

James's Test
by
Simon Wiedemann

© 2026

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

A male SCIENTIST (50s) and a female APPRENTICE (early 20s), both in white suits are in a small room with white walls, and one huge window. A number of buttons on a panel are by its side, and a door is next to that. Out of the window, JAMES is seen in his favourite pink dress in another small and bare white room. He sits on a chair with a button on one of its arms, looking bored. The SCIENTIST looks at JAMES with curiosity, then turns to his fellow WORKER.

SCIENTIST

We all know about the experiment where people are told to apparently 'electrocute' a so called 'test subject' who is really an actor, to see how obedient the punishers are, I think we should bring the test back, just for James. You do agree this is a valid experiment, don't you?

APPRENTICE

Oh definitely, he's a weirdo. I'm just as intrigued about his reaction as you.

SCIENTIST

Good. I just need to remember what buttons to press, otherwise I'm going to play the wrong samples to James!

The SCIENTIST knocks on the window. JAMES turns to face his general direction.

JAMES

Hello? I can't see you...

SCIENTIST

Don't worry about that, I can see you.

JAMES

Oh good.

SCIENTIST

Do you know why I've bought you here, James?

JAMES

You've spotted a person jaywalking and he needs to get what's coming to him?

SCIENTIST

Right. I know this is a big ask, but would you mind punishing him for me?

JAMES

Sure.

SCIENTIST

Great. The button on your chair will be giving him just a slight electric shock, that's all. It will feel like nothing more than a harmless pinch. Is that ok?

JAMES

Fine by me.

SCIENTIST

Perfect. Now, you won't be able to see him as he's in another room. However, as he is in a room near to you, you will be able to hear him.

JAMES

I understand.

The SCIENTIST presses a button that plays an audio file of a man speaking.

MAN

I love jaywalking and I'd do it again!

JAMES

I heard that!

SCIENTIST

Right, exactly.

JAMES presses the button.

SCIENTIST

You did the right thing.

The SCIENTIST presses another button.

MAN

Jaywalking should not be a crime!!!

JAMES

Oh, he's gone way to far, now...

SCIENTIST

I couldn't agree more. As he's such a wrong'n, I will be turning the power up. The pain he'll be feeling is comparable to a gentle stab. Is that ok?

JAMES

It is indeed...

JAMES presses his button, then another button gets pressed by the SCIENTIST.

MAN

OW! (Expletive!)

JAMES

Hahaha, brilliant!

SCIENTIST

That's fine with you?

JAMES

Fine? This is Christmas!

SCIENTIST

I see. The thing is, I really really hate him. So much so I think he deserves the most extreme pain imaginable.

JAMES

Jaywalkers are the lowest of the low.
..

SCIENTIST

Oh I know.

JAMES presses his button repeatedly.

SCIENTIST

Oh, I've had enough of this.

The SCIENTIST opens the door to enter JAMES'S room. The APPRENTICE watches in curiosity, then presses a button for herself over and over again.

MAN

ARGH! ARGH! ARGH!

JAMES

Oh hello, sir. Shall I increase the power for you? How do you do that?

SCIENTIST
You've shown your true colours,
haven't you?

JAMES
What do you mean?

SCIENTIST
James, do you know what psychopathy
means?

JAMES
Scummy jaywalkers?

SCIENTIST
No, you.

SCIENTIST
What do you mean?

SCIENTIST
Personally, I'd give a jaywalker a
simple fine.

JAMES
But they'll never learn!

SCIENTIST
I've had enough of you, you can go,
now.

JAMES
Can I take the chair, please?

SCIENTIST
James, the button doesn't do
anything. I lied.

JAMES
So I have been electrocuting people,
then?

SCIENTIST
Sorry, no.

JAMES
I've been living a lie? This isn't
really the greatest day of my life?

SCIENTIST
No.

JAMES
Dammit!