

THE BROTHER'S GRIN

A Ten-Minute Play

by

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Cast of Characters

- JIMMY: Age:40's Billy's unkempt, older brother. He looks older than his years. He is unshaven and he looks like he needs a shower. His tattered business suit is also in need of a good cleaning.
- BILLY: Age:30's Jimmy's somewhat successful younger brother appears to be younger than his years. Although he is currently unemployed, he has had enough success in his career to afford his comfortable suburban home. He wears silk pajamas and a monogrammed terry cloth robe indicating the better times of the past.

THE BROTHER'S GRIN

SETTING: The living room of the suburban home of BILLY. There are two doors; one (STAGE-RIGHT) leading to the outside and one (STAGE-LEFT) leading to the off-stage kitchen. There is a sofa, end tables with lamps and a wing chair. A coffee table with a glass top sits in front of the sofa. Framed photo's sit on the tables. There is a large, soiled duffle bag and a cellphone on the coffee table.

AT RISE: *JIMMY looks at HIS cellphone and puts it back on the coffee table. HE stands and moves to the side table to look at framed photos. HE holds the photo's closer to the light as he tries to identify people in the picture.*

TIME: 3:10 A.M., Monday morning.

(An irritated BILLY enters from the kitchen carrying two mugs of coffee. HE hands one of the mugs to JIMMY)

JIMMY

Thanks, Billy. *(Takes a sip)* Whoa man, I really needed this.

BILLY

It's not real. *(Takes a sip)* It's Sanka. Would you mind removing your filthy duffle bag from my brand new coffee table? The table's not even paid for yet.

JIMMY

Oh, sure, Billy. Sorry.
(JIMMY moves the bag to the upholstered wing chair)
So how are the kids doing?

BILLY

They're fine.
(Seeing the filthy bag on his chair)
How about the floor? Would you have problem if we just put the filthy bag on the floor?

JIMMY

Oh, no. Of course not.
(JIMMY moves the bag to the floor)
The floor's cool for the filthy bag. I'm sorry man.

BILLY

Thank you. So, I'll ask you again. Why now Jimmy?

JIMMY

What do you mean, Bro?

BILLY

I mean...why now? Why are you coming to me now?

JIMMY

I'm coming to you now because I really need your help now.

BILLY

And that's my point then, isn't it? Same as it ever was!

JIMMY

What? Sorry...I'm not following, Bro.

BILLY

You *only* come to me when you *really* need my help...*Bro*. I never hear from you otherwise...*Bro*. In fact, I haven't heard a peep out of you in six years! Not a single call, not a note, not a Christmas card... not even a fucking postcard!

JIMMY

I don't send Christmas cards to nobody!

BILLY

Anybody! And I am not just anybody!!!

JIMMY

Shhh! You'll wake them!

BILLY

Goddamn it, Jimmy, don't shush me in my own house! What is going on with you? You look like shit.

JIMMY

Thank you.

BILLY

Do you ever sleep?

JIMMY

No, I don't sleep. And I don't eat... or shave. And I don't send Christmas cards. In fact, I don't do nothin' that you's do out here in Larchmont. And I definitely do not sleep!

BILLY

Well you should. You look awful.

JIMMY

Why, thank you Billy. I need you to tell me that. And I need to tell you what I'm here for. I'm running out of time.

BILLY

Yes...what the hell time is it anyway?

(HE looks at clock)

It's 3:10 A.M.! Why are you here at this hour? You know, your phone call scared the shit out of me! Who calls at that hour?

JIMMY

I already apologized for that.

BILLY

And I told you not to come! I have a very big day tomorrow. I have a very important meeting...an interview tomorrow... no, not tomorrow... in four hours! I can't walk in there looking like I have been on an all-night binge.

JIMMY

You have an interview at 7 a.m.? Who the hell interviews somebody at 7 a.m.?

BILLY

Somebody who is too busy to do it at a normal hour. Somebody who is too important to fill the usual nine to five slots with something as mundane as a job applicant.

JIMMY

If I were you, I'd take it as a sign. You don't want to work for someone who does interviews at that hour. If he does now, before you work there, what's he going to be like to work for?

BILLY

Thank you Jimmy for your masterful career counseling, but you are not me! I *am* going on this interview, red eyes and all! I cannot believe you had to choose this particular night to darken my doorstep!

JIMMY

I'm sorry, but I need your help now.

(The cellphone on the coffee table rings 3 times. After three rings nervously JIMMY answers it)

JIMMY (Continued)

Yes, I'm here.

(JIMMY puts the cell phone down on the coffee table)

BILLY

Who the hell was that!?! What did you tell them? You're here? You're where? You're in my house? Do they have this address? Are you bringing your shit into my house? Who was that!?!

JIMMY

Calm down, Baby Brother. It was a business call.

BILLY

A business call? At three a.m.? And it couldn't wait? In fact all of it...your problem... your being here...all of it...it couldn't wait until some decent hour when we could talk it out over some real brewed coffee and some cinnamon toast?

JIMMY

No, it couldn't.

BILLY

Fuck!!! Well, let's get on with it. What is it? What is it you want? And who the hell was that was on the phone!?!

JIMMY

Billy, if you keep screaming you will wake them. I can't believe they're not already awake with all of the commotion.

BILLY

No... I ...mean... right.

JIMMY

Is something up Billy? Are they here? They are here, right. And they are all right?

BILLY

Yes, I'm sure they're fine.

JIMMY

That was a two-part question. Are they here?

BILLY

No. No, Jimmy, they are not here.

JIMMY

What? What do you mean they are not here? Where are they?

BILLY

I don't know.

JIMMY

What!?! You don't know? What do you mean, you don't know!

BILLY

I'm telling you...I don't know.

JIMMY

But I entrusted them to you. I asked you to watch them.

BILLY

That was on a Sunday. You said you would be back in a few days. A few days meant, like, Tuesday... Wednesday maybe. A few days did not mean six fucking years!

JIMMY

I can't believe this! So where are they? And please don't tell me you don't know!

BILLY

They're with their mother. Your ex-wife. They're with Sylvia.

JIMMY

Sylvia!?! You gave them to Sylvia!?!

BILLY

She took them. I didn't give them to Sylvia. She took them.

JIMMY

How could you?

BILLY

How could I!?! Sylvia said you kidnapped them, Jimmy. She said you had no legal right to them. She said I would be an accessory to the crime. She said she wouldn't press charges if I turned them over. So I did, and she didn't. She said she was taking them and moving somewhere you could never find them. And she did. I haven't heard from them since.

JIMMY

I trusted you.

BILLY

Oh, you know what Jimmy? Fuck you! That night, in a scene very much like this one, you came into my house, uninvited, again looking and smelling like something I'd find under my front porch, and you asked me to watch your kids. And you left. No explanation. You just said you'd be back in a couple of days...six years ago! How dare you question my actions!?! Please...just go fuck yourself!

JIMMY

Billy, okay. I'm sorry. Of course...you are right.

BILLY

I think you should just leave. Please, leave now.

JIMMY

But I need your help. It's okay about the kids. I'll find them. I don't blame you. It is my fault. I was just surprised is all. I'm sorry if I overreacted.

BILLY

It's okay. What do you need? I need to get back to bed.

JIMMY

I need you to watch something for me...just for a few days.

BILLY

You are kidding, right? Wait...no wait...Wow! I am having a major deja vu. Have you lost your friggin' mind, Jimmy!?!

JIMMY

Why are you so angry with me? Why are you being so difficult?

BILLY

Oh, sorry. Was I being difficult? Are you kidding me! Jimmy, how could you have done what you did? Okay, so you don't give a shit about me. Time flies, years pass, who cares, fuck it, you got busy. I'm only your brother. But your kids, Jesus Jimmy, how could you not give a shit about your own kids? We might have been dead by now, and you'd never have known it!

JIMMY

Dead? What are you talking about? How could you be dead? And you're wrong about me not caring about you too. You forget...I spent my whole teenage life caring about you. I can't believe you said that!

BILLY

Firstly, we are not teenagers anymore. We are adults. Each with our own lives...with our own responsibilities. Secondly, what the hell does that even mean? You spent your whole teenage life caring about me! What does that even mean!?!

JIMMY

Think about it Billy! You had no friends of your own. You had no hobbies...no interests. I had to give you my friends. I had to give you my interests. In fact, everything that was mine, I gave to you. And for those things that I didn't give you...you went ahead and took!

BILLY

That is total bullshit Jimmy!

JIMMY

Even Angela. Your prom? She did it as a favor to me, and then you did her in the backseat of my Chevy Impala...which you also borrowed for the night!

BILLY

This whole conversation is ridiculous! I can't believe you are bringing this shit up after over 20 years. I cannot believe the Angela thing still bothers you. You are a piece of work!

JIMMY

I'm just saying that for much of your life I gave you everything you had. Giving you my kids to watch...I thought you would have enjoyed that. You always took everything else without question...or even permission.

BILLY

A used baseball mitt...an old sweater...even Angela, a teenage romance...is not the same thing as giving me responsibility to raise and protect your children! Let's move on. What do you want from me?

JIMMY

I need to leave this bag with you...just for a few days. I swear, I will be back in a few days to pick it up.

BILLY

What!?!? This filthy, fucking bag? You want to leave this filthy bag here? What am I supposed to do with it?

JIMMY

Just keep it here. Just for three days. It's small enough. You won't even remember it's here. And it's easy to store.

BILLY

Oh, convenient too! What's in here?

(HE opens the duffel and is shocked by its contents)

Holy shit Jimmy! How much is...

JIMMY

Four-hundred thousand...

BILLY

Dollars?

JIMMY

No lire. Of course dollars!

BILLY

Holy shit Jimmy!

JIMMY

You said that.

BILLY

What is this all about?

JIMMY

I'm in a shitload of trouble Billy.

BILLY

Yes, four-hundred thousand worth it looks like.

JIMMY

No, more actually. That's why I need a few days. I got the money...but there is one more thing I got to do. To close the problem for good.

BILLY

The problem?

JIMMY

Yes, the problem. Leave it at that. I need to do this one more thing to solve the problem.

BILLY

And if you can't get it done?

JIMMY

(Nervously)

No! No, I will get it done. I have got to get it done!

BILLY

Jesus Jimmy, you're shaking. This is really serious.

JIMMY

Yes. If the problem doesn't get fixed...well, it will.

BILLY

And if it doesn't?

JIMMY

Let's not even think about that. There is one other thing I need you to do for me. In just a few minutes, they are going to call.

BILLY

Who? Who is going to call? You gave them my number?

JIMMY

No, of course not. They're going to call on that.

(HE refers to the cell phone on the coffee table).

They are going to call that number. They call every fifteen minutes and I cannot take the phone with me. I can't risk it ringing at the wrong time. Please, when they call, pick it up on the third ring and just say, "I'm here". Then hang up. But you must pick it up on the third ring.

BILLY

The third ring.

JIMMY

That's right Billy. If you don't do it like that...it will all be over.

BILLY

But I don't understand why...

JIMMY

Please! Just do this one thing for me! Do it for Angela and the prom. You owe me at least one for that!

BILLY

Fuck Angela, Jimmy. I'll do it for you, but you are scaring the shit out of me!

JIMMY

I am scared shitless too. See we are still sharing everything. I gotta go.

BILLY

Three days. Right?

JIMMY

Three days. And if it doesn't work out...and if you do see my kids...please tell them I love them and tell them...I'm sorry. And please tell Sylvia I didn't mean to be such an asshole.

BILLY

I will, Jimmy. I will tell them. But I'm sure it's all going to be okay. I don't know why I am sure...but I am.

JIMMY

Bye bro. Take care of yourself.

(THEY hug and JIMMY exits. BILLY locks the door and watches out the window as we hear a car start and drive away. BILLY then moves to the closet. HE takes out a well-worn suitcase and puts the dirty duffel bag and a handful of clothes and shoes into the suitcase. HE then sticks his head into the door leading into the kitchen and addresses the off-stage, unseen Sylvia)

Sylvia, he's gone. Did you get the luggage in the car? Good. Now get the kids in the car and start the engine. We gotta get out of here fast. Use the back door. I'll be right there.

(Under his breath...really just to himself)

Oh, and Sylvia...Jimmy wanted me to tell you...he didn't mean to be such an asshole.

(BILLY pauses as he looks at the cellphone on the coffee table and grins broadly, then he turns out the lights and exits though the kitchen door. Heard from off-stage are the sounds of car doors slamming, a car starting, and then driving away. Then the cellphone on the coffee table begins to ring. It rings four times and then stops as the lights fade)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY