

HAZEL AND THE SUN

A Play in One Act

by

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Characters

- Julia: Female, mid-twenties. A light sleeper.
- Pam: Female, mid-twenties.
- Ted: Pam's boyfriend, recently acquired. Large and attractive, with an all-American-boy vibe...and yet, surprisingly goofy.

Scene

Julia's bedroom.

Time

The present.

SETTING: 5 a.m. Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning. A small bedroom. Above the bed is a window through which it is possible to climb in order to access the balcony. Next to the bed is a nightstand upon which rests a large digital alarm clock with glowing numbers.

AT RISE: Darkness. JULIA is asleep in bed, stretched out on her back with the covers over her entire body and head. PAM and TED open the door a crack and peep through. PAM is holding an open beer bottle.

TED
(barely audible whisper)

Is she?

PAM
(also whispering)

No, she's gone.

(PAM and TED creep into the room on joyous tiptoe and jump directly onto JULIA's covered head. JULIA screams. It is a blood-curdling fear-inspiring shriek from the dark depths of Hades.)

JULIA
Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

(PAM and TED tumble off the bed in shock, in the process knocking over JULIA's very loud alarm clock and setting it off. JULIA snatches and brandishes her pillow while flicking on the lights with her foot. TED frantically pushes buttons, trying to turn off the alarm. Finally, PAM pushes the correct one.)

TED
Damn. Sorry.

(There is an awkward pause.)

JULIA

(with remarkable calm)

You jumped on my head.

PAM

Stepped! Stepped - vigorously.

JULIA

You jumped on my head.

PAM

We didn't know you were there.

JULIA

It's -

(JULIA glares towards the alarm clock which TED is still holding. TED angles it in JULIA's direction, helpfully.)

JULIA

5 a.m.

(PAM glares at TED.)

PAM

The bed was perfectly made - the covers were flat.

JULIA

The dead middle of the night.

TED

Australian sheep farmers wake up this early.

PAM

So do bakers.

TED

And postal workers! My uncle is a postal worker. And coroners!

(PAM and JULIA stare at him for a moment.)

JULIA

I sleep flatly. Always have. On my back with the covers up to block the sun.

PAM

Oh. (beat) We were going to go onto the balcony. Didn't think you'd mind, not being here.

JULIA

So much for that idea. Gimme.

(JULIA reaches for PAM's beer and takes a swig.)

JULIA

Why? Were you going onto the balcony. If I even want to know. It's freezing out there.

PAM

We wanted to watch the sun rise. It's romantic. (beat) I let you take the balcony room.

JULIA

How can you have lived with me for two years and not know I sleep flatly?

TED

Uh, I'll go get another.

(TED exits.)

JULIA

Did you sleep with him?

(PAM nods.)

JULIA

First time, right?

PAM

Yeah. With him, obviously. How did things go with Peter? I thought - I just assumed things went well and you -

JULIA

They didn't.

PAM

I'm sorry. What happened?

JULIA

I wanted to talk. We were having dinner which is, you know, an hour of staring into someone's eyeballs only occasionally relieved by food or the waitress. Third date. It's getting to be time to at least start to ask those important questions. What is your most traumatic childhood memory? What person, living or dead, do you most admire? What is your most valued physical object?

PAM

He wouldn't?

JULIA

Absolute clam. "Starting school." "Abe Lincoln." "My car." Or else he really is that shallow. Either way. I told him about Miss Hazel, thought it might help, but he just got uncomfortable. We skipped dessert. It was a mutual thing.

PAM

I'm sorry. He seemed so promising.

JULIA

You scared me half to death! What if you would have been a burglar, or a rapist or a homicidal maniac with an ax knife two feet long?

(TED enters awkwardly holding another beer.)

TED

So, uh, sorry about, uh, you know. Jumping. On your head. This one time, at summer camp? My parents were way into summer camp, I used to have to go like 8 weeks a year. I hated it. Too many bugs. This time I was ten, major little dork, it was my second year. Apparently the whole cabin hated me. I had no idea. One night they all got together and covered my head with shaving cream and gummy worms. The shaving cream makes sense, pretty traditional I mean. But why the gummy worms? I never got that. Anyway I woke up when they were just about finished and yelled my gunky head off. (beat) So I guess, the point is, I sort of

TED (cont)

know how you feel. You must be upset. (beat) So, uh, what kind of music do you listen to?

PAM

She's more of an art person, honey.

TED

Oh. Uh. You know, I'll go get pizza, that place we saw? Who wants?

(No response.)

TED

(undeterred, stands)

I'll be right back.

(TED exits.)

PAM

Tell me about Miss Hazel.

JULIA

I told you about Miss Hazel.

PAM

You started to. The phone rang.

JULIA

She's this 102-year-old woman my family adopted a long time ago. She and her older sister lived next door to my Grandma while she was growing up and helped raise her. Hazel and Alma were the fireballs of their community, to hear my Grandma tell it. They ran the church picnics, tended the sick, stayed out all night dancing. Hazel worked in a telegraph office, then for an accountant, finally in the yarn factory with Alma. Hazel never married, her sister did, to Orion, a man who died at 40 of a rare neurological disease, long before I was born. So then it was just them, the two sisters again. Last winter Alma died at 103. Then a month ago, Miss Hazel fell and broke her hip. She hasn't been doing too well since. This past weekend, my dad and my Grandma went and moved her out of her apartment and into a new section of the nursing home - the last one.

PAM

I'm sorry.

JULIA

They were pretty well off, Hazel and Alma, never had any children. The apartment they'd shared for two decades was full of the things they'd shared for a hundred years: antique furniture, dancing porcelain figures, photographs in silver frames. Great carved mirrors with flowers and birds. Lace doilies, all hand-made. Music boxes and Chinese tea-cups. Clothing and books and pearls.

She had all of it sold at auction. All of it. After all my Grandma did for them, and all the legal work my dad did for them, free. After years of Thanksgivings, visits. After I went with my Dad to Alma's funeral, all the way back from here for the weekend.

All she kept - for my dad: a chair his grandmother embroidered. For my sister, and for me: their tiny, twin, golden handbags, one for each of us, from each of them.

They don't make anything like these bags any more. I lifted mine out of its original printed hand-stamped box. Limited edition. Whiting & Davis Co. A delicate label stitched with nimble fingers. Gold clasp, gold chain, silk lining, a thousand winking golden eyes on the surface, reflecting more light than a disco ball, outshining the sun. Tucked away inside, a square of beveled mirror wrapped in tissue paper.

It could be a doll's purse. It's smaller than my hand.

Why this? Why these? Why nothing else?

PAM

I guess it's romantic. Leaving you one thing. Like a fairy tale.

JULIA

It was greed. My dad was there. It was all about the money - and she didn't need it. She had plenty, and she'll be dead by June. If it takes that long. Does everyone get bitter by the end? And there's not even a story. Out of everything, why this bag?

PAM

You could ask her.

JULIA

She's deaf and barely speaks.

PAM

You could fly out and visit her. Hover by her bedside until she wakes. Write your questions in blue marker on a giant pad and hold it high while she reads. Capture her feeble responses on a high-power tape recorder. Coax and coddle, extracting the story bit by bit, hours between fragments as she gathers her fading strength to relate, at last, the Story of the Handbag, the ultimate nature of life, death, the universe, the final secrets of existence.

JULIA

But I won't. The bag will just sit in its box and wait for another date with another Peter. You and Ted will grow old together and tell this story of how after the first time you made love you jumped on your roommate's head on the way out to the balcony to watch the sun rise.

(Pause.)

PAM

We won't.

JULIA

Won't tell?

PAM

Get old. Together.

(PAM and JULIA stare out the window as the sun rises. TED reenters carrying a partially open pizza box and munching a slice. He pauses, hovers in the doorway.)

END OF PLAY