back.*

**HAROLD:** *(off-stage)* Doris, darling, are you alright? I heard yelling!

**DORIS:** Everything is fine, Harold!

*DORIS manages to push CYNTHIA out the door and closes it just as HAROLD shuffles in, wearing Doris’ slippers.*

**HAROLD:** Was someone here?

**DORIS:** No. You must be hearing things again, Harold, you know, your ears...

**HAROLD:** I could have sworn I heard Cynthia.

*As they speak, CYNTHIA has crept around outside the kitchen space, up to the kitchen window, behind HAROLD's head—he's unaware of her. DORIS, however, sees her.*

**DORIS:** Don't be silly, Cynthia is dead. *(at Cynthia, making a rude gesture)* Good riddance.

*CYNTHIA gasps, tries to open the window.*

**HAROLD:** Well someone was here, I heard them!

**DORIS:** It was the neighbors.

**HAROLD:** It's three in the morning, the neighbors are asleep! You're lying to me!  
*(beat)* We're getting burgled!

**DORIS:** Yes! Burglars! I didn't tell you because I didn't want to worry you. Your heart...

**HAROLD:** Oh, Doris, darling.

**DORIS:** You should look for them! *(pointing)* Over there!

**HAROLD:** I will!

*HAROLD shuffles off-stage to the living room.  
DORIS strains to see that he has left, then wrenches open the window.*

**DORIS:** Cynthia, I already gave you money. In fact, I left a lot of money in your casket to make sure you wouldn't come back!

**CYNTHIA:** *(preening, adjusting her hat)* I may have... used it.

**DORIS:** Oh my god, you bought that—thing.

**CYNTHIA:** It's not a "thing", It's an original Hermes fascinator from spring '57!

**DORIS:** *(correcting the pronunciation)* An original Hermès?

**CYNTHIA:** Hermes, I bought it from Hermes himself.

**DORIS:** Hermes... the trickster. You bought a Hermès from the patron of thieves and the inventor of lying—

**CYNTHIA:** Well I bought a "Hermès"—

**DORIS:** A Hermès with pipe-cleaners on it!

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, Doris, darling, I had to! You didn't pick the most exciting wardrobe, you see, and one must make one's presence known!

**DORIS:** Oh "one must", mustn't one. And one must go running to dear Doris every time one messes up one's life—and one's after-life!

**CYNTHIA:** Like you would know anything about living my life!

**DORIS:** You didn't do a very good job of living it yourself!

**CYNTHIA:** Well if we're going to play that game, neither did you, marrying that unfaithful bastard!

**DORIS:** What?!

**HAROLD:** *(offstage)* Doris, darling?

*HAROLD shuffles in; DORIS slams the window shut—on CYNTHIA'S finger—and turns. CYNTHIA cries out. DORIS, turning, blocks Cynthia's body with hers and speaks over Cynthia's shout:*

**DORIS:** Harold! Any burglars?

**HAROLD:** I checked behind all the sofas. Not one!

**DORIS:** Did you check behind the curtains? Or under all the... lamps?

**HAROLD:** *(urgently)* No! I didn't...

*HAROLD shuffles off. DORIS opens the window again.*

**DORIS:** What are you talking about?

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, now you want to talk, huh? Let me back in.

**DORIS:** Just tell me.

**CYNTHIA:** Give me the money, then.

**DORIS:** No!

*CYNTHIA mimes sealing her lips and throwing away the key. DORIS groans in frustration, then opens the door.*

**CYNTHIA:** Shall we start from the top?

*CYNTHIA once again waltzes in and grabs the tea-bags.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** Doris, darling! Tea?

*DORIS once again snatches them from her hands and throws them in the trash, along with the entire box in the cupboard.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** Oh, how rude! I really ought to go where I'll be appreciated. A friend of Harold's, perhaps!

*CYNTHIA makes a show of leaving, stopping several times to see if DORIS will call after her. Just as she is closing the door...*

**DORIS:** Cynthia. If you'll... *(she gestures unlocking her lips)* then I'll... *(she gestures giving her some money.)*

**CYNTHIA:** Double triple?

**DORIS:** *(sighing)* Double triple.

*They perform a short, complex secret handshake.*

**CYNTHIA:** Well. Those women at Harold's bridge club...

**DORIS:** No!

**CYNTHIA:** Yes! Your sweet Harold had eyes for Susan *(she gestures at her own eyes)*, he had hands for Emmeline *(her own hands)* and, he had *(her crotch)*—

**DORIS:** Cynthia!

**CYNTHIA:** I tell no lies. I used to visit each of them—have some tea, chat about my “grand-children”—Tommy is doing well, he's finishing his Ph.D. with honours, and he's becoming captain of the international space station!

**DORIS:** “No lies”.

**CYNTHIA:** Listen, every time I went for a visit, Harold would be coming up their driveway as I was going down.

**DORIS:** That doesn't mean he—

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, he did.

**DORIS:** *(in disbelief)* But—Harold?

**CYNTHIA:** He's a different man around other women, Doris.

**DORIS:** *(still in disbelief)* Harold?

*HAROLD enters. He sees CYNTHIA.*

**HAROLD:** Burglar! Doris, darling! I found one! I found one!

*HAROLD grabs the broom and brandishes it.  
CYNTHIA turns towards HAROLD.*

**HAROLD**

**CONT:** Cynthia! Wait, you're not Cynthia, Cynthia's dead.

**CYNTHIA:** That's right! I'm... Emmeline.

*CYNTHIA grabs the doiled table-cloth and wraps it  
over her head in 'disguise'.*

**HAROLD:** Oh. Emmeline... Are you a burglar?

**CYNTHIA:** No... but you are...

*CYNTHIA snaps her fingers: the lights dim, and  
some sexy saxophone music plays.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** You've stolen my heart.

*CYNTHIA stalks forward, hand creeping along the  
broom. HAROLD giggles.*

**HAROLD:** *(to Cynthia, pointing at Doris)* Doris...

*CYNTHIA takes the broom out of his hands, and  
places it in front of DORIS with the bristles  
covering her face.*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris who? *(placing her hat on top)* This is a hat stand.

**HAROLD:** Oh... "art nouveau".

**CYNTHIA:** So... can I have some money... big boy?

**HAROLD:** Doris will find out...

**CYNTHIA:** She never found out before.

**HAROLD:** My wallet's in the bedroom...

**CYNTHIA:** Well then I'll see you soon... Hhhhharold...

*HAROLD giggles, CYNTHIA tickles him, he giggles  
harder, and she pushes him towards the bedroom.  
CYNTHIA turns back towards DORIS.*

*DORIS crumples.*

**CYNTHIA**

**CONT:** Oh God. Okay. ...Oh, Doris, darling... there there... At least he stayed with you...

*CYNTHIA offers DORIS the box of tissues.*

**DORIS:** Only because I was so stupid!

**CYNTHIA:** Oh Doris, darling, you're not stupid, you were just a little... Okay, you were a bit stupid, but—  
Okay. Okay. There's no need to cry... Look. He'll be dead soon, okay? ...He'll be dead soon, which means, when he does die, I can make his life a living hell! I mean, his death a dying... His hell a living... I can make him suffer. *(pause)* Good, right?

*DORIS nods.*

**CYNTHIA:** We can make that asshole pay!

**DORIS:** Yes!

*DORIS tears apart the tissues and the box.*

**DORIS**

**CONT:** Rip off his head! Tear him limb from limb! Take his fingernails and tape them to his eyes!

**CYNTHIA:** Okay, okay, I will—But I can't do all that unless I can actually get to the afterlife.

**DORIS:** Oh.

*DORIS pauses... then opens the jar on the table.*

**CYNTHIA:** It was there?! I could have just—

**DORIS:** How much?

**CYNTHIA:** \$2.50. \$1.75 with senior discount.

**DORIS:** You only needed—! Here.

**CYNTHIA:** Oh, Doris, darling! Thank you!

**DORIS:** *(affectionate)* Uh huh.

*CYNTHIA waltzes to the door—and hesitates in the doorway.*

**CYNTHIA:** Doris, darling, I'll miss you.

**DORIS:** Goodbye, Cynthia.

*CYNTHIA smiles, blows a kiss, exits.*

**HAROLD:** *(offstage)* Emmeline!

**DORIS:** ...Yes, Harold?

**HAROLD:** *(offstage)* What did I come in here for?

**DORIS:** ...You went to get me some money... Sweetheart.

*DORIS grabs the doiled tablecloth and wraps it over her head. HAROLD shuffles in behind her.*

**DORIS**

**CONT:** Tell me, honey, when was the last time we... got together?

**HAROLD:** Well, Cynthia—uh—Emmeline—

**DORIS:** Cynthia?

**HAROLD:** Doris?

**DORIS:** Harold! Am I Emmeline or Cynthia?

**HAROLD:** You're Doris, darling—

**DORIS:** No! Cynthia or Emmeline, Harold, who were you sleeping with?!

**HAROLD:** Cynthia is Emmeline! It was... role-play.

*Beat.*

**DORIS:** CYNTHIA!

*Blackout.*