

There was a dead man, Honest

By Daniel Mitzimberg

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Stage – set with house on stage left – two rooms 1) living room with two doors (kitchen and guest room) at the rear and one at the side that opens to the entrance of the home and telephone foyer – exit and entrance to the home is from this room stage left. Each room must be presumed separate. Corded phone in the foyer on a stand with a chair next to it.

2) On stage right - a police station answering switchboard and a makeshift interrogation room. Exit from the police station is at the rear. Year – pre cell phones 1960

Characters:

Wife – Sara Sampson – a little loopy / screamer / excitable – mid 40's

Husband – Samuel Sampson – quiet / preoccupied – mid 40's

Dead Body – Jeffery Thompson – young man of 21

Police man – Officer O'Hanlon

Police man – Lt. O'Malley

Police man – Sgt. O'Shamis

Scene opens – man laying in the living quarters of a house.

Wife enters the room and discovers the body.

SCENE 1

SARA: *(Sees the body and SCREAMS)* Oh My God!!!

*(Runs around the body / frantic – never stopping to check the body)*

*(Pause)* Oh My God!!!

*(Looks around the house – still frantic - Stops and looks again at the body)* OH MY GOD!!!!

*(She runs into the foyer and picks up the phone to call the police - Dials the phone – while waiting for an answer)* Oh My God!!!

*(She paces the foyer pulling the corded phone off the stand and replacing it)*

*(Police phone rings at police station)*

O'HANLON: *(Picks up the phone)* Quietville Police Central – O'Hanlon speaking may I . . .

*(Interrupted)*

SARA: Oh MY God!!!

O'HANLON: No ma'am this is central booking.

SARA: Oh MY God!!!

O'HANLON: Yes ma'am may I have . . .

*(Interrupted)*

SARA: Oh My God!!!

O'HANLON: May I have the nature of . . .

*(Interrupted)*

SARA: OH. . .

*(Interrupted)*

O'HANLON: Yes Ma'am 'MY GOD!' This would go much easier if you'd tell me the nature of your call.

SARA: *(frantic)* There's a dead man.

*(Man enters from guest room and drags the body in the guest room)*

O'HANLON: Yes ma'am - Who's the dead man?

SARA: I don't know, *(frantic)* I didn't ask him!

O'HANLON: Did you know the deceased?

SARA: He's deceased? (Starts to cry)

O'HANLON: Ma'am! You said he's dead.

SARA: (*wipes tears*) He is. (Beat) Very dead. (*frantic*) Right here in my living room.

O'HANLON: May I please have your name?

SARA: What for? I didn't kill him. (*frantic*) I am not a suspect. (*beat*) Am I?

O'HANLON: I also need your address. We'll send someone right over.

SARA: (*Fast*) I'm Sara Sampson and I live at 25 Chester Street - Quietville, Oregon . . .

O'HANLON: Yes Ma'am I know what town we live in. There's a patrol car a few blocks away – I'll send him right over.

SARA: Make sure you tell 'em I'm not a suspect.

O'HANLON: Yes ma'am. Please hold while I radio the patrol.

(*Sara hangs up the phone and paces*)

O'HANLON: (*puts down phone / Grabs radio mic and calls*) This is central calling Sgt O'Shamis. I have a lady claiming she has a dead body in her house.

SGT O'SHAMIS: What is the address?

SARA: (*Pacing the foyer*) Oh MY God!!!

O'HANLON: 25 Chester – right around the corner from you.

SGT O'SHAMIS: Did she know the deceased?

O'HANLON: Said she was never formally introduced.

SGT O'SHAMIS: On my way – O'Shamis out

SARA: *(Pacing the foyer)* Oh MY God!!!

O'HANLON: Ma'am – the Sarg is on his – Ma'am???

*(Clicks the receiver a few times)* Ma'am?

*(Hangs up the phone)*

*(Sara paces and then sits and then paces and the sits)*

*(A knock at the door)*

SARA: *(Jumps – Calms down - answers the door - in a normal pleasant voice)* Hello.

O'SHAMIS: *(Stepping into the room)* Did you call for a police officer?

SARA: *(Frantically)* Oh My God!!

O'SHAMIS: *(Calming her)* Please settle down. Where is the deceased?

SARA: The deceased. *(She starts to cry)*

O'SHAMIS: Dispatch said there was a body.

SARA: *(she wipes her tears)* Right this way

*(She leads him into the living room where there is no body – she points down while looking away)*

SARA: Right here.

O'SHAMIS: Where?

SARA: *(Covers her eyes and looks towards where the body was)* There. *(She points)* Honest.

O'SHAMIS: I don't see anyone here now. *(looks at her like she is crazy)* Are you sure about this?

SARA: *(Looks at the officer - Pauses as if not quite sure)* Yes.

O'SHAMIS: I am sorry but he's not here now. Your dead body must of come back to life.

SARA: I was so sure **he was** here and **he was** dead.

O'SHAMIS: I'll call it in - we'll be on the lookout for any dead bodies walking around

*(they walk to the foyer and start to exit)*

*(Man drags body from bedroom back to the living room)*

SARA: Thank you officer. I wasn't seeing things. *(beat)* There was a man and I **did not** kill him.

O'SHAMIS: Yes Ma'am. I can see you **did not** kill him.

SARA: Correct. *(beat)* Please enter that into your report.

O'SHAMIS: I'll enter everything into my report. Thank you ma'am. *(He leaves the foyer while saying)* If you see any more bodies you'll let us know.

SARA: Yes, I will. *(Sara closes the door and heads back into the living room)*  
*(She sees the body again – lets out a SCREAM)* Oh My God!!!

*(She runs as fast as she can out of the room and after the police)*

*(A man comes from the other room and drags the body into the kitchen)*

SARA: *(Off stage)* Officer – he's back – Officer – Help

*(The officer and Sara run back into the living area to see no body)*

O'SHAMIS: Where? Where's the body?

SARA: Right there *(She points to an empty spot on the floor - Pause)* I saw a dead man, honest.

O'SHAMIS: Mrs. Sampson – you **cannot** keep calling every time you think you see a body.  
*(pause – telling her the law)* It's against the law to file a false police report.

SARA: But I didn't do it.

O'SHAMIS: You have. Calling me in on false pretenses.

SARA: But I didn't kill that man.

*(They walk to the foyer and the officer leaves the house)*

O'SHAMIS: Yes ma'am. I'll go and file my report now. Don't call unless you see a **real** dead body.

SARA: I won't.

*(Sara closes the door and looks back at the door leading into the living area)*

*She slowly walks toward the living area – and peeks through the door*

*She does not see any dead body and enters the room – she brushes the floor with her foot where she saw the dead man laying – and reacts to nothing there. She then sits in a chair staring at the center of the floor where the body was)*

*(Her husband quickly opens the door and startles her)*

SAMUEL: Honey! *(She jumps almost off the chair)* Are you OK?

SARA: I am fine. *(beat)* I think.

SAMUEL: *(looking around the room)* Have you seen my other pair of glasses?

SARA: He was just laying there.

SAMUEL: *(clueless)* Yes, my glasses. I need them.

SARA: I know I wasn't seeing things.

SAMUEL: *(Not really paying attention to the conversation – catching every other word)*  
I'm not seeing them either. Help. Please. *(Looking around the room)*

SARA: He was right there. *(She pointed to the floor)*

SAMUEL: Where did you say?

SARA: There. *(She pointed to the floor, leaned back, as she leaned her hand moved up to point across the room – just then Sam looked at her to see her point across the room)*

SAMUEL: Over there? *(he walks across the room to see his glasses hidden behind a lamp)*  
*There they are. (Holding them to the light – looking at the dirt through them)* Great.

*(He leaves and heads into the kitchen – cleaning his glasses)*

*(Sara continues to stare at the floor - Sam walks back out and into the foyer and then back again – like he forgot something)*

*(Sara just watches him)*

*(Sara gets up and goes into the other room – guest room – as Sam passes he goes into the kitchen and brings the body back into the living room)*

*(Sara enters the room and steps over the body like it is not there – she stops  
She turns to look at the body – she tests the body with her foot – it is real  
She reacts but does not scream)*

SARA: *(talking to herself out loud)* It **is** real – there **is** a body here on my living room floor – a **real** body.

*(She heads for the phone – she picks up the phone and does not dial - Places the phone back on the cradle and walks back into the living room - She tests the body with her foot again – reacts to the body – jumps back)* A real body – in my front room – **Oh My God!**

*(she picks up the phone again and dials the police)*

*(Phone rings)*

O'HANLON: *(Picks up the phone)* Quietville Police Central – O'Hanlon speaking. May I have the nature of your call?

SARA: Oh My God!!!

O'HANLON: Hello, Mrs. Sampson. Is your dead body back? *(Puts hand over phone)*

Sarg! It's the 'Oh My God' lady again.

SARA: Honest, I felt him, he's here. *(She stretches the phone cord over and peeks through the door to the living room to look)*

*(Whispers)* I can see him.

O'HANLON: You don't have to whisper. *(beat)* If he is dead you're not bothering him.

SARA: I am looking right at him. Oh - My - God!

O'HANLON: You keep your eye on him and I'll send someone over right away.

SARA: OK.

O'HANLON: **DO NOT** let him out of your site. *(yelling)* Sarg. I told her you would be right over.

O'SHAMIS: *(Off stage)* You'll have to send someone else I'm in the middle of sumpin' else.

O'HANLON: *(yelling)* Lieutenant! Can you go on a call?

O'MALLEY: *(off stage)* Right away. *(O'Malley walks by O'Hanlon – who holds up a slip of paper – he grabs it and heads out the door)*

O'HANLON: Mrs. Sampson, Lt O'Malley 'll be there in just a few minutes. Keep your eye on the deceased.

SARA: The deceased. *(She starts to cry)*

*(both hang up their phones - Sara goes into the living area and stares at the body - Every now and again she nudges it with her foot)*

*(A few minutes go by while she looks silently at the body and nudging it)*

*(The door bell rings - Sara gets up and heads toward the foyer to let the policeman in At the same time the husband enters and drags the body into the guest room)*

SARA: *(Normal cheery voice)* Hello.

O'MALLEY: Ma'am. You have a body in your living room.

SARA: Yes right this way. I've been keeping an eye on it. He hasn't gone anywhere.

*(They exit the foyer into the living area – where there is NO body)*

O'MALLEY: Ma'am

SARA: It was right here. *(pause)* I saw a dead man, Honest.

O'MALLEY: Please come with me to the station? You were told if you called in a false report we would have to site you.

SARA: No. It's not my fault. I didn't kill him.

O'MALLEY: It is illegal to file a false report.

SARA: I didn't file anything. I don't know how to file, ask anyone?

O'MALLEY: It's for your own good while we get to the bottom of this dead body mystery.  
*(They enter the foyer and he opens the front door – she is putting up a little resistance)*  
Please Mrs. Sampson, I don't wanna cuff you.

*(Samuel enters the foyer – totally clueless)*

SAMUEL: What's going on dear?

SARA: I filed a false police report, tell them I don't know how to file.

SAMUEL: That's true she's a horrible bookkeeper.

O'MALLEY: She claims there's a dead body in your house.

SAMUEL: There's no dead body in our house. What would make you think there's a dead body in the house?

O'MALLEY: She saw it and kicked it.

SAMUEL: *(Still clueless)* You kicked a dead body?

SARA: No. I just checked to see if he was dead.

SAMUEL: Was he dead?

SARA: YES!

O'MALLEY: I'm taking her to the station to cool off. I'm not going to charge her with anything. *(pause – talks to husband)* I think you may want to have her checked out. She may need some medical help, if you know what I mean?

SAMUEL: *(Clueless)* Yes. I will. *(beat)* What do you mean?

SARA: I'm not crazy.

SAMUEL: She's right, it's her sister that's crazy. Runs in the family. *(Sam goes back in the house and heads for the guest room - He brings the body back out into the living room)* Can you believe that Jeffery? They think she's crazy.

*(They arrive at the police station where Sara sits at the table and the officer heads off stage)*

O'MALLEY: Please wait here and I'll get someone to help you.

SARA: I'll wait.

*(Sam leaves the living area and heads into the kitchen – leaving the body on the floor)*

O'HANLON: *(Walks over and sits with Sara)* Hello, Mrs. Sampson

SARA: Hello.

O'HANLON: Would you like something to drink?

SARA: No thank you.

O'HANLON: Want to talk about it?

SARA: What's to talk about?

O'HANLON: You know.

SARA: *(frantic - fast)* I went into my living room and saw a dead body.

Then I went back and I didn't see a dead body

*(Starts to rant)* Then I went back again, **there it was**.

I called you guys and it was gone.

*(Begins to rave)* Then, you left and I went back **and there is was**.

So I called and you told me to watch it. So I watched it.

*(Ranting and Raving)* I watched it until your officer arrived and then **it was gone**.

And now I am here.

*(Pause - calm)* What's to talk about?

O'HANLON: How does that make you feel?

SARA: *(Yelling - angrily)* I FEEL FINE!

O'HANLON: Sara.

SARA: WHAT!

O'HANLON: There's some paperwork to fill out and we'll take you back home, OK?

SARA: *(calmer)* Yes, thank you. I'll take something to drink. Coffee if you have it.

O'HANLON: I'll get some for you. *(reassuring)* We'll get you home very soon.

SARA: Thank you.

*(He brings her some coffee – He turns to get some papers – she sniffs it and takes a sip – she spits it out immediately)*

O'HANLON: Something wrong?

*(She quickly acts like she did not sip the coffee)*

SARA: No, nothing.

O'HANLON: *(sits back down with Sara)* Here we go.

*(Showing her the papers)* This is your standard SF122 report - And your FC362 and 363 form  
Plus your FR441 Claim form - And finally your proof of liability LAL eleven

SARA: Your SR what and your BR who? *(beat)* I told you I don't know how to file.

O'HANLON: I will do the filing. Here first you need to fill out the FC362 and 363 form.

I will start the SF122 report and have you sign it when we're done.

Make sure you put your initials at the end of each page to show you have read the pages.

*(Sara just looks at the papers and shakes her head)* Don't worry this will only take a little while.

*(He turns over the papers and hands her a pen)* This is not a test, there are not write or wrong answers, just a formality.

SARA: I just want to go home

O'HANLON: Got to get the paperwork done first.

*(Sara starts to write on one of the papers and turns it over and writes on the other.)*

O'HANLON: *(Talking to self while writing)* Place of occurrence. *(pause)*Time. *(pause)*

Called or personally reported. *(pause)* Dispatched time.

*(O'Hanlon is writing away like a mad man – finishing the first page quickly)*

*(Talking to Sara)* Here, the first part is done. How ya coming along?

SARA: I don't know. I just want to go home.

O'HANLON: You have to actually fill in some of these areas where it asks you what you saw.

This is the FC362 report, very important.

SARA: You know what I saw. *(beat)* I saw a dead man, honest.

O'HANLON: I'll put down what I know. You'll have to sign it. Here you start on the FR441 Claim. OK.

SARA: *(she feels battered and slumps in the chair)* Ok.  
*(He takes the forms from her and starts to write at an amazing pace)* What is this?

O'HANLON: That is your standard FR441 claim – this is a form to let us know that the claim you made on the FC362 and 363 form is correct to the best of your knowledge.

SARA: It is. *(pause)* Honest.

O'HANLON: The LAL Eleven form is a mere formality. It tells us that no property was damaged while the investigation was going on.

SARA: There was an investigation?

O'HANLON: Of course we investigate everything. Now here is the SF122 form, please sign it *(points - beat)* here.

SARA: What's this for?

O'HANLON: This is the report that categorizes the FC 362 and 363  
And ties the claim form FR411 to those reports. *(pause – shuffling papers happily)*  
Paperwork is my life.

SARA: Why?

O'HANLON: Why what? *(beat)* Here sign the FC363 and put your initials at the bottom of the previous page.

SARA: *(Overwhelmed)* OK.

O'HANLON: Great, let me put these in your file.

SARA: I have a file. I don't have a file. I can't file.

O'HANLON: We are about ready to send you home. Would you like some more coffee?

SARA: *(Quickly – puts hand over cup)* No! (beat) thank you.

O'HANLON: Suit yourself. We have one more form the RLS twenty one – release form.

SARA: No More forms! Just take me home.

O'HANLON: Sarg can you take her home.

O'SHAMIS: *(Off stage)* Sure, be right there.

O'HANLON: *(O'Hanlon finished the last form)* Please sign here and you are on your way.

O'SHAMIS: *(O'Shamis come from back stage and leads Sara out the door and heads home)*  
Come on Mrs. Sampson, time to head home

SARA: Thank god

*( short time passes )*

SARA: *(enters the foyer and yells back at the cop)* Thank You. I'll be fine.

*(She enters the living room and stops – she stares at the body on the floor)*

SARA: *(Starts to kick the body in the side yelling)* NO! *(kick)* NO! *(kick)* NO! *(kick)* NO!

*(She runs out of the house yelling at the police to come back- offstage - The body gets up off the floor and clutches his side in pain he stumbles into the kitchen)*

SARA: *(She returns to the foyer with the police officer)* He was on the floor again – I kicked him.

O'SHAMIS: Mrs. Sampson, please it has been a long day. Get some rest and well can talk in the morning. *(They did not go into the living room)*

*(In disbelief walks the officer to the door – not saying a word)*

*(The body stumbles back into the living room and collapses on the floor - she turns and looks back – dreading going back into the living area)*

SARA: He's not there – it's not true – I was seeing things – there's no body  
*(She enters the living room and sees the body back on the floor - She grabs a poker and beats the body to death – striking it dozens of times)* You are not there *(hit)* you're not real *(hit)*  
*(the body lay motionless on the floor)* You're not there *(hit)* **you are not real.**  
*(Sam enters the room - Sara acts like nothing happened - calmly)* Hello dear.

SAMUEL: *(looks at the body and grabs the arm)* Come on Jeffery time to go home.

SARA: *(Looking away)* There's no-one there

SAMUEL: *(Shaking the body)* Come on. Time to go. *(he sees the blood and the bruising)*  
Oh MY God!! *(grabs the poker from Sara)* What have you done?

SARA: *(calmly)* What's wrong?

SAMUEL: Oh My God!!

SARA: There's no-one there.

SAMUEL: Oh MY God!!

*(Sam heads for the phone and calls the police - The phone rings)*

O'HANLON: *(Picks up the phone)* Quietville Police Central – O'Hanlon speaking may I have the nature of your call?

SAMUEL: Oh My God!!!

*(Sara sits looking at the body)*

O'HANLON: Mrs. Sampson? Is that you?

SAMUEL: Oh My God!!!

O'HANLON: Mrs. Sampson?

SAMUEL: This is not Mrs. Sampson. I'm Samuel Sampson and there's a dead body on my floor.  
*(pointing with the poker)*

O'HANLON: *(puts hand over phone mic - yelling)* SARG!

SAMUEL: I want to report a dead body.

O'HANLON: I know on your living room floor.

SAMUEL: Yes, how did you know?

O'HANLON: We've already taken this report.

SAMUEL: He's dead.

O'HANLON: Yes, we know. We'll be over in the morning to pick up the body.

SAMUEL: Morning? What do I do until then?

O'HANLON: Nothing. I suggest you get a good nights' sleep.

SAMUEL: Oh My God!!!

O'HANLON: Thank you Mr. Sampson.

*(he hangs up the phone)*

SAMUEL: *(heads back into the living room with Sara still sitting looking at the body she is sure is not there)* He told me to get a good nights' sleep.

SARA: That sounds like good advice. Everything will be OK in the morning.

SAMUEL: Oh My God!! How can you take this lightly. Jeffery is dead. We just celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday last night. He'd too much to drink and was out like a light. I couldn't wake him all day.

SARA: *(Stops looks back at the body - pause - yelling)* Oh My God!!!

(Curtin)