

HARD BALL

A Short Play

Written by

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CHARACTERS:

LILA - A teenage girl, 16.

JACK - Her father, mid-40s.

CAROL - A co-worker of JACK. Mid-30s.

SETTING:

The stands of a Major League Baseball stadium.

TIME:

The present.

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SETTING: Three connected seats at a Major League Baseball stadium, any where in the U.S. or Canada. If possible, there should be a waist-high metal railing in front of the seats, indicating that they are in the first row.

AT RISE: Organ music and other baseball park sound effects. JACK and LILA enter. JACK is looking at tickets and checking seat numbers. HE is also loaded down with bags, souvenirs. HE can be dressed in the specific team gear (American League) of whatever Major League team THEY have come to see play. LILA carries nothing and HER entire teenage body language suggests she is not too happy to be here. (*Note: Parentheses within dialogue indicate where that line is overlapped by the next line.*)

JACK

Here we are! Hey! Great seats! Right down front.

LILA

Why did we have to get here so damn early?

JACK

Don't you want to watch batting practice?

LILA

No.

JACK

You used to beg me to getcha here early to watch batting practice.

LILA

When I was ten!

JACK

Look! There's Jose' Perez! Warming up in right field.

LILA

Gawd! He must be eighty years old by now.

JACK

He's ten years younger than me!

LILA

“Ten years younger than I,” Dad. Learn to speak English.

(JACK affects a comic Italian accent)

JACK

Ah, I speak-a da English good enough.

(Yelling into the ball field)

Hey! Jose'!

(To LILA)

Maybe he'll come over and give you his autograph!

(Into the field)

HEY! JOSE'. My little girl here loves you!

LILA

DAD! Shut up!

JACK

Look! He's waving at you, Honey. Wave back.

(LILA is mortified.)

LILA

Oh Gawd!

(JACK waves for HER.)

JACK

That's why I love the DH rule. Gives some of these older guys a few more years to shine. Maybe he'll hit one right to us when he gets up at the plate. Oh! That reminds me. Look at what I brought for you.

(HE takes a baseball glove out of one of the bags and tries to hand it to her.)

JACK (CONT'D)

Just in case.

LILA

Great. Thanks.

(Instead of taking the glove, SHE pulls out HER cell phone and starts to text.)

JACK

What are you doing?

LILA

If you're going to drag me out here an hour before the game ...

JACK

I'm the boss, Honey. I have to be here when my employees arrive for Family Day.

(SHE continues to text through the following)

LILA

You just want me here as window dressing. So you can pretend we're still a big happy family.

JACK

Is that what you think?

(Pause)

I want you here because you're my daughter and I love you.

(Pause. SHE shrugs, texts.)

C'mon! Lila! I hardly get to see you anymore. Let's talk a little.

LILA

About what?

JACK

How's school going?

LILA

It sucks.

JACK

How are things at the house? With your Mother and ... and, y'know ...Janice?

LILA

You mean "how are things at Dyke Central?"

(HE grabs the phone roughly out of HER hands.)

LILA (CONT'D)

Hey!

JACK

Don't you ever talk about your Mother like that! (Don't you ...!)

LILA

She left you for a woman, Dad!

JACK

She wasn't happy.

LILA

Well I'm not so god-damned happy my self, in case you haven't (noticed!)

JACK

Watch your mouth! People from the office are starting to come!

LILA

I'm sixteen! It's a little late for me to start playing "Lila has two mommies!"

(JACK waves at someone off)

JACK

Hi, Helen. Yep, we got a beautiful day!

LILA

Give me back my phone.

(Pause)

Give me back my phone or I will be very unpleasant today.

JACK

You use to love coming here every year for Family Day.

LILA

That was when we were a family.

(Pause.)

JACK

Do you want the glove or not?

LILA

I don't think old Jose' Perez is gonna be hitting anything over the right field wall today, Dad.

JACK

He still has some juice in him. Jose' does. He might surprise you.

LILA

Here comes one of your brain dead employees.

(SHE holds out HER hand while affecting a big, phony smile)

Do we want “nice Lila” or “Demon Daughter from Hell Lila” today? Hmmmm?

(Pause. HE gives HER the phone. CAROL enters with a picnic basket.)

CAROL

Hey, hey, hey! Jack!

JACK

Carol! Hi!

CAROL

Looks like we're gonna have a great day for it!

JACK

Sure does. Where you sitting?

(CAROL looks at HER ticket.)

CAROL

OhmyGod! I think I'm sitting right here next to you. And this must be Lila!

JACK

Lila, this is Carol. From the office.

CAROL

Your father's office is a shrine to you, Lila.

JACK

Carol's my acquisitions manager.

LILA

Really? And what kinds of things does she acquire? Hm?

JACK

Well, she, uh, she handled all of the arrangements for Family Day this year. Right, Carol? Got the tickets and everything. Did a great job, too.

(CAROL dismisses the praise.)

CAROL

Oh!

LILA

So I guess that means we have you to thank for these fabulous seats right down front. All together. Like one big happy family.

CAROL

Well I just sorta handed them out, at random y'know. Willy-nilly and silly! That's me! Hey! Look what I brought!

(SHE shows HIM the contents of HER picnic basket.)

JACK

Oh, Carol! Your famous fried chicken.

CAROL

And my potato salad!

JACK

Looks like there's a lot there.

CAROL

Well aren't you two the lucky ones to be sitting next to me then.

LILA

Aren't we just.

CAROL

But y'know, they wouldn't let me bring in any of my drinks. I had Snapple and fruit juice and

JACK

In glass bottles?

(SHE nods

CAROL

Silly me! I'll just run down to the refreshment stand and

JACK

Oh, let me, Carol.

CAROL.

Nooooo! I'll do it.

(HE's reluctant to leave LILA with CAROL, afraid that LILA will not behave well.)

JACK

Well, if you don't mind

LILA

Oh, and would you get me a Diet Coke, Daddy? Please?!

JACK

Uh, sure, Honey. Carol?

CAROL.

Just a bottle of water, please.

JACK

Anything else, ladies.

LILA

Go on, Dad.

JACK

So that's one Diet Coke, (one water and....)

LILA

And take your time.

(The two women are staring at each other.)

JACK

Uh ... sure. Okay.

(A bit mystified, HE leaves. The women continue to stare at each other a moment, sizing each other up.)

CAROL

Cards on the table?

LILA

You don't have any cards, bitch.

CAROL

That's no way to talk to your future Step Mom, Lila.

LILA

Like that's gonna happen.

CAROL

Chicken?

LILA

You sleeping with him?

CAROL

Not yet.

LILA

What do you want with an old man?

CAROL

He's not that much older than I.

LILA

Ooooh! Proper use of the subjective case. I'll bet your grammar isn't so perfect in front of him.

CAROL

Best not to spring too much on a man all at once., doncha think?

LILA

He's not rich.

CAROL

Sure you don't want any chicken?

LILA

Mom soaked him in the divorce.

CAROL

I know.

LILA

So what's the appeal?

CAROL

He's hot.

LILA

Oh, please! He's a wimp!

CAROL

He is not!

LILA

My mother walked all over him.

CAROL

He's a good and kind man, and when he loves someone he loves them completely and forever. And that's not weakness, Honey. It takes someone special to love people like that. You'll find that out as you get older.

LILA

I already have one pontificating Mother.

CAROL

I don't want to be your mother, Lila. But I'd like to be somebody's mother, before it's too late.

LILA

Have you considered a sperm bank?

CAROL

Wouldn't you like a little brother or sister?

LILA

The idea is not completely without its appeal.

CAROL

So give me your blessing.

LILA

Are you asking for my father's hand in marriage?

CAROL

It'll be twice as hard if you're against me.

LILA

Oh, Sweetheart! It'll be impossible if I'm against you.

CAROL

Maybe. Maybe not.

LILA

You want to find out?

CAROL

Do you? You hardly see him anymore. I see him five days a week, eight to ten hours a day. Sometimes we work late!

LILA

Bring it on, bitch!

CAROL

I don't believe you, Lila. I don't believe you would sacrifice his happiness just to show me that you can jerk him around any time you want?! Am I wrong? Are you actually that petty and spiteful!? Are you really just another version of your Mother?!

LILA

Ouch! That hurt.

CAROL

Good.

LILA

You play hard ball.

CAROL

No more than you, Babycakes.

(Pause.)

LILA

I don't want to see him hurt again.

CAROL

I won't.

LILA

How do I know that? I don't know anything about you. Except that you're annoying.

CAROL

What do you want to know?

LILA

Are you a dyke?

CAROL

Why would I want to marry him if I were gay? Duh!

LILA

My mother married him.

CAROL

Your mother is confused. I'm not.

(Pause.)

LILA

My mother's not bad. Not really. She's just

CAROL

Confused.

LILA

Yeah.

(Pause)

CAROL

He's coming back. We don't have a lot of time here.

LILA

So give it to me straight. What's your pitch?

CAROL

In two years you'll be off to college. He'll be alone. Lonely. He'll be fair game for any of those conniving bitches in that office - and believe me - there are a few already sniffing around.

LILA

You mean in addition to you.

CAROL

I'm not like that and I'll prove it to you if you give me half a chance. I'll be good to him and for him. I'll love him fiercely until one of us dies, and I'll do my best never to hurt him. I promise.

(Pause)

CAROL (CONT'D)

I can't promise I'll never hurt him, because the more you love someone in this world, the more you can hurt them. But I'll never hurt him intentionally, that I can promise you.

(Pause)

CAROL (CONT'D)

Please, Lila

(Pause. JACK enters with drinks.)

JACK

Hey look! Jose' Perez is taking his batting practice.

CAROL

I used to have such a crush on him.

JACK

This is probably his last year.

LILA

He'll make a great batting coach.

JACK

That he will.

(We hear the solid crack of a bat hitting a ball.)

LILA

OhmyGod!

(THEY all look up, shading their eyes from the sun.)

JACK

That is the highest pop-up I've ever seen!

CAROL

It's coming this way!

JACK

It's still goin' up. Lila! Here!

(HE tries to give LILA the glove, but SHE hands it right to CAROL.)

LILA

Oh, no! This one's all yours, Carol.

(CAROL beams a smile and puts the glove on and looks up, ready to catch the ball. JACK is looking up, too, but LILA is looking at both of THEM.)

JACK

Here it comes! Are you ready?

CAROL

Oh, you bet I am!

(Snap to black.)

THE END