

Her Favorite Ride

by

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LOGLINE:

A young woman, who is avoiding her mom's repeated phone calls, is eager to commence with her birthday tradition as soon as her sister arrives at their favorite theme park.

FADE IN:

EXT. THEME PARK - DAY

JAMIE, a woman in her late twenties, zips up her fleece jacket, pulls her sleeves over her hands, and stares at THE VIKING as screams burst forth on its rotation. The giant ship loops a few more times before coming to a rough pendulum halt. Jamie smiles and wipes away a stray tear.

Checking her phone, she turns away from The Viking. A large FOUNTAIN, stretching the length of the main entryway, welcomes her as people walk along both sides. Trees adorn the corners of the fountain, and some people sit under them enjoying meals or checking their park map.

Jamie walks over to one of the empty metal tables and sits. Her phone rings. Her thumb hovers over the SLIDE TO ANSWER option as she stares at the word MOM above the picture of a smiling woman. After several rings, it reads MISSED CALL instead.

A hand touches her shoulders, and she drops her phone. When she turns around, she lets out the breath she was holding and jumps up to hug her younger sister LAURA, whose handmade messy bun beanie contrasts her khaki pants and collared blouse.

JAMIE
(tightens hug)
I didn't think you'd come.

LAURA
And miss your birthday tradition?
Never!

JAMIE
I've missed you.

Laura frowns. Jamie's phone rings again. She declines the call from her mom before shoving her phone back into her jacket pocket.

LAURA
What'd mom do this time?

JAMIE
Doesn't matter. Today is about you
and me. Ready?

Jamie grabs Laura's hand and heads for the archway entrance to THE WOODED ALCOVE section of the park.

THE WOODED ALCOVE

BOOTHES line the walkway. One offers flashing, noisy toys to the children who dance around it. Another promises extra-buttery popcorn and steaming hot chocolate.

As Jamie considers the hot chocolate, a teenaged GAME ATTENDANT holding a basketball jumps in front of her.

GAME ATTENDANT
If I can do it, anyone can!
(points to prizes)
You can win a giant elephant!

They walk around him.

LAURA
I thought elephants were your favorite?

JAMIE
(laughs)
But you're better at basketball.

They pass a carousel of swings that lift you into the air, spin you around a few times, and gently set you back down.

Music from the swings blends with hit music from the 1920s as they walk past the ride where anyone can drive replicas of Model T cars down a winding track.

They stop in front of THE MENACE, an old wooden roller coaster that loops and dips above a long, winding pathway.

JAMIE
(smiles)
Ready?

LAURA
Why even ask?

THE MENACE

They look up from the pathway as the wooden coaster whooshes down the track straight at them. Laura laughs.

When they reach the loading gates, no one is in line for the front car. As they move toward the empty lane, a BOY lines up behind them. He's about ten, alone, and wearing an oversized hoodie.

JAMIE
Can't believe we're first in line!

LAURA
They must know it's your day.

JAMIE
Not likely.

The boy stares at them and backs up a bit.

When The Menace grinds to a halt, the RIDE ATTENDANT, a teenaged girl who chomps on a giant wad of bubble gum, lets the passengers exit before opening the gates.

Laura chooses her spot first. Jamie, about to board, stops when the boy tries to hop in ahead of her.

JAMIE
Not this time, kid.

BOY
But—

RIDE ATTENDANT
You heard her. Maybe next time.

BOY
Yes, ma'am.

Tears threaten as he moves behind the gate.

BOY (CONT'D)
I just wanted a riding buddy.

After everyone's lap belts are secure, The Menace jolts forward and starts clicking its ascent.

LAURA
Poor kid doesn't want to be alone.

JAMIE
(tears form)
Neither do I.

At the top, the whole park is visible. A large portion on the left is being cleared for a COMING SOON attraction, and the fountain cascades to the right.

Everyone raises their arms and yells as the coaster thunders down from the lift hill, twists around to the right, bumps them to the left, clicks up another slightly smaller hill, drops in a swoosh, and beats them into the side of the car again as it rounds twice more before returning to the loading dock.

Laughs and cheers erupt. Jamie rubs her arm.

LAURA
Best ride ever.

JAMIE
You said it.

THE WOODED ALCOVE

They exit directly in front of a BENCH, which is next to a small booth labeled SEAFOOD DELIGHTS with a FOOD ATTENDANT, a portly man, behind the counter. Jamie walks over.

FOOD ATTENDANT
Caviar! We only serve the best!

JAMIE
Caviar? Really?

A few different jars of caviar are opened atop ice beds to the left. On the right, also on beds of ice, rest an assortment of garnishes: eggs, onions, lemons, and bread.

LAURA
You can't be serious. I doubt he knows what *the best* even means.

JAMIE
But I've never had caviar before.

LAURA
And you want your first time to be at a theme park seafood display?
Gross.

FOOD ATTENDANT
I'd be happy to help you choose.

JAMIE

I guess not.

LAURA

What would you do without me?

She takes one more look at the seafood stand before turning away, tears building again. Her phone rings. Mom.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You should get that.

JAMIE

I know.

Laura walks away. Jamie accepts the call and sits on the bench facing The Menace. Mom sounds like she's been crying.

MOM (V.O.)

You're there, aren't you?

JAMIE

It was her favorite ride.

MOM (V.O.)

I knew you'd be there today.

(deep breath)

When you're ready, she hid a gift here for you last week.

JAMIE

Last week? But she... she...

MOM (V.O.)

Before the accident. She had big plans for your birthday, Jamie.

JAMIE

(tears falling)

I'll be there soon...

She hangs up and stares at The Menace a bit longer.

JAMIE

(whispers)

Thanks for one last ride, Sis.

FADE OUT.