

Ajax Is Carried Away

A stage play

by

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SAMPLE

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Cast of Characters

Ajax	7, a neighborhood boy
Tommy	55, construction worker
Vance	59, Tommy's next-door neighbor
Phil	55, hotel manager

SAMPLE

Setting

A shabby neighborhood in PA suburb on Memorial Day.

Front of Tommy's small house. Front yard is center stage, a side yard is to the right. The house door leans up against the wall to the left of the gaping doorway. A wide portion of the wall to the right of the doorway is demolished. A giant flat screen monitor is mounted on the wall between the demolished portion of the wall and the right corner of the house, where a poor-looking evergreen stands, the only shrub in the yard. A tent is set up in the side yard to the right of this. It contains household furnishings and odds and ends: lamps, bookcases, magazines, boxes. Just outside the tent stand two stacks of very weathered cartons. They bear faded labels of MARS, FOREVER YOURS, MILKY WAY, O'HENRY, TWIX, SNICKERS, and KIT-KAT. An armchair with a crate serving as table stands outside the tent entrance. Downstage far left, the porch of neighboring house, also small and run-down, is visible. Two misshapen wicker chairs and a ruined table stand on it, a dilapidated tool shed is visible behind. A hurricane fence directly behind all this cuts off what was once the back yards of these houses. A six-lane expressway looms directly beyond and a little higher, looking like traffic will spill right over the fence onto the houses and residents. Background noise of traffic is incessant. Crescendos of eighteen-wheelers downshifting to make the upgrade are heard intermittently. Upstage far right just beyond Tommy's property is a thicket of underbrush that hides the entrance to a culvert that passes under the expressway. Downstage right is an extensive thicket screening a deep ravine that cuts the neighborhood off from the town.

Scene 1: Morning

Tommy's front yard. Ajax enters upstage right from shrubs and grasses that obscure the culvert entrance. He wears a swimsuit, brightly colored galoshes, a backpack, and an oversized baseball cap. He is wet, filthy, shivering, out of breath. He sits down near the culvert thicket on rubble-strewn ground, removes the baseball cap, and scrapes the muck on it off on his leg. Tommy emerges from tent with clipboard in one hand, a cell phone clapped to his ear, sits in armchair and looks through papers on clipboard.

Tommy *(starts reading from clipboard, then abandons it)* Hello, Mrs. Bocci? This is Tommy DeStein. Owner of Tommy's limo-scene. You know, 'big time face time for mugs that matter most'? We just did a job for you—yeah, that's the one. Hope I'm not bothering you. I'm calling because that review you entered on Yelp. I look at those reviews all the time because they mean a lot to me and I noticed yours was pretty negative. I'd say it was pretty negative. It wasn't positive. I detected some dissatisfaction in it, and that makes me feel bad because I dedicate that service to the community, did you know that? The honest truth. The only reason I'm out there is to keep people circulating who might fall out of it because driving gets too, maybe, even dangerous for them because maybe they can't see or hear or think too well or anyway we're all about keeping social contacts alive for important faces, you know, mugs, instead of just making a phone call. And we'll stop and pick up groceries for you. Did you know that? So when I saw your review I felt I had to inquire what the source of your dissatisfaction maybe was. Did it have anything to do with the driver mentioning a discretionary tipping policy, because I assure you— *(pause)* So would it be accurate if I noted down for my records that you were dissatisfied about getting stuck in traffic at Hulton bridge due to the fact that it's been under construction for the past six months? Thank you, Mrs. Bocci. Stuck for the entire memorial service, you say? Missing that memorial service, that was probably an emotional setback for you. Is there some small way we could compensate for that setback? I'm being frank. Financially. I'm ready to make out a check for whatever sum you feel that emotional upset is worth to you, that is, put you back. Please, Mrs. Bocci. For my peace of mind. Twenty dollars?

Twenty-five? And twenty-five for the flowers? They didn't get there either? They were with you. Fifty dollars? Done, Mrs. Bocci, done. Not another word is necessary. I want our customers to feel protected and if they feel they have been set back by our service, I want to offset that setback. I'll have the check in the mail to you today. And I thank you for being honest with me. It helps us improve our litigation. Pardon? Our service, I meant. It helps us protect our service. That's why we value negative reviews on Yelp so highly, that is, take them very seriously. Thank you, Mrs. Bocci for your time. Good-bye.

Tommy disconnects. Puts a stick of gum in his mouth, chews it, notices Ajax.

Tommy Hey, what are you doing over there? That's private property. Go away. Clear out. Get into a scrape somewhere else.

Ajax moves off towards culvert thicket, but not out of sight. Tommy gives him a long look, then walks to house next door, hops up on porch, knocks on window, tries to peek in, exits upstage center, returns right away, moves to armchair, makes connection on his phone.

Tommy Hey, who's this? This is the right number. Sure, I'm sure. Who are you? None of your business. How did you get this phone? Hello? Hello?

Tommy *(glances toward Ajax)* I can see you, Ajax. You know what that means? You're too close. Vamoose. Skeddaddle. Go home.

Ajax You can't make me.

Tommy Yes, I can. I can sue if you don't get off my property.

Ajax *(moves further back)* I'm not on anybody's property now.

Tommy You're in the sewer. That's everybody's property. That gets fouled up, guess who gets flooded? And it won't just be dirty water. Beat it, Ajax. Get away from here. Wherever you're going to, just go, okay? Go, go, go.

Ajax *(moves a little further back)* I'm not hurting anything.

Tommy I don't need any more problems. I can't handle any more issues, so just go home, please? Go home and put some clothes on. Then maybe we can talk.

Ajax I won't. You can't make me.

Tommy Does your mom know you're running around like that?

Ajax I have to be on time or the boat will leave without me.

Tommy You stink to high heaven. Where have you been?

Ajax She said she would fix them. She forgot.

Tommy What are you doing over here anyway? Why aren't you in school?

Ajax takes folded sheet of paper out of his swimsuit and hands it to Tommy. Ajax points.

Ajax This is today.

Tommy That's right.

Ajax It's red.

Tommy Yeah, it's red.

Tommy folds paper and returns it to Ajax who unfolds it, looks at it.

Ajax It's a holiday and there's going to be a barbecue with frankfurters and Cokes for everyone who marches for free. She knew I had to be ready or I would miss the boat and won't go to music camp if I don't.

Ajax tries to fold paper. Tommy helps him. Ajax slides folded paper into his swimsuit.

Tommy What boat?

Ajax I would like some frankfurters and Cokes and march and play my whistle at the same time. We practiced.

Tommy What boat, Ajax?

Ajax Mr. Wilmouth said luggards will miss it and she still didn't come.

Tommy What boat are you talking about?

Ajax Now she can't and I'm going to miss it if I don't get there now.

Tommy What boat is that?

Ajax I'm already too late. I'm already too late.

Tommy Hang on, Ajax, hang on. What boat are you talking about?

Ajax The one with the fire truck.

Tommy What fire truck?

Ajax I have to line up on Walnut street behind the fire truck sharp or it will march without me and I won't get to go to music camp and get my lunch all summer. Mr. Wilmouth said so. I have to have my lunch.

Tommy They're not going to let you line up on Walnut street for anything looking like that. Or smelling like that.

Ajax She said she would fix them. She forgot. Now she can't.

Tommy Fix what?

Ajax My pants. They're too long. She forgot. Now she can't.

Tommy So you left without them, I see.

Ajax approaches cartons of candy.

Tommy Get away from those, Ajax.

Ajax Are you having a party?

Tommy No, I'm not. Just move away, okay?

Ajax Who's it for?

Tommy It was for my daughter.

Ajax She didn't eat it?

Tommy No, she didn't.

Ajax Didn't she want it?

Tommy She wanted it too much.

Ajax She wasn't our Sunday school teacher anymore.

Tommy No, she wasn't.

Ajax She smelled funny.

Tommy She was sick, Ajax. Very sick.

Ajax Let me have some, please?

Tommy That stuff is no good. It's been standing out here a whole year.

Ajax My Halloween candy lasted a whole year and I still ate it.

Tommy You shouldn't have.

Ajax Candy's always good.

Tommy That's what's bad about it.

Ajax That's funny.

Tommy You always want more.

Ajax I do. I always want more and more and more.

Tommy That's why your mother keeps you away from it, doesn't she?

Ajax I sneak it and destroy the evidence.

Tommy I bet.

Ajax If I clean and vacuum and swab out the johns, will you let me have some?

Tommy What are you talking about?

Ajax I can clean and sweep and swab out the johns and make it spic-and-span all over. I know how. I start the vacuum all by myself all the time.

Tommy You're not getting any of that junk under any circumstances.

Ajax I'm so hungry. Please let me have some.

Tommy Did you have breakfast?

Ajax shakes his head no.

Tommy No breakfast, no candy. That's a rule.

Ajax Please, Mr. DeStein. I won't tell. I promise.

Tommy No one's getting any of that. I'm dumping it out.

Ajax Where?

Tommy It's because of that my daughter was so sick. Never mind where.

Ajax She rode around in a little cart.

Tommy A bariatric power wheelchair. Four thousand bucks on the be-my-friend payment plan for the six-hundred-pounds-guaranteed model. Go over that and guess what? No coverage. Did that stop her? No.

Ajax She had tubes in her nose.

Tommy Yes, she did.

Ajax It made her nose runny.

Tommy About this parade, Ajax.

Ajax I have to go. Luggards will miss the boat. I have to have my lunch. I'm already too late.

Tommy Hold your horses, young man. I'm going to call your mom right now and she'll come and get you and clean you all up and give you some breakfast and fix your pants and get you to Walnut street right on time to line up with everyone else. And you'll look spanking new and handsome in your nice trousers. And smell good too. You'll see. Just hang on, hang on, hang on.

Tommy dials number.

Ajax Are you calling her now?

Tommy Yes.

Ajax Please, don't, Mr. DeStein.

Tommy It's all right Ajax. I'm not mad at you.

Ajax She said not to until she's home. No ifs, ands, or buts.

Tommy Settle down, Ajax. We'll get you to your boat in plenty of time with your pants on.

Ajax She said she'll be mad at me.

Tommy She won't be mad at you. You're not calling. I am.

Ajax She won't answer.

Tommy Ajax? What's wrong? Ajax?

Ajax She won't answer.

As Tommy approaches, Ajax throws himself against Tommy and pummels him with his fists, sobbing outright. Tommy disconnects, sets phone down, and tries to calm Ajax.

Tommy Whoa. Whoa. What's going on here? What's this? What's happened? What's happened, Ajax?

Ajax They were mean to my mom. They were mean to her and made her fall down.

Phil enters upstage center. On seeing him, Ajax backs away rapidly and disappears into shrubs by culvert. Phil strides rapidly towards Tommy.

Phil Arab. What are you doing here?

Tommy If you're surprised, maybe I should be asking you that question. I live here.

Phil moves hurriedly past Tommy, trips over tent guideline, falls, clutches at it in a temper. Tommy rushes over.

Tommy Take it easy, Phil. That's my home.

Phil Damn stupid place for a tent.

Tommy I had zero options.

Phil Why you sticking it out in that thing anyway? The Indians got wiped out. And they weren't environmentalists, either. *(scrambles to his feet and prowls around behind tent)* I know it's around here somewhere.

Tommy What?

Phil That thing.

Tommy What thing?

Phil That pipe.

Tommy What pipe?

Phil You know. Big. Wide. Hollow. Long. Something they shoved in under the road. They've got all kinds of names for all that construction crap. Plug, pump, bridge, trestle. A big pipe.

Tommy You mean the culvert?

Phil Yeah. That's it. It runs from my parking lot to right around here somewhere.

Tommy My personal swamp. The only atmosphere this place has.

Phil You seen that kid come out of it?

Tommy What kid?

Phil Tina's kid.

Tommy Ajax?

Phil Yeah, that's his name.

Tommy It's a sewer, Phil. It's not for people.

Phil That kid goes through it all the time.

Tommy He's not going to go through that.

Phil Diemidio said he saw him go in. He'd have to come out and that's right around here somewhere.

Tommy Why would he go in there?

Phil To get across the highway, Deep Thought.

Tommy Why would he do that?

Phil To get to the parade.

Tommy What parade?

Phil Some parade Tina promised she'd take him to and can't.