

Keeping Up With the Joneses

A Play for Grades 3 - 5

by

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KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

CAST

GAS JOCKEY
MOTHER
FATHER
SAMMY
KITTEN
PRINCESS
WALT
MRS. JONES
FRANKIE
BOBBIE
CHRIS
JUNIOR
RAY KROC
CASHIER
STAGE MANAGER
ELVIS
CAMERAMAN
ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR
CROWDS (at McDonalds, at Radio Station, at Disneyland)

LOCATIONS

Gas station
Living Room
Car
McDonalds
Stage Door of a Radio Station
Disneyland

(Lights up on the GAS JOCKEY,
who stands by his gas pump.)

GAS JOCKEY

A gallon of gas just went up to 23 cents. That's a lot - for 1955. Yep, lots of things happened in 1955, and not just the skyrocketing price of gasoline. Why, I heard that RCA just came out with a television that plays in color! I don't know who'd want it, though. It costs almost a thousand dollars! But TV is important to SOME people. As a matter of fact, a few months ago Walt Disney himself got his own show! Yup, the guy who makes those movies. The show's called "Disneyland." Well, the other day he starts talking about another Disneyland - not the show but an actual place!

(Lights up on WALT.)

WALT

Disneyland began when my two daughters were very young. Saturday was always Daddy's Day, and I would take them to the merry-go-round, and sit on a bench eating peanuts, while they rode. And sitting there alone, I felt there should be something built, some kind of family park where parents and children could have fun together.

The idea of Disneyland is a simple one. It will be a place for people to find happiness and knowledge. It will be a place for parents and children to share pleasant times in one another's company.

(Lights up on family, sitting
on sofa and chairs, watching
WALT on TV.)

MOTHER

What a nice idea.

SAMMY

Mother, what is this we're eating?

MOTHER

It's a TV dinner, dear. It's the latest thing. They're like a meal in a little metal tin! And clean-up is a snap!

PRINCESS

Father, where is Disneyland going to be?

FATHER

In California. That's a long way from here. It would take us almost a week to drive there.

SAMMY

Disneyland is the LAST place I'd want to go.

MOTHER

Mind your manners, Sammy. Children should be seen and not heard. And it would be a wonderful place to go. Walt said it himself - it's for the young and the old.

FATHER

Who are you calling Old?

(Knock on the door. MRS.
JONES enters.)

MRS. JONES

Hi, hi, hi! Am I interrupting anything?

KITTEN

Oh no. Not Mrs. Jones.

PRINCESS

Mom HATES Mrs. Jones!

FATHER

Quiet, you two. Mind your manners.

MOTHER

Hello, Mrs. Jones. What brings you here?

MRS. JONES

I just wanted to show you THIS!

(MRS. JONES pulls out a
postcard.)

FATHER

What is it?

MRS. JONES

It says "You and your family are invited to attend opening day at ... Disneyland!" Myron and I are talking little Junior and driving to California!

MOTHER

Driving? I thought you'd take an airplane.

MRS. JONES

Heh heh ... not this time. Maybe the next time. Well, gotta get packing. See you when I get back! Ha! Ha! Ha! You can keep the card. I already called in my reservation. (exits)

PRINCESS

Father, did the Joneses really fly in an airplane?

FATHER

Don't be silly. Only the very rich can fly. Everyone else drives or takes a train.

MOTHER

That Mrs. Jones burns me up. Too bad we don't have one of those postcards.

FATHER

What did Mrs. Jones give you ... there in your hand?

MOTHER

What? (looks) Oh, right! She gave me one of those postcards!

FATHER

And what's stopping us from calling in a reservation, too?

MOTHER

The phone number is right here on the card.

PRINCESS

What?!

KITTEN

Does this mean we're going to Disneyland?

SAMMY

Oh no. Count me out. Family trips are for squares.

KITTEN

Aw, come on Sammy! Don't be such a party pooper!

SAMMY

I want no part of this.

MOTHER

That's it! A family vacation! That's what Walt says - a family should do things together. Everybody, pack your bags! We're going to Disneyland!

(Family exits, but SAMMY remains. FRANKIE, BOBBIE & CHRIS enter.)

FRANKIE

Hey Sammy! What's buzzin', cuzzin'?

SAMMY

My folks are total bad news.

BOBBIE

Cool it, Daddy-o. Don't be a wet rag.

SAMMY

Dig this. They want to load us all up in the chariot and drive to California!

CHRIS

So what's the big tickle?

SAMMY

The whole thing is so square, it's a cube!

BOBBIE

Don't have a cow. Just get with it. Sounds like Fat City to me!

FRANKIE

You should be on Cloud 9!

CHRIS

It'll be boss, Sammy. Just enjoy the ride. We'll be hanging until you get back.

SAMMY

I'm glad I have my fiends. At least you understand me.

FRANKIE

My parents don't understand anything I say!

(SAMMY and FRIENDS exit.
Lights up on GAS JOCKEY.)

GAS JOCKEY

Now, the idea of Disneyland was great at the time. But the truth is, nobody really knew what it was going to be like. There's never been anything like it, so nobody new what to expect. But people from all over the country wanted to see it, and they all paid 23 cents a gallon for gas to get there!

(Lights up on the family's
CAR.)

KITTEN

(After a pause) Are we there yet?

MOTHER

No, Kitten. We have a long way to go. Days!

SAMMY

Can't that radio pick up anything good?

FATHER

What you think is "good" sounds like noise.

SAMMY

I can't believe you've never heard of Elvis Presley.

MOTHER

Who's that?

PRINCESS

He's a singer, I think. We talked about him in Civics class. He's gotten everybody upset.

MOTHER

Why would he upset people?

PRINCESS

I don't know - I guess it's because he shakes when he sings.

SAMMY

Elvis is the coolest -- like crazy, man. Radioactive!

FATHER

He sounds crazy.

SAMMY

You're such a square, Pops. Elvis is the most! I dig those side burns and that hair!

FATHER

That boy needs a proper haircut.

KITTEN

Mommy, when's lunch?

PRINCESS

Yeah. We've been driving almost all day. Where are we, anyway?

FATHER

Des Plaines, Illinois.

MOTHER

See if we can find someplace to eat.

(Lights up on GAS JOCKEY.)

GAS JOCKEY

The clock is ticking, and everyone has a deadline to meet. Sure, there are plenty of places to eat along the road, but sometimes you need something ... fast.

(Lights up on a bustling McDonalds. There is a line of people in front of a CASHIER, who is handing them bags of food one by one. The family gets in line.)

CASHIER

Welcome to McDonalds. Can I take your order please? Next customer! Keep the line moving! Can I take your order please?

SAMMY

This line is huge. We'll be here all day.

PRINCESS

It seems to be moving pretty fast.

MOTHER

We'll need to get our food fast if we're going to make it to Disneyland on time.

(RAY KROC enters and hears what they are saying.)

RAY

I think you'll find our food to be the fastest you've ever seen.

CASHIER

Welcome to McDonalds. May I take your order?

FATHER

Sure ... uh ...

CASHIER

Don't get confused. The menu is very limited. That's one of the ways we get it to you so fast. Just hamburgers, French fries, shakes and soda.

FATHER

Okay then. We'll have seven hamburgers, five French fries and five sodas.

CASHIER

That'll be two dollars and five cents.

FATHER

Righteo! Got it right here! (pays her)

CASHIER

(Hands him a bag) Here you go. Have a nice day, and thank you for coming to McDonalds.

MOTHER

That was amazing! I've never seen an operation move so fast!

RAY

You like it, huh? I'm hoping it catches on. My name's Ray Kroc, and this is my restaurant, McDonalds.

FATHER

It's amazing! Food on the go! And so fast!

RAY

The idea really isn't mine. I invented the machine that makes milkshakes. While I was selling them, I went to a restaurant in California owned by the McDonald brothers. They came up with the idea of a limited menu and making them in a quick, efficient way.

KITTEN

But we're in Illinois, not California.

RAY

That's right. The McDonald brothers let me franchise their idea, which means I can sell their idea to people all of the world. Soon you could see McDonald's all over the country!

MOTHER

Well Mr. Kroc, I must say that I've never seen anything quite like it. The food moves so ... fast!

RAY

Fast. Fast food. I like it!

JUNIOR

(Enters) Hey Princess! Hey Kitten! Isn't this place the coolest! All they need is a play area in the back and it would be perfect!

RAY

A play area ... hmmm ...

(MRS. JONES enters.)

MRS. JONES

Well lookie, lookie. I knew I'd find you here.

MOTHER

Mrs. Jones. Why am I not surprised.

MRS. JONES

Mr. Kroc, this is a fine place you have here. My husband Myron might be interested in opening one up in OUR neck of the woods.

RAY

Would you, now!

MOTHER

I wouldn't believe her. She's full of hot air.

MRS. JONES

Oh, what do you know?

(MRS. JONES makes it to the front of the line.)

CASHIER

Excuse me, ma'am.

MRS. JONES

You think you're so much better than me.

CASHIER

Uh ... ma'am.

MRS. JONES

But we all know you're just jealous.

CASHIER

Ma'am, it's very important ...

MRS. JONES

(To CASHIER) WHAT?!

CASHIER

You're holding up the line. We specialize in making the food fast here, but you've slowed it down to a dead stop. What would you like to order?

(Line starts grumbling.)

MRS. JONES

Oh ... sorry. (To JUNIOR) Where's your father when I need him!

JUNIOR

He's still in the car.

MOTHER

Have a nice trip, Mrs. Jones. See you in California!

FATHER

Come along, children.

MRS. JONES

Where's your father? MYRON!!!

(FAMILY exits. Fade to GAS
JOCKEY.)

GAS JOCKEY

The highways of America are long and lonely. It's easy to
get lost if you're not paying attention.

(Family is back in the car.
MOTHER is looking at a road
map.)

MOTHER

That Jones family really burns me up. Always showing off.

SAMMY

They're just a bunch of jerks. Like we would ever want to
keep up with the Joneses.

FATHER

Honey ...

MOTHER

Hmm. Keeping up with the Joneses ...

FATHER

The map?

PRINCESS

Daddy, where are we?

FATHER

That's what I'm trying to find out. Any luck with that
map?

PRINCESS

There's a bunch of people. Maybe they can tell us where
we are.

(We see the back of radio station KWKH. There's a stage door with a crowd of fans being held back by one person - the STAGE MANAGER.)

FATHER

Excuse me, but could you tell me ...

STAGE MANAGER

Thank goodness you're here! I can't hold these kids off any longer! Quick - you hold off that side and I'll hold off this side. We have to keep the kids from charging the door.

MOTHER

I don't think you understand ...

FATHER

We're traveling to California and we seem to be lost.

STAGE MANAGER

Oh, I thought you were reinforcements from the home office.

PRINCESS

Could you tell us where we are?

STAGE MANAGER

Shreveport, Louisiana. And this is KWKH where they broadcast the Louisiana Hayride. Haven't you ever heard of it?

SAMMY

I've heard of it. I listen to it every week.

STAGE MANAGER

Then you know why this crowd gets bigger every week.

SAMMY

You mean HE'S in there?

(Crowd screams)

STAGE MANAGER

Does that answer your question?

MOTHER

Who's HE?

SAMMY

Mother, Elvis Presley is in there!

MOTHER

Is that the boy with the ants in his pants?

SAMMY

Elvis is, like the coolest EVER! He's changing the sound
Rock 'n Roll! He's, like ... the King of Rock 'n Roll!

FATHER

You mean that howling you like to listen to on the radio?
This Elvis person is responsible for it?

SAMMY

Open your mind up, Daddy-o. One day Elvis will be one of
the most famous people in the world!

(Door opens, ELVIS comes out.
Crowd screams.)

STAGE MANAGER

Oh, no. Hold your ground! Don't let any of them through!

ELVIS

Say, did anyone come lookin' for me this evening?

STAGE MANAGER

Look around. They're ALL looking for you!

ELVIS

This would be an older gentleman named Colonel Parker.
He's been wanting to talk about managing me once my
contract here runs out. (Sees MOTHER) Hello, ma'am. Do
you want an autograph?

MOTHER

Me? No, thank you. We're lost. We need to get to
California.

ELVIS

Well darlin', grab I-20. That'll take to through Texas and
turn to I-10 just before you hit New Mexico. That'll get
you right on to California.

FATHER

Thank you ... thank you very much.

ELVIS

"Thank you ... thank you very much." I like the rhythm of
that. Thank you ... thank you very much. (goes off
repeating to himself)

KITTEN

We should really get going before the Joneses catch up to us again.

(MRS. JONES and JUNIOR
enter.)

MRS. JONES

Excuse me, but we seem to have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Could someone point us to California?

JUNIOR

Is that Elvis Presley?

STAGE MANAGER

Oh no, more people! Okay, no matter - you take that side. Hold that line!

MRS. JONES

What?

FATHER

Just do what she says.

ELVIS

I appreciate your help with the crowds, but I have to get out of here.

FATHER

We'd be happy to take you anywhere, as long as you point us to the highway.

ELVIS

It's a deal!

SAMMY

I can't believe it - Elvis Presley will be riding in OUR CAR!!! The girls at home won't believe it!

FATHER

Where can we drop you?

ELVIS

I've found a new place to dwell. It's down at the end of Maloney Street, called Heart Lake Hotel.

MOTHER

Let's make a run for it!

(Family and ELVIS make a run for it, leaving the STAGE MANAGER and MRS. JONES to hold off the crowd. One more teenager joins the crowd.)

TEENAGER

Hey, where's Elvis?

STAGE MANAGER

Elvis has left the building.

(CROWD chases Family off stage, leaving the STAGE MANAGER and the JONESES.)

MRS. JONES

So, do YOU know how to get to California?

STAGE MANAGER

Follow THEM.

MRS. JONES

Come on, Junior. MYRON, FOLLOW THEM! BUT WAIT FOR US TO GET IN THE CAR!!! MYRO-O-O-O-ON!!! (chases after them)

(Lights back up on the GAS JOCKEY.)

GAS JOCKEY

Funny thing about roads is that if you follow them long enough, they'll take you where you're going. So, on July 17, 1955, all roads led to one place - a place that used to be an orange grove in Anaheim, California, which was now the home to a place called Disneyland.

(Lights up on WALT.)

WALT

To all who come to this happy place: Welcome. Disneyland is your land. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, and dreams, and the hard facts that have created America ... with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world.

CAMERAMAN

And we're out! That was great, Mr. Disney!

(There is a sudden bustle of people around - camera operators, electricians, sound engineers, and people with clipboards. They are filming the opening day.)

DIRECTOR

Switch to Ronald Regan out in Frontierland.

ASSISTANT

Mr. Disney, we're getting complaints about the lack of water fountains.

WALT

We ran into a snag with the plumbing. I had to choose between toilets and water fountains. What would YOU have done?

ASSISTANT

Very good, Mr. Disney.

DIRECTOR

I need a crew over in Fantasyland! Now!

CAMERAMAN

What about me?

DIRECTOR

You stay with Mr. Disney. (exits with crew)

WALT

Do we have the kids chosen to run over the drawbridge of Cinderella's Castle?