

THE SMITH MOUNTAIN HUNTING CLUB

BY

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(Lights come up on five chairs sitting in a semi circle, with a cooler filled with cans of drink sitting in the middle. A stand is set up upstage of the chairs, with a hunting trophy of some sort on it.)

(NARRATOR walks onto the stage nostalgically.)

NARRATOR.

I know this place doesn't look like a castle or anything like that, but trust me, it used to be. This is the den of the Smith Mountain Hunting Club. To the people of Huckleberry, Kentucky, this is the summit of Mount Everest. Not many have a key to get into this building. The privilege of being a key holder belonged to only five people in all of Huckleberry County. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "only five in the whole dang county?" Well yeah, five is a lot considering Huckleberry County only has one hundred thirty eight people. The Club is so exclusive because it has to be. No one's going to care about something that everyone can get into easily, like jail. And being exclusive was pretty good for the club too, cause with less people, there was less people to start crap and the good times could just keep rolling. It wasn't exclusive in the sense that no one could ever get in, there was a test that you had to pass to get in. And trust me, even though the test was one nearly impossible to do, people still tried. For three reasons, for bragging rights of getting into the club, to get in on all the good times, and to get access to guns. You see, a long time ago, the Mayor of the town issued some weird law that said only hunting club members and law enforcement were permitted to have guns; why he issued that law, I still don't know. The only place that people could practice shooting was at the shooting range but all those guns are puny and are attached to a table using a wire. People wanted the freedom to hunt. People wanted to get in on the good times. People wanted to be a member of the Smith Mountain Hunting Club.

(Lights down. NARRATOR exits. Lights come up to three of the chairs being filled with a member of the club. The chair on the far SR is empty. JOHNNY sits in the middle chair. In the chair that COLTON is sitting in, SKYLAR sits on COLTON'S LAP. Each club member has a can in their hand and is listening closely to the story.)

SAM.

So there he was up in that tree stand. Greenhorn Johnny over here is sweating up a storm, you can feel the sweat falling from his face to the bottom of the tree where I was. This huge, once in a lifetime buck has absolutely no idea that Johnny is about to blow him to Bambi heaven. I keep looking up at him to see what the heck he is waiting for, then suddenly Johnny yells out cuss words that haven't been heard in the woods of Huckleberry County in probably fifty years.

SKYLAR.

Wait, I'm confused. Did you not take the shot?

JOHNNY.

I did.

COLTON.

Well then why'd you start cussing? Did you miss?

JOHNNY.

No. I forgot to load the gun and I left all my bullets in the truck. Dang thing just clicked when I pulled the trigger and I felt like chucking it.

(ALL are laughing at JOHNNY'S misfortune. ELI enters.)

ELI.

Evening all.

ALL.

Hey Eli.

ELI.

Johnny, out of my chair.

JOHNNY.

Oh come on, Eli. My chair has a spring in the back of it that's out of place and it's hurting my back. Yours is comfortable.

ELI.

I know, that's why I want it. Now get up.

(JOHNNY reluctantly gets up and heads for SKYLAR'S chair.)

SKYLAR.

Stop, don't even think about it.

JOHNNY.

Oh come on, Skylar. You aren't even sitting in it.

SKYLAR.

I could get up some time soon and if I do, I don't want to sit in my chair after its had your factory-smelling stench on it.

JOHNNY.

Seriously? Colton, reason with your woman here.

COLTON.

Nah, she's right, you stink. I wouldn't risk it either. If you want, I got another knee open if you want to pop a squat.

JOHNNY.

No thanks, this isn't a Vegas nightclub.

(ELI sits in his chair, he is obviously uncomfortable.)

SAM.

Eli, what are you doing here? I thought you couldn't come up here today cause the Fire House was having some sort of a ceremony or something.

ELI.

If you're talking about Randy Foster's wedding that none of us got invited to, it's setting up right now and all but five of Huckleberry County got invited. And guess who those five are?

SAM.

Us.

ELI.

Yep. They told me to clear out.

SAM.

Did you at least take some cake?

ELI.

I did, but you know just as well as I do that that is a long drive up the mountain, and a man is liable to get hungry.

SKYLAR.

I think it's kind of ridiculous that Randy is withholding an invitation to his wedding from us just because we didn't let him in the club.

SAM.

Yeah, I mean, it's not like we had a choice. It's not our fault that he missed the shot.

ELI.

It's fine. I really don't care about ole Judge Randy's wedding anyway. Now we just have another story to tell.

COLTON.

Speaking of stories, Sam here was telling us about Johnny's little bullet less mishap the other day before you came in here.

ELI.

Ah yes, that is now my favorite Johnny story. I believe we should sew a throw pillow with that story on it and give it to Johnny so the little spring in his chair won't hurt his back no more.

JOHNNY.

Laugh all you want, but when it came to the test to get into the Club, I passed with flying colors.

ELI.

Probably because you remembered the bullets.

(Everyone freezes. Lights down. A spotlight appears on the NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR.

I should probably explain to all of you what "the test" is. In the woods about three miles from the Smith Mountain Hunting Club, there is a narrow clearing in the valley. On each side of the narrow clearing, there is a line of trees, filled with bird's nests. For some unexplainable reason, these birds are faster than the average bird. They fly like the wind and can usually only be seen as blurs. The test is that you must shoot one of the passing birds. It sounds simple, but trust me, these birds are the fastest creatures out there. To accomplish such a feat gets you into the Smith Mountain Hunting Club, the place where good hunters go for good laughs and a company of good Samaritans.

(Spotlight off. Lights up. Scene resumes.)

JOHNNY.

Regardless, I passed and now I'm not being a little brat like Randy Foster is being. Not inviting five people when you invited everyone else in town to your wedding, who ever heard of such a thing?

COLTON.

Well Randy has always expected to get what he wants. He was like that back in high school. When he failed the test and didn't get into the club, that was probably the first time he had heard no in his lifetime. And

(MORE)

COLTON. (cont'd)

besides, he's a judge so he's used to getting what he wants. He's just a brat.

SKYLAR.

And that bride of his is no better. That Anna Farmer; she didn't deserve to get homecoming queen and she knows it. Only reason she won was because she slept with all the guys in the school to get their votes.

ELI.

But then again, that was back in high school and it really doesn't matter now.

SAM.

Yeah, and besides, it was just Homecoming.

SKYLAR.

You only say it's just homecoming because you won back in your day. You know I would look good with that crown on my head.

COLTON.

Heck yeah you would, but then again, you always look good. I guarantee you look better than Randy Foster and his bride combined.

SKYLAR.

Aw, Colton.
(They kiss.)

ELI.

May I remind you all that this is a hunting club and not the alley behind the drug store. No smooch-facing. Besides, we don't have time for any of that right now, because I've got some club business.

JOHNNY.

If it involves getting new chairs, I'm in.

ELI.

No, it's not about chairs, it's about a new applicant.

SAM.

Another one? There usually ain't this many applicants per month.

ELI.

Yes, well this one is a first time applicant.

SKYLAR.

Who is it?

ELI.

You remember Jodi Eisenhower?

SAM.

Um Sam, Jodi is dead. It's gonna be mighty hard for her to try out for the club since she's six feet under.

ELI.

Not Jodi Eisenhower herself, it's Jodi Eisenhower's boy, Jacob.

COLTON.

Jacob Eisenhower is applying to the club?

ELI.

Yep, he came down to the firehouse this morning and asked me if he could.

SKYLAR.

Is he even old enough?

ELI.

He turned eighteen during his last week in juvy. He got out three weeks ago.

SAM.

We aren't actually serious about letting that little punk in are we?

ELI.

It isn't a matter of whether we like the kid or not, it is a matter of whether he passes the test or not.

JOHNNY.

But Eli, this isn't the type of kid that you want in the club. He's rotten.

ELI.

What do you mean he's rotten?

JOHNNY.

He's just a bad apple; you put him in the pie and you'll ruin the pie.

COLTON.

Eli, think about it. This is the kid that took a baseball bat to practically every mailbox in town, has vandalized more houses than I don't know what, and he's stolen more stuff from the businesses around here than I care to say.

SAM.

And we all know the story about his brother.

ELI.

Now you know full well that that is a rumor that the wives of the deacons at church started.

SAM.

I don't know if it is or not, but with this kid's history, I wouldn't put it past him.

SKYLAR.

He is not the type of kid that we want in the club.

ELI.

Now listen, this club is exclusive, but it is not an electoral club. The club rules state that so long as the applicant passes the test, they can get into the club, it doesn't matter if the kid is a rotten apple or not. I mean, look at me. I was in jail and none of y'all seem to care.

JOHNNY.

That's because we all know that you were young when you got in and it was for something stupid and we know you aren't like that anymore.

ELI.

That's exactly what I am saying. Look, I see a lot of myself in this kid, maybe he just needs to find a place that is filled with positive influences to guide him on the right path.

SAM.

(Reluctantly.)

You're right, Eli. We should at least give the kid a chance. And besides, it's the test, it's not like just anyone can pass it anyway.

ELI.

Exactly, so you're all fine with it?

SKYLAR.

I guess we sort of have to be.

(JACOB enters SR.)

JACOB.

Hey Chief, where's the pisser? I gotta take a leak.

COLTON.

You brought the kid up here?

ELI.
Jacob, I thought I told you to wait in the truck.

JACOB.
What? I gotta take a piss.

ELI.
The bathroom is down the hall, second door on the left.
(JACOB exits SL.)

COLTON.
(Yelling after JACOB.)
And don't leave the faucet running!

SKYLAR.
Eli, what the heck is wrong with you? Why would you bring that little brat up here?

ELI.
Look, after I talked to you guys about letting him apply, I was going to take him to go do the test. It's not like any of us have anything to do today anyway, what with Randy's wedding and all. All the stores in town are closed.

COLTON.
But you can't bring him up here. He's not even supposed to be in the building if he isn't a club member.

ELI.
He's just using the bathroom. What do you want him to do? Piss in the woods?

COLTON.
He's a boy, he's got the equipment for it.

SKYLAR.
Look Eli, we all get that you want the kid to find a place that'll help him but I'm just not sure if this is the place for him.

ELI.
I'm telling you he just needs a chance.

SAM.
How about this, we interview the kid. If after the interview we feel he isn't fit for the club, we just say we'll do the test some other time and then we just push it off until he just says forget it.

JOHNNY.

I like that.

SKYLAR.

Me too.

ELI.

Okay, let's do that. But hey, I want fair questions. Give him a fair shot like you would if he was just an average Joe from town.

(JACOB enters.)

Jacob, have a seat.

COLTON.

Yeah, sit in that chair Johnny is sitting in.

ELI.

No. Jacob, sit here.

(JACOB sits in the middle chair.)

Jacob, the members of the club want to ask you a few questions.

JACOB.

I wouldn't do anything like that, Sir. I'm trying to be a good boy so I can get out of here.

ELI.

What?

JACOB.

That's what you say in juvy when a guard asks you if you did something. It's gotten me out of lots of punishments. Can I have a beer?

COLTON.

No, you cannot have a beer.

JACOB.

Well can I have a cigarette? They didn't let me have any in Juvy, now that I am out I've got catch up with what I missed out on.

COLTON.

Shut up, Kid.

ELI.

Colton, be nice.

COLTON.

I really am trying, Eli.

ELI.

Jacob, can you answer their questions?

JACOB.

I'll try.

ELI.

Thank you. Well, go ahead.

SKYLAR.

Alright Jacob, I'll start you off with two easy ones.
What all did you do in juvy?

JACOB.

Nothing much. They would tell us to wake up, we'd wake up. They'd tell us to work, we'd work. They'd tell us to eat, we'd eat. They'd tell us to sleep, we'd sleep. It was just a giant, boring circle where barely anything ever happened. Only times it wasn't boring was win some guy would run his mouth in the yard and then some other guy would punch his fist down that guy's throat.

SAM.

Were you ever in one of those fights?

JACOB.

Once or twice. People stopped messing with me after the first month that I was in there. You know what kind of cash they use in Juvy?

SAM.

What?

JACOB.

You know what kind of cash they use in Juvy?

SAM.

I don't know.

JACOB.

Teeth. Teeth you collect from the fights that you've won. The more teeth you had, the more powerful you were. Even in Juvy, money is power. But hey, at least we all had to work for it. Hard work too. It's hard to knock a guy's teeth out, but once you get over that fear that you'll break your own fingers when you punch the guy, it becomes a lot easier. Does that answer your question, Sweetheart?

COLTON.

Don't you talk to my wife that way, boy.