

## THAT'S ALL FOLKS

*Through the years, Peter, 16, has been given the daunting challenge of taking care of his autistic younger sister, Shelly, 14. Shelly is a high-functioning autistic teenager who attends a special program in the local high school. Peter watches out for Shelly every day. He protects her from other kids, eases her tantrums, and makes sure she makes it to and from school. In the past few months, Peter has started to notice girls more. He is particularly interested in the new girl at school. He'd like to talk with her, but each time Shelly embarrasses him or comes between them. To make Peter's life worse, Shelly and Peter's parents have been fighting for weeks now. The word divorce has even come up. Peter knows that Shelly's autism has played a part in the tension. When Peter arrives home from being out with a friend, Shelly is sitting in his room. This is the last straw!*

PETER: What are you doing in here?! Get out of here!

SHELLY: I watch Bugs Bunny. Five minutes till "Bugs Bunny and Friends."

PETER: You don't belong in here, Shelly. It's my room.

SHELLY: Next stop Wilson.

PETER: Go downstairs and watch whatever you want.

SHELLY: Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Makes a realistic sounding ding.)*

PETER: Get out, or I'm going to throw you out!

SHELLY: *(Flapping her hands, upset.)* T-t-t-that's all folks!

PETER: Come on!

SHELLY: *(Waving her hands a bit.)* No. Loud. Loud. *(Touching ears.)* Loooooud.

PETER: Yes, I'm being loud, Shelly, but it's my room. I can be as looooooud as I want.

SHELLY: *(Rocking.)* Yeah.

PETER: You don't think I have a right to be loud in my own room?

SHELLY: Yeah. *(Beat.)* Lawrence is next.

PETER: You don't think I have a right to do anything if it doesn't involve you. Or at least Mom and Dad don't.

SHELLY: Priority seating is intended for the elderly and those with disabilities.

PETER: You embarrass me. Do you hear me?

SHELLY: *(Turning in another direction.)* Priority seating is intended for the elderly and those with disabilities.

PETER: You looked like an idiot today, ya know? Why can't you be like a normal autistic kid who doesn't like to touch? Do you know how weird that looks to come running at me—hugging me? It's weird. I'm your brother. You don't do that in front of other people.

SHELLY: Your cooperation is appreciated.

PETER: But you don't care. You just keep going on with your own little thing. I know everybody thinks you can't stop, but I know you can.

SHELLY: *(More quietly.)* Your cooperation is appreciated. Your cooperation is appreciated. Your cooperation is appreciated. Your cooperation is appreciated. Your cooperation—

PETER: Stop it!!

*(Shelly stops. She even briefly looks up at him.)*

PETER: I'm sorry, Shelly. I just . . . hate this. I sorta have a thing for that Donna girl, ya know? That new girl. So when you came . . . at me today, well, it scares other kids. I mean, you scare other kids. I was really pissed off even though I know you don't mean to scare anyone. I got really angry. I even had to go to the Y with Josh to blow off some steam. It's like I get angry all the time now. I hate it. I don't think it's fair to be in this position. It's just I told you I'd pick you up from your classroom. Why didn't you wait?

SHELLY: *(Quietly.)* This is Lawrence.

PETER: I know you were just being you. I'm just tired, and I want my own space tonight. Okay?

SHELLY: Doors closing. Doors closing. *(She makes the ding sound.)*

PETER: I know you hear me . . . Sooo. Go. Down. Stairs.

SHELLY: Who directed most of the Looney Tune Cartoons?

PETER: I don't want to play trivia. The TV is free down there.

SHELLY: Try again. Who directed most of the Looney Tune cartoons?

PETER: Fine. I'm gonna get Mom then.

*(Shelly shakes her head furiously and makes a humming noise.)*

PETER: What's wrong?

*(Shelly begins flapping her arms. In between, she starts to bite her hand.)*

PETER: *(About her biting.)* No. No.

SHELLY: *(Still biting.)* Gone. Gone. T-t-t-that's all folks.

PETER: Stop it!

*(She lets out a cry and stops biting.)*

PETER: Okay, Mom's gone. That's okay. She'll be back.

*(Shelly lets out another hum noise and plunks into the chair.)*

SHELLY: *(She folds her legs, leans forward, and rocks herself. She imitates a famous Bugs Bunny cartoon. Blankly, without emotion.)* Would you like to shoot me now or wait till you get home?

PETER: It's practically six. Are you sure she's not here?

SHELLY: *(Continuing.)* Shoot him now. Shoot him now.

PETER: Did something happen?

SHELLY: *(Touching her ears.)* Loud.

PETER: A fight?

SHELLY: You keep out of this. He doesn't have to shoot you now. He does so have to shoot me now. I demand that you shoot me now.

PETER: Dad and Mom had another fight?

SHELLY: *(Quietly singing, mumbling the words to the Bugs Bunny theme song "Overture.")* Overture . . . light the

lights. This is it. The night of nights. No more rehearsing and nursing a part . . . we know every part by heart.

PETER: He left?

SHELLY: T-t-t that's all folks.

PETER: *(Reaching out to her.)* Listen. Did he leave?

SHELLY: *(Imitating Woody Woodpecker and Porky.)* H-h-h-ha-ha. H-h-h-ha-ha. T-t-t-that's all folks. T-t-t-that's all folks. H-h-h-ha-ha.

PETER: *(As if to say enough already.)* Okay! *(Beat.)* Do you know why?

SHELLY: *(Imitating her father.)* I am so sick of this! I am so sick of you and everything! It's enough to have to deal with Shelly every day. Everything we do is with autistic kids—autistic events. I'm tired of the obsession. I don't want my life based around this! Do you understand this?

PETER: Where's Mom?

SHELLY: I am so sick of this! I am so sick of you and everything!

PETER: He didn't mean it, Shelly.

SHELLY: *(Biting her hand in between, not ever looking at him.)* I am so sick of this! I am so sick of you and everything! It's enough to deal with Shelly every day. It's enough to deal with Shelly every day.

PETER: It's not your fault. This is not your fault.

SHELLY: *(Does perfect imitation of father's emotion without adding her own.)* Do you understand this? Do you understand this? Do you understand this?

PETER: Yes, yes. I understand. I understand how you feel, and he's just using you as an excuse. It's not your fault. Now, where's Mom?

SHELLY: Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Making the ding noise.)* Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Makes the ding noise.)* Doors closing. Doors—

PETER: She just wants to be left alone then. She'll come out of her room soon. Don't worry.

SHELLY: Closing. *(Makes the ding sound.)*

PETER: It's not right what he said, Shel. It's not even true.  
SHELLY: *(Begins singing again quietly, rocking.)* Overture.  
Light the lights.  
PETER: They just fight. They can't seem to get along.  
SHELLY: *(Singing, rocking.)* This is it. The night of nights.  
PETER: We could try to help them though.  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* No more rehearsing and nursing a part.  
PETER: You could try to get better, Shelly. It would make things easier maybe.  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* We know every part by heart.  
PETER: I know you're in there. I understand you. Look at me.  
The first step is more eye contact. Look at me.  
*(He steps in front of her and tries to make her look. She turns away.)*  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* Overture.  
PETER: I'll work with you every day. I promise.  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* Light the lights.  
PETER: I'm talking to you, Shelly. Tell me how your day was.  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* This is it. The night of nights.  
PETER: I know you're sad. So talk to me directly now. I'm your big brother. Why don't you talk to me?  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* No more rehearsing and nursing a part.  
PETER: You have to talk directly, not through TV stuff anymore.  
SHELLY: *(Singing.)* We know every part by heart. Overture—  
PETER: *(He forces her to look at him.)* No, no. What's going on with you, Shelly? What's going on?  
*(She pauses, quietly. She avoids his eye contact.)*  
PETER: *(He feels her calm down. She's with him.)* That's good. Look at me now. Come on. You can do it. Tell me.  
SHELLY: *(Pause.)* Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Makes the ding noise.)*  
PETER: Come on, at least try. At least try to look at me for once!  
SHELLY: Priority seating is intended for the elderly and those with disabilities. Priority seating is intended for the elderly

and those with disabilities. Priority seating is intended for the elderly and those with disabilities.  
PETER: Don't you see what you've done to us?!

SHELLY: Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Makes the ding noise.)*  
Doors closing. Doors closing. *(Makes the ding noise.)* Door closing. Doors—

PETER: *(Slapping her hard across the face.)* Stop it!  
*(Shelly cries out and throws herself off the chair.)*

PETER: Oh God.  
*(Shelly begins biting her arm hard.)*

PETER: Oh God. Please, Shelly. I'm sorry.  
*(He moves toward her but she squirms away from him making a whining sound and biting her arm.)*

PETER: I didn't mean it. I don't know what I'm doing, Shelly. I'm an idiot. Please stop. Stop hurting yourself. Please.

SHELLY: *(She begins banging her hand hard against her head.)*  
Do you want to shoot me now or wait till you get home?  
*(Peter moves down to the floor with her, trying to stop her hand. She fights against it.)*

PETER: I didn't mean what I said. Please . . . stop. I'm stupid. I'm just a kid. I say stupid things I don't mean half the time.

SHELLY: *(Still biting her hand, mumbling.)* Do you want to shoot me now or wait till you get home? Shoot him now. Shoot him now. You keep out of this. He doesn't have to shoot you now. He does so have to shoot me now. I demand that you shoot me now. *(She keeps repeating, whispering more.)*

PETER: *(Trying to hold her hand back away from her teeth.)*  
I know I'm a rotten brother. And I know if I could get through to you, Dad wouldn't be so angry so often. *(She pulls her hand away.)* Okay. Fine. But whatever happens, we're gonna need each other now more than ever. And it doesn't matter if you keep biting yourself or not, the pain will still be there. So go ahead if you want to. Go ahead. I'm obviously not helping you any. I'm just making things worse. I can't believe I hit you. I'm sorry, Shelly. I'm sorry.

(He moves away from her.)  
SHELLY: (She stops struggling and curls up in a ball. Very quietly.) It's not your fault. This is not your fault.  
PETER: What did you say?  
SHELLY: It's not your fault. This is not your fault.  
PETER: (Pause.) We communicate—you and I. Probably better than other brothers and sisters. We just connect in a different way I guess, you know?  
SHELLY: Yeah.  
PETER: It'll be all right. You know? Maybe he'll be back. He'll be back. I'm sure of it.  
SHELLY: Yeah.  
PETER: If he doesn't, he's pretty stupid. Cause we're pretty good kids.  
SHELLY: Yeah. I knew I took that wrong turn in Albuquerque. Should have zigged when I zagged.  
(Peter smiles.)  
PETER: Should we get Mom?  
SHELLY: Yeah. (She reaches out her hands to him.) Hug?  
PETER: (Beat.) Sure.  
(They embrace.)  
PETER: I love you, kiddo. Don't ever forget that. 'Kay?  
SHELLY: (Beat. Nods.) Um.  
PETER: We'll make it through this. Okay?  
SHELLY: Yeah.  
PETER: But no huggin' me at school, all right? Okay?  
SHELLY: Yeah. (She lets go.) Who directed the most Looney Tune Cartoons?  
PETER: (Playing along.) Umm. I don't know. Thomas Jefferson?  
SHELLY: (Makes bad buzzer noise.) Wrong answer.  
PETER: Maybe, humm, let me think . . . Mel Blanc.  
SHELLY: Ding! Correct. Ding!  
PETER: Come along, Rabbit. Doors opening. Doors opening. Priority seating is intended for Bugs Bunny and his pal Daffy. Ding! (She takes his hand.) Ding. (Thinking a

moment before they leave.) Ding. (To her.) He'll be back. He's gotta come back, right?  
SHELLY: Ding.  
(Peter gestures for her to move ahead.)