

UNHEARD

By Glenn Alterman

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SYNOPSIS: Sam is visiting his very ill father in a hospital. The two men are obviously uncomfortable with each other. But something happens during that visit that frees both of them, if only momentarily.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 males, 0-1 either)

SAM (m) An older man. *(61 lines)*
HAROLD (m) Sam's son. *(59 lines)*
NURSE (m/f) Voice heard over hospital
speaker. *(15 lines)*

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A sun filled hospital room.

SOUND EFFECTS: Soft hospital bells.

AT START: *SFX: soft hospital bells.*

NURSE: *(Over hospital speaker.)* Paging Doctor Goodson. ...Paging Doctor Goodson.

The lights come up in a hospital room. Bright daylight shines in the window. We see an older man, SAM, in a hospital bed. He looks quite ill. His son, HAROLD, is standing by the window.

SAM: So?

HAROLD: *(Turning, then walking over to SAM, smiling.)* So?

SAM: What else?

HAROLD: I don't...

SAM: How's your mother?

HAROLD: Fine.

SAM: Say hello for me.

HAROLD: Sure.

SAM: *(A beat.)* So how's things?

HAROLD: Things, things are good.

SAM: Yeah, work?

HAROLD: Great.

SAM: They payin' you enough?

HAROLD: I get by.

SAM: *(A beat.)* So how's Boston?

HAROLD: Boston? Boston's great.

SAM: *(A smile.)* You like living up there, in Beantown?

HAROLD: Yeah, I do. Boston's great, y'know.

SAM: No, I don't.

HAROLD: Don't what?

SAM: I don't know, I've never been there.

HAROLD: No?

SAM: No.

HAROLD: Well you should come up some time.

SAM: Yeah.

NURSE: Paging Dr. Lyson.

HAROLD: *(A beat.)* So how you feeling?

SAM: You asked me that already. *(Then, smiling.)* Getting laid?

HAROLD: What?

SAM: You seein' anyone up there in Bos-town?

HAROLD: Nah, no one special.

SAM: Playin' the field, huh?

HAROLD: More or less.

SAM: (*Smiling.*) Just like your old man. But I bet you do okay.

HAROLD: (*Smiling.*) Well they're not knocking down doors. ...So what do the doctors say?

SAM: Doctors! They come in here and ask me, "How you feeling?"

HAROLD: That's it?

SAM: Two, three times a day.

HAROLD: Really?

SAM: "How ya feeling? How ya feeling?!" Sometimes they come in like little groups, look at me, whisper among themselves. Then walk outside, talk some more, come back in and...

HAROLD: It's probably just ...

SAM: ...take some blood,...

HAROLD: I'm sure it's...

SAM: CAN-CER! It's cancer, for Christ's sake!

HAROLD: (*Softly.*) They told you that?

SAM: What do you think I'm stupid?

HAROLD: No, I...

SAM: Hey, don't bullshit a bullshitter, okay?

HAROLD: (*Looking at SAM.*) Okay, Cancer.

SAM: Colon cancer, advanced.

HAROLD: So you know, they told you.

SAM: And pretty soon they'll take me downstairs, open me up, take a look inside, see how far it... (*Stops.*) She dating anyone?

HAROLD: Who?

SAM: Your mother.

HAROLD: I don't know, I don't think so.

SAM: Beautiful woman.

HAROLD: Hm.

NURSE: Attention all visitors, visiting hours will end in five minutes.

HAROLD: (*Looking around.*) S'a nice hospital.

SAM: (*A shrug.*) It's a hospital; beds, walls and windows.

NURSE: (*A little louder.*) Five minutes.

SAM: (*Smiling.*) How she loved to dance, your mother.

HAROLD: (*Smiling.*) Yeah, I remember.

SAM: When we were young, we'd go to a bar or club, and every guy's eyes would be just on her.

HAROLD: Yeah?

SAM: Drop dead gorgeous! Every face would do an about face. Then someone would put some money in the juke box and... Shit how she loved to dance. Regular Rita Hayworth.

HAROLD: Huh.

SAM: Me, two left feet

HAROLD: Oh c'mon, Dad.

SAM: Nah, she was like Ginger Rodgers, I was like one of the Marx Brothers.

HAROLD: Dad, I remember seeing you two dance. You weren't that bad.

SAM: People with polio dance better!

NURSE: Attention all visitors, visiting hours are *almost over*.

SAM: Time to go I guess.

HAROLD: Yeah.

SAM: When you going back?

HAROLD: Tonight.

NURSE: *(A little louder.)* Visiting hours are over.

SAM: Taking the plane?

HAROLD: Train, I think.

SAM: Really?

HAROLD: Takes a little longer, but y'know, by the time you get out to the airport, and with security, and delays....

NURSE: Visiting hours are over!

SAM: So how long's it take by train?

HAROLD: I don't know, 'bout three and a half, four hours.

SAM: That's not too bad

HAROLD: No, I do some reading and...

NURSE: OVER!

SAM: Thanks for stopping by.

HAROLD: *(Standing there, uncomfortable.)* Yeah. ...So... I'll see ya Dad.

SAM: Yeah, see ya.

NURSE: *(Softly.)* Say what you have to say.

SAM: So long.

HAROLD starts to leave.

NURSE: *(Louder.)* SAY-WHAT-YOU-HAVE-TO-SAY!

HAROLD stops, turns to SAM.

HAROLD: Dad?

SAM: What?

NURSE: Say it!

HAROLD: Dad.

SAM: What?

NURSE: *(Louder.)* NOW!

HAROLD: *(Softly.)* ...I love you.

SAM: What?

NURSE: Louder!

HAROLD: *(Louder.)* I love you, Dad!

SAM: *(Softly.)* I love you too.

HAROLD: Yeah?

SAM: Of course, you're my son.

HAROLD: I know, but we never...

SAM: Look, I'm sorry how things worked out.

HAROLD: Doesn't matter.

SAM: That I wasn't the best father. That I left you and your mother.

That we haven't talked in all these years. That...

HAROLD: Dad?

SAM: What? *(SAM moves close to him by the bed, just looks at him.)*

HAROLD: *(Softly.)* Dad?

SAM: *(Softly.)* What, son? ...What?

HAROLD remains still, a bit frozen, unsure of what to do. A change in the light from the window. SAM slowly opens his arms to HAROLD. HAROLD leans in, they embrace. They hold each tightly, quietly for a moment. SFX: soft hospital bells.

HAROLD: *(Standing back up, looking at him, softly.)* You realize...
this is the last time we're ever going to see each other.

SAM: Yeah.

HAROLD: That you're going in there, and you're going to die during the surgery.

SAM: I know.

HAROLD: And... that we never actually said any of this.

SAM: Not a word.

HAROLD: No last minute good byes, no holding you, no last minute I love yous. None of this will actually ever happen.

SAM: 'Course not.

The light from the window returns to the way it was.

NURSE: *(Very softly.)* Visiting hours are now over.

HAROLD: So I should get going.

SAM: Yeah.

HAROLD: *(Sincerely.)* Was really nice seeing you.

SAM: Yeah. I should get some sleep.

HAROLD: Right. *(Starts walking towards the window.)*

SAM: *(Calling to him.)* Harold?

HAROLD: *(Turning to him.)* Yeah?

SAM: Give your mother my regards.

HAROLD: Sure.

SAM lies back in bed, closes his eyes. HAROLD looks at him for a moment and then turns, looks out the window into the sunlight.

NURSE: *(Getting softer.)* Paging... Paging. ...Paging.

As the lights slowly fade.

THE END