

BUT DOES HE HAVE TO BE

---

A Short Play

by

Cast of Characters

GARRETT. Male. Early-to-mid 20s.

JIM. Male. Early-to-mid 20s.

Scene

GARRETT's stepmom's garage.

Time

The present.

Note

This dialogue moves fast. Don't let the air out of the balloon. It's a lot of pages, but really it should clock in around 10 minutes.

SETTING: A fairly chaotic suburban garage. There is no car inside, but rather several cheap folding tables, cardboard boxes, rags, tools, and dropcloths.

AT RISE: GARRETT and JIM stand amidst the chaos, arguing. Well, GARRETT is arguing. JIM seems...unconcerned. In the corner of the room, covered in a dirty dropcloth, is something suspiciously body-shaped. It is... not moving. At all.

GARRETT

He's fucking dead, Jim!

JIM

Yes. Dead.

GARRETT

Dead!

JIM

I know. Dead.

GARRETT

Dead!

JIM

Super dead.

GARRETT

I don't think you—

JIM

The deadest.

GARRETT

Jim!

JIM

Garrett?

GARRETT

He's dead!

JIM  
Yes. (beat) But does he have to be?

GARRETT  
What?

JIM  
Does he have to be?

GARRETT  
Does he have to be what?

JIM  
Dead.

GARRETT  
Does he have to be dead?

JIM  
Yes. Does he have to be dead?

GARRETT  
I mean...he is dead.

JIM  
Sure. Now. (beat) But does he have to be?

GARRETT  
I don't...

JIM  
Dead now.

GARRETT  
Yes.

JIM  
But later...?

GARRETT  
Still dead!

JIM  
Maybe.

GARRETT  
...

Maybe.

JIM

I still don't...

GARRETT

What if he wasn't?

JIM

He is.

GARRETT

I know that, Garrett. But what if he wasn't?

JIM

Wasn't...

GARRETT

Dead. Wasn't dead.

JIM

I'm so...

GARRETT

No I know. It's weird.

JIM

Weird.

GARRETT

I think that I might be like able to...

JIM

To...?

GARRETT

You know.

JIM

I honestly have no fucking clue what you are —

GARRETT

Fix it.

JIM

What?

GARRETT

Fix it.

JIM

Fix...it? Like...it it?

GARRETT

Yeah. It.

JIM

Death?

GARRETT

I mean that is the "it" in this conversation, isn't it?

JIM

Jim.

GARRETT

Is there another "it" to which we've been referring? Seems to me like this is the it-iest "it" in our current conversational orbit.

JIM

Can we maybe—

GARRETT

If there is another more significant "it" please I beg you, elucidate me. Perhaps I've completely fucked up the antecedent geometry here or—

JIM

JIM HE'S DEAD!

GARRETT

THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO FIX!

JIM

Fix?

GARRETT

Fix!

JIM

Fix...how?

GARRETT

Make him less dead!

JIM (cheerfully)

GARRETT

Less dead?

JIM

Make him just a little bit less dead.

GARRETT

Isn't deadness sort of a binary thing? Like, you're dead or you're not dead. I don't know that modern science has found anything in the, you know, middle of that.

JIM (scoffing)

Modern science. Pffft.

GARRETT

I'm calling—

JIM

I can fix him.

GARRETT

To make him a little less dead.

JIM

I knew you were paying attention.

GARRETT

How?

JIM

Well I was watching you and even though you were all flappy and flail-ly and exasperated I knew that deep down you were—

GARRETT (erupting)

How are you going to make him *less dead*?!

JIM

Oh! That's—

GARRETT (interrupting)

Wait. Flappy and flail-ly. I was not. I do not.

JIM

I mean a little.

GARRETT

No!

JIM

You flapped a little. Maybe "flail" was harsh.

GARRETT

Flail was way harsh.

JIM

Harsh. Not way harsh. And definitely flappy.

GARRETT

Whatever. So how are you going to fix him?

JIM

I have a system.

GARRETT

A system?

JIM

A system! A foolproof system.

GARRETT

To make someone less dead.

JIM

I believe we've covered this.

GARRETT

So what is your system?

JIM

I've been doing some research.

GARRETT

Into...

JIM

Reanimating the dead.

GARRETT

Oh.

JIM

Yeah.

GARRETT

Like you do.



JIM

Well I don't know if *you* do, but I do do it. (giggles)

GARRETT

Tell me you're not.

JIM

Doodoo.

GARRETT

I'm calling—

JIM

No! Really. I can doodoos this. I mean do this. I can do this!

GARRETT

What kind of research?

JIM

On the internet.

(Beat.)

GARRETT

We're going to jail.

JIM

You have no faith!

GARRETT

He's dead and you're describing doing internet research on—

JIM

Reanimation.

GARRETT

On the internet.

JIM

Dude they closed the library 18 months ago.

GARRETT

Yes, but—

JIM

So where else am I supposed to go to learn about reanimation? No library, so the internet is really the best choice left right?

GARRETT  
To research reanimation.

JIM  
Or anything else.

GARRETT  
But in this specific instance...

JIM  
Oh yeah, definitely reanimation.

GARRETT  
For how long?

JIM  
What?

GARRETT  
How long have you been—

JIM (interrupting)  
Oh researching? I dunno...like, 7-8 months. Not full time or anything. I still went to work. Part time. I went to work part time and researched part time.

GARRETT  
So it was a nice balance.

JIM  
Exactly. Balanced.

GARRETT  
Well that's good. I wouldn't want your creepy hobby to become a creepy obsession. As romantic as the image of you huddled under a blanket in front of a laptop eating a fucking Cup O' Noodles and drinking goddamn grape soda while sitting on a pile of Ho Ho wrappers and reading websites about REANIMATION is...

JIM  
Dude stop going through my garbage.

GARRETT  
Oh my God.

JIM

No like I don't need your judgment about my diet. I happen to like those things. Also they were not fucking Ho Hos. They were Ding Dongs.

GARRETT

That's the same fucking--!

JIM

It is not! Ho Hos are rolled! Ding Dongs are like flat with a creamy middle layer of filling. It's a completely different--

GARRETT

It's the same three basic ingredients. Stale chocolate cake. Gross filling that tastes like semen-infused marshmallow. Some weird chocolate shell. Oh wait no. Also sadness. There's four ingredients and the fourth is sadness.

(Beat)

JIM

I think you should leave.

GARRETT

He's fucking dead, Jim!

JIM

Right. So my system.

GARRETT

From the internet.

JIM

Yes my internet system.

GARRETT

Your foolproof internet system.

JIM

Do you want to snark me or help?

GARRETT

I'd like to do both if that's permissible.

JIM

Fine, but you're wasting time.

GARRETT

There's a time limit on this.

JIM

Of course there is. You think you can just let a body lie there for like...hours or days or whatever? You have to keep it fresh.

GARRETT

Naturally.

JIM

Freshness is key and you're just sitting here wasting time judging me for dietary habits that completely fuel my whatever my like...drive to create.

GARRETT

OK.

(Beat. Long beat.)

GARRETT

Should I--?

JIM

Give me a second. (Beat.) OK. I'm ready. We need some baking soda.

GARRETT

Baking soda?

JIM

It has a proven quality.

GARRETT

Proven by?

JIM

The person on the internet.

GARRETT (overlapping)

The internet. How much baking soda?

JIM

At least four boxes.

GARRETT

Where are we going to get four boxes of baking soda?

JIM

If you run inside there's a case of it under the kitchen sink.

GARRETT  
A case?

JIM  
Yeah.

GARRETT  
Why do you have a case of baking soda?

JIM  
Costco.

GARRETT  
Got it.

JIM  
So can you go get that for me?

GARRETT  
Sure. (Starts to head inside.)

JIM  
Oh also while you're in there could you grab those two giant jugs of white vinegar?

GARRETT (stopping)  
White vinegar?

JIM  
Yeah.

GARRETT  
Your foolproof plan involves baking soda and white vinegar?

JIM  
They have a proven quality!

GARRETT  
Are you trying to raise a person from the dead or make a middle school science fair volcano?

JIM  
I think it's pretty closed minded of you to think that they can't do both.

(GARRETT turns toward the door.  
Stops.)

GARRETT

Why do you have all these things just...ready?

JIM

I thought the opportunity might arise.

GARRETT

You see this as an opportunity?

JIM

Don't you?

GARRETT

No I pretty much see this as a dead body covered by a furniture blanket in the corner of your mom's garage. Which—how did he...?

JIM

Don't you trust me?

GARRETT

Jim.

JIM

No seriously. I would like to think that after 12 years of friendship I'd have earned a little faith. Like maybe *just maybe* you'd be willing to go with me on this journey. I have invested a *lot* in this project and I guess I just assumed my best friend would have my back.

GARRETT (overlapping)

Of course I have your back!

JIM

Then act like it!

GARRETT

...

JIM

I need this, Garrett.

GARRETT

What?

JIM

This has like...meaning.

Meaning?

GARRETT

It means something.

JIM

That's generally what "meaning" means.

GARRETT

Asshole.

JIM

Are you...?

GARRETT

Please.

JIM

(Pause). If. If I were to help you.

GARRETT

You wouldn't need to do much.

JIM

What would I--?

GARRETT.

JIM

Just turn a key. Wait, you have jumper cables right?

GARRETT

I do. Wait why do you...oh God you're—

JIM

It's not what you think!

GARRETT

I think you're trying to jumpstart a dead body like it's your broken down Neon.

JIM

No no no no. It's not that. (Beat). It's not JUST that.

GARRETT

I can't believe...OK explain it to me.

JIM

Really?

GARRETT

Quickly.

JIM

OK first we cover him with the baking soda. And we have to completely fill his mouth. That's the really important part. It won't work if the mouth isn't *completely* full.

GARRETT

Oh I'm glad we've got that straight.

JIM

We attach the jumper cables to his hands. One on each side, so the current is complete.

GARRETT

Do you know anything about electricity?

JIM

I think it's fairly obvious that I don't.

GARRETT

Noted.

JIM

Then this is where I need you. See we need the current to start at the exact same time as the vinegar enters the chamber.

GARRETT

The chamber?

JIM

This part could get a little messy, but that's why I'm doing it.

GARRETT

What do you mean by the chamber?

(JIM produces a turkey baster from a garage drawer.)

GARRETT

I'm out of here.

JIM

No wait! Please!

GARRETT



This is absolutely insane.

JIM

What do you have to lose?

GARRETT

Other than the little respect I have remaining for you?

JIM

Tell you what. You help me. One of two things will happen. Either this works, in which case you'll have been part of something historic and we can definitely sell our story to like...Peacock or some shit and they'll make a mediocre 7-episode TV series about us where I'm played by Noah Centineo and you're played by someone less attractive—

GARRETT

Rude.

JIM

And if it doesn't work, then it doesn't work and I won't bother you about it again!

GARRETT

You could just not bother me about it again right now.

JIM

I'll take you to Chili's.

GARRETT

(Pause). What?

JIM

I'll take you to Chili's if it doesn't work.

GARRETT

I'm listening.

JIM

My treat. Entrée of your choice. And a Triple Dipper.

GARRETT

Southwestern Eggrolls.

JIM

Dude.

GARRETT

That's my price. Entrée. Triple Dipper. AND Southwestern Eggrolls.

(Pause). Deal. JIM

And. GARRETT

What? JIM

And if somehow this works— GARRETT

It will. JIM

And if somehow this works...I get to name him. GARRETT

Sold. JIM

I'll get the baking soda. GARRETT

(End of Play.)