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The Prodigy's Father

by

Allan Havis

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Characters:

Jamie Resnickattractive woman, 40, interior designer
Max Resnickhandsome therapist, 53, Jamie’s husband
Caroline Neversink attractive woman, 45, Jamie’s friend
Harold Borgesfastidious architect, 53, Max’s friend
Richard Wicker.....well built police detective, 50
Jonathan Resnick. Jamie & Max’s 8 year old prodigy

Time and Place

A coastal town in Southern California, 2008
All the action takes place in the Resnick home.

EIGHT SCENES OVER SEVERAL WEEKS

**SCENE ONE
(LIVING ROOM OF F. HOME
IN AN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD)**

JAMIE

We don't feel lucky.

CAROLINE

Few people do. Except the Kennedys.

JAMIE

We have a lot of anxiety.

CAROLINE

Many people do.

JAMIE

But I sense there's a connection between luck and anxiety.

CAROLINE

Actually I sense a connection between luck and guilt.

JAMIE

We won a raffle.

CAROLINE

Wow!

JAMIE

I never buy raffle tickets.

CAROLINE

Never?

JAMIE

(TONGUE IN CHEEK)

Ever. Gambling is frowned up at the church.

CAROLINE

Marriage is a gamble.

(LAUGHING SWEETLY)

You never win shit, darling.

JAMIE

We got a soft leather bag.

CAROLINE

Lambskin?

JAMIE

Of course. It's right here.

CAROLINE

Lots of cute stuff inside?

JAMIE

Did you have some work done?

CAROLINE

Just my eyes. Last summer. Dr. Taylor.

JAMIE

And your cheeks?

CAROLINE

Last year. Dr. Prizzi. You know Prizzi's wife.

JAMIE

I thought you were going to stop?

CAROLINE

Stop what?

JAMIE

You were switching to botox.

CAROLINE

No way, Jamie! Botox causes intracranial aneurysms and sexual dysfunction.

JAMIE

Oh? Wasn't there a movie called *Prizzi's Honor*?
(PICKING UP LEATHER BAG)

CAROLINE

What's inside?

JAMIE

A ton of green tea. And I really love tea.

CAROLINE

Green tea cures compulsive lying.

JAMIE

And there are wonderful creams and oils, decent toiletries for a Chinese New Years Festival. There was a tiny gift envelope too.

CAROLINE

Oh?

JAMIE

Almost threw it out.

CAROLINE

Never throw things out.

JAMIE

Recycle.

CAROLINE

Do you like oysters?

JAMIE

No. Why?

CAROLINE

Well, you gamble when you eat oysters at the bay.

JAMIE

Oysters Rockefeller?

CAROLINE

Well, basically you're substituting oysters for snails. Not a word about bivalve mollusks!

JAMIE

Caroline, you're the gourmand.

CAROLINE

Thank you. But credit Antoine Alciatore's secret recipe of absinthe, parsley, and body secretions. Society took a wrong turn when they banned lethal absinthe.

JAMIE

We won a weekend at Harrah's Indian Casino.

CAROLINE

You love gambling too much, Jamie.

JAMIE

True. I play blackjack online and I win on Sundays.

CAROLINE

Where's Jonathan?

JAMIE

Sleep-away camp.

CAROLINE

No one does that anymore.

JAMIE

Sure they do.

CAROLINE

All summer?

JAMIE

Two weeks.

CAROLINE

That's a small eternity, Jamie.

JAMIE

He loves it.

CAROLINE

He has issues.

JAMIE

He has allergies.

CAROLINE

He's pre-pre puberty.

JAMIE

Look. Your kids have grown. What do you know?

CAROLINE
Theme camp?

JAMIE
Yes.

CAROLINE
Puppy love.

JAMIE
Computer friendly.

CAROLINE
Really?

JAMIE
It's a YMCA camp that helps kids overcome crippling crushes with screen saver logistics.

CAROLINE
Wow!

JAMIE
And it's a weight reduction camp. No starches, no fats, no power bars.

CAROLINE
Tough love for puppy love.

JAMIE
They train ninja chess masters too.

CAROLINE
Does he still masturbate in public?

JAMIE
Caroline . . .

CAROLINE
Chess is very self-indulgent.

JAMIE
Does *your son*?

CAROLINE

All the time, it cured his dyslexia . . . started at age 9. Cure and treatment.

JAMIE

(SWEETLY)

Give me a break.

CAROLINE

It's the one thing I disagree about with my church. Really, Jamie.

Ten years later he has grotesque photos of Amy Winehouse under his mattress. Mind you, I have nothing against the British music scene, but Petulia Clark she's not.

JAMIE

Jonathan's into broken logarithms. It's a new math and revolutionary in the investors market. He's on to something *magical*.

CAROLINE

Magical?

JAMIE

There's not one sexual bone in his entire body.

CAROLINE

There is, Jamie. You're in denial. Check his laundry. Check his iPod.

(WAKING UP FROM THE SOFA, MAX MURMERS SOFTLY)

JAMIE

All of my son's psychic energy is in the Dow Jones Industrial.

CAROLINE

You know there's a very helpful book from Doubleday called "Wet Dreams And The Color of Your Rainbow".

JAMIE

Jonathan put together quite a bizarre hedge fund for us that's killer rich now. It's scary, Caroline. Jonathan predicted Bears Stern's collapse a year before the experts and he knew Fannie Mae was really Humpty Dumpty. He knew about Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG, everything that's failing.

CAROLINE

(SEEING MAX)

Oh, Max!

MAX
Hello Caroline.

JAMIE
I thought you were at work?

MAX
Isn't it Saturday?

JAMIE
Friday.

MAX
Oh.

JAMIE
Fasten your shirt, Max.

CAROLINE
Zipper up.

MAX
I'm sorry. Button-less jeans.

JAMIE
You look a mess.

CAROLINE
You do, Max. Something about your thinning hair. And it's not for me to say.

MAX
It's my gall bladder.

CAROLINE
I'll go, Jamie. It's late and I've chores.

MAX
Things may have shifted anatomically speaking since the earthquake.

CAROLINE
Right, Max.

JAMIE
(KISSES CAROLINE ON THE CHEEK)

Bye bye.

MAX

Tectonic plates, Caroline. I know what I'm talking about. We lost the freeway in less than five minutes.

CAROLINE

What can't you blame on the earthquake?

MAX

Our SUV's engine problems.

(TO JAMIE)

Did we really need a Hummer?

JAMIE

See you.

(OPENS FRONT DOOR)

CAROLINE

Bye.

(EXITS)

JAMIE

I never wanted a Hummer. I can't even park the fucking thing at the shopping center.

MAX

You applauded the invasion of Iraq and wanted to show solidarity with the tanks.

JAMIE

I was joking.

MAX

Why are you friends with her?

JAMIE

We go back a long time. We like the same novelists. Her husband died in a tandem parachute jump.

MAX

Say no more.

(PAUSE)

And he was an anxiety ridden kleptomaniac.

JAMIE

That's irrelevant.

MAX

I think it's tragic. He didn't have to die.

JAMIE

She's coping very well.

MAX

I can see that.

JAMIE

You make jokes at her expense.

MAX

Not any more, Jamie.

JAMIE

And why is that?

MAX

My millionaire patient is suing me.

JAMIE

Bertram?

MAX

Ahuh.

JAMIE

That's so weird.

MAX

Indeed.

JAMIE

You reupholstered the couch for him.

MAX

I know. I had too. He hated paisley. He's classic obsessive/compulsive. I was savior. His jester. His magnificent hero. He was prone to acts of self-immolation and had a colossal Zippo lighter. I destroyed his pyrotechnic arsenal, darling, in a matter of weeks.

JAMIE

What's his beef?

MAX

That I released too many files to his HMO which went to his employer.

JAMIE

Did you take a sleeping pill?

MAX

Yes. And an allergy pill too. I was trying to catch up with my exhaustion. Jamie, it was a major threat day.

JAMIE

By phone?

MAX

An attorney's letter served at the door by a giant elderly man.

JAMIE

Your practice has insurance coverage.

MAX

Doesn't matter. The newspapers pick up every allegation when a law office partners with a PR firm. And since Jonathan's getting a lot of media attention, I'm a magnet for this crap. I'm burning up, really. There must be a better world out there, Jamie, just beyond my grasp. We have good neighbors. We get Christmas and Hanukah cards. You serve on the PTA and I coach little league. But ever since Jonathan made the front page of the LA Times, we inhabit a circus ring. Am I exaggerating?

JAMIE

No.

MAX

Be truthful, Jamie.

JAMIE

About what?

MAX

About Jonathan's gift.

JAMIE

He has a gift.

MAX

Is it not a curse?

JAMIE

No.

MAX

Are you certain?

JAMIE

I talk to the minister, Max.

MAX

And what does he say?

JAMIE

He says God does not curse children.

MAX

He's just being legalistic.

JAMIE

Please don't make a game of this.

MAX

Okay.

JAMIE

You're amused by the things that I respect.

MAX

Hardly. Your minister scares me.

JAMIE

Because he has a glass eye?

MAX

I'm serious.

JAMIE

He's published many books.

MAX

I've read them all. Including the one about the end of original sin.

JAMIE

Nothing is bad about Jonathan's personality. Admit that much.

MAX

That he's charming? Jonathan is never wrong. He's as sharp as tack. Such self-confidence . . .

JAMIE

He wrote a beautiful email yesterday to me, Max.

MAX

I know.

JAMIE

Jonathan has a poetic leaning that we should praise. Sometimes there's a fountain of exquisite words that pour from his lips. He compared little lakeside creatures to the Greek titans. He gave names to each living thing. I know you read the letter. His humor was your humor, Max. And he wants to be a child. Not a freakish prodigy.

MAX

I understand.

JAMIE

So we have to help him stay a child.

MAX

I'll take him to the stadium. We can go fishing. Bowling? We could shoot some moose up on Laguna Mountain? What do you want me to say?

JAMIE

Say you love him.

MAX

I love Jonathan.

JAMIE

Say it with feeling.

MAX

I just did. I love our son. He's the greatest thing that happened in my life.

JAMIE

Sometimes I think you inhabit Warren Beatty's body.

MAX

What?

JAMIE

And Beatty's soul. You look like him. You act like him. You even had two prominent women in your life that mirrored his two women.

MAX

What the heck are you talking about? He had a million women.

JAMIE

He had two *meta-ladies* that established his moral compass.

MAX

Meta-ladies?

JAMIE

Thankfully he settled for Annette Bening and tossed off the cabalistic bitch Madonna.

MAX

So if I am guessing correctly, you're Annette Bening?

JAMIE

Have I ever worn a cone shaped brassiere?

MAX

Never.

(PAUSE)

And who was my Madonna Ciccone?

JAMIE

You're such an asshole.

MAX

No, seriously . . .

JAMIE

I think it's time to change the subject.

MAX

Well, I better informed today than yesterday.

JAMIE

Good for you, Max.

MAX

Don't tease.

JAMIE

Evolution can be your personal quest. I like teasing you.

(PAUSE)

When do you want to go to Harrah's?

MAX

Whenever. Is this about a night of gambling or a night of intimacy?

JAMIE

We should go now while Jonathan's at camp.

MAX

You really want to go overnight?

JAMIE

I do. It's a short ride.

MAX

To Harrah's to see Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson – and a lot of Asian tourists?

JAMIE

I want to leave the house.

MAX

And if we wait another week we can catch the awesome Z. Z. Top. I know you like red necks with beards.

JAMIE

We're all idiosyncratic about facial hair.

MAX

Why don't you go with Caroline?

JAMIE

Don't be a prick.

MAX

I'm sorry.

JAMIE

We haven't had a couple's vacation in over a year.

MAX

You're absolutely right.

(KISSES HER)

We'll go tomorrow. I'll cancel my appointments. How's that?

JAMIE

Great.

MAX

Splendid.

JAMIE

Do you remember when you proposed to me?

MAX

Of course. We were in Italy.

JAMIE

It was France.

MAX

It was a Latin country. Give me half a point. We were in a restaurant.

JAMIE

What was I wearing?

MAX

An incredible red, low cut dress. And I had two rings, not knowing which style would persuade you.

JAMIE

What did I say to you?

MAX

You wanted both rings.

JAMIE

What else did I say?

MAX

That you knew my sincerity was as deep as a well.

JAMIE

Yes. Exactly my words.

MAX

Yes. Exactly as I remembered.

JAMIE

Is it a dead memory?

MAX

Very much alive, Jamie.

JAMIE

I've kept both rings.

MAX

How well I know that.

JAMIE

Is that all you can say?

MAX

I love you dearly. Because I've always loved you. And I'll go with you to see Willy Nelson at the Indian Casino and dance the night away.

END OF SCENE