

CHECKING THE ICE

by Scott Mullen

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CHECKING THE ICE

A Comedic/Dramatic Trio & More

by Scott Mullen

SYNOPSIS: Four brothers go down to a pond to check if the ice is thick enough, and they disagree over how reckless that process is. But it turns out that the older brother has things well in hand.

TIME: The Present.

SETTING: A frozen pond.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 either)

JAMIE (m/f)..... The oldest sibling (17). Distracted. *(31 lines)*

KRIS (m/f) The second sibling (16). Always worried. *(47 lines)*

SAM (m/f)..... The third sibling (15). The instigator. *(32 lines)*

MAX (m/f)..... The youngest sibling (14). The instigated. *(16 lines)*

CHARACTER NOTE: The characters can be male or female, though they were all written as male, so if the performers are female, you may change pronouns and other gender-specific words as appropriate.

SET: The pond invisibly covers most of the stage. On stage right is a bench at the edge of the "pond".

PROPS: Cell phone

COSTUMES: Winter gear – it's cold. Heavy coats, maybe hats, gloves, scarves.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: The ice should be completely imaginary, but there should always be a sense from the actors' behavior where the edge of the water is. If the actors wear shoes that slide easily across the stage, as if they are sliding on ice, that would be optimal.

PRODUCTION HISTORY: CHECKING THE ICE was written for the Sauk Theatre in Jonesville, Michigan, for their 24-Hour Theatre Project. It was first performed on September 16, 2023 by Atticus Maas, Ezra Hutchinson, Parker Falke and Zacrey Brammer. The director was Savannah Bruton.

DO NOT COPY

AT START: JAMIE, KRIS, SAM, and MAX enter from stage right, near the bench. JAMIE wanders off to one side, on a cell phone; We don't hear what he's saying, and he's not paying attention to anyone else. SAM and MAX go to the edge of the pond. KRIS lurks behind them.

SAM: It looks frozen.

MAX: I don't know...

KRIS: It's not frozen!

SAM: (To MAX.) Walk out on it and check.

KRIS: Don't walk out on it!

SAM: He's the youngest. The youngest checks.

MAX: I'm tired of being the youngest.

SAM: I've got a Twinkie hidden back at the house that's all yours if you check the ice.

MAX: I'm checking the ice.

MAX taps the ice with his foot.

KRIS: No! Jamie! Tell them to stay off the pond!

JAMIE waves him off. Whispers into his phone.

SAM: (To MAX.) Just crawl out on your belly. That will spread your weight over the ice. It won't break.

MAX: That makes sense.

MAX gets down on his belly.

KRIS: That's terrible advice! Don't go on the ice!

MAX crawls forward on his belly.

MAX: Too late.

SAM: Do you hear cracking?

MAX: I don't think so.

SAM: Go further.

KRIS: Don't tell him to go further!

MAX: Do you have more Twinkies?

SAM: So many Twinkies.

MAX: I'm going further.

KRIS: I'll give you my dessert tonight! And tomorrow night!

MAX crawls further.

KRIS: (To SAM.) When are you going to do when the ice cracks and Max falls in?

SAM: I'll stay off the ice, because it's too thin.

KRIS: Sam!

SAM: Relax. It's not very deep until you get out near the middle. (To MAX.) Crawl out toward the middle!

MAX crawls.

KRIS: Stop telling him that!

SAM: He needs to go out to the middle to check the ice. Because we need to know if it's thick there. If it's thick there, it's fine.

KRIS: And if it's not thick there?

SAM: It's not fine.

KRIS: If he falls in, he could drown!

SAM: Nah, he'll just climb out. He's a good climber.

MAX: Tenth best climber in my class!

KRIS: That doesn't sound good. Plus, he'll be wet and frozen! Has he ever climbed when he's wet and frozen?

SAM: We can throw him a rope. Did you bring a rope?

KRIS: No, I didn't bring a rope!

SAM: That's your job. You're older.

KRIS: Jamie! Jamie!

JAMIE again waves him off.

SAM: He's talking to Jordan Johnson.

KRIS: How do you know that?

SAM: He's always talking to Jordan Johnson. I think she's his girlfriend.

KRIS: Jamie doesn't have a girlfriend. He would have told me.

SAM: I only know what I know.

MAX suddenly stops.

MAX: I think I heard a crack.

KRIS: Lay flat!

MAX lays flat.

KRIS: (To SAM.) Now look what you've done! He's stuck out there.
How are we going to get him back?

SAM: He's not even to the middle yet. Keep crawling!

KRIS: Don't keep crawling!

SAM: There's a pint of ice cream hidden in the freezer behind the
peas and carrots. It's all yours if you make it to the middle!

MAX crawls.

KRIS: Why does he listen to you and not me?

SAM: I'm a lot more fun. (To MAX.) Do you still hear cracking?

MAX: I don't think so!

SAM: He's fine.

KRIS: What happens if the ice breaks, and he gets caught in the
current and it sweeps him under the ice and he drowns?

SAM: There's no current. It's a pond.

KRIS: What if he gets stuck under the ice and then he's banging on
the ice, but he can't breathe, and we can't hear him screaming, and
then he drowns?

SAM looks at him for a beat.

SAM: You're very dark.

KRIS: I don't want to be dark!

MAX: I think I'm in the middle!

SAM: Pound on the ice!

KRIS: Don't pound on the ice!

SAM: How else will we know it's safe?!!

MAX pounds on the ice.

KRIS: Ahhhh!!!! Jamie!

KRIS runs over to JAMIE and grabs his shoulder.

KRIS: Make them stop!

JAMIE looks at the pond.

JAMIE: I need to call you back. Okay. You too. No, same for me—double. No, double-double-double.

KRIS glares at him.

JAMIE: I'll call you back. Five minutes.

JAMIE hangs up.

JAMIE: That was important.

KRIS: Max is in the middle of the pond banging on the ice.

JAMIE: I see that.

MAX: Nothing's happening!

SAM: Bang harder! Let me see if I can find you a rock!

KRIS: No rocks!

JAMIE: The ice looks fine.

KRIS: It's not fine! It's barely winter! This is the first day below freezing!

JAMIE might sit on the bench here. KRIS might join him.

SAM: Max! Just stand up!

KRIS: No! Don't stand up!

SAM: If he stands up, we'll know it's safe.

JAMIE: No, when he jumps up and down, we'll know it's safe.

KRIS: Ahhhh! No! No jumping! *(To JAMIE.)* What are you doing! You're supposed to be the oldest! You're supposed to be the responsible one!

JAMIE: That was when they were kids. They're not kids anymore. They can be responsible for themselves.

MAX gets to his feet.

JAMIE: Any cracking?

MAX: Not yet.

JAMIE: You know what to do.

MAX starts jumping up and down. He's having a blast.

KRIS: Ahhhh! Stop!

JAMIE: Plus, you're responsible enough for both of us.

KRIS: They don't listen to me!

MAX keeps jumping throughout the following.

SAM: Any cracking?

MAX: Not yet!

JAMIE: Just keep jumping. (To KRIS.) This is why we have younger siblings. One to check the ice, and the other one to talk him into checking the ice. Sam! If Max falls in, will you help him get out?

SAM: Probably!

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