

FAMILY BOND

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Characters:

ROBERTA – 40 yo female; middle class, single mom.

JAMIE – 15 yo female, Roberta’s daughter;

UNCLE JOHN – middle aged.

MAC, John’s old friend – middle aged.

SEAN – Mac’s son, middle aged (should be played by same actor as MAC).

Time and Place: Present day; anywhere. ROBERTA is sitting at the kitchen table with her head in her hands – stressed - as JAMIE enters. An open laptop is in front of ROBERTA on the table.

JAMIE

What’s the matter, Mom?

ROBERTA

I must’ve sent out 15 resumes today. All online. There’s no such thing as send-a-cover letter through the mail anymore. It figures, of course. Now, no one has to talk to you. Everything’s over the internet - cover letters, resumes, and of course, the responses. That way, no one can be held accountable if they don’t call you.

JAMIE

Don’t worry, Mom, you’ll find something.

ROBERTA

Sweetheart, I do love that about you. Your endless optimism. Do you remember when you were six and you tried to ride your bike down the street?

JAMIE

No.

ROBERTA

I do. You had the training wheels on for, I don’t know, two, three weeks. You had that bright pink Hello Kitty bike.

JAMIE

I remember that bike!

ROBERTA

You took off down the driveway and make a sharp right to head down the street. But that was when we lived at the top of the road, and you picked up too much speed heading down the hill. Thank heaven no cars were coming, but you still managed to take a good spill at the bottom.

JAMIE

I remember. But just the spill, and the scrape. Did you take me to the hospital?

ROBERTA

I was sure I was going to have to. I ran like a bat out of hell down the street to you, but you were just sitting there – your knee bleeding pretty bad. When I got to you, you looked up at me – not a tear to be had, like you were confused or something. Of course, seeing you take that crash and looking at me like that, I was convinced you'd hit your head. Oh dear God, I'm thinking, she's never gonna remember a thing. Probably a concussion... or worse. So I burst into tears, and I'm asking you if you're all right. The tears just start flowin' and I'm getting more and more frantic. "Jamie, are you all right?" is all I'm trying to say, but I'm sure you can't understand a word of my blubbering because I'm getting' more and more upset. Finally, you seemed to understand what was happening, and stood up, using the bike to help you with your balance. Well, that shut me up.

You stood there, with your blood coming down your leg, and you said to me, "Momma, don't worry about it. Can you help me hobble up the hill back to the house? I can take a bath and get the boo-boo fixed. It'll be okay, Momma. Momma?"

JAMIE

Just like that?

ROBERTA

As sure as I'm sittin' here. So as my crying fit turns into hysterical laughter – just like in those old cartoons – I picked you up in my arms, blood and all, and took you back to the house. You just held on to my neck and smiled. I knew then who the strong one was in this household!

JAMIE

Momma, you've always been the strong one, what with it only bein' you and me. You'll find a job – I know you will.

ROBERTA

But I only have eight more weeks of unemployment.

JAMIE

That's still two months.

ROBERTA

I know, but I've already been collecting for six months – half a year wasted. You know, I counted today – I hit the one-fifty mark. One hundred and fifty job applications. I even expanded my job search to include almost anything in an office, from Department Head to Data Entry... there has to be something out there.

JAMIE

When do you think companies will start hiring again, Momma?

ROBERTA

Some are hiring, honey. Just not middle aged middle managers, who need to earn more than the recent college youngster who will work for half of what you and I need to live.

A "ding" goes off on the computer.

JAMIE

There's another notification, Mom. Go for it – maybe this will be the one.

ROBERTA

Let's see what it says – into the abyss.

“Data Entry. Mount Vernon Hospital. Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 5pm. Apply at VernonHosp.org.” Okay... here's the site... here's the job description... isn't great, but it would do... “Apply for Employment”... okay... upload cover letter.

JAMIE

You're completely over qualified for this!

ROBERTA

That's the problem. If you're over qualified, you get tossed out because they don't think you'll stick around long enough. If you're under qualified, they toss you out because you can't handle the position. And the middle is overcrowded, so you can't win.

JAMIE

Come on, mom. Why don't you type up some wacko cover letter that is so outside-the-box that they call you in just to see who wrote it? We need milk, I'm gonna walk to the Almart. Be right back. Type something wild!

JAMIE exits while ROBERTA is typing.

ROBERTA

The standard business-speak approach hasn't been getting' me anywhere. Maybe Jamie's right. Let's try brutal honesty this time. “To Whom It May Concern. I am the single mother of an awesome teenaged daughter. I was laid off early this year when the company I had worked for downsized, causing the layoffs of five middle managers. My unemployment is running out, and the government subsidies we are receiving are not sufficient to sustain what our government is calling an “average standard of living.” I am a smart woman of forty, with a Bachelor's Degree, who is willing to commit her time and energy to working for your company, if only you will give me that opportunity. Attached is my resume – please let me bring my strong organizational abilities and excellent office skills to your company. Sincerely, Roberta Smythman.”

JAMIE reenters carrying a carton of milk in a bag, and a small jewelry box.

ROBERTA

Take a look at this one before I upload it.

JAMIE

I will, but here. Take this first.

ROBERTA

What is it?

JAMIE

It's Aunt Mimi's gold ring. Uncle John gave it to me after she passed away. With gold prices at what they are, this can easily get us through another month, or maybe even two. I'm sure Aunt Mimi would welcome the chance to help us.

ROBERTA

Are you sure you want to do this?

JAMIE

When I was walking to the Almart, I passed a jewelry shop. Big signs: "Cash for gold!" I figure it can help us out...

ROBERTA starts to cry.

JAMIE

Mom?

ROBERTA

Oh, sweetheart. It is so wonderful of you to think of doing this, but I can't let you.

JAMIE

But I want to help!

ROBERTA

I know you do. But I'm not ready to start selling heirlooms.

JAMIE

Uncle John said that they had.

ROBERTA

Had what?

JAMIE

Sold heirlooms. This one.

ROBERTA

Honey, you're not making any sense.

JAMIE

He told me that during the war, he and Aunt Mimi were having financial difficulties.

ROBERTA

We can certainly relate.

JAMIE

So Uncle John went to the pawn shop with Aunt Mimi's ring...

UNCLE JOHN appears. Offers the ring to the (unseen) pawnbroker.

UNCLE JOHN

Hey, Scotty. I got this ring here. Been in the family for generations, since the grandparents came over on the boat. I need some cash to put food on the table – what can you do for me?

ROBERTA

I have never heard this before...

UNCLE JOHN takes money from the pawnbroker.

UNCLE JOHN

Thanks, Scotty. Try not to sell it, will ya? I know that one day something good will happen, and then I'll be able to come in and buy it back from ya. Huh?

JOHN exits.

JAMIE

Uncle John then told me that after the war, sure enough, he did land a job that helped him and Aunt Mimi get back on their feet. So he went back to the pawn shop...

JOHN reappears at the pawn shop.

UNCLE JOHN

Hey, Scotty! I told you I'd be back. Dust off that ring so that's I can give it to my bride for our next anniversary... What? Sold it? But you said... I know you need to eat, too, Scotty, but... yeah. Who picked it up? Come on, Scotty, I ain't gonna make trouble. But if I talk to the guy, I got cash now, maybe he'll understand.

ROBERTA

Did he get the guy's name?

JAMIE

Yup. I guess Scotty trusted him enough not to harass the guy for the ring.

ROBERTA

So...

JAMIE

Turns out Uncle John knew the buyer. It was an old friend of his from the Rotary that he hadn't seen since the war started.

Enter JOHN and his FRIEND. JOHN rings the doorbell.

MAC

Just a minute.

JOHN

Hey, Mac.

MAC

Johnny! It's been too long.

JOHN

That's an understatement.

MAC

It's very good to see you, Johnny.

JOHN

I hope so, Mac. I'll get right to the point. You picked up a ring at the pawn shop awhile back.

MAC

I did. Nice piece. I liked it the moment I saw Mimi wearing it.

JOHN

Mimi wearing...? You knew it was ours? What? Why you son-of-a...

MAC

Johnny, calm down there, boy. I dabbled in jewelry for years before the war. I know a good piece when I see it. But I also knew that if Mimi's piece was in a pawn shop, times must've been really tough for you.

JOHN

So why'd YOU pick it up. I went there to get it, and they told me it was sold. I was gonna surprise Mimi with it, so I hadn't told her I was going to get it, and then I had to make up some stupid story about where I was because I couldn't come home with it... What's the story, Mac?

MAC

The story is simple, my friend. I knew it was yours, and I knew that you had to be pretty low down to give it up. So I picked it up to hold for you.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

MAC

I know we lost track of each other, Johnny, but we'd always be friends. I bought it to hold for you. The last thing I'd want to see is Mimi's ring not being there for you if and when you got yourself back on your feet.

JOHN

You bought it... for me to get back?

MAC

Yup. I do gotta let you know, that even though the war didn't strike me like it did you, I can't give it to you for free, but I certainly can give you a fairer price than the broker would've.

JOHN gives MAC a big hug.

JOHN

Mac! I can't believe this! I can't believe this! Oh, man! You're the best! Mimi is going to be so happy to have this back – you have no idea.

MAC

I do have one more favor.

JOHN

Anything!

MAC

From now on... keep in touch.

JOHN is grinning from ear to ear as they exit. ROBERTA is wiping away tears as the scene shifts back.

JAMIE

So Momma, I'm sure this ring would be happy to be of help once again. *(Beat.)* Hey look, Momma. An email.

ROBERTA

All right, let's look.

JAMIE

“Dear Ms. Smythman. I've heard through a colleague that you are looking for an office position. I have looked at your resume, and I'd like to have a phone interview.”

ROBERTA

Look at that!

JAMIE

“As my office is short staffed, please call me today at 555-435-7688. Sincerely, Sean McLlenny.”
(Beat.) Well, go ahead.

ROBERTA

Go ahead, what?

JAMIE

Call, mom!

ROBERTA

He said sometime today.

JAMIE

Today is now. Don't snooze, mom. Call.

ROBERTA gets her cell to call.

ROBERTA

Okay, okay.

She dials and listens.

Yes. Sean McLlenny, please. Sure. *(Beat.)* Mr. McLlenny? Roberta Smythman...

SEAN appears (it's the same actor who was MAC, except dressed modern day).

SEAN

Hello?

ROBERTA

Yes, Mr. McLlenny. My name is Roberta Smythman, and I received an email from you about a job opening at your company.

SEAN

Roberta! So glad to hear from you – I was hoping you'd call. Are you still looking for a job?

ROBERTA

Yes, sir, I am.

SEAN

That's great! Can you email me your resume so that we have our own copy?

ROBERTA gets on her computer.

ROBERTA

Uh, sure, Mr. McLlenny. I'm sending over the pdf as we speak. May I ask how you got my name? I mean, I really need a job and all, but I didn't know about your position, so I didn't send you a cover letter – how did you receive my name... if you don't mind my asking?

SEAN

Not at all. You're not going to believe this, but we actually met when we were kids.

ROBERTA

What?

JAMIE is still sitting there, getting antsy.

SEAN

I know this sounds ridiculous, but I was having lunch at Techzone with a friend the other day, and he had a pile of resumes on his desk. Yours was in the pile.

ROBERTA

Okay...

END OF EXCERPT.