

From Miss Polly's Institute for Criminally Damaged Young Ladies Puts on a Show
By Don Zolidis

JAMIE, 14, a lifer at the juvie home for girls.

KAYLIE, 14, a girl attempting to escape.

(KAYLIE has decided to break out of the girls' home after a particularly disastrous Hamlet rehearsal. Her only friend, JAMIE, tries to get her to stay.)

(Back in the girls' dorm room. A plain, unadorned bed and little else. KAYLIE has a bag and is stuffing things into it. JAMIE enters. She watches KAYLIE for a while.)

JAMIE

What are you packing for?

KAYLIE

What do you think?

JAMIE

You're taking off?

KAYLIE

Yup.

JAMIE

Had enough, huh?

KAYLIE

Pretty much.

(KAYLIE gets her things together and starts for the door.)

JAMIE

You figure they'll let you just walk out of here?

KAYLIE

I'm getting out, one way or another.

JAMIE

What's that mean?

KAYLIE

I'm not sticking around here—to jump through hoops for that psycho.

JAMIE

Hey, come on—

KAYLIE

What? You heard her. She's crazy. And you guys are all following orders like some kind of stupid little army—

JAMIE

Better than sitting here doing nothing.

KAYLIE

Well I'm not doing that either.

JAMIE

You're not gonna make it.

KAYLIE

Watch me.

JAMIE

Before you got here, there was another girl who tried the same thing. Four times actually. They kept on adding a year to her sentence each time—the last time, they were tackling her, and she was screaming and yelling and everything, and she bit this guard in the cheek and held on—we didn't see her any more after that.

KAYLIE

What'd they do?

JAMIE

They sent her to straight-up prison—no more kids stuff. And she went from getting out at eighteen to getting out at thirty.

KAYLIE

Well I'm not planning on biting anyone.

JAMIE

Yeah, but once you start down the road, you never know. The lure of human flesh and all...

KAYLIE

Shut up. You've been here too long, that's your problem. You don't even question anything.

JAMIE

What's that supposed to mean?

KAYLIE

Just what I said. You just follow along, no matter what. She tells you to jump, you jump. She tells you that Hamlet has a talking bear and a bunch of dancing gumdrops in it and you just accept it—

JAMIE

What do I care if there's a talking bear in the show?

KAYLIE

I'm sick of it. I'm sick of this place.

JAMIE

You should come back to the show. It's better with you in it.

KAYLIE

It sucks anyway.

JAMIE

We could do it better—you could do it better—they've got Melanie in there now—

KAYLIE

Melanie? She's the worst one.

JAMIE

I know. And she's adding the talking bear into every scene. Now, instead of Hamlet getting poisoned and killed at the end, the bear eats everyone except for Hamlet, and Hamlet rides the bear off into the sunset.

KAYLIE

That's messed up.

JAMIE

I know. None of us have any idea what's going on. You gotta come and like restore order or something.

KAYLIE

Sorry.
(Pause.)

JAMIE

The show needs you.

KAYLIE

Tough.
(She starts to leave.)

JAMIE

What am I gonna do here if you take off?
(KAYLIE stops.)

KAYLIE

I don't know. Same as what you did before I got here.

JAMIE

You're my only friend in this place.

KAYLIE

So come on and leave with me. We'll both break out of here.

JAMIE

And go where? Do what?

KAYLIE

I got some friends—we could crash on their couch—I mean, don't you got anybody? Like, family or anything?

JAMIE

Family?

KAYLIE

Yeah.

JAMIE

No. My Dad took off before I was born... and my Mom—I'm not going back to my Mom.

KAYLIE

If it makes you feel any better, I'm not going back to my Mom either. She doesn't want me back. She's glad I'm in here. One less thing to slow her down. One less thing to worry about.

JAMIE

Yeah.

KAYLIE

But what I'm saying is you gotta make it yourself, you know? You can't just sit back and wait for these people to make all the decisions for you. Like they're gonna protect you. No one's gonna protect you. All anyone ever wants is to get something outta you or else just make you go away. It's like we're all at this table, and there's just one piece of bread in the middle, and it's who're you gonna climb over to get it? To eat, you know? To live. I'm tired of living in a cage. Locked up, waiting for somebody to drop some crumbs in front of my face and ask me for gratitude.

JAMIE

So you're gonna live out there?

KAYLIE

I'm not scared. It's just me. I'm gonna be fine. You'll be fine too.

(Pause.)

JAMIE

You got no idea.

KAYLIE

What?

JAMIE

Before I was here—I mean my Mom hates me—and I knew that even when I was little. I don't know how I knew, but I just did. Cause she just didn't... love me, you know? I remember I would just sit in the corner and cry—all the time, I would put my head to the wall, and I'd smell the old paint, and I just wanted to die. Like, this is, this is kindergarten. I wanted to die in kindergarten. And I grew up, and I grew up with this hole in me, and all I ever wanted to do was fill it with something, anything. So I just started doing whatever I could just to not feel anything—I mean, in sixth grade I was strung out on all kinds of stuff—all the time—and it still didn't help—I mean it helped for a minute while I was on it but then as soon as I wasn't messed up anymore, that old empty spot in the middle of the me would come right back and I'd feel like being in that corner again. She didn't care. She saw it all, she didn't care. So maybe I wanted to kill myself—but I got lucky and I ended up here instead—and I'm alive now cause I came here, and I've got a little bit of self-esteem now, just a touch of it, and that's new to me, and that's pretty cool. So I'm not really ready to go back out there yet. Cause it may not be great here, but I know what's out there.

KAYLIE

Okay.

JAMIE

You'll stay?

KAYLIE

I'll think about it.