

You're Getting Warmer
by Victoria L. Davis

CHARACTERS

TIFFANY'S MOTHER - In her late thirties, early forties. Immaculately and tastefully dressed (suit, low pumps, strand of pearls). Hair carefully coifed. Trim figure. Cultivated voice. Reserved but gracious manner.

DAVEY'S MOTHER - In her early to mid-twenties. Casually dressed in jeans, t-shirt, sneakers. Hair rather lank, not unkempt, but little attention paid to it. Unpolished, honest speech.

SET

The play is set in front of a large picture window, located in the corridor of a hospital. The window looks out, most notably, on to the hospital helicopter "launching pad."

Stage should be bare, the illusion of a window created by the actresses. Actresses should be facing out into the audience.

PROPS

Pillow

Straight-backed, functional small chair

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(DURING THE BLACKOUT, MUSIC FROM A CHILD'S TOY/STUFFED ANIMAL IS HEARD, A LULLABY. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS, THE MUSIC IS UNDERCUT BY THE BEEPING OF HOSPITAL IV'S. THE DISCORDANT SOUND FADES INTO ONE INSISTENT IV. BEEPING SUSTAINED FOR A MOMENT, FADES).

LIGHTS UP.

(TIFFANY'S MOTHER STANDS AT ONE END OF THE WINDOW, LOOKING OUT. NOTHING HAPPENS FOR A MOMENT. DAVEY'S MOTHER ENTERS, WALKS TO THE WINDOW, PLACES HERSELF AT THE OPPOSITE END. AS THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO WOMEN CHANGES, IT SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN THE WAY THEY SHARE THIS SPACE).

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Sometimes I wish I could get in that helicopter and fly away and never come back. (TIFFANY'S MOTHER GLANCES OVER BRIEFLY, SELF CONSCIOUS LAUGH FROM DAVEY'S MOTHER)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (GLANCES OVER AT TIFFANY'S MOTHER AGAIN, SLIGHT PAUSE) You ever been in one?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: No, no I haven't.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Me neither. I'd like to though. (SLIGHT PAUSE) This here's my little boy's favorite spot. He can just sit here for hours waitin for that damn thing to take off or come back. He likes it better than the playroom.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Tiffany loves to come here too. (SLIGHT PAUSE) You're Davey's mother, aren't you?

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Yeah.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: He's a beautiful little boy.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Yeah—he's a real looker. Like his dad. (SLIGHT PAUSE) Your little girl's real pretty too. (AWKWARD PAUSE) Did she have hair like yours?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: No. She has hair like her father's. I always put bows and fancy barrettes in it. When the sunlight catches it, it glows fiery red. (SLIGHT LAUGH) Sometimes people stop and stare...they stare.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Maybe it'll grow back. I heard sometimes it grows back. (SLIGHT PAUSE) She sure had a cute hat on yesterday—I seen you walkin her in her wheelchair. (SLIGHT PAUSE) You know they did another test on him yesterday.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I saw them take him into the treatment room.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: A bone marrow—(HESITATES)

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Aspiration.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (NODS) He's only four years old you know. And scared to death of needles. Must take after me—they scare me shitless. (SLIGHT PAUSE) I didn't go in with him. Big old needle in his back—I was scared I'd get sick or pass out or do somethin stupid. (SLIGHT PAUSE) I seen you go in there with your little girl.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: They try to give all the procedures in there, not in their beds. To keep bed a safe place.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: There ain't no safe place here s'far's I can tell. Place gives me the creeps.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: It gets better after awhile. You don't notice the smells so much and you learn what all the noises are—

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I ain't gonna be here that long. We just brought him in because he had this bee sting on top of his head and it just didn't seem to get any better. They think this test is gonna show he's got leukemia—I bet they're wrong.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I hope so.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: You know they oughta have some place to sit here. With everybody comin here so much. Waitin for that helicopter.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: That would be nice.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (WALKING QUICKLY DOWN THE HALLWAY) Why don't I just grab a chair?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (RUBBING THE BACK OF HER NECK) Oh, don't bother.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: No bother. No one'll miss it. They're always movin somethin in and out of these hallways. Wheelchairs, beds—a regular U-Haul heaven. (DRAGS BACK A SMALL, STRAIGHT BACKED CHAIR AND A PILLOW. GIVES THE CHAIR TO TIFFANY'S MOTHER, PLOPS DOWN ON THE PILLOW).

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Every time I come to see Davey I see you here. You don't have no job?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I worked until a couple months ago.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I don't have no job, but I have a little baby at home. He's only three months old, and I hate to leave him with a sitter all the time.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Tiffany is our only child.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Oh. (SLIGHT PAUSE) She sure is a pretty little girl.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Yes. Of course I'm prejudiced but she's very bright—and creative too.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Takes after you?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: No, no. I can't draw a straight line with a ruler. But she's quite an artist. We want to give her private lessons...and she's smart too. (SLIGHT PAUSE) Much smarter than me.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I just think you don't like to go braggin' on yourself. I hear the nurses talkin about you, bout what a good mother you are and how you do all kinds of things for Tiffany. Just like a nurse. (SLIGHT PAUSE). You would have gone into that treatment room today.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Davey knows you care about him—that's the most important thing.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I hope you won't think I'm rude or nothin, but I've been watchin you. You're always smiling. And you always know just what to do. Tiffany gets sick to her stomach and there you are with that pan. (SLIGHT PAUSE) I don't know what to say to Davey. I can't tell him it's not gonna hurt—I've never lied to him and I ain't gonna start now. I want to tell him it's gonna be okay, you're gonna be okay—but I'm not sure I believe it myself. Not deep down.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (GENTLY) It's hard to wait for the tests to come back.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Yeah. (SLIGHT PAUSE) I heard your little girl cryin last night. I didn't listen to what you said or nothin, but I could tell she was upset.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Yes. Very upset.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: It took you a long time to quiet her down, but you got her to sleep.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: We played a game.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Please tell me it wasn't Candyland—sometimes I think if I play one more game of Candyland or watch one more Thundercat cartoon—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I know. No. We played Hot and Cold. It's a guessing game.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Sometime you'll have to teach me how to play.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Yes. Sometime. (RISES, AS IF TO LEAVE)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (NOTICES) Do you like tomatoes? (TIFFANY'S MOTHER STOPS)

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Very much.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (STANDS UP, HOPING TIFFANY'S MOM WON'T LEAVE) I'll bring you some. I don't have a very big garden—we got ourselves a tiny backyard. My husband says it ain't hardly big enough to play ball in with Davey. But I got me a little corner. Tomatoes always seem to come up at the same time no matter what you do—we got more than we can eat. And I ain't got no time to put up any. I'll bring you some tomorrow.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: That's very nice of you.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: My man says I'm pure Okie—give me a piece of dirt and I'm happy. I guess he's right. Me an dirt—we got an understandin. (TOUCHES TIFFANY'S MOTHER'S HAND) You got pretty nails. Mine break all the time. I never paint them—need to see the dirt under my nails, to clean them proper. But I don't mind. I like it when the dirt gets caked on my hands—like another skin. Listen to me—real poetical, huh? (TIFFANY'S MOTHER SITS BACK DOWN ON THE CHAIR. DAVEY'S MOTHER SITS ON THE FLOOR AGAIN, BUT CLOSER TO HER) But the dirt an me—we got an understandin. I dig around in it, I plant the seeds, I water it, I weed it—and it grows

things for me...Sometimes when I leave here late at night, I go and sit in my garden. My husband says I'm crazy, that I can't see the weeds in the dark, but I just like to sit out there. Like I can feel things growin, (SLIGHT PAUSE) Last night I was sittin there and I thought maybe it would be better to know. Maybe if I knew what was wrong, I'd understand what to do. I just want to know what to do.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: It's not that simple. Oh God, look I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—
(STANDS UP)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Please don't go. (SPRINGS UP) I seen you talkin to other parents.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Sometimes the nurses tell me when a parent wants to talk to another parent. (IRONIC) Someone experienced.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I told a nurse.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: She told me.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: But you didn't come.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: No.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Why?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I don't know.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: You don't like the way I look or somethin'?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: No, I — (SLIGHT PAUSE) They don't know Davey's diagnosis yet. I remember that as a good time. Now.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I can't wait. Somethin's happening to Davey.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Shouldn't you talk to his doctor or a nurse about it?

DAVEY'S MOTHER: They wouldn't understand. I tried to talk to my husband about it but he got angry. (SLIGHT PAUSE) You and Tiffany are close. Like Davey and me. And you always seem to know what to do. (SITS BACK DOWN) And I don't. (PUTS HER HEAD DOWN, QUIET DESPAIR) I don't know what to do.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (SITS BACK DOWN, GENTLY) I'm listening.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (INHALES DEEPLY) Davey's eyes are changin. Oh sometimes when he's laughin or feelin good they're his eyes. But most of the time they're like old man's eyes. And sometimes they look at me angry-like, like he's beggin' me to do somethin and there's nothin I can do. And when the doctors come around on those rounds, he goes away somewhere. I can see him leavin in his eyes but I can't go with him. And then I think what if I have to tell him that he's going to—I'm scared all of Davey's gonna disappear from his eyes. And never come back.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I can't help you.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Please—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I wish I could, but I can't.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Maybe I'm not askin the right way.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (RAPIDLY, SHIFTS CHAIR TO FACE DAVEY'S MOM) Okay—I'll teach you to play Hot and Cold. You wanted to learn. Now is a good time. One person begins by saying there's something hidden in this room. And the other person gets to ask questions. The number of clues you allow can vary—let's say three. Then you have to start guessing. If your guess is close, I'll say you're getting warmer; if your guess is way off, I'll tell you you're getting colder. (TAKES BOTH PARTS, ONE IN HER OWN VOICE, ONE IN A CHILD'S VOICE) "There's something hidden in in this room." "Is it big or small?" "Sometimes very big and sometimes very small." (STANDS UP ABRUPTLY) Now isn't a good time after all. I'm sorry. (TURNS TO LEAVE)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Is it always in the room or does it come and go?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (STOPS) It's always here.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Would I know what to call it if I saw it?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Yes, yes I believe you would. No more clues.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Okay. It's a wheelchair, one of those that folds up.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: You're cold, very cold.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: It's some other machine around here.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: You're getting colder.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: It's too hard with three clues. There are too many things around here.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: It's under the bed and on the sides of the bed and sometimes it's in the bed—on the pillow—

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I know, I know. It's that special marble game with all those pieces you have to put together—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Cold.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Davey loves to play with it but they have to keep it locked up because the parts get lost but it's always there and I bet the kids hide it under their bed sometimes—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Cold, cold, cold.

(BRIEF SILENCE)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: This game scares me.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Warmer.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: This thing in Tiffany's room, it's scary.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (CROUCHES DOWN CLOSE TO DAVEY'S MOTHER) You're getting warmer.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: And it's dark, very dark. And empty.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Very warm.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (WHISPERS) And sometimes you see it in Tiffany's eyes.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Hot.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I don't believe you. It don't feel right, you tellin a child through some game—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (BROKEN LAUGH) You're getting colder. You still haven't guessed right. (STANDS) I didn't want to play. Tiffany made me play. I knew the answer but I let her go on and on. I guessed anything I could think of and she never got impatient. And then I knew she wouldn't stop. Not until I guessed. I knew she was going to die. Before the doctors told me. They asked me to tell her and I lied to them—I told them I had. But I didn't. Tiffany would talk to them about how sick she was, but never in front of me. So they thought I told her. I couldn't tell her. And so she made me play. (PAUSE) All the nurses think I'm so wonderful, the perfect mother. And I couldn't even tell her. Even when I knew she knew. Now do you understand? It wasn't Tiffany you heard crying last night. My little girl held out her arms to me, and she hugged me, and she told me "it's okay. Now you don't have to pretend anymore. We're going to be okay."

(SILENCE)

(DAVEY'S MOTHER RISES, STEPS TOWARD TIFFANY'S MOTHER)

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (SLOWLY) I tried not to pretend. I really tried. (SLIGHT PAUSE) So now you know. I don't have any answers to give. Except—don't make Davey hide it. (STARTS TO LEAVE)

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I think you're one ballsy lady. (TIFFANY'S MOTHER STOPS, TURNS BACK, STARTLED) I don't mean that crude like—

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: (SHAKY LAUGH) No. Thanks. (PAUSE) It's cold in here. It's so hot outside and then I come in here and just freeze some days.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I guess I've always been kinda warm blooded. (PAUSE) Can you tell me what time it is?

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Five o'clock.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Davey'll probably be awake now. And if he ain't awake, they'll probably have to wake him up to eat anyhow.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: You're right. The routine around here takes some getting used to.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: I'll catch on.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: Ballsy ladies do.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: (LAUGHS) I better go.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I'm going to stay a few minutes more. You never know—the helicopter might take off.

DAVEY'S MOTHER: Yeah. Holler if it does and I'll rush Davey out here. (TAKES A FEW STEPS, TURNS AROUND) Maybe sometime we could go have a cup of coffee or somethin.

TIFFANY'S MOTHER: I'd like that.

(DAVEY'S MOTHER SMILES, WALKS OFF. TIFFANY'S MOTHER STANDS MOTIONLESS IN FRONT OF THE HELICOPTER WINDOW FOR A MOMENT).

Sometimes I wish I could get inside you and fly away and never come back.

BLACKOUT