

JSPR

GRAND-MUMAW: Jasper's grandmother

JASPER: Grand-Mumaw's teenage grandson

SAMMY: one of the few young members of The Wheel

SCENE i: THE REAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

It is 2674. GRAND-MUMAW, 76, and JASPER, 14, are down-center-stage beside a firm, mustard-yellow couch. JASPER is visiting his grandmother in her home, The Wheel, which houses the last people on Earth who are in permanent wheelchairs. GRAND-MUMAW is in a manual wheelchair, sitting erect and confident beside JASPER, who looks bored, half-sitting on one of the couch's armrests, picking at some loose material beside him. He has one earbud in, and occasionally moves his head to the music. Written and spoken English has changed dramatically since GRAND-MUMAW was a kid--common vernacular has become abbreviated and text-like, so the dictionary considers acronyms like "t.t.y.l." and "b.t.w." to be actual words. The language is called Texglish.

In protest, GRAND-MUMAW has taught herself enough Shakespearean language to use it with common English. Currently, she is training her grandson JASPER to speak "the real English language," by practicing with him the dialogue that he and a school-official may share if he cheated on a test.

GRAND-MUMAW wheels in front of the couch and faces the house. She looks at the audience and talks to her grandson.

GRAND-MUMAW:

(dramatically)

Oh, my dear, oft-well-behaved student! What a fop you are-- what daubery! Prithee, don't speaketh! Thy teenage years are excuse enough for thy bale.

JASPER:

(gesticulating half-heartedly)

Uh, Mr. Headmaster, sir, I know what ir-irregulous acts I have committed, and I, um...

(CONTINUED)

(forgets his line, sighs in frustration)

JASPER stands angrily beside the couch, crosses his arms, and glares at GRAND-MUMAW, who drops her act as well.

JASPER:

(irritated)

grandma, this is an FWOT! what is this supposed to be, AFGE?! FFS, we look like retards!

GRAND-MUMAW:

(again talking at the audience)

Today's language is completely intpinse! And no, JASPER, we do not appear to be *(glares at JASPER, spits out word)* retards. We are simply credented individuals for practicing the fantastical art of speech! We speaketh the aggregation of all Germanic languages, and everyone ought to appreciate it for ostenting to us such literary legends as William Longfellow and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and such public-speaking legends as Martin Luther King and Winston Churchill.

(guilt-tripping)

If you would rather speak the geckish way you write, along with the rest of the noddies who speak what they appellate as the English language, be my guest. I shan't exiom thou to enkindle buxomness, and I am no longer eager to ensign thou to speaketh the real English language.

JASPER:

(beat, then raises eyebrows incredulously)

and u thnk my language is FUBB?!

GRAND-MUMAW scowls.

GRAND-MUMAW:

Nurse!

A nurse hurries onstage UR.

GRAND-MUMAW:

Sirrah, take me to my room anon.

The nurse quickly wheels GRAND-MUMAW offstage UL. JASPER breathes a sigh of relief when she is gone.

SCENE ii: ALIENS

JASPER is putting in his other earbud when he hears a motorized sound behind him. His eyes widen and he jumps onto the seat of the couch in fear. Crouching behind the backrest, he listens to SAMMY, 17, enter UR. She pauses beside the couch and looks over at him with a smile and raised eyebrows. Her chair has an oxygen machine attached to the back, which powers her nose-breathilizer, and a metal pole-on-wheels holding her catheterized-pouches. JASPER slowly looks up at her, and recoils in horror onto his knees.

SAMMY:

(surprised, chuckling)
Am I that repulsive?

JASPER pulls out his earbud and twists the headphones around his finger and puts it in his pocket, watching what he's doing as he responds.

JASPER:

(hesitant)
TBTH, people in wheelchairs, OITRW, are considered aliens.

SAMMY:

(laughing and shaking her head)
NFW! OMG, I love it!

JASPER is shocked into silence for a beat, and SAMMY puts a hand on the armrest beside her, chuckling still. He stares at her hand.

SAMMY:

So what's your name?

JASPER:

...Jasper.

SAMMY:

(smiling)
Jasper? Are you sure you don't mean JSPR???

He looks up at her with a scowl. Her smile doesn't waver, and she raises her eyebrows expectantly.

JASPER:

(defensively)
That is how you spell it, but I'm called Jasper.

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SAMMY:

(smiling wryly)
Oh, well, please excuse me, IANAЕ. You know, KISIS.

JASPER chuckles.

JASPER:

Do all aliens know Texglish?

SAMMY:

(sarcastically)
Yeah, we just know as soon as we're sitting in a wheelchair. ICWTT, as they say.

(shaking head in irritation)
Of course we don't just know it! Our species can learn languages, but we can't instantly acquire them, especially from something as random and inconsequential as sitting in a wheelchair!

(under breath)
IYEC.

JASPER shifts to sit cross-legged with his back and head against the backrest. He looks up at the ceiling.

JASPER:

(annoyed, embarrassed)
Well, DHAC! IWJW how you knew it.

SAMMY:

I was bored one day, okay?! Human bodies aren't meant to be so ...dysfunctional, and if I spent my life like this, I might be used to it, but I didn't, and so I'm not. A person can only count the

(looks at ceiling)
specks in the ceiling so many times...So I taught myself Texglish.

(getting worked up)
It's fun, and I can go online and feel like an actual teenager. And I- I love having some small amount of evidence to help convince myself that I don't belong here, in this place that defines you based on whether or not you're ablebodied. Because being in a wheelchair is an irrefutable part of me, but it doesn't define me!

*JASPER is silent, still looking at the ceiling.
SAMMY looks away from him and wipes her eyes.
Slowly, he rolls his head up and looks at her. She looks at the floor.*

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JASPER:

What's your name, YAF?

BLACK OUT

SAMMY'S laughter is heard, and then JASPER'S, too.

THE END

VOCABULARY:

1. *fop* = a fool
2. *daubery* = false pretence, cheating
3. *prihee* = if you don't mind
4. *bale* = mischief
5. *irregulous* = lawless
6. *FWOT* = fucking waste of time
7. *AFGE* = a fucking growth exercise
8. *FFS* = for fuck's sake
9. *intpinse* = impossible to untangle
10. *credent* = credible
11. *ostent* = show
12. *geckish* = foolish
13. *noddy* = dolt
14. *appellate* = title
15. *exiom* = force
16. *enkindle* = be keen of
17. *buxomness* = obedience
18. *enseign* = teach
19. *FUBB* = fucked up beyond belief
20. *sirrah* = an inferior
21. *anon* = right now
22. *TBTH* = to be totally honest
23. *OITRW* = out in the real world

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24. *NFW = no fucking way*
25. *OMG = oh my god*
26. *IANAE = I am not an expert*
27. *KISIS = keep it simple, I'm stupid*
28. *ICWTT = it comes with the territory*
29. *IYEC = if you even care*
30. *DHAC = don't have a cow*
31. *IWJW = I was just wondering*
32. *YAF = young angry female*