

"SAM MULDOON, PRIVATE EYE"

By Rob Biesenbach

CAST

Sam - 8, grade school private eye, tough, hard-bitten

Jennifer - 9, damsel in distress, ice queen

Ashley - 8, Sam's double-crossing girlfriend

(In a treehouse. Sam addresses audience. Jennifer enters on cue.)

SAM

I'll never forget the night she walked into my life. I was working late in the treehouse. It was 8:30 - a half-hour past my bed time. What can I say? It was a school night. I heard a knock on the door and in she walked. She was a tall drink of water, nearly 4-foot-six. Blonde, built like a brick schoolhouse. Nine years old, but with the body of an 11-year-old. The second I saw her, I knew she was trouble.

JENNIFER

You Sam Muldoon?

SAM

What's the sign on the door say?

JENNIFER

It says, "Girls Keep Out."

SAM

No, I mean the other one ... the one in blue Crayon.

JENNIFER

Oh, sorry ... it says, "Sam Muldoon, Private Eye." That you?

SAM

In the flesh. Have a seat ... fruit rollup?

JENNIFER

No thanks, I'm trying to quit ... nasty habit.

SAM

We all gotta die of somethin.'

(He crams whole fruit rollup in his mouth and chews.)

Now unless you climbed all the way up here to gimme a nutrition lecture, whaddaya say we get down to business?

JENNIFER

Fair enough. I'm Jennifer. I'm here about my boyfriend, Johnny.

SAM

Ya think he's seein' someone on the side?

JENNIFER

How'd ya know?

SAM

Sweetheart, I've been in this business half my life - four years - and I've seen it all. But I'll tell ya right now, if it's muscle yer lookin' for, ya came to the wrong place ...

JENNIFER

No, I don't want him hurt ... just tailed.

SAM

Where can I find him?

JENNIFER

Same place he goes every day after school. Chuckie Cheese. Ya know the place?

SAM

(To audience) Yeah, I knew the place. Down at the mall ... reeks of warmed-over pizza and stale cotton candy. It's where zombie-eyed stooges gamble away their lunch money to win plush toys and beanie babies for dames like her.

JENNIFER

Think you've got me pegged, huh?

SAM

It ain't algebra, dollface ... you're about as hard to figure out as a one-colored Rubik's cube.

JENNIFER

Is that right?

SAM

Yeah, that's right. You strut in here in your snug "Hello Kitty" jumper, dripping in jewelry from Claire's ...

JENNIFER

What's your beef, friend?

SAM

I'll tell you what my beef is. And I ain't your friend. How do I know this ain't a setup?

JENNIFER

A setup?

SAM

You heard me. How do I know some goons aren't waitin' there to jack me? Ya make a lot of enemies in this business ... I've sent more guys up the river to detention hall than you've dated.

JENNIFER

I wouldn't be so sure ... I've been around the block a few times.

SAM

That right?

JENNIFER

Actually, I still need to take my older sister along if I go around the block - but I am experienced. Maybe I could ... make that experience work for you ... after you help me out. You ever been French kissed?

SAM

French kissed?

JENNIFER

Is there an echo in here?

SAM

Used to be - but then I put up that Olsen Twins poster ...

JENNIFER

Why ya stallin', Sam? Don't tell me you're afraid of cooties ...

SAM

Oh, that's rich. What about Johnny? Ya just gonna toss him aside like yesterday's comics?

JENNIFER

Sure ... after we've got the goods on him.

SAM

Boy, you are one cold fish. (Pause, considering) Tell ya what. I'll take the case. I don't know why, but I'm gonna go out on a limb here and trust you. One question though: why me?

JENNIFER

Because you're a dick.

SAM

Says you.

JENNIFER

No, I mean, you're a gumshoe, a flatfoot, a detective - like the sign says.

SAM

Oh, right. (Pause) So, ya got a photo of this "Johnny?"

JENNIFER

Here ya go.

SAM

Nice mug.

JENNIFER

Yeah, he's easy on the eyes, that's for sure. That's last year's class photo, though - his front tooth has come in since then.

SAM

Okay, I'll be on the case tomorrow, right after 6th period. (Pause.) Tell ya what, to seal the deal, how about a ... "downpayment?"

JENNIFER

What'd you have in mind?

SAM

First base?

JENNIFER

You move fast. Depending on the neighborhood, "first base" can mean anything from a kiss on the cheek to -

(Sam spins her around.)

SAM

Pipe down and hold my hand!

(They stand holding hands for a moment in a passionate but kid-like embrace, then Ashley enters.)

ASHLEY

Sam Muldoon, you two-timing bastard!

SAM

Ashley, it's not what ya think! Okay, honey, put down the water balloon ...

ASHLEY

Hey, I'm not afraid to use this! I knew I couldn't trust ya, Sam. That's why I hired Jennifer here - to see if you'd cheat on me.

SAM

Oh, it's the ol' double-cross, eh?

JENNIFER/ASHLEY

That's right!

SAM

Well, ain't you a couple of peaches? (To Ashley) So then I guess we're kaput, huh?

ASHLEY

You catch on fast.

(She pelts him with water balloon.)

SAM

(To Jennifer) And you and me?

JENNIFER

Not a chance! And don't think Johnny's not hearin' about this!

(Ashley and Jennifer exit.)

SAM

(To audience) So, I got played. What can I say? We've all got our blind spots. Mine's pretty girls. Well, good riddance to 'em ... though I can't say I'm lookin' forward to ridin' that school bus in the morning ... maybe I can get a note from Mom ...

(Lights out.)