

On Friday We Wear the Right Tie

A Short Play

by

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CAST: GERALD, 10, Catholic school kid
JERRY, 35, Gerald when he is older
NUN, 40's, principal of the school

TIME: 1969

PLACE: A hallway just outside the Principal's office in a Catholic elementary school.

NOTE: A time travel play. Gerald and Jerry are the same person.

A wooden bench, a door to the office, a large bulletin board with posters on hygiene, fire drills, cut-out letters spelling:

RULES TO GOOD BEHAVIOR

- 1. OBEY YOUR ELDERS*
- 2. DON'T SASS BACK*
- 3. OBEY THE RULES!*

SCENE 1: MONDAY

A school bell sounds.

Lights up on Gerald, sitting on the bench wearing the standard-issue school uniform of dark pants, white short-sleeve shirt, dark shoes but with one notable exception: he wears brightly-colored, oddly-fitting striped tie, a clear violation of the school dress code regarding boy's neckwear.

Jerry enters, dressed as a janitor, a large ring of keys jangles off his belt.

He works the floor with a large dust mop. With each pass, he exchanges glances with GERALD, nods his head knowingly. With each nod, Gerald lowers his head, lower and lower.

JERRY

Wrong tie?

Gerald nods

JERRY

Gotta see the Sister?

Gerald nods

JERRY

Gonna get paddled.

Gerald nods

JERRY

Gonna hurt.

Gerald covers his head.

JERRY

Well, cheer up! It's not like we knew this wasn't gonna happen.

GERALD

You said we wouldn't get into trouble.

JERRY

Trouble!?! Who's talking about trouble?

GERALD

Teacher said.

JERRY

You got this all wrong. This is a golden opportunity of unimaginable length, width, height, depth and dimension.

GERALD

But I'm gonna get paddled!

JERRY

Of course you are and isn't it wonderful?

GERALD

But you said...

JERRY

...hey, hey, hey. You wanted to wear the tie. You stole it out of your dad's closet. You put it on and you tied the knot. Once that was done, courses were set in motion, clocks ticking tocking, salmon spawning. And wallah! I'm here. Just like Aladdin and the Lamp.

GERALD

But it's gonna hurt.

JERRY

Oh, you betcha! That's SOLID OAK, mister! Sister got One-Tooth Bob the Janitor to drill holes in it so it stings and your butt looks like you sat on a waffle iron.

GERALD

You're not going to get paddled.

JERRY

Oh, yes I am.

GERALD

No you're not.

JERRY

Yes I am.

GERALD

No you're not.

JERRY

Yes I am!

GERALD

No...!

JERRY

... In spirit! What happens to you, now, happens to me, eventually. That's why I'm here. To make sure courses of motion stay in courses of motion. Or else, a parallel universe takes over and our history becomes a tossed salad at the dinner table of time and space where years fall like crumbs from croutons and get lapped up by the slobbering Daschund of despair and destitution. A wiener dog! Something like that. I get confused by the quantum flux.

GERALD

I wish I never put this stupid tie on.

JERRY

Hey, none of that sass. I'm counting on you, big guy! In fact, tomorrow, I think we should put on your dad's bright yellow one. Oooh, the one with the airplanes.

GERALD

Tomorrow?

JERRY

Yes, Tuesday.

GERALD

But I thought you said just today?

JERRY

Silly boy! Gotta be the whole week.

GERALD

Every day!?

JERRY

Day plus day plus day plus day plus day equals week.

GERALD

I'm gonna get paddled!

JERRY

Sorry. I don't make up the rules. I just break 'em.

GERALD

(lowers head, starts to cry)

But you said, you said ...

JERRY

Oh, don't think of it as getting paddled by a nun. Think of it as ... pocket change.

(he jingles his keys)

Each swat one little dime, a measly nickel, a sticky penny. A small price to pay for a lifetime of, flying higher than you can fly, of seeing farther than you can see, of, of, BEING MORE ME THAN YOU CAN BE! Now, we both gotta do our parts or we end up selling insurance for a conglomerate and all is lost. My part is to give you moral support. Your part is get in there and get paddled by the Sister. Once we get to Friday, Smooth Sailing!

GERALD

But what if I don't want to?

The Sister enters abruptly through the door. Gerald and Jerry quickly stand. Chords from an ominous organ are heard. This is played every time the Sister enters. From behind her back, she pulls out a good stiff wooden paddle.

She eyes Gerald, motions with her finger "come here." Gerald approaches, stops at the door, Sister points "go in." Gerald sulks into her office. Jerry shakes his keys.

JERRY

Pocket change, my boy, pocket change!

Sister glares at Jerry.

JERRY

Hello Sister.

(singing)

I got spurs that jingle, jangle, jingle, as I go riding
merrily along.

Sister exits in a huff, Jerry continues singing then exits.

SCENE 2: TUESDAY

The school bell sounds.

Gerald enters, walking stiffly and sits gingerly on the bench. He wears the same clothes but bright yellow tie. Jerry enters dressed as a milk man, carrying a crate of chocolate and white milk in paper pints. He sits next to Jerry, offers him a pint of white milk, Gerald nods "no". Jerry gets himself a pint of chocolate milk, opens, guzzles.

JERRY

Ah!

GERALD snears.

JERRY

Oh, don't take it too hard. We knew this would happen. Get it? Hard wood. See, that's what's called a-play-on-words. Just a sample of the humor which awaits you. Jokes, puns, quips, pratfalls, amusing antidotes, celebrity impressions, clownish exaggerations, irony. Hey, you know what irony is?

Gerald shakes his head.

JERRY

Educational television. A good deal on a used car.
Representative Democracy. You and me.

(MORE)

JERRY(cont'd)

We're ironic You, a scared shaken boy afraid to cross the street without looking both ways four times and me, a life-size man not thinking twice about chugging down a 64oz purple grape Slurpee from 7-11 just for the sinus burn. How you got to be me is dizzying. But here we are. Half pint sea urchins of humanity poised on the cusp of the space-time continuum, clinging to the fabric of life, enduring the big bang of natural law. Amazing, isn't it?

GERALD

Why are you dressed like a milk man?

JERRY

Why shouldn't I be?

GERALD

I don't know.

JERRY

That's why I'm here. So you do know.

(holds up a carton of chocolate milk)

For the Chocolate Milk, boy! Everybody knows chocolate milk is milk times all the stars in the sky carry the one! I wish there were chocolate milk cows. I would crawl underneath one and grab hold and just...

(extremely gargling noise)

GERALD

Mom only gives me money for white milk.

JERRY

Don't I know it.

GERALD

Mom says if I behave at school she'll give me the money for chocolate.

JERRY

Don't I know... WAIT! NO! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!

GERALD

But I want chocolate milk.

JERRY

Not by their rules! If you give in now, we'll spend the rest of our lives lost in the world of White Milk. Working in cubicles with cartoons pinned to the walls in glass-paneled office buildings with fluorescent lighting and spread sheets and microwaveable frozen lunches, opening file cabinets, and taking out staples from reports with one of those stapler-taker-outers and maybe, just maybe if you're on your good behavior, they'll let you have a sip, a lousy measly drop of chocolate milk. No, no, no, no, no.

(MORE)

JERRY(cont'd)

There's only one way to get to the chocolate milk! And that's getting paddled by a nun for a week!

GERALD

But that hurts.

JERRY

So does being born! But we get over it. So, stay the course and do it for the evolution of chocolate milk cows!

Jerry grabs another pint of chocolate milk and guzzles it down.

SISTER enters, same as before. The ominous organ chord, the finger motion. GERALD rises and goes into office. Sister glares at Jerry. He grabs another pint of chocolate, guzzles it down, crushes the box.

JERRY

MOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!

Sister exits into office. Jerry exits making cow noises.

SCENE 3: WEDNESDAY

The school bell sounds.

Gerald enters very stiffly, wearing a wide striped tie. He bunches his coat on the bench and sits very slowly.

A loud whistle. Jerry runs in carrying a football, fake running for a touchdown. He wears a football coach's uniform.

JERRY

Twenty-one, forty-three, thirty-five, hut, hut, hike!
(announcer-ish)

He fades back to pass, the blitz is on, he escapes on tackle, another tackle, Gerald is open down the sidelines, he's hit as he throws...!

Jerry throws Gerald the ball.

JERRY

Good hands! Hey, I was thinking we should go out for the team next year. Get the cheerleaders saying our name.

(cheer)

"Jerry, Jerry, he's our man, if he can't do it, we won't!"

(MORE)

JERRY(cont'd)

(normal)

What do you say, bucko?

GERALD

I can't sit down.

JERRY

So? Run a couple of laps, you'll be fine. Besides, it's Wednesday.

GERALD

So?

JERRY

So? It's Hump Day! Once we get past this, it's smooth sailing right onto Friday.

GERALD

BUT IT HURTS!!! REALLY BAD!!!

JERRY

Eat an orange, do wind sprints.

GERALD

She makes me pull down my pants so she can hit me on my underwear.

JERRY

Yeah. Too bad it's not the 1990's. They'd throw her ass in jail for child abuse. But, it's 1969. Nuns rule. Sorry.

GERALD

If I don't wear the right tie, she's gonna paddle me for a whole year. She said!

JERRY

Not gonna happen. Besides, on Friday, we wear the right tie.

GERALD

But I won't be able to go to the bathroom!

JERRY

Big deal! Do you realize the average human spends two years of their lives sitting on a toilet! What a waste of time. HA! Get it. I think that was a double entendre.

GERALD

I don't wanna wear this stupid dumb tie anymore!

Gerald starts to take off tie.

JERRY

Don't you do that!

GERALD

I hate you!

JERRY

You're just doing this to yourself.

GERALD

LEAVE ME ALONE!

Jerry blows his coach's whistle.

JERRY

You wanna work in a factory? Hey! I'm talking to you! You wanna work in a factory?

GERALD

I'm in the fifth grade.

JERRY

Mr. Hill was in the fifth grade! So was Mr. Kozloski and Mr. Feemo and Mr. Dubnyk. All of your friend's dads were all in the fifth grade and they all ended up working in a factory! Filthy with black grease, lifting heavy boxes for no reason at all, pushing levers and gear shift pistons, turning boiling hot steam valves, for years and years, day after day and THEY WERE MISERABLE! The only thing they had on the horizon was lunch, when they would eat thin bologna and American cheese sandwiches and maybe a bag of Frito's. Oh sure, maybe they had a couple of beers at the bar with the guys or played Jarts in the backyard, but what did that get them? A beer belly, clogged arteries and farts that stain the air. Nothing but the same thing over and over until they wasted away into nothing, their skinny arms turning their World War II tatoos into black splotches of confusion and death. And you know how they got that way? Well let me tell you, mister. By wearing the same tie day after day in the fifth grade! Now. You look me in the eye and you tell me, mister. You wanna work in a factory? You wanna work in a FACTORY! SPEAK UP, BOY!

Gerald straightens his tie back on.

JERRY

I didn't think so.

(sudden change of character,
very nice)

I'm not really mad. This is just pretend play acting. Fun, huh?

(back to hard ass)

ALRIGHT! Now, we gotta big game today! I wanna see some drive. Some vim, some vigor, some vitamin C, A, E, B6 and B12! I want to see you go for the chocolate milk! But we gotta want it! We gotta want it bad!

(MORE)

Wonder what happens next?

For a copy of the full script, email me at:

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Thanks!