

Long trip on the short bus

By Dan Mitzimberg

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Characters:

Charlie : 14 years old - Slightly handicapped – slow to articulate – functional
(could be boy or girl adjust the text accordingly)

Sammy : 13 years old - similar issues but more functional – quiet and timid
(Both kids act and play like they are 6 years old)

Bus driver : Nice guy who puts up with a lot – jokes with kids

Joe : Bully who picks on kids and adults – in late teens / early 20's.

2 Men asking questions Looks like cops - gangsters

3 cops – ending only

Stage setup – left stage / fence with toys / house off stage

Center stage – bus several rows of seats and driver facing away from house

Across stage – bushes and trees for park

SCENE 1

*(Scene opens with the bus driver pulling up to the bus stop two children get on
Sammy sits (upstage) on one side a few seats in front of Charlie (downstage) on
the other side of the bus- a slight angle may make the bus placement easier)*

CHARLIE: Hey bus driver wanna see me stand up?

BUS DRIVER: Now Charlie *you know* you're suppose to stay seated

CHARLIE: You'll let me, huh? (beat) Huh?

BUS DRIVER: No Charlie we have one more stop before yours. Just stay seated!

CHARLIE: Hey Sammy, watch me stand up. Watch. I'm gonna do it.

(Both kids laugh and Bus driver shakes head - Bus pulls over to pick up kid)

BUS DRIVER: See if you can find a seat. (sarcastic) Real busy day.

JOE: (tough guy) Sure pops.

(Joe walks back on the bus and stops in front of Sammy who is staring at him)

JOE: Whatcha you looking at, retard?

CHARLIE: *(Speaks up)* He doesn't like to be called a retard.

JOE: *(Looks over to Charlie – very aggressive)* **Do You?** Retard.

CHARLIE: *(quietly)* No.

BUS DRIVER: Come on kids, let's settle down.

JOE: Mind your own business, pop. We were just funnin'.

SAMMY: *(Starts to laugh)* Pop. *(Laughs more – Charlie starts to laugh)* Pop.

JOE: Sumpin' funny, retard.

CHARLIE: You said 'pop'.

(They both laugh harder)

JOE: *(slowly – one word at a time – tough in Sammy's face)*

I - don't – like – to – be - laughed - at.

CHARLIE: I don't like to be called a *(stutters)* retard *(beat – quietly)* so were even.

JOE: We're not even *(Joe stands and turns to Charlie and makes a punch gesture)*
I'll punch you out - **RIGHT HERE!!!**

BUS DRIVER: Hey!! leave the kids alone. They have enough problems without your help.

CHARLIE: Ya, we got enough problems.

SAMMY: *(Charlie cowers down behind the seat)*
(Loud) **Hey leave** *(quieter)* him alone.

JOE: *(Turns to Sammy)* You're next **punk**.

SAMMY: *(Starts to laugh again)* Punk. You said Punk.

(Looks at Charlie laughing)

JOE: *(Yelling)* What do you think is so **god-damn funny?**

CHARLIE: *(Sits up and runs his right index finger over his left index finger)*
(teasing) You said a bad word. You're not sposta cuss.

BUS DRIVER: Sit down and behave yourself. **I – will – not – tell – you – again!**

JOE: *(Joe walks to front of the bus threatening the driver)*
Whatcha you gonna to do? **old man**.

BUS DRIVER: I'll report you.

JOE: To who?

BUS DRIVER: To the school.

JOE: I quit going

CHARLIE: *(teasing)* Stay in school.

(Joe looks back at Charlie – mean look – Charlie cowers again)

BUS DRIVER: To your mom.

JOE: My mom's just an old whore

CHARLIE: *(Acting sympathetic – as best he could)* I am sorry your moms' a whore.

SAMMY: *(Whispering to Charlie)* What's a whore?

CHARLIE: *(Whispering back)* I don't know but his moms' one.

JOE: *(Heads back to Charlie- yelling)* **What did you call my mom?**

CHARLIE: Nothing. You said - she was - that thing.

JOE: Only I can say that.

SAMMY: What's a whore?

JOE: *(Turns and grabs Sammy by the arm)* None of your business.

(Charlie hides behind the seat again)

BUS DRIVER: *(Pulls over to the side of the road – stands and turns - yells)*
I told you to sit down and leave these kids alone!

JOE: *(yells back louder)* **Or what?**

BUS DRIVER: I'll have to ask you to get off the bus!

CHARLIE: Ya, get off the bus.

SAMMY: Ya

JOE: Who's gonna make me? These retards?

BUS DRIVER: Nobody wants any trouble. Just sit down and let's get going.

JOE: NO! I don't like being laughed at *(looking at Charlie)* **Do I!?**

CHARLIE: *(quietly)* I don't know.

JOE: *(to Charlie)* Are you makin' fun-a- me?

BUS DRIVER: *(frustrated)* **I – have - had - enough.** Let's go, off the bus.

JOE: *(Makes an aggressive move towards the driver and lunges)*

Make me!!!! Old Man.

BUS DRIVER: *(jumps back and almost falls)* I shouldn't have to. *(beat)* Just leave and we will forget this ever happened.

JOE: Oh, you won't soon forget this. *(he makes Another move toward the driver)*

CHARLIE: **Hey!** Leave him alone he's nice.

JOE: *(heads back towards Charlie)* Want me to come after you?

CHARLIE: *(Slinks behind the seat)* No.

BUS DRIVER: Come on. Obvious they're no match. Just leave. No problems.

SAMMY: *(mimic)* Ya – just leave.

JOE: *(Heads back towards the front after the bus driver)* There's plenty of problems.

SAMMY: *(puts his school bag in the isle of the bus)* Come on just leave him alone.

JOE: *(he moves quickly towards the back of the bus)* OK punk. You're next. **Come on!**

(Joe trips over the bag and falls forward hitting his head on the seat)]

CHARLIE: Oh Oh *(everyone's Quiet)*

(Joe does not move and there is no blood)

SAMMY: Oh Oh – is he OK?

BUS DRIVER: *(Checks to see if Joe is OK.)* He's OK. Just sleeping.

CHARLIE: *(mimic)* Just sleepin'

SAMMY: He's sleep'n

BUS DRIVER: *(going back to drive the kids home)* Leave him alone - I'll get him home.

CHARLIE: (Singingly) He gets to go home

SAMMY: He was nice. Wake'm up so we can play some more.

BUS DRIVER: Let'm sleep. He's tired. I'll get him home.

SAMMY: Let'm sleep Charlie.

CHARLIE: OK, think he'll want to play tomorrow?

SAMMY: He was nice.

BUS DRIVER: Here is your stop. You boys **go right home**. Don't stop anywhere!

CHARLIE: OK.

BUS DRIVER: I am serious. Go right home

SAMMY: *(snickers)* He is serious

CHARLIE: Ya - serious. *(giggle)*

(the boys head away)

(The bus driver leaves the area)

SCENE 2

(SCENE CHANGES)

(remove the chairs from the stage – set up for park scenes)

(Next day - kids are in their front yard playing - two men come up to visit)

MAN 1: (*kneels – 2nd man stand near*) Hi boys.

CHARLIE / SAMMY: (*not really paying attention to the men*)Hi

MAN 1: Did you ride the bus yesterday?

CHARLIE: Yes

MAN 1: (*pulls out picture to show them*) Did you see this boy?

CHARLIE: He was nice.

SAMMY: Ya he was nice

CHARLIE: He was asleep

SAMMY: Ya asleep

MAN 1: Did you see him get off the bus?

CHARLIE: He fell over and was asleep

MAN 1: Did you talk to him?

SAMMY: He made me laugh

CHARLIE: He said 'pop' to the bus driver

SAMMY: (*both boys start to laugh*) Ya - 'Pop'

MAN 1: Did you see him get off the bus?

CHARLIE: He was asleep. (*beat*) On the bus.

SAMMY: He was nice.

(the kids go back to playing)

MAN 1: *(He stands and looks around)* Thanks kids.

(the men leave)

CHARLIE: Mom!!! (beat) Moooom!!! (beat) Can we go to the park and play?
(pause) Moooooooooom!!!???

VOICE OFF STAGE (WOMAN): Be home when the sun goes down.

CHARLIE: OK Mom

VOICE OFF STAGE (WOMAN): Watch for cars.

CHARLIE: Ok Mom

(Kids getting ready to leave)

VOICE OFF STAGE (WOMAN): Don't play with the bigger kids

CHARLIE: OK Mom

VOICE OFF STAGE (WOMAN): Don't go anywhere else

SAMMY: *(Mimic)* OK Mom *(starts to laugh)*

CHARLIE: OK Mom - Let's go, hurry

(kids head across the stage)

SCENE 3

(SCENE CHANGE)

(Joe is standing at one end of the stage / with a tough boy attitude – two boys are playing on the other side of the stage – in the dirt (floor) behind trees and bushes)

SAMMY: Hey look. It's that funny guy on the bus

CHARLIE: Ya. He is sposed to be asleep. He woke up.

SAMMY: *(stands)* I'm gonna go and say hi.

CHARLIE: We're not sposta play with big kids – momma said.

SAMMY: *(Charlie holds Sammy)* He's our friend

(They both stand and look as the two men from before approach Joe)

CHARLIE: That's those cops

SAMMY: They aren't cops, they are secret agents

CHARLIE: Nu'uh

(the two men act rough to Joe – push his shoulder and crowd his space – Joe stops acting tough and starts to act nervous)

SAMMY: What then?

CHARLIE: Spy, Like James Bond, zero zero seven

(hiding in the bushes or behind tree, watching Joe and men)

SAMMY: He is a secret agent not a spy

CHARLIE: Uh,uh zero zero seven is a spy

SAMMY: Spy number seven

CHARLIE: Zero zero seven

SAMMY: Zero plus zero plus seven equals seven - Secret agent seven!

MAN 1: *(tough)* You didn't do as you were told.

JOE: *(nervous)* Damn bus driver got in the way

MAN 1: I don't think you have it in ya

JOE: What am I sposed ta do?

MAN 1: Shoulda done the bus driver too

JOE: That ain't right

MAN 1: The boss ain't happy.

(Man pushes Joe back just a little to show authority)

(The kids start to sneak around to get a closer look

They get about half way around – hiding off front stage or in the audience)

JOE: Those kids didn't see anything, beside they're slow

MAN 1: Slow?

JOE: Ya, you know, slow in the head. They got mental problems.

MAN 1: Don't matter, you were told to shut 'em up.

(Kids are now close enough to hear)

JOE: I don't think you have anything to worry about. They didn't see nuttin'

MAN 1: Well Mr. Vivian does and he told you to take care of it.

SAMMY: *(Starts to giggle)* He said Mister Vivian

CHARLIE: Shhh, they will hear you *(Starts to giggle but under his breath)*
Shhhhhh

MAN 1: *(Forceful)* You had better do it **and do it today!**

JOE: I am not going to kill'em.

(both men and Joe look around nervous someone heard)

MAN 1: You don't have any choice – **DO IT TODAY!!**

(Man pushes Joe down – there he sits while the two guys leave the stage)
(Joe sits and tosses rocks and slaps the ground in frustration)

CHARLIE: They hurt him and made him mad

SAMMY: Let's go talk to him

CHARLIE: No! mom will get mad

(Charlie looks around – Sammy walks up to Joe while Charlie was looking away)

SAMMY: you OK?

JOE: *(concerned)* You shouldn't be here, better run before those guys see ya

CHARLIE: *(Still hiding – loud whisper)* Sammy. no. come back.

SAMMY: *(yelling back to Charlie)* Come'er Charlie - he's OK

JOE: You don't understand. They'll hurt you.

SAMMY: You won't hurt me. You made me laugh. - 'Pop' *(starts to laugh)*

(Charlie slowly walks up to them)

JOE: This is messed up

CHARLIE: Those were the spys who had your picture

(the kids sit down with Joe)

JOE: My picture?

SAMMY: Ya, they were at my house

JOE: *(Concerned)* They know where you live?

CHARLIE: Ya, they're cops, huh?

JOE: No, they're very bad men who hurt people.

SAMMY: They didn't hurt me.

JOE: You r'member a couple of days ago - at yur bus stop.

SAMMY: You got on the bus and went to sleep

JOE: before that

CHARLIE: I guess so

JOE: see the guy I was with?

SAMMY: (points to self) Me? Ya. He was tall. She wuz cryin'. (beat) He hurt her

JOE: Ya, well, He did more than that

CHARLIE: So, I see girls cry all the time

SAMMY: You never see girls cry

CHARLIE: Do so. *(Pause)* He never hurt me

JOE: He will, hurry home and tell your mom.

CHARLIE: We can't, we'll get in trouble for talking to big kids.

JOE: You'll get in more trouble if he hurts you. (beat) Where do you live?

(They all get up (brushing off) and walk across the stage)

CHARLIE: *(pointing)* See that blue house

SAMMY: That's not it

JOE: No?

CHARLIE: We live next to it.

JOE : Go home - tell your mom call the police!

SAMMY: Were those guys the police?

JOE: No, they're very bad men *(Slowly)* Tell the cops they can get Mr. Vivian and to hurry

SAMMY: *(Laughs)* Mister Vivian

JOE: Can you remember that?

CHARLIE: We're not retards, you know.

JOE: I know – do as I say – 'K

SAMMY: 'K

JOE: Hurry *(the kids start to leave at a slow pace)* FASTER!!

(they run off stage – Joe runs off stage the other way)

SCENE 4

(a few seconds later the kids run across the stage as they get close to the other side of the stage they yell)

CHARLIE / SAMMY: Mommy – Mommy!!! Two men want to hurt us.

(They run off stage – to their house) Call the cops for Mister Vivian (giggle)

(opposite stage Joe enters – then the two men)

JOE: Listen guys, I am not gonna whack those kids. They don't know nuthin' – they're handicapped

MAN 1: *(smug)* You owe Mr. Vivian, **big time** - he don't wanna take the chance

(they walk towards the house and stop across stage)

JOE: That's their house, you do it.

MAN 1: *(tough guy)* Uhnt uh, your job, or Mr. Vivian 'll revoke yur breathing privileges'.

JOE: That's an awful big word for a dick like you

MAN 1: What? (beat) Privileges?

JOE: No! (beat) job.

(man 2 smacks Joe – Joe hits the floor)

MAN 1: *(Joe gets up – brushes himself off)* Now get up - get yur ass over there and take care-a- business

JOE: How? I don't got a gun.

MAN 1: *(man 2 hands him a gun)* Now you do. We'll wait here.

JOE: What 'bout the parents?

MAN 1: That's your problem, shudda done it yesterday

JOE: What 'bout the neighbors?

MAN 1: *(pushing Joe toward the house)* Again - your problem. stop stalling, get yur ass over there.

JOE : *(slowly walks -across stage to the house – puts gun in pants)*
(The guys follow him part way) I'm not sure 'bout this, I'll do it tomorrow

MAN 1: Tomorrow - you'll be dead

(Joe at the side of the stage and looks back – the two guys nod their heads - gesture - signaling for him to enter the house)

JOE: *(steps up and rings the doorbell - Someone answers – off stage)*
Hi, are the kids home?

(Joe enters the home)

(nothing happens for a couple of minutes)

(very quiet)

MAN 1: *(agitated)* Sumpin's wrong, we got double crossed!
Come on - we'll do it our self and then take care of that punk kid

*(The men hurry across stage – man 1 forces his way inside - off stage
The other man (2) stands out front looking away from the house)
(A few seconds go by)*

*(A very loud yell – several people yell – Loud Noise (shock audience) and man 1
flies out of the house – he hits man 2 knocking both of them to the ground)
(directly behind them come the two kids and Joe landing on top of the men)
(They duct tape the men while Joe gets their guns (weapons) and tosses them)*

SAMMY: Take that
(
he grabs a toy and hits one of the men repeatedly)

JOE: Tie up their hands!

CHARLIE: Take that Mister Vivian

SAMMY: *(hits him with a toy)* Ya - take that and that

CHARLIE: *(starts to laugh)* Mister Vivian

(Sammy starts to laugh – Joe laughs)

MAN 1: *(Men struggle but cannot get free)* Let us go - we won't hurt you.
LET US GO – NOW!!

SAMMY: *(hits the man with a toy – toy breaks – Sammy is sad)*
Hey - you broke my toy

MAN 1: Come-on Kid let us go.

CHARLIE: No way - You broke his toy - You're gonna go to jail for a broken toy for a hundred years

(Joe stands in front of the house – three police officers enter and take the men away (off stage) reading Miranda rights – the last police officer handcuffs Joe – turns him around while handcuffing him – Joe is facing the kids)

CHARLIE: Hey let 'im go, he's our friend.

JOE: *(nodding his head)* You kids did good.

SAMMY: Where ya gonna go?

JOE: I'll be OK – best of all, you'll be OK.

CHARLIE: *(he cups Joes face with his hands – looks him in the eyes – pause)*
We're not retards

JOE: *(pause – sincerely)* I know.

(Police officer takes him off stage)

CURTAIN