

Holes in the Plastic

A Play By Eve Kelly

As Performed in the TheatreWorks
playwright project

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Character List

Ben: 17

August: 17

Laurie: late forties

A special thank you to Mr. Shelby, Dan Moyer, and my parents. You are all fantastic.

Dedicated to my Aunt Margie, who keeps fighting.

Holes in the Plastic

SCENE 1

(Ben's Room. It is reasonably neat, the bed is half made. Ben is sitting on the bed.)

BEN

Look God, I have a game tomorrow night. You probably guessed that from the fact that I'm talking to you. I guess I just figure that maybe if I ask enough you'll do it for me. I really don't think it would be that hard for you. I mean, James asked you to get to third base with his girlfriend and you gave him that, so why can't you just give me this? It's the seventh time I've asked for it. I just want her there. At the game. Just once I want her to be in the stands and to be sober. That's all I'm asking for! You really know how to keep a guy on the line God. She's my mother. She's really all I got in terms of support, you know? I don't even care if we win, I mean of course I care, but it's not that important just as long as she's there watching.

I hate to say this but I figure if I'm supposed to be honest with somebody, it's you... I'm losing faith. In you, in the religion, in Mom... in everything really. People around the world are dying and you can't even help them? I suppose when I put it that way my request sounds trivial, and who knows maybe you just stopped a nuclear bomb from being dropped somewhere. But I just need something tangible, something real to go right in my life. Just for once. Is that so much to ask?

SCENE 2

(Porch and Entryway. The porch has a small bench on it. The entrée way has a bench, a basketball on the floor along with a boy's shoe.)

Ben is on his way to school when his mom stops him. He pauses at the door)

LAURIE

Ben! Ben wait, please. Just give me a second will you?

BEN

I have to go to school.

LAURIE

(During this monologue Ben stops to tie his shoes.)
Ben, you normally leave twenty minutes from now. Please just hear me out? Yesterday... look can't we just forget

about yesterday? Chalk it up as some big mistake? Moms are allowed to make mistakes, right? I already apologized, what more do you want? I'm sure nobody will even remember what happened. Not like I even took *all* my clothes off, they stopped me after only the shirt. And you know if that referee had been any good I wouldn't have had to bribe him into giving you the point you deserved. (*Ben gets up from tying his shoes and starts to leave*) Wait Ben, I'm messing this all up. I'm sorry. I really am. Please believe me? I messed up, big time. You deserve so much better from a mom. But please, I'm trying. I know it doesn't look like it, but I am. I want to be the mom I once was. And... I want you to trust me and believe in me again. Can't it just be like old times where when I mess up I owe you an ice cream?

BEN

I'm not seven. I'm sick of this. You say you're sorry and you want to be there for me, then you go and get shit-faced.

Laurie

I was hardly shit-faced last night.

BEN

Oh great so now you're saying that it wasn't that bad.

Laurie

No I didn't mean that. I mean... look I messed up okay?! But I'm *trying*.

BEN

What, trying to only drink every *other* night?

Laurie

No, trying to be the mom that you used to love.

BEN

Try going to a meeting, or doing something, and then you can tell me that you're trying.

Laurie

Ben. I would have no place being at one of those meetings. I am not an alcoholic.

BEN

[pause] Whatever. I'm going to school. Can you give me twenty dollars? I uh need it for a field trip.

Laurie

Here. (gives him the \$20) Have a good day...

(Ben exits, Once he is away from his mom, he breaks. He sits down on the porch bench, puts his head in his hands and tries to get himself together. In the Entryway Laurie sits on the bench Ben was previously sitting on, and leans against the wall.)

SCENE 3

(At park close to school. Ben and August are eating lunch together. Ben has a haphazard sandwich, an apple, and a bottle of water. August has five little eco friendly containers containing grapes, mini sandwiches, carrots, hummus, and broccoli, and a little plastic plate. During their conversation she will meticulously unload her various food items onto her plate, arrange them into various designs like faces or animals then eat them slowly.)

August

I read the craziest thing on this website! They made this hamster take Viagra and then made him jetlagged and found out he bounces back quicker on Viagra! Science is so amazing! Like yeah, it's really weird, but so cool! [pause] Sorry I couldn't come to your game! My dad wouldn't give me a ride, he was in one of his moods.

Ben

You okay?

August

Yeah, I've found that if I just don't respond then he usually stops yelling. He was just annoyed that he didn't get the promotion that he wanted. Anyways, how was the game?

Ben

We won.

August

Well of course you did, but how did you play? Make any shots? D'your mom come?

Ben

Yeah I made some shots. And yeah. She came.

August

Really? She hasn't come to one of your games in ages!
That's great!

BEN

She was drunk.

AUGUST

Shit.

(Pause)

How bad was it?

BEN

She tried to strip in front of the ref.

AUGUST

Oh, Ben...

BEN

(Trying to change the subject)

Do you believe in god?

AUGUST

God? I dunno. Dad always told me that god was for people who needed something to believe in, but then, he believes in all the Hindu gods... and mom always said that god was whatever you needed her to be. She said that god could be a he too, she just used she cause well... you know my mom. So do I believe? I guess not, I mean why should I? Nothing supernatural has ever happened to me. I think I kinda want to believe though. Like it's nice thinking that there's something bigger out there. Comforting. You know?

BEN

Yeah... kinda.

AUGUST

Why do you ask?

BEN

Well I mean I always believed in god as a kid. A lot of my friends doubted it, but I just always knew that there was a god. But recently... I guess it just doesn't make sense. I dunno...

AUGUST

No I get what your saying. Like if there were a god why would she let things suck so bad for so many people? Why would she let governments kill their people and farmers put

unhealthy pesticides in their crops? Why would she even let unhealthy pesticides exist?

BEN

Exactly

AUGUST

Maybe it's cause that's what makes us who we are. I dunno but like if pesticides didn't exist then my mom would have nothing to do with her time. If the environment weren't in trouble there would be no use for my dad's products. And people would never learn how to save and be efficient. If my parents were involved in my life, they'd probably make my lunches, and then I wouldn't get to have hummus everyday. You know? Like maybe the stuff that we think we want will actually have bad consequences of its own.

BEN

I just can't believe that it's that simple. I can't believe that god killed my father and made my mother an alcoholic just to make my life better.

AUGUST

Ben...

BEN

No it's fine. Don't worry about me.
So what else did you learn on the internet last night?

AUGUST

(Sarcastically): That people who hold all their feelings inside have more trouble in the long run. Look. I don't, I can't understand how your house is. I can't understand what it's like and what it takes for you to make it through a single day in your house with your past...

BEN

Then maybe you should stop trying to.

AUGUST

Oh right 'cause it's that easy to stop trying for you.
(pause) Remember fifth grade when we were the only dorks that wanted to learn Spanish? They didn't want to run a class of only two students but we wrote them all those essays about how important Spanish was to us. Why was Spanish so important to us, Ben?

BEN

Well... I guess we just wanted to learn it? Gustamos español..

AUGUST

No but it was something more than want, it was need. We needed to learn Spanish. But, where did all that need, all that passion go?

BEN

Look August; what are you trying to say?

AUGUST

If there was music here, and I asked you to dance with me, would you?

BEN

Aug, you're acting crazy

AUGUST

You wouldn't have thought so before. Back then you made forts with the lost and found clothes right along with me. You were the one who wanted to catch all the lady bugs in the world and start an entire colony just of them. You were the one that sang *I wanna hold your hand* just for me. And you were the one I fell for. That's right Ben don't you turn away now. I fell hard for you. When you were done building sand castles all that was left was the ditch in the sand and I tripped right in. You shouldn't have dug it so deep because now I can't get out. And I know as soon as I stop talking you're gonna say, "August, I'm sorry, you know you're one of my closest friends but I just can't deal with this right now." Ever since your dad died that's what you would have said. So I've settled, waiting for you to be ready to deal with me again. But I'm tired of waiting for every other aspect of your life to be perfect. I'm tired of waiting for you to decide that you have time to deal with me. So I need to know, is there any bit of the boy I fell in love with left?

BEN

Aug... I've changed. I don't know if it's maturity or just getting fucked up, but I can't be what you want or what you need.

AUGUST

Screw you. (exits)

BEN

Hey god? Remember when life was simple and I was happy? Can we go back there? I liked that place. When dad would play basketball with me after work, with just the porch light to see by. We'd both miss all our shots cause of the lack of depth perception, but it got me pretty good. And mom used to read me all the Harry Potter books over and over until I could say the lines with her. (laughing) and that one time that mom and I decided to make seven up jello. We got the jello mix and the seven up, but when we tried to mix them the whole thing started fizzing everywhere, uncontrollably, and we ended up on the floor laughing our heads off covered in gooey seven up.

Could you have stopped my dad from dying god? I think so. If you exist, then you are all powerful. Which means that you let him die. You let him leave two people who needed him more than anything else in the world. It's not mom's fault she's an alcoholic. It's her fault she's not dealing with it, but it's not her fault she has the disease. Isn't that also your bad, god? I thought we were all created in your image. If so, something went wrong. It's not some sickness that goes away. It's not something she injected herself with, it's something she was born with. So why did you let that happen?!

SCENE 4

(At home Laurie making dinner while drinking. She has Janis Joplin playing over the radio. The kitchen looks as if Martha Stewart threw up in it. There is a mix of expensive and old cooking ware, and various pieces of odd cooking ingredients. Laurie is dancing slightly and pouring food in to bowls. Ben enters)

LAURIE

Hi honey! I felt so bad about last night that I wanted to make it up to you with your favorite meal... casserole!!!

BEN

I'm not hungry.

LAURIE

(Attempting to not slur her words and stay upright) What do you mean you're not hungry! I know how you love my casserole! I always used to make it for you on your birthday. And I crisped the top just like you like!

BEN

I don't want any of your casserole mom.

LAURIE

I've been slaving away at the stove all day and you come back from sitting around at school and tell me you don't want any of my casserole. You can start showing me some respect and actually starting to care about this family, or you can walk right back out.

(Ben takes out a breathalyzer)

BEN

Fine mom, prove it.

LAURIE

WHAT is that.

BEN

There was no field trip. Just blow into the hole and prove your sobriety. It's that simple.

LAURIE

You horrible, inconsiderate boy. Get OUT of my house.

BEN

Try acting like a mom and maybe I'll start treating you like one.

(Grabs sweatshirt, slams front door behind him.)

SCENE 5

(In park, Ben is sitting on bench. He is only wearing a sweatshirt and jeans, and is starting to look a little bit cold as nighttime approaches.)

BEN

Okay God, joke's on me. There is clearly no fucking way that you exist. That was funny there with the whole, "let's make Ben believe life could be nice" bit, but I've figured out your tactics. No more believing. But really? Did you have to lie to me all those years? Did you have to lead me on like that? ... I guess so. It just seems like a pretty dick move to me. I tried to tell myself, when dad died, that it was for the best. That he was in a better place and that this would make me a stronger person. You know all the shit that everyone tells you, I really tried to believe it. But the more mom drank the less I could comfort myself with that bullshit. And now that it's pretty much everyday, well I'm done with bullshit. And I'm done with you god. So I guess as my final words to you, I just wanted to say, fuck you.

(August walks in.)

AUGUST

I talked to your mom. She told me you'd left, so I figured I'd find you here. Look, you don't have to say anything, you just need to come with me. Crash on my couch. For me. Or for you. Or for whatever the fuck you would do it for. Just for tonight, please come with me.

(Ben gets up and they walk away together in silence.)

SCENE 6

(At park August and Ben are eating lunch together in awkward silence.)

AUGUST

Ever ridden a camel?

BEN

No...

AUGUST

Oh... I was watching this program on them last night. You know their humps are made up of fat? And they can drink up to 40 gallons of water in one go! That's how they go so long without water [pause] you know. In the desert and stuff. [pause] They can also close their nostrils to the sand, and retain moisture through their nostrils. [pause] 'cause deserts are all hot and dry. [pause] I want to own a camel one day.

(Ben's phone rings.)

BEN

Hello?

Hi.

Yeah. I'll come home after school.

(Hangs up.)

(pause)

I read an article about camels once. They have three eyelids to protect them from the sand. (August smiles)

SCENE 7

(At home Laurie is dressed nicely and looks healthy for the first time.)

LAURIE

Ben... look I know that apologizing at this point is pretty pointless, but I just wanted to let you know that I went to

an AA meeting this morning. I'm... an alcoholic. It's still hard to say, hard to admit to myself, but when you sit around that table and everyone admits to being one, it gets easier. There were these normal nice people, who just happen to have this disease. It made it seem okay to have it in a way that it has never seemed before. Anyways I've spent the rest of the day cleaning out your dad's closet.

BEN

You went in dad's closet?

LURIE

They told me at the meeting I should. That it would be the next step along with getting you home again. Anyways I just...I found this. I think he would have wanted you to read it. (*Holds out old-looking diary.*)

(*In Ben's room.*)

BEN

(*Reading*):

Dear Diary, I got a baby boy this morning. I didn't believe god could be so generous to give me the most amazing baby in the world, but that is what he is. He smiles all the time already, and hardly ever cries. And above all he's absolutely the most beautiful creation on this earth. Could I have really taken part in such a miracle? I started this diary just for him. It is to record every special thing that happens in his life. and when he is all grown up and I'm an old man I'll give it to him, and he'll have all the memories of his life.

(*Ben skims through it, lands on a page a ways forward.*)

Ben has a new friend. He brought her home for dinner, her name is August. I think he likes her, as in, really likes her. She seems to bring sunshine everywhere that she goes. She's excited and passionate about just about everything and when Ben's around her, so is he. I hope this lasts, I really do.

(*Ben picks up his cell phone, dials*)

Aug, meet me on the football field in an hour, I have something for you,

SCENE 8

(*On the football field. There is an odd looking fort with pieces of clothing, from the lost and found, keeping it together. Ben is standing outside the fort holding a plastic container when August enters.*)

AUGUST

Ben! What is all this?!

BEN

I'm not the boy I used to be, I can't be. My life got turned upside down when my dad died, but I had no right to push you out of it.

AUGUST

Ben-

BEN

No, just hear me out. You know how gophers, if there's danger, they hide? That's what I did. I know I had no right to push you away, but I was scared. If you'll take me, it'll be difficult for both of us, to make it work. I can't just have you feeling sorry for me all the time, or doing favors for me all the time. But I'll still make forts out of the lost and found clothes with you, I still want to start a colony of lady bugs. I'll build a sandcastle for you August if that's what you want, but at the end of the day I'll always want to be in that ditch, right next to you.

(Holds out plastic container)

I got our first lady bug, and I poked holes in the plastic, just like you taught me to, so that they can breathe.

(August hugs Ben tightly)

SCENE 9

(Ben and August are sitting together on the park bench.)

AUGUST

So... how was your mom today?

BEN

(Shrugs) She went to another meeting, and as far as I know has been sober since that one night. We have this deal that she uses the breathalyzer everyday when I come home from school. It's been working well. She made me the best casserole last night. And then she took me out for ice cream.

AUGUST

God that's good to hear.

BEN

So what did you learn about the world last night?

AUGUST

My mom printed out this article on Giant Salamanders, so I've decided instead of getting a camel, to get a giant salamander. They are the world's largest amphibians. And the males guard the eggs rather than the females. AND they stick in groups, for hunting and stuff. I have a thing for animals that stick together.

BEN

So I've noticed.

AUGUST

Look I gotta run, there's a special on Salmon on the Discovery channel. Skype tonight?

BEN

Of course.

(They kiss, August leaves.)

BEN

Well god, I don't really know what to say. I guess this is what people talk about when they tell stories of their faith being tested, but that sounds so cliché. I still don't think it's right, what's happened, but as long as my mom stays on the right track I guess we're gunna be okay. You really had me guessing for a sec there, with that crap you pulled. I really don't think I owe you one. I think it's pretty even...

Maybe for hannukah I could get a Giant salamander?

(lights fade)