Grandma Buddy and The Great Tornado

by
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Characters:

Grandma Buddy: Practical. Calm. Adventurous. She’s seen it all and not much fazes her.


Sarah: Mother. Smart. Protective. Fierce love for her family. Aware that everyone is growing up too fast.

Jake: Middle-school. Loves video games, karate, Star Wars and American Ninja Warrior. Fancies himself a champion fighter in one of his many games.

Jennie: Grade-school. The next Global Dance Sensation. She knows tap, modern, ballet, jazz, show-dance, hand-dance and ribbon-dance. From the moment she gets up to the moment she goes to bed, she will dance.

Julie: Grade-School. An Adventure Scout Drill Sargent-in-Training. She keeps the family in line and does not suffer fools lightly.

Setting:
The living room of the Buddy family home in Freeport, Oklahoma. Outside, the wind blows tremendously. It is tornado season in Oklahoma and today may finally be the day of The Big One. Several tornados have already touched town on the edge of town and one may or may not be headed directly towards the Buddy household.
(Sarah sits in a chair in the living room. She is scanning the weather outside with a stern look of worry. Jake sits on the couch in a karate outfit, playing a video game on his phone.)

Bill
(As he comes bursting through the front door) Man, oh man, that is quite a storm brewing out there! So exciting!

Sarah
Are you sure it’s safe for us to be going out?

Bill
I’ve attached my Windy-O Graphic Meter-Reader to the top of the mini-van. It tells me the exact barometric pressure and air propulsion velocity with minute-to-minute updates. So exciting!

Sarah
Bill, please. I just don’t know that we should be driving in this weather-

Jake
(sitting on the couch, playing a video game on his phone) I can’t miss karate, I’m testing for my green belt today.

Jennie
(Comes running into the room) Mom, I need my green belt for my Lizard Ladies jazz dance routine, Julie took it and she won’t give it back.

Julie
(striding in) We’re working on our Amputation Badge in Adventure Scouts today, I need it for the tourniquet.

Sarah
I don’t know that any of us should be going anywhere in this weather. The storm is getting worse-

Bill
(peering out the window) The Meter-Reader seems to be indicating a dramatic increase in wind velocity-

Jake
Mom, I have to-
I can't be late/

We're going to amputate/

What if we all stay home and play a game? We could make cookies and play Pictionary, have a family day like we used to-

No, no, no-

Why can't we just sit and spend some time together? Huh? Everyone is always running off in a thousand different directions. Today seems like the perfect opportunity for some family time-

We're too old for family time, Mom-

I need my Amputation Badge-

I will literally die if I miss the recital-

(A huge surge in the wind. It sways the house. Everyone tense up, holding on like they just felt an earthquake) Whoa! Did you feel that!? This thing might just blow us right off the map. So exciting-

Ok, that's it, we are not going anywhere-

Nooooo! Mom! Please!

We don't have to have any family time, if that seems like such a terrible idea, but I can't let you leave, it's too dangerous-

Please! Nooo, Mom! I have to-
(to the kids) Go dance by yourself then, go play video games by yourself, go adventure-train by yourself. Maybe the days of being a family who does things together are behind us.- (Grandma Buddy walks into the room. The kids all run to her and begin pleading-)

Grandma Buddy, please talk to mom/She’s holding us prisoner/ I have to amputate- (She gently pushes the kids aside and walks towards the front window. Everyone falls silent as they watch her move. At the window, she stops. Then, in the silence-)

Tornado. (Everyone stands there, still as stones. There is a pause, then-)

Run. Runnnnnnnn!!! (The entire family starts running around in circles, screaming as they do so, chickens flying, cats screeching, pots clanging, Chaos, Chaos, Chaos!!!) Not in circles, people, Down to the basement! (Everybody runs screaming down into the basement.) It’s not brain surgery, civilians. This is Adventure Scout Basic Emergency Evacuation stuff. We got a tornado coming-

So exciting-

move it or lose it. (They all make it down to the basement.)

Wait, my phone! I forgot my phone. I can’t….breathe, I can’t breathe. (He begins to quietly hyperventilate.) I need it. I was on level 27 of Nightmare in Bunny Bunny Town. 1000 more points and I’ll beat the all time record. I’ll be immortal. The Greatest Fighter Nightmare in Bunny Bunny Town has ever seen. (He turns to run back up the stairs.)

Jake! Do not go up there. It’s not safe.

But it is exciting-

Please, mom. I gotta get my phone.

I’m sorry, Jake-
If I don’t have my phone I'll to have to…. oh, god…..talk to….my family. (The girls recoils it horror.)

Jennie/Julie

Uggghhh.

Sarah

Yes, I know, you’ve all made that perfectly clear.

Jake

I’m going up-

Julie

(Turns towards the stairs. Julie, standing there, reaches up and slaps him across the face.) She’s gone, soldier. Time to move on.

Jennie

What about my dance recital?

Julie

We’re at war, sweetheart. There are no dance recitals in war.

Sarah

We are not at war, Julie. It’s a tornado-

Bill

So exciting-

Sarah

Will you stop saying that, Bill-

Bill

Sorry

Jennie

No dance recitals? But I already have my sparkly cowgirl outfit. I have my sparkly astronaut outfit. I have my sparkly congressional senator outfit, I have my sparkly-

Julie

Ok, calm down there Taylor Swift. Things are getting way out of control here, I’m declaring Marshal Law. First of all, no more press briefings. Rations imposed on toilet paper and juice boxes. Mom, dad, I’m gonna need the keys to the car-

Jake

You’re not the boss of us, twerp.

Julie
IF YOU EVER WANNA SEE YOUR PRECIOUS PHONE AGAIN YOU’LL DO AS I SAY, CAPICHE?

Bill

Good for you, Julie-

Julie

Zip it, Pops-

Sarah

Honey, I think you’re getting a little overzealous. We’re all a little anxious about the tornado-

Bill

(whispering) so exciting.

Jennie

(in agony) Overzealous is one of the Back Street Boys songs we were going to dance to. (She stands and begins to perform a jazz dance routine as she sing the words to Overzealous.)

Overzealous
Why are you so
Overzealous
Maybe you’re just
hella- jealous
Of my rockin’ bo-stank-rip-de-bank

Bill

What is she saying?

Sarah

Jennie, stop that. (Jennie keeps dancing. To Bill) This is all your fault.

Bill

Me?

Sarah

Jennie, honey, please stop-

Julie

Yeah, lets shut ‘er down there, Macarena.

Jennie

If I don’t dance I will die. Literally die.

Julie
Oh, boy.

Jake
1000 points away from Ultimate Fighter Status in Nightmare in Bunny Bunny Town.

Bill
Here, Jake, this will make you feel better. *(He produces a large, tin-foil type clown hat with wires and other electronics attached to it.)*

Jake
What the heck is this?

Bill
It’s my Size-Mo Electric Disaster Tracker.

Sarah
It’s a tin-foil clown hat, Bill.

Bill
My dreams, Sarah? They’re delicate. *(Putting the hat on his head.)* This device will allow the thermo-sizmic waves of the tornado to be tracked through your physiological biosphere.

Julie
Let’s try a little English there, Principal Big Words.

Bill
The closer the tornado gets, the bigger your eyeballs become.

Jake
Will they get so big they explode?

Bill
Possibly.

Jake
Cool.

Sarah
No, Bill, No, Jake. No, No, No! *(Takes hat off Jake and shoves it into Bills hands)* No tinfoil hat, no exploding eyeballs, no sparkly senator dancing, no Drill Sargent Adventure Scout-

Julie
That’s Brigadier General Adventure Scout, civilian-
Jake
If I’m going to die without my phone at least let it be cool. (He puts the hat back on and begins humming and vibrating as he tries to bulge his eyeballs. Bill starts frantically adjusting the wires.)

Jennie
“Overzealous, Why are you so”- (She continues to dance and sing.)

Julie
Marshall Law, people. Everybody against the wall. (She begins to try to corral the family into a herd.

Sarah
Mom, can you please help me with this? (She looks around the room. No answer. Everyone begins to stop what they are doing, aware that Grandma is not there.) Mom?

Bill
Grandma Buddy? (Looking around the basement.)

Everyone
Grandma Buddy!!!! (The entire family starts running around in circles, screaming as they do so, chickens flying, cats screeching, pots clanging, Chaos, Chaos, Chaos!!!)

Grandma Buddy
(flips on a light. She is sitting quietly in the corner. She is wearing a beret and a black turtleneck and holding a carrot like a cigarette) Hello, family.

All
(Everyone screams, startled by her sudden appearance.) Aaaahhhhhhh!!!

Sarah
Mom! I almost had a heart attack. I thought you got left upstairs. Why are you wearing a beret?-

Bill
Are you smoking a carrot?

Grandma Buddy
Sssh. Quiet. Listen. (They all strain to hear). Do you hear that?

Sarah
No. What? I don’t hear anything.

Grandma Buddy
Exactly. Silence. The tornados getting closer. Look at Jakes’ eyes. (they all look at Jakes eyes. They are beginning to bulge.)
Jake/Jennie/Bill/Sarah

Cool!/Gross!/Brilliant/Oh, honey

Julie

Yeah, we’re gonna have to amputate-

Grandma Buddy

I know you’re scared. We’re all scared. Tornado’s touched down, coming this way-

Bill

so exciting-

Sarah

Bill-

Grandma Buddy

we don’t know if we’re gonna make it-

Sarah

We don’t?

Grandma Buddy

Jake’s probably gonna go blind-

Jake

awesome-

Grandma Buddy

So, what are we gonna do, huh? Are we gonna fall down on our knees, gnash our teeth and tear our hair out?

Jennie

This one time, in dance class, there was this girl where all her hair fell out-

Grandma Buddy

Are we gonna shiver and shake and hid under the covers, say good-bye for a hundred years till we think it’s safe to come out again!!?

Sarah

Yes.

Grandma Buddy

No!
Julie
Great speech, Grandma. I'm taking notes.

Grandma Buddy
Thank you, sweetheart.

Jake
So, what do we do?

Grandma Buddy
Same thing my Grandad and Grandma did to make it through the Great Depression, make it through World War II, make through every manner of strife and danger that befell them.

Bill
Make cookies and play Dictionary?

Grandma Buddy
We're going to put on a production of Hamlet.

Bill
Come again?

Grandma Buddy
We're gonna put on a production of Hamlet. The salvation of humanity lies in the theatre!

Jennie
What's a Hamlet?

Julie
It's like an omelet.

Jake
Technically, it's a ham omelet.

Jennie
We're gonna make a ham omelet?

Bill

Jake/Jennie/Julie
(recoiling in terror) Nooooooo!!!!

Jake
No, Grandma, please, not a play. Anything but a play-


Grandma
Do you even know what the plot of Hamlet is?

Jake
My guess would be “boring”.

Grandma
*(Getting in his face)* I’m sorry, are sword fights to the death boring? Are double-murder plots boring-

Sarah
Mom-

Grandma
Are haunted ghost stories riddled with acts of betrayal, espionage and revenge boring-

Bill
All right, Grandma Buddy, maybe we can tone it down just a smidge-

Grandma
My point is that Hamlet is one of the most thrilling, harrowing, spine-tingling tales of human frailty ever told.

Jennie
Does it have dancing?

Grandma
So much dancing.

Jake
And fighting?

Grandma
They never stop fighting.

Julie
Is there a tyrant that usurps power at a time when the country is most vulnerable and uses that power to further her own cause?

Grandma.
Yes, sweetheart. There is

Julie
I’M IN!
Sarah
Mom, this all seems a little too violent for children, I mean, am I right, Bill, help me out here-

Bill
I would have to agree, Grandma Buddy-

Grandma
(To Bill) Did I tell you about the part where a special chemical concoction of various ancient poisons is created and secretly concealed in a chalice which is then used as a weapon of mass destruction to reek havoc on the kingdom?

Bill
A secret chemical concoction?

Grandma
Created in a basement lab, just like this one. It's like the story was written for you.

Bill
Let's do it! (To his wife) Sarah?

Julie/Jake
Please, mom. Please, please, please.

Jennie
(She begins to sing and perform one of her many, many routines.)
Hamlet
Just another Swedish word for Omelet
Now we're all just begging please Oh Mom let us do this play

Everyone
Hamlet
Just another Swedish word for Omelet
Now we're all just begging please Oh Mom let Us do this-

Sarah
Alright, alright, but I still think it's too violent for kids.

Julie
What’s the plot, Grams?

Grandma

Ok, here we go. Hamlet’s dad gets killed and Hamlet thinks his Uncle Claudius is the murderer.

Jake

Can I be Hamlet?.

Bill

That makes me Hamlets’ dad.

Julie

I call Claudius. No offense, dad.

Bill

None taken.

Julie

(giving Bill the stink-eye) But I’m gonna crush you like a bug.

Grandma

But then Claudius marries Hamlet’s mom, Gertrude.

Julie

(nudging her mom with her elbow.) Hey there, hot stuff.

Bill

(To Julie) In the play, honey, not in real life. (To Sarah) Right, sweetheart?

Grandma

Hamlet has a girlfriend, Ophelia, who tries to help him.

Jennie

Does she dance?

Grandma

She does.

Jennie

Does she have an outfit?

Grandma Buddy

She does.

Jennie

I call Ophelia! (She stands and begins to do her interpretation of an Ophelia dance.)
Grandma
Claudius knows he's about to get busted so he puts some poison in a cup, they all accidentally drink it and then have a big sword fight and everyone dies. The end.

Jake/Jennie/Julie
Hurray!

Jake
So, how do we do it, what do we say?

Grandma Buddy
First you have to memorize your lines. Bill, you start. Your line is, “Ahhhh, I’ve been stabbed.”

Bill
*(shrieking like a girl)* “Ahh! I’ve been stabbed.”

Julie
Let’s bring it down an octave, Ariana Grande.

Bill
*(lower)* Ahhh! I’ve been stabbed.”

Grandma Buddy
Perfect. Now Julie, you say, “Gertrude, your my wife now.”

Jake
Gross.

Jennie
She has to say it, Jake. It’s what shortstop wrote.

Jake
Who?

Jennie
It’s what Aw-shucks-bear wrote.

Grandma Buddy
Then Sarah, you say, “I’ve ruined everything.”

Julie
So true.

Sarah
No, listen here, young lady, I have not ruined everything-

Grandma
Then Jennie, you do a big dance number and sing about St. Valentines Day.

Jennie
Oh. my. god. I love it.

Grandma Buddy
And for the big finale, Jake you’re gonna stand up and say, “The killer was Claudius in the bedroom with the candlestick.”

Bill
Are you sure that’s in the play?

Grandma Buddy
Then you all drink from the poison cup, grab some swords and have a big fight. Everybody got it? Great. Places!

Jennie
(whispering) Hey, everyone. Look. Jakes’ eyes. They’re huge. (They all look. Jakes eyes are indeed almost popping out of his head.)

Bill
Son? Can you hear me? What’s happening, how are you feeling?

Jake
(almost an inaudible whisper)………

Julie
Speak up there, bobble head.

Jake
(still so quiet)……

Bill
Son, we just can’t hear you.

Jake
I Said, “It’s Family Time!” (At that moment the roof gets blown off the top of the house and they all get sucked up into the tornado.)

Everyone
Aaaaahhhhhhh!!!! (The members of the family go swirling around and around in a giant circle, sometimes coming into view and sometime gone out of sight).
Grandma Buddy
You heard the boy! Placeeeees! *(She swirls away-)*

Sarah
*(Swirling in)* Mom, we’re in the middle of a tornado, I don’t thiiiiink*(Swirling out)*

Julie
*(Comes swirling into view)* Focus, people, Focuuussss! *(She gets sucked back into the void.)*

Jennie
*(Comes swirling into view as she sings and does her dance routine)* “Overzealous! Why you gotta be so Overzealous-“ *(She doesn't miss a beat as the tornado swirls her away.)*

Grandma Buddy
*(As Bill blows into view, so does Grandma Buddy)* Bill! You have the first line. You need to start.

Bill
*(A chicken flies by and hits him in the head.)* Aaaah! I’ve been stabbed.

Grandma Buddy
Excellent.

Bill
No, I mean I was literally stabbed in the head by a chickeeeeeen. *(Bill is gone.)*

Grandma
*(Julie and Sarah come flying into view)* Julie, you’re up next, aaagghh *(Grandma Buddy gets yanked away.)*

Julie
Gertruuuuude!!!!!! You’re my wife nooow.

Jake
*(Swirling by)* gross. *(He’s gone.)*

Sarah
Oh, my goodness, what’s happening? I was suppose to keep everyone safe and now we’re swirling around inside a tornado??!!-

Julie
Save it for acting class, Judy Garland, your line is “I’ve ruined everything.”

Sarah
I have. I’ve ruined everything. Everythiiiiiiiiing. (As she and Julie swirl away, Jennie comes twirling/swirling/dancing in, dressed head to toe in a sparkly St. Valentines Day outfit)

Jennie

Hamlet
Just another Swedish word for Omelet

(She’s gone as Grandma Buddy and Jake swirl in, with Jake holding a candlestick-)

Grandma Buddy

Time for the grand finale, son.

Jake
(Declaring with bold authority) The Killer is Optimus Prime in the Boardroom with the Candlestick!

Julie
(Julie swirls in holding a broom) You’re going down, Burrito Nose! (She and Jake begin a duel as Bill, Sarah and Jennie all swirl in.)

Jennie

Sword fight
Swirlin’ in a windstorm well it just might make your family really want to hold tight To each other nooooww

Grandma Buddy

Ok, Big Finish! Poison Chalice! (On cue, they all clutch their throats and improvise elaborate dying sequence. Except Jennie.)

Grandma Buddy

You too, sweetheart. (Jennie gracefully bows, blowing kisses to her fan Then she falls.) Bravo! Bravo! (She begins to applaud wildly. The actors stand.)

Everyone

Thank you! Thank you! Thank yooooooooouuu (The tornado subsides, diminishing in intensity. They are all magically settled back down into the basement, like coming off an incredible ride at an amusement park.)

Julie
That was awesome!

Jennie
Can we do it again, please, please, please!!!

Jake
Dad, go make another tornado.

Bill
Alright- *(He turns to go)*

Sarah
*(stopping him)* Bill-

Julie
Mom! That was so fun.

Sarah
You liked it?

Jake
It was incredible.

Sarah
Weren’t you scared?

Jennie
Not with you and dad and Grandma watching out for us.

Jake
I was watching out for everyone, too-

Julie
Yeah, me too.

Sarah
You were looking out for each other?

Jake
Sure. We’re family.

Julie
I’m sorry I said you ruin everything, mom. What I meant to say was, “You make everything awesome.”
Bill
You do, sweetheart. You really do.

Jennie
Maybe we didn’t make cookies and play Pictionary, but we acted out Omelet in a Tomato.

Sarah
(Pause. She smiles) Yes. We did.(They all join in a hug with mom, a moment of quiet love.)

Bill
Come on, Grandma Buddy, get in on this, too. (Looking around, she’s not there.) Grandma Buddy? (Grandma Buddy is gently walking towards the front window. Everyone falls silent as they watch her move. At the window, she stops. Then, in the silence-)

Grandma Buddy
Volcano. (Everyone stands there, still as stones. There is a pause, then-)

Julie
Runnnnnnnn!!! (Black out.)

End of Play