

CYNTHIA
 Jennings and Campbell, of course.
 Everybody in the school has known
 about them for weeks.

They are nearly to the stairwell.

GIRL
 Well, I haven't heard. Give.

CYNTHIA
 Well, you know Rochelle Dotson? She
 saw them at a movie together about
 three weeks ago, and you know what
 else?

They are on their way down the stairs.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY, AT THE STAIRWELL -- DAY

IRENE
 No! In the same car? Really? Here?

Cynthia is nodding her head "Yes" through all of this. They
 walk a few more steps.

IRENE (CONT'D)
 Are you sure?

And they pass the office, where James Knox is looking out
 through the glass in the office door. His face is pressed
 to the glass, and he's making steam faces with his breath.

INT. MAIN OFFICE -- IMMEDIATELY AFTER

James leaves the door and returns to the counter in the
 office, taking up his standard pose, gazing at Ms. Davis.
 After a few moments, she senses his eyes on her.

DAVIS
 Can I help you, James?

JAMES
 I thought you'd never ask. You could
 go out with me this weekend. That
 would help me out a lot.

Ms. Davis has heard this kind of stuff before. She stifles
 a grin, and pretends she didn't hear James.

DAVIS

Why don't you sit down, James? I know Mr. Chambers is anxious to talk to you.

James remembers why he's there, and makes an attempt at a reprieve.

JAMES

He's taking an awful long time. Maybe he's going to be too busy to see me today.

She's beginning to enjoy this game.

DAVIS

Well, he is a very busy man, but I heard him say specifically, "I want to talk to James about this, no matter what".

JAMES

Oh. Okay, okay. Wait. I got it. I can just go to Second Period, and then he can send for me when he has the time.

DAVIS

Let me see, do my job, or do what you want me to. Do my job, or what you want. Choices, choices. Nope. I don't think so. Just sit.

JAMES

(very serious)

Ms. Davis -- I shouldn't be missing class -- this is wasted time. Please? I even like Second Period.

DAVIS

Okay. I've got to hear this one. Why do you like Second Period, James?

JAMES

It's my teacher. Ms. Sampson. She inspires me to "be the best that I can be".

DAVIS

What you really mean is, Ms. Sampson is hot.

JAMES

Well... yes, she is very attractive, now that I think about it. But she's nothing compared to you, Ms. Davis ...may I call you Ellen?

DAVIS

James, the day you can call me by my first name, is the day armadillos will fly. Sit.

James waits for a few seconds, debating whether to give up or not, shrugs, and turns toward the bench, mumbling under his breath.

JAMES

Gah! Sit. Sit. That's all I hear around here.

He does sit, though, head down, apparently defeated.

JAMES (CONT'D)

They must think I'm a dog. That must be it. Here, James. That's a good boy. Sit, James.

Roll over, James.

Play dead, James.

After a moment, James' head lifts a little, and he checks Ms. Davis out to see if she's paying attention. An audible SIGH from him tells us she isn't. Suddenly the BELL for Second Period rings, and James leaps to his feet.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh, my god, my books! They're still in Mrs. Rossbach's class. You gotta let me go get them. Somebody'll steal them. I'll have to pay for them. My dad'll kill me. My life will be over. Please! You gotta let me go!

Ms. Davis shakes her head in resignation, and waves James away.

DAVIS

Go. Go.

James sprints for the door. Ms. Davis shouts after him.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Two minutes, that's all you've got.

The door SLAMS.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Don't run.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY, AT THE STAIRWELL -- DAY

James flies into the hallway, and spins on his sneakers, trying to keep his balance. He is on the stairs, headed for the third floor in seconds. Mr. Chambers arrives seconds later, just missing him.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY, AT THE STAIRWELL -- DAY

James zooms out of the stairwell, mumbling all sorts of things to himself, and heads for Mrs. Rossbach's room. He opens the door and stands in the doorway, panting.

INT. MRS. ROSSBACH'S ROOM -- IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

ROSSBACH

James! What are you doing here? I thought I sent you down to see Mr. Chambers. Surely he isn't through ripping your ears off yet.

James is suddenly meekness personified.

JAMES

Uh, no ma'am, he isn't through with me. I mean he hasn't seen me yet. I, uh, I just came to get my books.

ROSSBACH

Well then, what are you waiting for? Don't just stand there, get them and get out of here. Disrupting two classes in one day is just too much.

James works his way back to his desk, stepping on people, making a general nuisance of himself, and repeating the process as he returns to the door. He stops and turns toward Mrs. Rossbach, as if he wants to say something.

ROSSBACH (CONT'D)

Go.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY -- DAY

As James reaches the stairwell, his attention is distracted by a small plastic box on the wall. The Fire Alarm. James looks back and forth to see if anyone can see him. He stares at the Fire Alarm. It stares back at him. Good and Evil are obviously at war within him. The box is waist high, just about right for a karate kick.

JAMES

How would Jet Li do it? A roundhouse kick, sure.

James takes a practice kick, spinning on one leg. He misses by a mile. He shifts in place a little, warming up, then takes another pass at the box. He catches it on the edge, and the cover flies off, shattered in several pieces, but he also drops his books and grabs his foot.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ow. Ow. Ow.

He hops on his good foot for a few seconds, then tests his injury. He can walk. He'll be okay. But will the fire alarm? He faces off against the coverless alarm box.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Should I do this? If I get caught, I'll be on the dooky farm forever.

Right -- I shouldn't.

Evil wins this one, hands down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But I'm going to anyway.

He throws the switch. A loud JANGLY ALARM sounds. James grabs his books and hurls himself toward the stairs.

INT. MAIN OFFICE -- IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Ms. Davis and Mrs. Randle hear the sound of the alarm, and look up, startled.

INT. MS. CAMPBELL'S CLASSROOM -- IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Ms. Campbell is grading papers, hears the sound of the alarm, and leans on her elbows, covering her face with her hands.

CAMPBELL

Why me?