

ROAD TEST

by
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SCENE ONE.

The inside of a car. Perhaps a Chevy. Nothing too fancy. More like an economy-sized rental car. JILL sits in the driver's seat. JACK is on the passenger side.

In this play, the "/" symbol shows the point at which the next line begins to be spoke over the current line.

(A SILENCE.)

JACK

Just drive right at them. / They'll get out of the way

JILL

What if I hit them?

JACK

You won't. This is how I learned to drive.

JILL

What exactly do you learn about / driving, doing this?

JACK

Confidence. It builds confidence in your handling of the car.

JILL

Steering into the birds?

JACK

Confidence that you won't accidentally run over a bird.

JILL

In the parking lot?

JACK

Yes. And you get a feeling for how the car handles. How to guide it.

JILL

Why do you need birds for that?

JACK

I already told you.

To learn how to steer / the car. JILL

To build confidence. JACK

That I won't hit a bird. JILL

Yes. JACK

Driving. JILL

Yes. JACK

On a road. JILL

Or a parking lot. Yes. JACK

And birds are usually in parking lots? / Or on roads? JILL

In parking lots. Yes. Or even roadways or highways even. As a city girl I wouldn't expect you to know about parking lots. Or driving in general. That's why I'm teaching you. JACK

Thank you. JILL

No worries. / I'm glad to. JACK

I'm happy you are. JILL

/ And - JACK

JILL

And that birds hang out here.

JACK

Why “that birds hangs out there”?

JILL

So you can teach me.

JACK

They do. Hang out here. / Birds and high school students.

JILL

I know. I believe you.

JACK

Sometimes the lot is covered with them.

JILL

Birds.

JACK

Of every kind. Or of every feather as the case may be.

JILL

Of every feather? What does that mean?

JACK

You’ve never heard the saying “birds of a feather” / all flock together?

JILL

Yeah, sure. / But -

JACK

So I’m saying. Birds of a feather.

JILL

Oh. I thought you meant the high school kids. Like they were all birds of a feather.

JACK

No. / Otherwise I would have just said -

JILL

The birds are birds. You don’t need to say they’re like birds of a feather.

JACK

But I'm talking about the birds. The high school kids aren't birds of a feather. / It's a particular clique.

JILL

They're not all the same?

JACK

No. That's what I'm telling you. Only a certain kind of high school kid hangs out at the parking lots.

JILL

So of the ones that do, they're all the same?

JACK

Yes, but the ones that do are different from the ones that don't. Like the kids who do musicals after school or whatever. / So they're birds of a feather.

JILL

But the ones that do hang out together in parking lots, I'd consider them birds of a feather.

JACK

Jill, you're missing the point. / You're confusing things.

JILL

No. / It's that they all are the type that would hang out after school in a parking lot. That makes them birds of a feather.

JACK

Same with the birds.

JILL

You're confusing me.

JACK

Look, just start the car. I'll teach you without the birds.

JILL

Do you think you can?

JACK

What kind of question is that? / Of course I can.

JILL

Well, you make it seem like that was the best / and only way to learn.

JACK

It's the best way, yes, but it's not essential. You can see what I mean about the birds another day.

JILL

Wait! There's a bird!

JACK

What? Where?

JILL

Over there. It just landed.

(JACK sees it now.)

JACK

(Proudly.)

See?

JILL

I do. I do.

JACK

Usually it's a whole lot more. Like a whole gaggle of them.

JILL

Geese?

JACK

No. Just a regular bird. Like that one. A pigeon or whatever.

JILL

It's called a gaggle of pigeon?

JACK

I don't know. / A whole bunch of them.

JILL

The group of them? Should I wait for the others?

JACK

What others?

JILL

You said they usually come as a group. / Should I wait and see?

JACK

That was a hypothetical.

JILL

Should I drive towards it?

JACK

Yeah. But don't be surprised if its friends come. / Its friends of a feather.

JILL

Will they land if they see I'm driving towards this one?

JACK

Good point. Probably not.

JILL

And this one will fly away before I even get near him right?

JACK

That's right. It'll sense you're coming and fly away. I don't know about the others.

JILL

How do they sense it?

JACK

Huh?

JILL

Air pressure? / Or do they see us?

JACK

That's right.

JILL

Because either way how are the ones in the sky going to know not to land.

JACK

Well, that's why I told you not to be surprised if more birds come.

JILL

Can't they see?

JACK

Of course they can. / Their eyesight just isn't as developed as ours.

JILL

I would think they could see further. / Since they have to fly all the time.

JACK

(Still pondering the eyesight of birds.)

Well, they have beaks...

JILL

Can they hear us coming?

JACK

Of course. Of course they can. They have a million ways of sensing danger. Just drive at that one and you'll see what I mean.

JILL

Okay. / I am.

JACK

You can go faster.

JILL

If I go too fast, won't it get too fast at some point / for the bird to react?

JACK

No. And don't use both feet. You should get in the habit of using just one foot for both the brake and the accelerator. That way, you're automatically off the one if you're using the other.

(The car jerks forward as JILL floors the pedal.)

There you go. Now just drive the car right towards the -

(Suddenly, a loud thud. JILL screams.)

What was that? Where's the --

(They whip around to look out the back. They stop the car and sit there for a while in silence. Shell-shocked.)

I've never seen that happen.

(A longer silence.)

They always get out of the way.

JILL

What do we do now?

JACK

I suppose...we get it off the road.

JILL

It?

JACK

The dove.

JILL

It was a dove?

JACK

I'm just saying. / It could've been a dove. Or a seagull. Or whatever.

JILL

The road-kill.

JACK

No. Not road-kill. A bird can't be road-kill. Have you ever seen a bird dead on the side of the road?

JILL

No.

JACK

Alright then.

JILL

Then what do we call it?

JACK

We don't call it anything.

JILL

We have to call it something. How are we going to talk about this?

JACK

We're not.

JILL

We're just going to forget this ever happened?

JACK

That's right.

JILL

But it did happen.

JACK

I know.

JILL

So what do you make of that?

JACK

It must have been a retarded bird or something.

(At this, JILL begins perhaps to cry.)

JILL

It's just you get so used to them leaving before you even make contact - that after a while you instinctively just try to avoid them in the first place.

JACK

I'm telling you. A normal bird would have gotten out of the way.

JILL

The story of my life.

(After a beat. JILL puts on her glasses and moves closer to JACK. Without further hesitation, she leans in and lands her lips on his. They hold for a moment. And then begin to kiss. For a while.)

JACK

(Once they stop.)

What was that?

JILL

Just a test. I drove right at it this time.

JACK

I told you to.

JILL

You told me it would get out of the way.

JACK

Did we kill it?

JILL

Let's go find out.

(She exits the car.)

THE END.