

Betty Broadway

by

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EXT. THE COFFEE HAUS - DAY

A line of potted palm trees separates the shop from the sidewalk. Lizards dart quickly between safety and risk.

Linen table cloths, weighted with napkin holders, reflect the sunshine as they drape over the wrought iron bistro tables.

INT. THE COFFEE HAUS - DAY

DAVID PAGE, (24) sits alone at a corner table. Note cards are scattered about, a few under his coffee, a few on the floor.

He's husky and wears an extra large Led Zeppelin shirt with a Florida Gator's hat, turned backwards.

His hair is shoulder length, thin, stringy and, like his week-old facial scrub, is completely ignored.

KAYLEE, 19 and slim with buttons attached to her apron, approaches with a fresh biscotti, wrapped in wax paper.

She's pretty. Her dyed black hair is wrapped in a ponytail, but a few strands always seem to escape to fall over her eyes.

KAYLEE

Hey. How goes the script?

David grunts.

He grabs the biscotti and bites it, hard.

KAYLEE

You're eating angry. Don't eat angry. That was an innocent biscotti. It deserved better than that.

Kaylee sits down as David crumbles up the wax paper and throws it at her, which she catches, effortlessly.

DAVID

Shouldn't you be working?

KAYLEE

Shouldn't you?

David begins to pick up some of the loose index cards.

DAVID

Yes I should. But I'm stuck. You know anyone who can write songs?

KAYLEE

I thought it was a zombie picture.

DAVID

It is, but Tony wants to reinvent the genre with a zombie musical, which I'm NOT crazy about.

KAYLEE

So why do it?

DAVID

'Cause Tony's sister's boyfriend has a cousin that works for Hammett and Ulrich, an' he seems to think he can get us looked at.

KAYLEE

...with a zombie musical?

David slumps behind his laptop screen while Kaylee consults her smart phone.

KAYLEE

No worries. There's a girl in my life drawing class whose grandma used to work on Broadway.

DAVID

You ain't tryin' to set me up again, are you?

Kaylee rolls her eyes as she scrolls through the menus.

KAYLEE

Ewww! She is way pretty and cool and ginormously out of your league. Oh, and if this works out, you are SO painting my room.

David sighs and takes another chomp of biscotti.

EXT. PASADENA ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY - AFTERNOON

A generic looking multi-story building, surrounded by palm trees and mature oaks.

A weathered wooden sign stands by the entrance. It reads, in elegant type, "Pasadena Senior Living Community."

INT. FUNCTION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A large group of SENIORS are gathered around the piano. They sing, in a variety of keys, Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville.

SENIORS

Searching for my lost shaker of  
salt...

Those who are able raise their canes high above their heads as they shout:

SENIORS

SALT! SALT! SALT!

The focus of the attention is BETTY SARGENT (85), with curly silver hair, a bright Hawaiian shirt and khaki cargo shorts.

SENIORS

Some people claim that there's a  
woman to blame.

She pounds the piano with authority and sings with joy.

SENIORS

But I know it's my own damned  
fault!

The seniors applaud. They thank Betty as they shuffle off.

David, clean shaven and dressed in a nice shirt and pants, enters with a SALESWOMAN. She points towards Betty, smiles and leaves.

David has a cheap bouquet, still wrapped in plastic.

DAVID

Hi...Are you, like, Betty Sargent?

BETTY

Depend's whose asking. Are those  
for me?

David smiles and hands her the bouquet.

BETTY

Then it's me. I never turn away a  
man with flowers.

DAVID

I'm David Page. My sister is, uh,  
friends with your granddaughter...

BETTY

The screenwriter. Here.

She hands him a thick bag of full of song books.

BETTY

Make yourself useful.

David strains with the bag as Betty scoots along with her walker, which is decked out with skate board decals.

INT. BETTY'S APARTMENT

It is small, but her whole life seems to fit neatly in this one bedroom apartment.

An upright piano dominates the living room, the walls are a museum of classic Broadway and Hollywood musicals, such as framed movie posters for "Johnny Appleseeds."

A photo of a young Ethel Merman, with the inscription of "Love Ya, Betty Broadway! E." hangs above the piano.

On a separate wall, there are photos of handsome young soldiers. Some photos are black and white, others in color.

A Grammy holds down a stack of music on top of the piano.

Betty and David enter the apartment.

Three cats take notice from their naps. They stretch.

BETTY

Get me that blue vase, will ya? Top shelf, to the left.

David puts down the bag and heads into the kitchenette. He's a bit lost. One by one, the cats gather in the kitchen.

BETTY

Your other left. And add some sugar to the water. These flowers have seen better days. Christ, haven't we all?

David finds a nice crystal vase and begins to fill it from the sink. David begins to sneeze.

BETTY

Wait-Not that! That's a Waterford antique! Oh, what the hell. Life is too damn short.

David places the vase on the counter, on top of an embroidered coaster decorated with musical notes.

BETTY

So. Have you sold anything?

DAVID

No. Not yet. Workin' on it.

Betty pulls up the piano bench and tickles the keys. They are battered. Wood shows through where the ivory has worn away from decades of constant use.

BETTY

Working on it? Honey, writing isn't something you work on...It's a passion, a driving force that wells up from within your soul that has to be released, other wise...

David plops on the living room couch.

The cats walk towards David. They stop at his feet and stare.

DAVID

I think it's passion.

BETTY

You have to bleed it. Consider Shelton and Cook. They write dialogue in their sleep and dream in industry standard format. Do you?

DAVID

Well, I have, uh, Final Draft.

Betty laughs.

BETTY

Honey, a lot of people have guitars, but does that make them Les Paul?

HANNAH, 28 and gorgeous (even without make-up), storms into the tiny apartment. She carries several bags of groceries.

Hannah has long blonde hair that she tried to tie up, but failed miserably as it falls like satin around her face.

She has florescent green eyes and a lovely figure, which she shows off without trying in a pink tank-top and loose cotton shorts.

Hannah unloads the groceries on the counter. She doesn't notice David.

The three cats jump up on him. David sneezes again.

HANNAH

Hey Grammy; we have to call Dr. Norris about getting that prescription refilled, because the pharmacist said that...Who the hell are you?

BETTY

This is David, the screenwriter. You met his sister at Art Class.

HANNAH

Oh yeah. Kaylee's brother. Sweet girl.

The young woman checks the fridge.

HANNAH

Do you want a drink? We have Fresca, Diet Sprite...I can make some sweet tea, if you like.

DAVID

Iced tea would be awesome.

Hannah begins to make some ice tea in the kitchen.

The cats purr as they climb all over David. He tries to push them off, but to no avail. They are relentless.

HANNAH

So what's the script about?

DAVID

It's like, about this guy who..

BETTY

It's a zombie musical. Hannah, can you get me the MacBook, please?

Hannah walks into the living room and picks up a briefcase that leans against the sofa.

Betty flips open a top of the line laptop. It has a small midi keyboard attached.

DAVID

I like, really appreciate your help on this...Of course, I can't, uh, you know, like, pay you right...

BETTY

Nonsense! We'll be partners. You will pay me and pay me dearly with lyrics that sing from the depths your soul and burst forth from the bowels of your heart...

Hannah shouts from the kitchen as Betty plays the midi keys.

HANNAH

Like "Alien".

Seconds later, the tune chimes out of her computer.

BETTY

What's the title going to be? It's got to be universal, and reflect the overall message of the piece.

DAVID

I was thinkin', somethin' like "Zombie Love."

Hannah walks in with iced tea for everyone. She pulls up a chair, even though there is plenty of room on the couch.

The cats are asleep. One is curled up on David's lap, one sleeps on his head and the third one is on his left side.

HANNAH

How about "You Complete Me?"  
Zombies are always missing parts.

DAVID

Yeah. It's about a girl who falls in love with this dude who turned into a zombie. Faced with the idea of being separated forever, she decides to let 'em bite her so's that she can be a zombie, too. It turns out though, that true to his nature, the dude zombie just winds up eating her brains anyways.

HANNAH

Loved her for her mind.

DAVID

This is the song that plays in her imagination when thinkin' about the bite idea.

BETTY

Unfortunately, some people can only feel love after it's been taken away; stolen by death or war or time...or if it was never attainable in the first place.

INT. BETTY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The moon shines through the window as a gentle breeze drifts through the lacy curtains.

The song writers sit with notes, scribbles and staff paper scattered about the living room carpet.

BETTY

This was so much fun! Reminds me of when I wrote Amber Waves for Johnny Appleseeds. Ben Royce needed it first thing in the morning, and, by gosh, not only did we it done but we got a Tony nod in the process.

DAVID

I loved that song. We sang that in third grade.

BETTY

I still treasure these moments, getting lost in the creation of music. You've got some talent, but you have to work at writing it from the heart-otherwise, you'll come off as a zombie yourself.

DAVID

I will, and thanks again. I'll be by around nine. Do you need me to, uhm, bring anything?

BETTY

Yeah. Some Marlboro one hundreds and some decent wine. None of that wine in a box crap.

As David gets ready to leave, the cats jump up, stretch and go back to their regular spots. David is covered with cat hair.

HANNAH

You know that's against the rules.

BETTY

And you know that I couldn't care less.

Betty kisses Hannah on the cheek and grasps her hand.

BETTY

I hope that you'll join us again tomorrow. It's been such a blessing. I get one more chance to do what I love with the person I love!

Hannah smiles.

EXT. PASADENA FACILITY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

David and Hannah exit the building together.

David's beat-up Saturn is parked next to Hannah's sexy Miata.

DAVID

Your grandma is cool.

HANNAH

That she is.

DAVID

Hey...You want to, like, you know, get some Chinese? I know a little place downtown that has great...

HANNAH

I don't think so. Look, I'll be honest. I just had the absolute worst break-up ever. I'm not interested in anyone new right now.

Hannah gets into her car.

DAVID

I didn't mean it like that. I just figured...

Hannah closes the door and starts the engine.

EXT. PASADENA FACILITY PARKING LOT - MORNING

David closes his car door. He's got coffee, a bottle of wine and a pack of cigarettes. He turns to see Hannah drive up.

DAVID  
Hey, Hannah.

Hannah climbs out of her car and rips the cigarettes out of David's hand, crumples them, and throws them in her backseat.

HANNAH  
You forgot them.

EXT. PASADENA FACILITY HALLWAY

David and Hannah walk towards Betty's apartment.

HANNAH  
I'm sorry about that Chinese thing last night. It's just where I'm at right now. Nothing personal.

David smiles as they walk up to Betty's door.

Hannah tries the door, expecting it to open. It doesn't.

HANNAH  
Oh no! No!

Hannah fumbles for her key.

INT. BETTY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Betty lays on the floor, like she fell off the piano bench.

HANNAH  
Grammy! Oh God, no! NO!

David grabs Betty's house phone. He pushes the red button.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT WAITING ROOM - LATER

Hannah speaks on her cell phone as David walks in.

HANNAH  
Yeah, Susan. I'll call you back.

DAVID  
So...Is she alright?

HANNAH  
We don't know yet. She had a stroke, but they don't know to what extent it may have affected her. Still, it's important to be strong, optimistic. For her sake.

David begins to tear up.

DAVID  
Just so you know, I really feel fortunate to have met you guys- I feel like I really got to know your grandma, even though it was just a little while, it was special. Meant a lot to me, and now, look...Soft as a grape.

Hannah puts her hand on his shoulder.

A NURSE pokes her head in. She carries a small, battery operated piano. Hannah takes the keyboard and smiles.

HANNAH  
Come on. She wants to see us.

David wipes his eyes with his sleeve as they head into Betty's room.

DAVID  
Soft as a grape.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT-BETTY'S ROOM

Betty looks awful. Tubes and wires are everywhere, however she grins ear to ear when David and Hannah walk in.

Excitedly, she motions to Hannah to play the keyboard.

DAVID  
I thought about what you said, and so I revised some of the words. I hope you like it.

Betty smiles and nods as Hannah plays the tune.

He clears his throat.

DAVID

You complete me. Don't defeat me.  
Please don't eat me. Life without  
you would be like losing my eye-I'd  
never be whole, but I couldn't die.  
The path that we walk has hardly  
been bless'd, if we dwell on what's  
wrong, we'll miss on the rest. I am  
all that remains of who I used to  
be, but now I'm with you for  
eternity. You complete me.

Betty smiles and laughs, but she can't clap due to the wires.

Hannah grasps her grandmother's right hand.

DAVID

I sent a copy of the song to my  
friend out in Hollywood. Good news  
is, he really liked it, but the  
challenge is he wants to add ten  
more. I'd really like to continue  
working with you on this, once you  
get back on your feet, of course.

HANNAH

Perhaps you might have one more  
musical in there, itching to get  
out.

Betty reaches and grasps David's hand. She pulls him down to  
her face, and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

Betty speaks softly, but with all the fire and passion that  
still burns in her heart.

BETTY

Oh, I'd be delighted, partner!

FADE TO BLACK

To see the musical score and other surprises, check out  
<http://bettybroadway.webs.com/>