

This puts DOROTHY in a difficult position and she tries to compromise diplomatically.

DOROTHY I think ...there is a definitive performance lying somewhere between Californian Realism and English Mellifluence.

JEFFERSON (*angrily*) That's just bullshit ... Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!!!

The door opens and there is a girl with suitcases.

JESSICA Dad?

JEFFERSON My God! Jessica! How...

It is his daughter JESSICA. JESSICA is seventeen, and smarter than her father. She is also very used to being let down by the dad she once idolised.

JESSICA You were going to meet me at the airport?

JEFFERSON Was I?

NIGEL (*s.v.*) Oh dear. It's not just his lines he has problems remembering.

JEFFERSON Jessica, cupcake!

JESSICA Please don't call me that.

JEFFERSON This is my daughter.

JEFFERSON *tries to introduce them.*

Jessica, this is...er... Denis.

DOROTHY Dorothy...

NIGEL Nigel.

MARY Mary.

JESSICA Hi.

DOROTHY Jessica - lovely to meet you. Your father's...told us er...so much about you ...

JESSICA I doubt it. Unless he's looked me up on Wikipedia

JEFFERSON Don't be like that.

Awkward silence.

I said I'd look after Jessica for a while. My ex-wife's getting married again.

DOROTHY That's nice.

JEFFERSON Not for the guy who is marrying her!

Nobody laughs.

It's just for the duration of the honeymoon. Which starts...

Checks watch.

JESSICA ...yesterday.

DOROTHY So all quite sudden.

JEFFERSON You wait for the divorce!

Still nobody laughs.

JESSICA It's not funny Dad. You promised you would be there and you weren't.

JEFFERSON Your mom must have told me the wrong landing time. Deliberately, of course - to make me look bad.

JESSICA You don't need any help with that Dad.

DOROTHY Well Jessica - you're very welcome here.

Beat.

Do you want to be in a play?

JEFFERSON (*very forcefully*) No she doesn't!

JESSICA I can answer for myself.

JEFFERSON Non-negotiable. No play. No acting.

JESSICA But...

MARY *leaps in to calm things down.*

MARY We're all so thrilled to have your father here, playing King Lear.

NIGEL (*drily*) Yes indeed! Do you know the piece at all?

JESSICA We did it in high school, remember Dad?

JEFFERSON No.

JESSICA That's cos you weren't there.

To NIGEL.

Anyway, he is perfect casting.

JEFFERSON Really?

JESSICA Lear is an arrogant egomaniac and a lousy father rolled into one.

More awkward silence. DOROTHY fills the gap.

DOROTHY Well you must be tired - let's get you sorted with a room.

JEFFERSON I'll help you with your bags.

JESSICA When - tomorrow?

JEFFERSON, MARY and JESSICA *exit. More awkward silence as they all look at each other.*

NIGEL (*very jolly*) At last! Some drama!

We hear the FOOL's song sung by DOROTHY.

DOROTHY/FOOL

FATHERS THAT WEAR RAGS SHALL MAKE THEIR CHILDREN BLIND/BUT FATHERS THAT
BEAR BAGS SHALL SEE THEIR CHILDREN KIND.