

Bad Thing

by

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Characters

Mike, 27

Jimmy, 19, his developmentally delayed  
brother

Setting

A car.

MIKE and JIMMY are in a car. MIKE is driving, irritated by the traffic. JIMMY sits awkwardly next to him. JIMMY wears a red Santa hat and hugs a baseball glove. On the car radio, a Christmas tune plays.

MIKE

What is the deal with this traffic? Looks like a hurricane evacuation. I mean, is the pope in town? Where is everyone going?

JIMMY rubs his head. He gets emotional. He starts to cry.

MIKE (cont'd)

We're going to be late.

MIKE notices JIMMY.

MIKE (cont'd)

Jimmy?

MIKE turns off the radio.

MIKE (cont'd)

Jimmy, what is it? What's wrong?

JIMMY

I got that bad thing in my head. I don't like that bad thing, Mike.

MIKE

Why are you thinking about that?

JIMMY

I can't get it out of my head.

MIKE

Think nice things.

JIMMY

I can't get that bad thing out of my head, Mike.

MIKE

Yes, you can. Just think about rainbows or your train set or something.

JIMMY won't stop crying.

MIKE (cont'd)

Jimmy...come on, man. Think about baseball. And the Durham Bulls. And all the games we've gone to. Summertime. Under the lights. Hot dogs. Home runs.

JIMMY

Are we going to be together forever, Mike?

MIKE

Yes, Jimmy. You and me. Together. For all time.

JIMMY

I just want to be with you, Mike.

MIKE

And I want to be with you, too, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Why did you say we weren't going to be together forever?

MIKE

That's not what I said, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Why did you say we weren't going to be together forever?

MIKE

We are. We are going to be together forever.

JIMMY

I want to be together forever.

MIKE

We are. We are. OK?

MIKE suddenly jerks the wheel.

MIKE (cont'd)

(out the "window")

Dick head!

(to Jimmy)

You see that guy? He cut right in front of the car. He could have killed us.

JIMMY

Dick head.

MIKE

Don't say that, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Dick head.

MIKE

Jimmy, stop saying that.

JIMMY

Dick head, dick head, dick head...

MIKE

Japanese maple.

JIMMY

...dick head, dick head, dick head...

MIKE

*Highway 40, highway 40, highway 40-*

JIMMY

....dick head, dick head, dick head...

MIKE

Windex!!

JIMMY stops. Calms.

JIMMY

Windex.

MIKE

Right. Windex. Windex is a wonderful word.

JIMMY

Windex, Windex, Windex, Windex, Windex, Windex, Windex,  
Windex, Windex-

MIKE

*OK, that's enough!*

Beat.

JIMMY

Where are we going?

MIKE

The doctor. I told you.

JIMMY

I don't want to go to the doctor.

MIKE

We can get ice cream afterwards. OK? How's that?

JIMMY

Why are we going to the doctor?

MIKE

Don't worry about it.

JIMMY

Why are we going to the doctor?

MIKE

They're just going to do another pointless scan and then we're leaving.

JIMMY

Doctors' offices smell funny. They always smell funny. Like laundry soap.

MIKE

I'll get you some Bubble Yum and you can chew on that.

JIMMY

In my nose?

MIKE

No, in your mouth. It will help hide the smell.

JIMMY

I love Bubble Yum.

MIKE honks the horn.

MIKE

Traffic is ridiculous. We are *so* late.

JIMMY

Tell me about Mom and Dad again.

MIKE

I don't want to talk about Mom and Dad right now.

JIMMY

Tell me about Mom and Dad.

MIKE

No.

JIMMY

Mike, tell me about Mom and Dad.

MIKE

No, Jimmy.

JIMMY

You have to. So I don't forget. You told me that.

MIKE sighs.

MIKE

Mom liked tulips. Dad liked the Yankees. Mom liked sunsets. Dad liked...

MIKE waits for JIMMY to finish the sentence.

JIMMY

Cutting the grass.

MIKE

Right. Mom liked the church. Dad liked building patios.  
Mom liked...

JIMMY

I don't know.

MIKE

Mom liked waffles.

JIMMY

Like me.

MIKE

Like you.

JIMMY

You like waffles, too, right?

MIKE

You know I do. Dad liked Corvettes. Mom liked...

JIMMY

Alcohol.

MIKE

Alcohol? No, she liked California. Why did you say alcohol?

JIMMY

Mr. Jensen told me that. He said Mom liked alcohol and that's why I'm in special classes at school.

MIKE turns to JIMMY, quietly furious.

MIKE

Mr. Jensen needs to stay in his yard. And you need to stay in ours. Don't talk to him anymore. Ever. You understand?

JIMMY

Mr. Jensen said Mom liked alcohol because you were such a bad kid.

MIKE

He said that? That guy is unbelievable. I accidentally hit a baseball through his bedroom window when I was 16 and he won't let it go.

JIMMY

Mr. Jensen said Mom liked alcohol and that's why Mom and Dad died in a car wreck.

MIKE  
 (to himself, bitterly)  
*Jesus Christ Almighty.*

JIMMY  
 Where are we going, Mike?

MIKE  
 Jimmy, don't talk to Mr. Jensen anymore. He's a bitter, deranged, lonely old man.

JIMMY  
 Where are we going?

MIKE  
 (impatient)  
 The doctor. I told you.

JIMMY  
 I don't like doctors. Why are we going to the doctor?

MIKE  
 (exploding, suddenly)  
 Because I'm sick, Jimmy! I'm sick! I told you! I've told you a hundred times! I am sick and I'm not getting better, you stupid fucking moron!

JIMMY  
 Moron.

MIKE  
 Ah, shit. I'm sorry, Jimmy.

JIMMY  
 Moron.

MIKE  
 I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

JIMMY  
 Moron.

MIKE  
 I don't feel good, buddy. I'm just not myself. I'm sorry. I shouldn't talk like that.

JIMMY  
 Moron.

MIKE  
 Windex.

JIMMY  
 Moron.



MIKE

Apple pie.

JIMMY

Moron, moron, moron, moron, moron, moron, moron, moron,  
 moron, moron, moron...

MIKE

STOP!!

JIMMY stops. MIKE drives. Beat.

MIKE (cont'd)

(looking at "traffic")

Let me over. Let me over.

MIKE maneuvers the car.

MIKE (cont'd)

(waving)

Thank you. (beat) Spoiled little...  
 (to the other driver in  
 rearview mirror)

Yeah, I'm talking to you.

(to Jimmy)

Look at her. Blonde, blue-eyed, driving a three ton SUV.  
 The world is at your fingertips, isn't, missy?  
 (looking out again)

Here she comes.

(to the other car,  
 condescendingly)

Hi, sweetie.

MIKE follows as the car passes him.  
 His face falls.

MIKE (cont'd)

Shit. She's crying.

JIMMY rubs his head again. He starts  
 to cry.

JIMMY

I got that bad thing in my head again.

MIKE

Jimmy, we can't keep doing this.

JIMMY

Why did you say I was going to grow up and have my own  
 Christmas with my own family? Why did you say that bad  
 thing?

MIKE

Forget I said it.

JIMMY

I don't want another family, Mike.

MIKE

I was just-

JIMMY

Why did you say I was going to grow up and be with another family?

MIKE

Not *any* family, Jimmy. *Your* family. Don't you want to grow up and get married and have kids?

JIMMY

Stop saying that, Mike!

MIKE

It's Christmas time and I thought someday you'd want to tell your kids about Santa Claus, and the Grinch, and Rudolph and-

JIMMY

Stop saying that bad thing, Mike!

MIKE

It's not a bad thing, Jimmy! It's not! It's a nice thing! And I would really, really like it to happen-

JIMMY

PLEASE STOP!!

MIKE

-because I want to believe there's still hope for you!

JIMMY cries. MIKE realizes there is no hope.

JIMMY

I just want to be with you. Forever. (beat) Tell me it's just going to be you and me forever.

MIKE

It's just going to be you and me.

JIMMY

You promise?

MIKE

I promise. Until the end of time, you and me.

JIMMY  
The end of what?

MIKE  
Nothing. We'll be together forever. OK?

JIMMY keeps crying.

MIKE (cont'd)  
OK, Jimmy?

JIMMY comes out of it.

JIMMY  
I want ice cream.

MIKE  
Great.

JIMMY  
Cookies and cream.

MIKE  
It's the best.

JIMMY  
What's your favorite?

MIKE  
Cookies and cream, of course. You know that.

JIMMY  
Just like me?

MIKE  
Yeah.

JIMMY  
We're a team, aren't we? You and me? Together forever,  
right? We're a team, like the Durham Bulls? We're going to  
watch baseball this summer, right? Hot dogs and home runs?

MIKE gets emotional. It's all sinking  
in.

MIKE  
Yeah, Jimmy.

JIMMY  
Hot dogs and home runs.

MIKE  
(near tears)  
Always remember that. Mike liked hot dogs and home runs.

Mike liked baseball in the summer. And Mike liked it best when you were right there with him.

JIMMY

I want it now.

MIKE

You want what now?

JIMMY

Ice cream. I want it now.

MIKE

We can go get ice cream in an hour. OK? One hour. You can wait one hour, can't you?

JIMMY goes quiet. MIKE drives. MIKE fights to keep from breaking. He looks at the baseball glove that JIMMY hugs.

MIKE (cont'd)

You really like that baseball glove I got you for Christmas, don't you?

JIMMY

I like it. I'm never letting it go.

MIKE suddenly looks out at the road, then over his shoulder.

MIKE

I missed the turn to the hospital. (beat) I have to turn around.

MIKE does not maneuver the car to do so. He stares straight ahead, lost. JIMMY rubs his head again.

JIMMY

I got that bad thing in my head again, Mike.

MIKE

Yeah. I got a bad thing in my head, too, Jimmy. I got a bad thing, too.

MIKE rubs his own head.

MIKE (cont'd)

Real bad.

Lights fade.

THE END