

## Immaculate Deception

*The lights rise on a living room festooned with Pittsburgh Steelers memorabilia – pennant, banners, hats, scarves – even the rug. Every piece of furniture is either gold or black or some combination.*

*Into the room enter Frank and Harrison (Harry) Leiszowicz, sons of the just-deceased Bruno Leiszowicz. While both wear mourning suits, Harry seems much more comfortable in the dark outfit. For example, his tie is still tied. Frank has already removed his jacket and loosened his tie, removing it as he enters, throwing it onto a chair. Harry retrieves the tie and, with a quick annoyed glance at his brother, folds it neatly and puts it into his jacket pocket. Meanwhile Frank has exited the room and returned with a beer. He flops down on the couch and takes a gulp from the bottle, then makes a face.*

HARRY

What's the matter?

FRANK

*(Holding up the bottle)* Iron City. Man, how could dad drink this stuff?

HARRY

I don't know. Maybe all those cigarettes he smoked killed his taste buds.

*Frank takes another big swig and makes another face. Harry shakes his head.*

HARRY

You don't have to drink it, you know.

FRANK

You don't have to tell me that, either. *(Belches)* Besides, he left half a case in there.

HARRY

Well now you can't say he didn't leave you anything.

FRANK

*(Upset)* You know, I lost a father here, too, you know.

HARRY

You haven't home since mom passed away.

FRANK

And that's supposed to mean I didn't care?

HARRY

And the only times you'd call is to razz the old man when the Steelers lost.

FRANK

I called plenty.

HARRY

You called when it suited your purpose. To borrow money or to annoy dad.

FRANK

What? So because you stuck around and sponged off the old man that's supposed to count for something?

HARRY

Where do you get off saying stuff like that? Who do you think was driving dad to the doctor's office, to the physical therapist, to the radiologist, to the VFW hall –

FRANK

Where he could sneak another pack of cigarettes.

HARRY

If you thought it was so important to stop him, then you should have been here, too.

*Harry turns away, disgusted. Frank takes another swig of beer and makes another face. There are a few moments of silence when the doorbell rings. Harry starts to cross, but Frank just yells from where he is sitting on the couch.*

FRANK

It's open, come on in.

*Harry gives him a dirty look. Enter Victor Michellini, a well-dressed, grey-haired, distinguished man in his sixties. He holds an 8 x 10 yellow manila envelope in his hands.*

VICTOR

Excuse me, I'm looking for Frank and Harrison Leis... *(Having trouble pronouncing the name)*

HARRY

Leiszowicz. That's us. I'm Harrison - Harry, and this is my brother Frank.

VICTOR

*(Extends his hand to Harry, who shakes it professionally)* How do you do. *(Extends his hand to Frank, who barely gets up but manages to shake his hand)* First of all, let me apologize for barging in on you like this, of all days, but your mother's instructions were very clear in this regard.

HARRY

Our mom? She's been dead for five years.

FRANK

*(Starts to get off the couch)* Yea, what are trying to pull?

HARRY

Relax, Frank. *(To Victor, as Frank recedes back onto the couch)* Sorry about that, Mr. Michellini.

VICTOR

That's quite all right. I can understand the confusion. You see, before your mother passed away she engaged my firm for a small job. I was instructed, if she passed away before your father, to deliver this envelope to the two of you on the day of your father's funeral. Or her funeral, if her death followed your father's.

HARRY

And Mom died first.

FRANK

*(Starting to show some interest)* So what's in there?

VICTOR

The envelope was delivered to me sealed, so as curious as I might be, I cannot tell you. *(Takes out and unfolds a piece of paper from his jacket pocket)* If you would both sign here to indicate that you accept delivery...

*Harry, then Frank – who has bolted off the couch – both sign the paper, which Victor folds up and puts back in his pocket.*

VICTOR

Thank you, gentlemen.

*Victor starts to hand the envelope to Harry, but it is grabbed by Frank, who turns it over several times to examine it.*

VICTOR

Again, my condolences on your loss.

HARRY

*(Shakes Victor's hand)* Thank you Mr. Michellini. Let me show you out.

VICTOR

No need. I can find my way. Good day.

*Frank only grunts in Victor's direction as he exits. The two men stare at the envelope.*

FRANK

Whattya think it is?

HARRY

*(Look at Frank as if he is a real dope)* Well there's really only one way to find out.

*Frank just looks at him, dully*

HARRY

*(Annoyed)* Open it?

*Frank rips open the envelope. Inside is a photograph and a letter. Frank takes the photo – which he appears trying to comprehend – throws Harry the letter, which he starts to read to himself, then out loud...*

HARRY

Frank. Listen to this. “Dear Frank and Harry. If you are reading this letter it means that both your father and I have gone on to that great reward.” *(Rolls his eyes)* “I want you to know that my marriage to your father was the most important things in my life. We loved each other very much and always tried to be truthful with one another, to never hide anything. But I have been holding on to a secret.” *(Stops, almost afraid to read on. Takes a breath)* Jesus. “As you know, your father was a big Pittsburgh Steelers fan.”

*Harry stops reading. He and Frank look at each other, then around the room, taking in the absurdity of the statement. Frank goes back to looking at the photo, Harry returns to the letter. As Harry reads, Frank starts to get visibly excited.*

HARRY

“Back in 1972 your father won two tickets to a Steelers playoff game. Your father was very excited because the Steelers hadn’t been in a playoff game since just after the war. We were still just dating and I guess he wanted to impress me – not that he needed to by that point – and he invited me to go with him to this big game. Naturally I brought my camera. That’s where the picture you are now holding comes in. I know you have heard your father talk about the ‘Immaculate Reception’ a hundred times. This photo – ”

FRANK

*(Screams)* That’s it! That’s it!

HARRY

What?

FRANK

I knew this looked familiar.

HARRY

What?

FRANK

It’s the Immaculate Reception.

*Harry face registers only confusion*

FRANK

Didn’t you ever listen when dad talked?

HARRY

I know the story. *(Almost bored, as if reciting the multiplication table)* The Steelers were losing 7 to 6 in a do-or-die playoff game against the Oakland Raiders when, with seconds to go, Franco Harris caught a Frank Bradshaw pass that bounced off Oakland’s Jack Tatum –

FRANK

Fuqua. It bounced off Fuqua.

HARRY

*(Not in the mood)* You want to dig up dad's not yet cold body up so you can argue with him again about this?

FRANK

The ball bounced off John Fuqua, a Steeler, not Jack Tatum, an Oakland Raider. That means the play was over and the catch didn't count.

HARRY

Well, that's not what the referees said. They said it bounced off Tatum. An Oakland Raider. So the play counted.

FRANK

They were in Pittsburgh. The refs were afraid for their lives, surrounded by a stadium full of Steelers fans. Of course they ruled for Pittsburgh.

HARRY

And there was a second running back behind the grassy knoll, too. Oliver Stone's gonna do a whole movie about it. Come on, Frank. The bottom line is that the officials ruled that Franco Harris caught the ball and ran 42 yards for the touchdown and Pittsburgh won. *(Warms up, starts to smile)* The way dad talked about that play you'd think **he'd** caught that pass. God, he loved that team. You know he proposed to mom that day?

FRANK

And he held that play over us our whole lives. 'Never give up, boys' and 'remember Franco Harris and the Immaculate Reception' and *(darker)* 'maybe if you showed the same resolve you'd have been a success, Frank.'

HARRY

He was only asking you to do something with your life other than –

FRANK

He was only knocking me down, the way he always did, to make himself feel better.

HARRY

It was always dad's fault that you screwed up, wasn't it?

FRANK

A lot of help you were, too.

HARRY

How can you say that after I literally bailed you out?

FRANK

That wouldn't have happened, you know, if you had been with me that night.

HARRY

What? To help you load a truck of stolen TVs?

FRANK

I told you a thousand times, I didn't know they were stolen.

HARRY

*(Just exhausted)* Look, Frank, what does it matter now? They're both gone.

*There are a few moments of silence, as they both seem to need a break*

FRANK

She hated that team as much as we did, you know.

HARRY

Oh stop that. Mom loved that team almost as much as he did.

FRANK

Then how do you explain this? *(Shoves the picture in front of Harry)*

HARRY

Okay, what am I looking at?

FRANK

You don't see it? Look closer. *(Harry still doesn't see and Frank is getting impatient)* The ball, Harry. Look where the ball is.

HARRY

*(Plainly)* It's on the ground. *(Suddenly realizes the impact of what he is seeing)* It's on the ground. It's on the ground. Frank, oh my God, it's on the ground. Mom took the only picture of the ball hitting the ground **before** Harris picked it up. *(Looks at Frank)* It didn't matter who the pass bounced off of - a Steeler or a Raider - because the ball hit the ground. The Immaculate Reception wasn't immaculate, after all. It was incomplete. And Mom knew it. All these years, she knew it, and never said anything. Imagine. Imagine being able to keep a secret like that all these years.

FRANK

*(Eyes gleaming)* Yea, and imagine her not realizing the fortune she could have made off of this beauty.

HARRY

Mom wasn't stupid, Frank. She had to have known she could have cashed in, but she didn't because she knew what that would have done to dad. *(Just had a horrifying realization)* Oh, Frank, you wouldn't.

FRANK

Oh, no? Dad is gone. He won't care. So why the hell not?

HARRY

Because... I don't know... because it's not right.

FRANK

Yea. Compelling argument, Harry. Ever think that maybe she had this photo delivered to us like this so we could do what she couldn't when dad was alive?

HARRY

Why do you always think like that?

FRANK

Like what?

HARRY

That everything has been put on this earth for you to make buck of off it?

FRANK

And why can't you ever see the possibilities, man? Why can't you see that this is why Mom had this photo delivered to us like this. This is our ticket, and I'm taking it. *(Starts to exit)*

HARRY

Wait a minute.

FRANK

*(Whirls around, his empty fist balled up)* Don't try to stop me, Harry.

HARRY

Stop you? Who said anything about stopping you? I agree with you.

FRANK

You do?

HARRY

*(Harry unties his tie and takes off his jacket)* Yea, I do. Look, Frank, you were right on both counts. Dad is gone, so he won't care. And Mom must have had a reason for putting that photo in our hands. It makes perfect sense. Let me see it. *(Frank slowly hands the photo to Harry, who practically drools over the photo)* Wow. Okay. We gotta be smart about how we do this. Gotta do this just right to squeeze every buck we can outta – *(Suddenly brightens)* That's it!

FRANK

What?

HARRY

I just remembered that I got a friend who knows a guy who's cousin is Terry Bradshaw's agent.

FRANK

*(Who is confused by Harry's sudden shift)* So?

HARRY

So, stupid, the last thing Bradshaw would want is for the secret in this photo to come out.

FRANK

*(Shocked at Harry's behavior)* You want to blackmail Terry Bradshaw?

HARRY

You're right. Why stop at Bradshaw? We'll get his agent to contact Franco Harris, too. Harris got just as much to lose as Bradshaw. Maybe more.

FRANK

*(Getting cold feet)* Yea, uh, good thinking, Harry.

HARRY

You bet it is. In fact, that whole team has been living a lie. Each and every one of them. Together, just think of what they'd pay to keep this quiet.

FRANK

*(Confused, and scared)* You sure changed your mind in an awful hurry.

HARRY

Whattya mean?

FRANK

I mean two seconds ago I was a rat for wanting to make some dough off this thing and now –

HARRY

You think I wanted to live at home? To play nursemaid and chauffeur and personal assistant to an old man who never even said thank you once to me?

FRANK

Yea, well, Dad was never a "thank you" kind of guy.

HARRY

Wasn't an "I love you" kind of guy either.

FRANK

Yea, the old man was pretty stingy with stuff like that.

HARRY

But at least I didn't hate him for it.

FRANK

I didn't hate him for it. I knew he's was trying to help me... in his own way.

HARRY

Hey what's with you? A few minutes ago you were complaining about everything about dad including his beer. Now you're defending him?



FRANK

I don't know... it's like all of a sudden you're making it seem like he didn't do anything for us. I mean, we had a pretty good life here, you know? We never went hungry. We had clothes for school. He got us both jobs at the foundry.

HARRY

Which you couldn't wait to leave.

FRANK

And you wanted to stay. It doesn't mean you loved him any more than I did.

*Both register shock at what Frank just said.*

HARRY

Frank, you've never said...

FRANK

*(Composes himself quickly)* Just forget it, okay?

HARRY

Listen... Frank. I, uh.... You, uh, wanna go out for a beer?

FRANK

No. *(Smiles)* I mean, there's plenty of Iron City in the fridge.

HARRY

Dad would like that.

FRANK

So would Mom.

*Harry puts the photo on the table and the two brothers exit. The lights fade to black, except for a spot light which shines on the photo.*

**End**