

THE SECRET, UNKNOWN, MYSTERIOUS, OTHER HISTORY OF THE OUTLAW
JESSE JAMES

by

Jody McColman

**THE SECRET, UNKNOWN, MYSTERIOUS OTHER HISTORY OF THE OUTLAW
JESSE JAMES**

ALGERNON: Male, 40s-50s, Claire's Father
CLAIRE: Female, Teens
GUIDE: Any gender, 18+

SETTING: A dingy
hardware store in
Northfield, Minnesota

AT RISE: GUIDE sits
behind a desk
distractedly doing
something or other

ALGERNON and CLAIRE enter

ALGERNON

Excuse me, um, is this the (looks at brochure), Third National Bank?

GUIDE

Why do you ask?

ALGERNON

Well, we found this brochure at the bus station. It says "Come Learn About the Secret, Unknown, Mysterious Other History of the Outlaw Jesse James," and gives this address and says this is the "Third National Bank of Northfield Minnesota."

CLAIRE

But... this doesn't look like a bank.

GUIDE

Oh! Right! Brochure! Yes!

Guide stands

Ahem, welcome to the Third National Bank of Northfield Minnesota!

ALGERNON

This just looks like a hardware store.

GUIDE

Uh... well, it's not a bank *anymore*. It was a bank. The bank.
(*dramatically*) Back in the time of THE OUTLAW JESSE JAMES!

ALGERNON and CLAIRE look around skeptically

CLAIRE

I've been in some old banks before, and this doesn't look like an old bank.

GUIDE

Oh, but it was. It WAS! It's just been, uh, refurbished, over the years.

ALGERNON

Ok, fine, let's say for the sake of argument that this was a bank, what does this Bank have to do with Jesse James? And even if it does have to do with Jesse James, twenty bucks for a tour of a not-bank is a little excessive for Northfield Minnesota, don'tcha think?

GUIDE

Ah, but it's not the tour that's worth the price of admission, but rather finding out THE SECRET, UNFAMILAR, SURPRISING--

ALGERNON (reading the brochure)

Secret, Unknown, Mysterious--

GUIDE

--SECRET, UNKNOWN, MYSTERIOUS, OTHER HISTORY OF THE OUTLAW JESSE JAMES!

CLAIRE

For \$20?

GUIDE

Well... yes.

ALGERNON

Ok, well, thank you. Maybe we'll come back after lunch. (to CLAIRE) I saw a Chicago Creole sandwich shop down the street, I could go for a sausage po-boy--

GUIDE

WAIT! I forgot it's Wednesday, Wednesdays are ten--

CLAIRE

Oooh, I've always been partial to a good sausage--

GUIDE

FIVE! Wednesdays are five dollars!

CLAIRE

Whaddya think?

ALGERNON

For five bucks? Sure, what the hell.

ALGERNON hands guide \$10

Here you go.

GUIDE

Really?

ALGERNON

Let's hear these secret, unknown, mysterious other secrets.

CLAIRE

Other history.

ALGERNON

Other history.

GUIDE

OK! Right! Ahem. Welcome to what was the lobby of the Third National Bank of Northfield Minnesota, not the last bank that Jesse James didn't rob. Try to picture in your mind the year eighteen--

CLAIRE

Wait, what did you say?

GUIDE

Try to picture in your mind the year eighteen seventy--

CLAIRE

No, before that.

GUIDE

Welcome to the lobby of--

CLAIRE

NO! The, uh, middle bit.

GUIDE

Not the last bank that Jesse James didn't rob?

ALGERNON

Yeah, that bit. Not the...

GUIDE

Not the last bank Jesse James didn't rob.

ALGERNON and CLAIRE just stare at GUIDE

Well, no. I mean, the last bank he didn't rob is across the street. The First National Bank of Northfield Minnesota.
(aside) Glory whores.

CLAIRE

Wait. So not only did he not, not, not rob this bank, he also didn't rob the bank across the street? Was Jesse James even in Northfield Minnesota?

GUIDE

Oh yes! Most certainly. He *tried* to rob the bank across the street, headline grabbing bastards, but didn't pull it off. That was the last bank he ever tried to rob. But this bank! He didn't not try to not rob this bank before he didn't rob the bank across the street. Don't you see?

ALGERNON and CLAIRE

No.

ALGERNON

He didn't not try not to... I...

CLAIRE

Ok, I think I get it. The bank across the street was the scene of the last bank robbery the James Gang ever attempted.

GUIDE

YES!

CLAIRE

Ok! Great! Wait. I see why that would make that bank famous. But, if this is just a bank that they didn't try not to rob, what makes this bank famous?

GUIDE

Ahh! *That* is the secret, unbelievable--

ALGERNON

Unknown.

GUIDE

--unknown, mysterious other history!

Long pause while ALGERNON and CLAIRE stare at GUIDE, finally..

CLAIRE

Which is?

GUIDE

Oh! Right! Ahem, please follow me into the VAULT!

GUIDE leads ALGERNON and CLAIRE to a different part of the stage

ALGERNON

This looks like a lunch room.

GUIDE

Ah, yes, it was the VAULT!

CLAIRE

Is this even the original building?

GUIDE

Well, no. BUT! This occupies the same SPACE you see!

ALGERNON

Ok, but I... Never mind. Continue.

GUIDE

Yes, where was I?

ALGERNON

In the VAULT!

GUIDE

YES! The VAULT. Here in the vault was found a never before seen and unknown-to-history artifact. Jesse James's MELLON BALLER!

CLAIRE

His--

GUIDE

MELLON BALLER!

ALGERNON

Ok. I've had enough. Sausage time.

CLAIRE (smiling)

No, wait. (to GUIDE) Please, go on.

CLAIRE begins to chuckle, with the laughter increasing throughout the following

GUIDE

Really? Thank you, I... Ahem, the legend is thusly. Few know that Jesse James was a vegetarian. And, an absolute fruit fanatic. Melons were his OBSESSION! In fact, his spate of larcenies was largely driven by his desire for melons. Melons of all types. Honeydew, Crenshaw, Water, even Cantaloupe. He loved them so much he had a melon baller custom made for him by the famous Kansas City blacksmith Jules DeLoupe! He took it with him everywhere he went. Before not robbing the attention sucking bank across the street, he cased *this* bank. Not finding it a suitable target for robbery, he instead hired a safe deposit box, and deposited his beloved melon baller in said box for safekeeping. In case anything untoward were to happen to him, you see. Unfortunately, when his gang botched the robbery across the street, the scrutiny from the police became too intense for him ever to return. And, many years later, the sacred melon baller that was thought to have been lost to history was recovered.

CLAIRE begins to slow clap

CLAIRE

That was... that was the best bullshit tour I have ever been on. I mean, I've been on some shitty tours in my day, but this, *this* is truly extraordinary.

GUIDE (offended)

I can assure you that everything is one-hundred percent--

CLAIRE

No, no, I'm not complaining. I stand in awe. Best five bucks I've ever spent. (to ALGERNON) Come on, sausage time. (to CLAIRE) Five out of five on TripAdvisor coming for you my friend!

CLAIRE goes over to GUIDE, takes out her phone and...

CLAIRE

SELFIE!

ALGERNON and CLAIRE exit. Guide watches them leave while smiling an amazed smile..

END OF PLAY