

SMART KID

A short drama by
Meredith Dayna Levy

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JAMIE, elementary school age (9-11) and dyslexic. Any gender.

FRANKIE, Jamie's friend, also of elementary school age (9 -11). Any gender.

MR./MS. PATTERSON, Jamie's teacher. Any gender, any age.

NURSE BERKLEY, the school nurse. Any gender, any age.

MR./MS. DRIVER, Jamie's school bus driver. Any gender, any age.

RICK, Jamie's dad. Male, any age.

JOANNE, Jamie's mom. Female, any age.

PHOENIX, Jamie's neighbor, a year older than Jamie. Any gender.

Note: a diversity of races is encouraged. She/her pronouns are used as default, but most of these roles are gender neutral and can be played by males or nonbinary/trans persons, as well as females.

SETTING

The present. An unspecified American town or city.

DEDICATION

To Patricia Brooks Cope-Levy and the students at Oakland School in Keswick, VA.

(Lights up on a bare stage.)

(Standing downstage facing the audience is JAMIE, elementary school age [anywhere from 9-11].)

(Orbiting around Jamie are JOANNE, Jamie's mother; RICK, Jamie's father; MR./MS. PATTERSON, Jamie's teacher; NURSE BERKLEY, the school nurse; MR./MS. DRIVER, the bus driver; FRANKIE, Jamie's best friend; and PHOENIX, Jamie's neighbor. They all face upstage.)

(All characters should engage in dialogue facing the audience, never each other.)

JAMIE: *(Making a phone with her hand:)* Ring, ring, ring!

(She "hangs up.")

(Frankie turns to face downstage and addresses the audience.)

FRANKIE: Hey Jamie! Missed you on Friday. Where were you?

JAMIE: Home.

FRANKIE: You were sick or something?

JAMIE: Totally. Dad took me to the doctor and he said that I was "exhibiting the stress levels of a thirty-five year old."

FRANKIE: Whoa, that sounds serious.

JAMIE: Best part was that I wasn't allowed to do any of my homework.

FRANKIE: But our book reports are due today!

JAMIE: It's OK. I have a doctor's note.

(Frankie turns upstage, and Mr./Ms. Patterson turns downstage.)

MR./MS. PATTERSON: I know it's no fun to be sick, but you had a whole month to read this book. Just because you were sick the weekend before it was due doesn't excuse you from

having to do it. I want your report on my desk by the end of the day tomorrow.

JAMIE: But Mr./Ms. Patterson—!

MR./MS. PATTERSON: No excuses, no exceptions. You're a smart kid, Jamie. I know you can do this.

(Mr./Ms. Patterson turns upstage, and Nurse Berkley turns downstage.)

NURSE BERKLEY: Where does it hurt?

JAMIE: My tummy.

NURSE BERKLEY: Did you eat too much candy at lunch?

JAMIE: No.

(Nurse Berkley takes Jamie's temperature.)

NURSE BERKLEY: You don't have a fever. This wouldn't happen to be because you didn't do your book report? Mr./Ms. Patterson told me that you got upset with her about it this morning.

JAMIE: Can you keep a secret?

NURSE BERKLEY: Nurse-patient confidentiality.

JAMIE: I did do my book report, but a kid on the bus stole it.

NURSE BERKLEY: Somebody *stole* your book report?

JAMIE: I didn't want to tell Mr./Ms. Patterson because it's embarrassing when *a bully* steals your stuff, and the bus driver totally ignores everything.

(Nurse Berkley turns upstage, and Mr./Ms. Driver turns downstage.)

MR./MS. DRIVER: Are you accusing me of not running a tight ship here, kid?

JAMIE: What do you mean, a tight ship? This is a bus.

MR./MS. DRIVER: That Nurse Berkley told me some bully nicked your book report on *my* bus, and that I'd better keep an eye out.

JAMIE: Can you keep a secret? No one stole my book report. I didn't write it because I had important appointments to keep last weekend.

(Phoenix turns downstage; he is dressed in pirate garb.)

PHOENIX: C'mon, it's time to play pirates!

JAMIE: I can't, Phoenix. I've got this book report to write.

PHOENIX: That won't take long.

JAMIE: I haven't finished reading the book.

PHOENIX: Then it might take you a bit longer. *(Looks over her shoulder at the book:)* Oh, I read that book last summer.

JAMIE: Can you tell me about it? Then I wouldn't have to finish reading it.

PHOENIX: I don't remember all the details. I just remember it was pretty funny.

JAMIE: There's nothing funny about it. It's too hard to read, and I don't even know half these words!

PHOENIX: When is it due?

JAMIE: Tomorrow.

PHOENIX: So watch the movie on YouTube. That's what my brother Mark does—and everyone says he's a genius. Now c'mon, Frankie is gonna be home any minute. Do you really want to let those water balloons we made yesterday go to waste?

(Jamie contemplates, then closes the book.)

JAMIE: Ahoy, maties!

PHOENIX: *(Charging upstage:)* Shiver me timbers!

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MR./MS. DRIVER: I see. Very important appointments.

JAMIE: Yes. And then I had to call my dad because he wants to talk to me every day when he's traveling. (*Makes phone with her hand:*) Ring, ring, ring!

(Rick turns downstage.)

RICK: (*Making a phone with his hand, picking up:*) Hey there, Jam-ster. Everything okay?

JAMIE: I just need help with my book report.

RICK: I'm sorry, but I can't help you right now. I'm working. Maybe in a couple days, when I'm home again.

JAMIE: It's due tomorrow.

RICK: Why don't you ask your mother to help you?

(Joanne turns downstage; she is folding laundry and watching TV.)

JOANNE: Honey, can't you see I'm busy?

JAMIE: You're just watching TV.

JOANNE: I'm also folding laundry.

JAMIE: I need help with this book report. Can't you read it to me?

JOANNE: You're getting a little old for me to keep reading out loud to you. (*To the TV:*) C'mon, Simon, cut the girl some slack. She's an orphan, for cripes' sake!

JAMIE: If Dad were here, he would read it to me!

JOANNE: Well, he isn't here, and frankly, I think he is coddling you too much. You're a smart kid, Jamie; you can read that book by yourself now.

JAMIE: Fine. If you won't read it to me, then will you take me to the library so I can get the audio book?

JOANNE: Absolutely not. You can read the actual book like everybody else.

JAMIE: Reading gives me a headache.

JOANNE: Well, I don't know what to tell you, kid. We all have to do things that give us headaches sometimes. Like laundry. Or parenting.

(Joanne turns upstage.)

JAMIE: *(Back on phone:)* She's too busy to help me either.

RICK: Chin up, Jam-ster. You're a smart kid; I know you can handle this. Read it out loud to yourself and pretend that I'm reading to you. Got to go! Love you!

(Rick turns upstage.)

MR./MS. DRIVER: I'm not saying that talking to your dad or playing pirates with your neighbor aren't important things. But a lot of people would say your school work is as important as that stuff. You're a smart kid –

JAMIE: WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SAYING THAT?!

(All characters look at Jamie; those facing upstage maybe turn over their shoulder to look.)

MR./MS. DRIVER: Sorry, kid.

(All characters turn back upstage, except for Frankie.)

FRANKIE: What's going on? You're lying to everyone! You told Nurse Berkley someone stole your book report, you told the bus driver that your mom wouldn't read to you –

JAMIE: She wouldn't –!

FRANKIE: You told me that you were too sick to do it.

JAMIE: I was.

FRANKIE: Those are three different stories, Jamie! What *actually* happened!?

JAMIE: Fine. You really want to know?

FRANKIE: Yes!

JAMIE: You really want to?

FRANKIE: Yes!

JAMIE: ...Aliens stole my book.

FRANKIE: Aliens.

JAMIE: They made me swear I wouldn't tell anyone.

FRANKIE: I'm your best friend. You don't think I notice things?

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