

ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT

a 10-minute play

by Brent Englar

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CHARACTERS

MR. JAMESON, middle-aged

MRS. JAMESON, the same

JOE JAMESON, 12

JOY JAMESON, the same

TIME

The present; Saturday night

PLACE

The JAMESON'S car, represented by four chairs set in two rows of two. A full moon floats in an otherwise clear sky.

(Lights up on the JAMESONS, slumped in their car. MRS. JAMESON is in the driver’s seat; her hands rest limply on the imaginary steering wheel. MR. JAMESON sits beside her; his right arm is bent awkwardly in a cast. JOE and JOY slouch in back. Both parents are dressed formally, as though for the theatre; both kids appear to be going to a school mixer. At the moment, however, they are stuck in a brutal traffic jam, and the only sounds are of cars honking in all directions. At last JOE leans forward and taps his mother on the shoulder)

Ma?
JOE

What, baby?
MRS. JAMESON

Aren’t you going to honk back?
JOE

Shut up, Joe.
MR. JAMESON

(JOE thinks for a moment, then rolls down his window and screams into the night)

SHUT UP!
JOE

Joe, shut that window!
MR. JAMESON

(ignoring him)
JOE
NO ONE IS MOVING! SHUT UP!

Joe, so help me, your mother will turn this car around and—
MR. JAMESON

—We’ve been stuck here an hour!
JOE

We’ve been stuck fifteen minutes.
JOY

JOE
SHUT UP!

JOY
YOU SHUT UP!

(For a moment there is silence. MR. JAMESON turns to his wife and groans)

MR. JAMESON
We forgot to feed the cat.

(Very deliberately, MRS. JAMESON reaches beneath her seat and pulls out an old-fashioned revolver. She opens her door, steps out of the car, and walks slowly offstage as her family watches in horror. A loud gunshot is heard)

MR. JAMESON (Cont'd)
Somebody's got to take that gun from her.

JOE
You want to be a hero, go ahead.

JOY
She's coming back.

MR. JAMESON
Just act natural.

(MRS. JAMESON reenters. She walks to the car, climbs into her seat, and closes the door, then places the gun back under her chair)

MR. JAMESON (Cont'd)
Feel better, hon?

MRS. JAMESON
I was aiming for the Moon.

JOE
Did you hit it?

MRS. JAMESON
I think so.

JOY

(gaping at the sky through her window)

I see a new hole up there, Mom.

MRS. JAMESON

Don't be absurd, Joy. The Moon is bulletproof. What have they been teaching you in school?

JOE

She's a dullard, Ma.

MRS. JAMESON

I have half a mind to visit your teacher myself.

JOE AND JOY

NO!

MR. JAMESON

I'll do it, hon, first thing Monday morning.

MRS. JAMESON

What about your job?

MR. JAMESON

Our little girl's education comes first.

(MRS. JAMESON nods, touched. MR. JAMESON wraps his good arm around her; she rests her head upon his shoulder)

JOE

You like that word—dullard? It means one with dull wits.

JOY

What are wits, Joe?

JOE

Wits, Joy, are tiny fibers in the cerebral cortex that slice facts into easily-digested pieces as they pass through the brain. Otherwise the facts clump together like oatmeal and the mouth hangs open to relieve the pressure. This is what gives the dullard her characteristic slack-jawed appearance. I'm going to be a neurologist when I grow up, Ma.

MR. JAMESON

(to JOY)

You set yourself up for that one, sugar.

MRS. JAMESON

(to herself)

Tomorrow I'll take aim at the Sun.

(They sit contemplating tomorrow. Suddenly JOY points at the cars in front of them)

JOY

We're moving!

(Everyone sits up, re-energized, and leans forward. MRS. JAMESON poises her foot above the gas pedal, but she does not lower it)

JOE

(after a moment)

False alarm.

JOY

We're going to be late for the dance.

JOE

What a shame.

JOY

It is a shame! Some of us managed to find dates.

JOE

I would've had a date. Ashley Johnson told me she'd love to go with me, but she has to visit her sick grandmother in the woods.

JOY

That's Little Red Riding Hood.

JOE

No, that's Ashley Johnson. With the ponytail.

JOY

Ashley told me she's going with Kirk Fairchild.

JOE

Really? What about Josie McEwen?

JOY

What did she tell you?

JOE

Her evil stepmother locked her in her room.

(JOY smiles and looks out the window)

JOE (Cont'd)

You think she's lying?

JOY

I didn't say anything.

JOE

That's why I'm asking!

(leaning forward)

Dad, did you ever ask a girl to a dance?

MR. JAMESON

Of course.

JOE

What did she say?

MR. JAMESON

She said yes.

JOE

Oh.

(He falls back for a moment, disappointed, then leans forward again)

JOE (Cont'd)

Ma?

MRS. JAMESON

What, baby?

JOE

If a guy you didn't like asked you to a dance, what would you tell him?

MRS. JAMESON

Well, I'd want to be careful not to hurt his feelings, so I would say I'd love to go with him but I had something else to do that night.

JOE

Like what?

MRS. JAMESON

Oh, like visiting a sick relative, perhaps. Of course if I was really desperate, I'd just say my evil stepmother grounded me.

JOE

But what happens when you run into him at the dance?

MRS. JAMESON

That's easy. You explain that your relative felt better or your stepmother moved out, and you were all set to call him but someone else called you first. Why, baby?

JOE

Just curious. Can we turn around?

JOY

No!

JOE

Look, nobody's on that side of the road. We'll be home in five minutes.

JOY

I have a date!

MR. JAMESON

And your mother and I have tickets to Cirque du Soleil.

JOY

I HAVE A DATE!

MRS. JAMESON

For heaven's sake, Joy, settle down.

MR. JAMESON

Who's up for some music?

(With his good arm he turns on the radio, but the only thing playing is static. He changes to a new station, which produces a different kind of static. A third attempt proves equally unsuccessful, and he turns off the radio)

JOE

Must be the power lines.

JOY

There aren't any power lines.

MRS. JAMESON
I removed the antenna.

MR. JAMESON
What?

JOE
Why?

MRS. JAMESON
I didn't like the look of it.

MR. JAMESON
I never even noticed it had a look.

MRS. JAMESON
Also wind resistance.

(MR. JAMESON glances anxiously at his children, who nod)

MR. JAMESON
Hon?

MRS. JAMESON
Yes, Jeffrey?

MR. JAMESON
This is difficult to say, so I'll just come out and say it. We're concerned, the children and I—you may have lost your mind.

MRS. JAMESON
Really?

JOE
It's true, Ma.

JOY
We're very concerned.

MRS. JAMESON
I feel perfectly well.

MR. JAMESON
They say lunatics often do.

MRS. JAMESON

Who say?

MR. JAMESON

The experts.

MRS. JAMESON

Hmm ... Well, Jeffrey, I hate to bring this up, but you haven't exactly been the picture of stability lately yourself.

MR. JAMESON

What do you mean?

MRS. JAMESON

For instance, the doctors all agree your arm has been healed for three months now. Isn't it time you let them take off that cast?

MR. JAMESON

I've never met an X-ray that knows my arm better than me, and I say it still feels weak.

JOE

Actually, Dad, it's perfectly normal for a broken arm to feel weak even after the bones knit—in the absence of regular exercise the muscles begin to atrophy.

MR. JAMESON

Shut up, Joe.

(JOE considers this, then rolls down his window and screams “SHUT UP!” as before)

JOY

Who are you yelling at?

JOE

What do you mean?

MRS. JAMESON

(to MR. JAMESON)

And there's a rage inside Joe that can't be entirely healthy.

JOY

I'm healthy, aren't I, Mom?

MRS. JAMESON

Who did you say was your date tonight, Joy?

JOY

I HAVE A DATE!

(She throws herself against her chair and glares out the window. MR. JAMESON gasps and turns to his wife)

MR. JAMESON

Do you mean to say we've all lost our minds?

MRS. JAMESON

Haven't we always been this way?

MR. JAMESON

It would appear so.

MRS. JAMESON

Then there is only one conclusion to draw. Either we have not lost our minds or—

MR. JAMESON

—OR?!

MRS. JAMESON

Or we never had minds to lose.

JOE

I can live with that.

MRS. JAMESON

Joy?

(JOY continues to stare furiously out the window. MRS. JAMESON points at the road ahead)

MRS. JAMESON (Cont'd)

Oh, look, we're moving again.

(MRS. JAMESON lifts her foot above the gas pedal as her husband and son lean forward in anticipation. She lowers her foot with a bang. Blackout. End of play.)