

The League

By Jeff James (©2005)

(The setting is the living room of a house, tastefully decorated in a very upper-middle class fashion. Upstage center is the front door of the house, with a window stage right of that in the wall. A few feet stage left of the front door is a closet door. The back wall is decorated with pictures, books, etc. Center stage is a leather couch, and down stage of that is a glass coffee table with magazines strewn artfully across it. Stage right of the couch is a reclining chair. Down stage left of the table is medium-sized TV set with its back to the audience. The TV is on but is muted. Through the window we see a young man dressed in a "super hero" costume walking to the front door. The door opens and he enters. This is ETHAN. He is wearing a mask, cape, and shirt with an insignia of a flame on it as well as nondescript pants. After he shuts the door, he quickly removes the mask, shirt and cape, opens up the closet door, and throws them in the top. He puts on another shirt from the closet and goes to sit down on the couch. His mother, MARIE, enters the room from stage right.)

MARIE

Did you go job-hunting today?

ETHAN

Um, yeah.

MARIE

Any good leads?

ETHAN

Uh, I think so.

MARIE

Well... tell me all about it!

ETHAN

Mom... do you mind if I just sit and watch TV? I'm pretty tired. I've had a long day.

MARIE

Oh... of course, Ethan. Do you want anything to eat?

ETHAN

No, I'm not hungry. I just want to watch TV.

MARIE

What are you watching?

ETHAN

Mom... could you just leave me alone?

MARIE

Well! If you're in such a bad mood, you should take a nap.
(Pause) I think I hear the kitchen timer. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. (Pause) And don't change the channel. I think your father is watching that.

(She leaves stage right. Ethan sits and watches the television blankly. After a second, he picks up a magazine and lifts it into the air. Without apparent use of a lighter, a flame springs from his fingers and he starts to burn one corner of the magazine. From offstage left, we hear the sound of a toilet flushing and Ethan quickly blows out the tiny flame and places the magazine under the others on the table. Ethan's father JAKE walks in from stage left holding a newspaper. He sits in the recliner and pulls off one of his shoes.)

JAKE

(Examining the inside of the shoe)

You know, I wish I could do something about the dirt in my shoes. But I guess that's my curse.

(He turns his shoe over and pours what appears to be earth into his hand, then puts the dirt in his mouth. He chews for a second and then swallows. This does not faze Ethan.)

JAKE

Are you going to be here for dinner?

ETHAN

I dunno.

JAKE

We're having lasagna. Your favorite.

ETHAN

I might have plans.

JAKE

You don't know yet?

ETHAN

I need to give someone a call.

JAKE

Can't you make time for dinner? You don't have any money, so you can't go out to eat!

ETHAN

(Sighing)

Dad, I wasn't going out to eat. I'm not even hungry, all right? Can we just drop it?

JAKE

Your mother is expecting you to eat with us. She's making a portion for you.

ETHAN

DAD!

MARIE

(Offstage)

Stop fighting! Dinner's almost ready!

JAKE

(Looks at his son for a second.)

Did you find a job today?

ETHAN

No.

JAKE

You know son, as much as your mother might like it, we can't support you forever. You've got to learn how to be a man. Support yourself. You're almost eighteen years old - you should have some goals in life. *(Pause)* Once you get yourself a job, you can join The League. I know it would be great if The League could make us money, but that's not why we do it. I go in every day at Farmer & Gimbal just so I can--

ETHAN

(Sarcastic)

--"do what I really want to do, save the world!" I know, Dad! You've told me this speech a hundred times. I know all about the stupid League and your "great work". You don't have to lecture me. Besides, whoever said I wanted to be a part of The League, anyway!

JAKE

Watch yourself, young man! You will not use that tone of voice with me in this house! I am your father, and I deserve your respect!

MARIE

(Offstage)

Jake! Ethan! Stop fighting this instant! I want a civil household for once! *(Pause)* No, Chelsea, mommy's making

dinner. I can't look right now, I'm trying to cook.
Chelsea, no. CHELSEA!

(There is a loud splashing sound from offstage right and after a minute Marie comes running in from the right, completely soaked with water.)

MARIE

(To Jake)

Your daughter has thrown a tantrum and ruined a perfectly good dinner! She is completely out of control! Do something about it!

(Marie runs off left. Jake gets up and turns to Ethan.)

JAKE

We're not done talking about this.

(He goes to leave and Ethan turns to look at the TV and then looks at his watch. He turns quickly to his father.)

ETHAN

Wait! *(Pause)* There's something on TV that I want you to watch.

JAKE

I'm not in the mood for jokes right now, Ethan.

ETHAN

It's important. (*Darkly*) I'm sure you'll want to talk about it.

JAKE

This had better be good.

ETHAN

I want mom to see this, too.

JAKE

(*Sighs*)

Marie! Come into the living room! Ethan has something he wants to show us!

MARIE

(*Offstage*)

It had better be a fully cooked dinner!

(Marie walks onstage in a bathrobe drying her hair off with a towel. Ethan picks up the TV remote and un-mutes the sound. Instantly we hear the voice of a newscaster talking.)

NEWSCASTER

(*Voiceover*)

--come to the six o'clock news on channel seven. I'm Gary Hurt and our top story tonight: A masked man robbed the First National Bank in Sharpstown tonight, making away with \$100,000. He was wearing a cape and shirt with the symbol of a flame on it. Eyewitnesses report that he used some sort of flame power to burn through the doors of the vault.

In the process of the robbery three people were seriously burned, and one man is in the hospital in serious condition tonight. At the time of the robbery, The League of Superheroes was nowhere in sight, and they could not be reached for comment. As of yet, the police have no leads in this story. *(Pause)* In other news, from the makers of the Chia Pet comes Cyborg Chia-Man--

(Ethan mutes the sound again, then looks at his parents.)

MARIE

What's this all about, Ethan?

JAKE

I knew I should have left the transceiver on! I'm glad you told me about this, son. We need to catch that man.

ETHAN

You don't need to catch anybody, Dad.

JAKE

What are you talking about, son?

(Ethan gets up and goes to the closet. He pulls out the costume he wore before and holds it up for his parents to see.)

MARIE

(Horried)

Ethan, what have you done?

ETHAN

(Quickly, intensely)

I just wanted to let you know that I don't need you anymore! I'm moving out! Corey and I are getting an apartment, and that's that.

MARIE

Corey Copperpot?! Did he put you up to this? *(Pause)* Oh, I knew something like this would happen!

JAKE

I knew that boy would be just like his father, dead or not! I never should have saved him in Reno! Never!

MARIE

Was this his idea, Ethan? Did he force you to do this?

ETHAN

NO! This was my idea! This is something that I've wanted to do for a long time!

JAKE

Then who put these ideas into your head, huh? I know we didn't! We didn't bring you up this way!

MARIE

Ethan, you know what Kurt Copperpot could do with his mind! You remember what he did to your father? How could you trust his boy not to do the same?!

ETHAN

Corey's not like that! He moves things! He doesn't do anything else! He's my friend!

JAKE

Why couldn't you have friends interested in things besides grand larceny? Huh? Most boys are satisfied with riding their bikes and playing tag!

ETHAN

I'm not a little kid anymore, dad! And I can choose my own friends! I'm not like you! I don't want to be anything like you, and I don't want anything to do with you anymore!

JAKE

Listen to my ungrateful son! How did you get to be like this?!

ETHAN

You made me this way! You did! All you care about is your stupid league of heroes! You don't care about anything else! I don't want anything to do with a bunch of forty year-old men who think they're saving the world! You're a joke! Nobody cares about what you do! You're completely out of it, old man!

(Jake is enraged by this. As he talks, he gesticulates wildly, and dirt flies out of his sleeves and goes all over the stage.)

JAKE

GET OUT! GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! I HAVE NO SON! YOU CAN BURN YOURSELF STRAIGHT TO HELL, FOR ALL I CARE!

ETHAN

FINE! I WILL! I DON'T NEED YOU ANYWAYS! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU BOTH!

(As Ethan says this, a plant sitting outside the window bursts into flames. Ethan goes to the door to open it, but suddenly an enormous gust of wind comes from the side of the stage Marie is standing on and the door slams shut before Ethan leaves. Ethan and Jake are blown aside by the wind. It dies suddenly.)

MARIE

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE! I will NOT have this happen to my family! We are going to sit down, and we are going to talk about this like civil human beings! And only after that will anyone decide what anyone is going to do with his life, understood!

(There is an eerie silence for a few seconds, and then from stage right we hear a huge splash and crash. A small child says "Whee!" and then water seeps onto the floor from the right.)

MARIE

CHELSEA!

(Marie begins to run towards stage right and then stops and turns around to look at Ethan very intensely. After a second, Ethan walks away from the door and sits down on the couch. Jake sits down in the recliner after shaking some more dirt from his sleeves. Satisfied, Marie goes into the kitchen. Jake and Ethan stare at each other. Blackout.)