

Get the Hell Off
by
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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

BERTHA and HAMILTON sit on the sofa having an uncomfortable conversation while Hamilton reads his paper. He seems to be comfortable with silence. Bertha appears more excitable.

A BOX OF TISSUES sits on top of the coffee table which is immediately in front of them

BERTHA

I don't like the way Johnny talks
to his ... his ...

Hamilton puts the paper on his lap.

HAMILTON

His imaginary friends?

It's hard for Bertha to admit it.

BERTHA

Yes.

Before Hamilton goes back to reading -

HAMILTON

Every boy has imaginary friends.

BERTHA

That's not the point, Hamilton. He
curses when he talks to them.

HAMILTON

Hmm.

BERTHA

He doesn't curse at anyone else.
Just to them. It's terrible, the
way he talks to his ... his ...

While reading--

HAMILTON

... imaginary friends, Bertha. He's just make believing.

BERTHA

It's just terrible. I want you to talk to him.

HAMILTON

About what, Bertha?

BERTHA

About his language ... aren't you listening to me?

Just as Bertha says this, JOHNNY, 10, smiling and with a burst of energy, pedals into the living room with his go-cart. As he rides around the couch ...

JOHNNY

Hi, pops.

HAMILTON

(through the paper)

Hi, son. Watch you mouth.

JOHNNY

Okay, pops.

Johnny pedals a little further then stops. He opens the bus door as if he is a bus driver picking up passengers and then turns to his imaginary friends outside the bus and--

JOHNNY

Okay, Knucklebrains. Those of you who want to get on, get the HELL on.

He turns to his imaginary passengers in the bus.

JOHNNY

And those of you who want to get
off, get the HELL off.

Bertha gasps while Hamilton just continues to read his paper
as if nothing has happened.

Johnny makes a turn and then disappears out of the room.

BERTHA

Did you hear that? He said the 'H'
word, Hamilton. HAMILTON?

Hamilton puts the paper down temporarily.

HAMILTON

What, Bertha. What. WHAT!

BERTHA

Did you hear him? He said ...
'hell'.

HAMILTON

I told him to watch his mouth. What
more do you want me to do, beat
him?

BERTHA

Now don't you get surly with me. I
want you to be serious with him.
You're never serious with him.
You're always ...

Hamilton sighs and buries his head back in the paper.

BERTHA

He said 'hell', Hamilton.

HAMILTON

(through the paper)
Shiver-me-timbers.

Hamilton continues reading while Bertha sobs for a few beats.

She grabs a couple of tissues from the tissue box and blows her nose loudly.

She takes several deep breaths and finally calms herself.

BERTHA

We're raising a social menace. I know it. I just know it. Next ... he'll talk to us that way. Then his teachers. And then he'll go to school with a gun and ...

Johnny races back into the room with his go-cart. He peddles around the couch and stops at an imaginary bus stop and talks to no one we can see.

JOHNNY

Okay, you turtle-brain rejects, those of you who want to get on, get the HELL on. Those of you who want to get off, get the HELL off.

Bertha holds her chest as if someone just punched her. She jumps to her feet and runs over to Johnny and waves her finger at him.

BERTHA

You listen here, young man. I don't like the way you're talking. You talk nice, do you hear me?

JOHNNY

Yes, Mommy.

BERTHA

Okay. Go. Play nice.

While Johnny TOOTS his imaginary horn and exits, Bertha sits back down on the couch and bites her fingernails.

Her neck tightens, becomes spasmodic. She puts a finger on a pressure point on her neck and the twitching stops.

She takes her pulse while Hamilton turns a page and continues reading. He appears cool, calm, and collected.

After a beat, Johnny bursts through the doors again and races around the couch. He catches a glimpse of his mother who is looking very cross at him. He waves and smiles.

Bertha softens and smiles back. Maybe she has been a little tough on him.

Johnny stops at the customary stop and ...

JOHNNY

Okay, you needle-neck flunkies,
those of you who want to get on,
get the HELL on. Those of you who
want to get off, get the HELL off.

Bertha bolts to the imaginary bus stop and waves her finger in Johnny's face once again.

BERTHA

That's it, young man. You go into
your room right now. You're being
punished, do you hear me? Now go.

Johnny, shoulders slouched and appearing defeated, disappears through the doors slowly peddling his go-cart.

Bertha sits back down on the couch.

BERTHA

Did you hear him, Hamilton?

HAMILTON

(while reading)
Hear what?

BERTHA

AREN'T YOU LISTENING? He said
'hell' again and ...

Hamilton puts the paper down, folds his hands across his lap.

HAMILTON

Confound it, Bertha! What's the big deal? He said it to his imaginary friends.

BERTHA

He said ... 'flunkies'.

HAMILTON

For crying out loud ... 'flunkies' is not a bad word.

BERTHA

It's not? It sounds like one.

Hamilton sighs and goes back to reading.

HAMILTON

(through the paper)

Anyway, they're just imaginary flunkies. No big deal.

Bertha throws her hands to her face, close to a breakdown.

SUPERIMPOSE

White letters on black: "THREE HOURS LATER".

BACK TO SCENE

Bertha looks at her watch and ...

BERTHA

Do you think Johnny had been punished enough?

Hamilton appears to be reading the paper.

BERTHA

Hamilton.

Behind the paper, Hamilton is actually sleeping.

Bertha lets out with a gigantic sigh. She gets up and walks to the door and disappears from view.

We can hear both Mom and Johnny off-screen.

BERTHA (O.S.)

Okay, young man. Have you learned your lesson?

JOHNNY (O.S.)

(very sincere)

Yes, Mommy.

BERTHA (O.S.)

Alrighty, then. You play nice now. Don't say any of those bad words. You hear me, young man?

JOHNNY (O.S.)

(Really excited)

Yes, Mommy.

Johnny then bolts into the room pumping hard on his go-cart. Bertha is close behind and retreats to the couch.

Johnny peddles the go-cart around the living room just like before. He stops and looks over to Bertha and smiles. She smiles back.

He turns to his imaginary friends and ...

JOHNNY

Those of you blowhards who want to get on ...

(yelling)

GET THE HELL ON.

(faster)

Those of you who want get off, then get the HELL off. Those of you who didn't like the three-hour delay,

(points at Mom)

complain to the BITCH over there.

Johnny peddles quickly and takes his imaginary friends out of the living room and off-screen.

Bertha appears to have breathing problems. She feels her arms. Checks her vital signs.

After a beat she turns to Hamilton who is sound asleep. She nudges him.

BERTHA

Wake up ... wake up.

Hamilton is not waking up. She nudges hard this time.

BERTHA

HAMILTON...

HAMILTON

What? WHAT!

BERTHA

Your son ... your son ...

Hamilton jumps to his feet.

HAMILTON

What about him. Is he okay? Is he okay.

Johnny bursts through doors with his go-cart, but this time he peddles to the couch with two baseball gloves in the back of the cart.

He stops in front of Hamilton and tosses a ball up and down.

JOHNNY

Dad, you want to have a catch?

HAMILTON

Sure son. That would be nice.

Hamilton takes the gloves out of the back and helps Johnny off the go-cart. Johnny tosses a ball up and down and while they exit the living room--

JOHNNY

You coming out to watch, Mom?

HAMILTON

Yeah, come on out. It'll be a HELL
of a hoot.

They exit as Bertha just stares straight ahead, as if drugged. Her eye twitches, barely perceptible. She takes one solitary gulp of air, then breathes very slowly.

A single twitch in her neck causes her head to jerk slightly. There it is, again.

And one more time.

FADE OUT

-THE END-