

LIBERTY'S HONEYMOON

A Play in One Act

written by

Ethan Warren

617.721.0672
ewarren17@gmail.com

CHARACTERS

PETER WATERS – late 20s. More uptight than he would like to admit.

LIBERTY “LIBBY” WATERS – early 20s. Girlish and seemingly immature in her bearing, but it masks a self-awareness.

SETTING

The kitchen of a well-to-do family’s home, with a table and four chairs. Late morning.
Present day.

Peter sits at the kitchen table, paper menus spread in front of him, talking on the phone.

PETER

Yes, hi, my name's Peter Waters, I'm looking at your catering menu. I'm trying to put together an order for about ninety people...private function...no, we're renting out a hall –

(laugh)

Yeah, that's my mom, exactly...no, it's just a ceremonial thing, it's Deborah Waters Day THIS year, it's not like it'll be an annual holiday...well thank you, I'll let her know. I'm sure she'll appreciate it...No, I'm sure she does. She has a crazy memory for students. You'd think thirty years as principal, a few would slip through the cracks, but they never seem to.

(laugh)

Yeah, she really is. So I was wondering about your –

Libby opens the door, sees Peter on the phone, and tiptoes in. Peter glances up, sees her, and his shock throws him off his game.

PETER

Uh, your vegetarian options.

Libby smiles and gives him a shy wave.

PETER

Um – I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to call you back. Thank you so much for – sorry.

He hangs up and stares at her for a beat.

LIBBY

Howdy, stranger.

PETER

You came.

LIBBY

Of course I did!

PETER

We never heard from you. At all.

LIBBY

Well, it's a big deal! Mom –

PETER

She'll get a certificate and eat a shitty catered lunch. She's embarrassed by the whole thing. But you're here.

LIBBY

It's still a big day for her.

She leans against a counter. Her casual attitude pisses Peter off.

PETER

We never heard from you!

LIBBY

I know! I'm sorry. Life's been so crazy.

PETER

Yeah, everything's been really crazy.

Libby nods. An embarrassed beat.

LIBBY

So how are things here?

PETER

Crazy. I've had to pick up a lot of slack. Somehow Mom's been even busier since she retired.

LIBBY

That's great. You're so responsible. You make me feel like such a bum.

She laughs. Peter doesn't.

PETER

So what's been going on? How's the family?

LIBBY

Great. So great. Seeing Arthur as a dad is so beautiful.

PETER

Doesn't he already have kids?

LIBBY

They don't really talk. I think they sort of took their mom's side.

PETER

Sure.

LIBBY

But he's so sweet with Gabe. He figured he'd never get that again, so it's like...I gave him a second lease on life.

PETER

Sure.

Uncomfortable beat.

LIBBY

Anyway, we just got back from Hawaii. Can't you see my tan?

PETER

No. What?

LIBBY

I'm kidding! I was trapped in the hotel all day. Can't bring a tiny baby to the beach.

PETER

What was in Hawaii?

LIBBY

Our honeymoon! You think just because we eloped we're not gonna do a honeymoon?

PETER

So you dragged a newborn to Hawaii just to sit inside? Couldn't the professor watch the baby while you sunbathed?

Libby purses her lips at "the professor."

LIBBY

Arthur was always running all over the place visiting historic sites. I hardly saw him.

PETER

Sounds romantic.

LIBBY

It was great. I didn't mind. I couldn't really be separated from Gabe anyway, with the breastfeeding. I don't know if –

PETER

Yeah, I'm familiar with breastfeeding.

LIBBY

The hotel was right on the water, though, so I could see it from the balcony. And it was a really nice hotel. I did bring a bathing suit, just in case. I tried it on one day, since I hadn't gotten to before. Y'know –

She mimes a pregnant belly.

LIBBY

I put it on just to see myself in the mirror. Just shifting from foot to foot, trying to find any angle where I look like...me. Who I was before.

PETER

Before what?

LIBBY

Before Gabe.

PETER

Sure.

LIBBY

I brought one of my freshman roommates with me to model swimsuits, back before the wedding. We weren't that close as seniors, but a lot of my friends got kinda...weird. So I couldn't...and Ronnie and I had stayed sort of friendly, we still sat at the same table at dinner sometimes. Saw each other at parties. So it was nice to catch up. We drove to this mall like an hour from school, just so we wouldn't run into too many people. I was sort of notorious by then. So we had a chance to talk on the drive. She had a lot of questions.

She laughs, uncomfortable. Peter doesn't.

LIBBY

So we went to the department store – the nice one. I had Arthur's card. And Ronnie kept trying to force these little bikinis on me, being like, *He'd LOVE you in this*. She'd literally try and force them into my hands, and she had this weird look in her eyes, like...she was sort of sad for me, but sort of into it, too. The transgression of it. I don't know. It was gross.

PETER

Yeah, sounds pretty gross.

LIBBY

But I wasn't really feeling like I'd ever want to put a bikini on again, so I had her try on this big pink and blue thing, all stretchy and baggy and...a MOM suit, y'know? And even then, when Ronnie came out of the changing room, I was so envious of her body, and she could tell. And she was like –

(falsely cheery voice)

Oh, pretty girl, you'll get your tummy back! But her face, like...collapsed as she said it. And she did this little spin on her toe, like a dancer, so I couldn't see her face. Her pity. But then she was facing the triple mirrors, so all the reflections were bouncing off each other and instead of once, I saw the look dozens of times, like a kaleidoscope. Just endless, pitying Ronnies, back and back into forever.

She gets lost in the memory. Peter waits, impatient.

LIBBY

Anyway! By the time we got to Hawaii, I sorta thought maybe I HAD gotten my tummy back. But when I was finally wearing the suit, looking in the mirror, I just...I knew I was never getting it back. The clock only runs one way. I can lose the weight, but I'm never getting my tummy BACK. And the suit, this weird unsexy suit, just rubbed it in. *You're a mom now.* And I'm so glad! It was my choice. And I'm so happy. I know you don't – I've never been happier. I have a family. But the suit...so I peeled it off my shoulders, and it hung down around my waist like a snakeskin. And Gabe had been crying a couple minutes, but I was trying to let him self-sooth –

PETER

Babies that little can't self-sooth!

LIBBY

He was fine. But I figured I should feed him, so I scooped him up by the armpits, the silly little armpits, and I have him on my hip, and he's screaming and flopping around like he doesn't have a bone in his silly little body. And I'm looking out through the glass doors at the balcony and the ocean, and thinking how good it would feel to be in the sun. My skin was, like, ACHING to be out there in the warm. Like, I flew twelve hours for THIS?

She briefly waits for a reaction. Peter gives her nothing. She pushes on.

LIBBY

So I slide the door open and I go out and I sit down on the little chair with the scratchy cushion and the metal all hot from the sun, and I stick the kid on the boob and he's tugging and whining and being all weird. It wasn't even as warm and lovely as I hoped. But still. My heart started racing, I was getting excited, because the hotel was in sort of a horseshoe shape, so from where I'm sitting, all these other rooms can see my balcony. Dozens of rooms, maybe a hundred. And it's the middle of the day, so pretty much nobody else is out on their balcony, but I could just imagine husbands sitting in their rooms, older guys having a siesta or waiting while their wives rub in big globby handfuls of sunscreen, and I imagined them catching a glimpse of me through the curtains, out there. Exposed like that –

Peter winces, but Libby presses on.

LIBBY

And it's not like I FELT sexy. Honestly, I felt more like a water balloon that got left outside all day. But there was this sort of...like a churning feeling in my gut. Just thinking that maybe they'd see me. These men. They'd see my body and maybe...they'd want me.

Peter stands up abruptly.

PETER

Christ, Lib! Stop!

LIBBY

What?

PETER

Do you not get how you sound?

Libby leans back against the counter, relaxed, as he gets worked up.

LIBBY

I guess not.

PETER

Of course not. Of COURSE.

LIBBY

What's that mean?

PETER

Are you serious?

Libby waits for him to speak. By now he's getting VERY worked up.

PETER

Do you really have so little self-awareness? You walk in here, I'm on the PHONE, and you just start – this MONOLOGUE – and you're – you turn breastfeeding, this natural, normal part of motherhood, into this bizarre little display for your own...

He sputters.

PETER

I mean, REALLY?

Libby just looks at him. He gets more upset.

PETER

I mean, do you ever—EVER—think about how the things you do impact people? Or do you just smash around like a wrecking ball not noticing there are people crushed behind you?

LIBBY

Do you mean Arthur getting fired?

PETER

No! God. He made his choices. That wasn't you. He...

LIBBY

Seduced me?

PETER

I don't know! You were both adults – technically. It doesn't matter.

LIBBY

So what are you talking about?

PETER

REALLY? You're that DENSE? Do you have ANY self-awareness?

He doesn't like being so worked up, and he deliberately pulls himself back, firmly shutting the door that just opened in him.

PETER

If you expect me to forgive and forget. That you chose the weekend of my wedding to tell everyone you were fucking your advisor and you were in love. Then I just don't know what to do with you.

Libby nods. Peter sits down, suddenly tired.

Long beat.

LIBBY

Ask me again.

PETER

What?

LIBBY

Ask me again if I have any self-awareness.

Peter looks at her.

LIBBY

Do it.

PETER

Do you have any self-awareness?

LIBBY

Yes. I do. And next time you find yourself thinking, *Does she have ANY self-awareness?* Try saying to yourself, *Yes, she does.*

Peter looks up at her, suddenly unsure what conversation they're having.

LIBBY

OK. My turn now. Do you have any self-awareness?

PETER

What are you talking about?

LIBBY

I know you can't forgive me. That's been really, really obvious for almost a year now. But you're so committed to this whole –

(goofy, pompous voice)

I'm the responsible one, someone has to be responsible thing that...well, we've never talked about it. I was starting to figure we never would. And yeah, no duh Mom's big day isn't that big a deal. But it gave me an excuse to come home and get us in the same room. And it got you screaming at me. I knew that wouldn't be easy, so yeah, I just walked in and started throwing words at you, but I'm pretty sure nothing ever makes you as mad as when I talk talk talk.

PETER

I wasn't screaming.

LIBBY

Well you were doing the Peter equivalent. So how'd it feel?

Beat.

PETER

Weird.

LIBBY

And how do you feel now?

Beat.

LIBBY

Do you feel free? Just a little?

PETER

I feel different.

LIBBY

That's a start. So now we can talk.

She goes to the table and sits across from him.

LIBBY

I screwed up, man. I could have figured out a better way, probably. I have trouble falling asleep about half the time these days, thinking about how distracted Mom and Dad were at your wedding. And I hate myself. And I'm breastfeeding three times a night. I need whatever sleep I can get. But I can't sleep because I hate myself. Does that feel good to hear?

Peter doesn't speak.

LIBBY

You don't get to keep doing that. Being silent. Seeing what I say and if I'm gonna hang myself or let you off the hook. Tell me: does it feel good to know I hate myself?

PETER

Not really.

LIBBY

Not as good as you always thought it might?

He doesn't speak. She raises her eyebrows.

PETER

No, not really.

LIBBY

So I'm sorry, man. I'm really, really sorry. But I also gotta say this: do you remember what happened two days after your wedding?

Peter doesn't speak.

LIBBY

Maybe something big hanging over my head and I knew was about to break?

Peter thinks, then realizes.

PETER

Shit. Is that when the school put out the statement?

LIBBY

You were in Costa Rica by then. I'm not sure when you even heard, and I know it was all a blur, but...yeah. I kinda had to do it. But I screwed it all up. And I'm sorry.

She stands up.

LIBBY

Now you know everything. I said what I came to say. I'm gonna go back to the motel, feed my baby, and go for a run. Working on those last five pounds. And it gives me time to think.

Libby looks him over, then starts to go. But when she gets to the door, she turns back.

LIBBY

I guess the real reason – I always had a feeling you didn't like me. And a year ago, I found out for sure. That my brother doesn't like me. And that...hurts. So...yeah. Bye.

She opens the door. Peter is quietly devastated.

PETER

Hey, hang on.

She waits.

PETER

Do you have a minute?

She nods. He's very emotional, but he's stuck.

PETER

I've been trying to figure out a good vegetarian option for the lunch. Can you give me a hand? I've got all these menus, and I just don't know what to do.

Libby looks at him. His eyes are begging forgiveness, the only way he knows how. She struggles with whether to give it.

LIBBY

Yeah, sure.

She goes to the table and sits down.

LIBBY

So what are you thinking?

PETER

Well, I want something hearty, since it's a hot lunch. I can't figure out if we should go vegan, just to get that base covered at the same time.

Libby is looking at him, and he glances up and catches her eye. They look at each other for a long moment, unsure if there's still a tension in the air. But when Libby speaks, she's relaxed. They can move on.

LIBBY

No, go cheese. Eggplant parm or something. Get a salad for the vegans. They made their choice. They can deal.

Peter smiles, then starts shuffling menus, looking at options. Libby watches him.

END OF PLAY