

Sea Turtles

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

James 6 or 7, full of hope, RYAN's son
Ryan 40, married, JAMES's father

TIME: Present day – Sunny afternoon.

SETTING: The Aquarium.

SEA TURTLES

(AT RISE we see a jellyfish and sea turtle exhibit. RYAN is holding a jacket while JAMES is holding a stuffed animal named Lenny that is a sea turtle. JAMES and RYAN start offstage.)

JAMES

WOAH! Dad ... look at *them*! This one is soooooo big! Dad –

(JAMES and RYAN enter.)

RYAN

HEY! Be careful. Don't run or you're going to get hurt.

JAMES

These jellyfishes are so colorful. This one has stripes! You wanna know something cool? Jellyfish don't have brains.

RYAN

Are you serious bud? That's pretty weird, huh? It would be weirder if I didn't have a brain ...

(RYAN starts to tickle JAMES while impersonating a jellyfish. They laugh. Something catches JAMES's eye. He runs.)

JAMES

Dad.

(pause)

Dad. It's—it's ... *wonderful*. Sea turtles.

RYAN

I know. Do you see that one? You know what kind of turtle—

JAMES

Yeah. A green sea turtle... My teacher says they're endangered dad. What does that mean?

RYAN

It means that they're close to being extinct.

JAMES

(gasp)

Like the dinosaurs???! Dad they can't be like them. Sea turtles are my favorite animals—especially the green ones.

RYAN

It's okay! As long as we help them then they will stay on Earth for a very long time.

JAMES

LOOK DAD! Look at the baby one. He looks just like Lenny.

RYAN

I *see*! Do you wanna know something cool? He probably was the only few out of 100 of his siblings to make it to the sea. He's the lucky one.

JAMES

Well, what happened to the other ones?

RYAN

They ... they didn't make it to the ocean.

JAMES

Why not?

RYAN

They died, son.

JAMES

They died? Well—why?

RYAN

Yes. For many reasons. Because they don't get to the ocean quick enough so they dry up and die. Or because bigger animals eat them. It's okay though. His siblings are in a better place.

JAMES

(concerned)

Where are their parents?

RYAN

In the ocean somewhere.

JAMES

Why would they leave their children in the ocean?

RYAN

I'm not sure, bud. It's just the way things are.

(JAMES sits. A few moments later RYAN joins him. Both are facing the sea turtles.)

JAMES

Dad?

RYAN

Yes?

JAMES

Are you mad at mommy?

RYAN

No.

JAMES

Well—why do you always yell at her? Did you forget to flush, again?

(RYAN knows where this is going and tries to avoid the question he was just asked, hoping JAMES will forget about it.)

JAMES

I hear you guys at night—

RYAN

When you're supposed to sleep?

JAMES

Yes.

(pause)

But I can't sleep because you guys are *so* loud. Are you gonna divorce mommy?

RYAN

James how do you know what a divorce is?!

JAMES

Mark from class told me.

(pause)

Well... are you?

RYAN

No! No. Me and mommy are not getting a divorce.

JAMES

So why do you guys argue so much?

(RYAN doesn't want to answer that question.)

RYAN

It's just ... mommy makes me mad—

JAMES

So you yell at her? When I get mad at my classmates, I don't yell at them. Or Mrs. Lampert will make me go in the time out corner.

RYAN

That's different.

JAMES

I know, but—

RYAN

James, you don't understand. It's a grownup thing. When people are married, things happen and they argue. It happens in every marriage—it's normal.

JAMES

Just because it's normal doesn't mean it *has* to happen.

(Pause.)

JAMES

Dad. I know I don't know many things, but I know that you shouldn't yell at mommy. It hurts her feelings and mines too.

RYAN

We just aren't getting along right now. That's it. I still love her – and I still love you.

JAMES

I don't get it—

RYAN

I know you don't. And that's okay but being an adult isn't as easy as you think.

JAMES

How come?

RYAN

Because you have so many things to worry about.

JAMES

We'll don't worry about them dad.

RYAN

James let's stop talking about it, okay?

JAMES

Why?

RYAN

Because I said so.

JAMES

But I—

RYAN

JAMES!

JAMES

Dad, I just—

RYAN

James! WHAT DID I JUST SAY? ... NOW STOP IT!

(Pause.)

JAMES

Okay ...

RYAN

Oh—oh ... don't cry! I didn't mean to yell at you.

(pause)

It's just that—okay look—mommy did something bad. Really really bad and daddy just doesn't know how to handle it.

JAMES

What did she do?

RYAN

I can't tell you James.

JAMES

Well, I'm sure it's something that can be fixed.

RYAN

It's not that simple. It's not at all. I wish it was that easy bud, but it's not. It's—It's complicated.

JAMES

But it *can* be simple right? It doesn't have to be complicated between you and mommy.

RYAN

No ... no it doesn't.

JAMES

She just has to apologize right? And make you laugh. Mrs. Lampert teaches us that in class. It works—it really does. I make Mark laugh all the time.

(pause)

Mommy just has to do something really nice for you. You know like something nice that'll make you smile. Maybe she could ... let you use the TV in the living room. Or ... or maybe she can take you to get a hotdog—like you do with me. See, that's all dad.

(JAMES realizes nothing he says is working. RYAN is growing more and more sad.)

JAMES

Hey, dad? Here you go.

RYAN

Why are you giving me Lenny?

JAMES

I want you to have him.

RYAN

But Lenny is your bestfriend. You can't give—

JAMES

I want you and mommy to be the lucky ones.

(RYAN takes the stuffed animal and hugs JAMES. They stand up and begin to exit.)

Dad? JAMES

Yeah? RYAN

What do you call a sea turtle that flies? A shell-icopter. JAMES

(RYAN laughs.)

See. I told you it works. I made you laugh. JAMES

I love you son. RYAN
(smiling at JAMES)

I love you too dad. JAMES

(Curtain.)