PLEASE BE AWARE THAT
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.

2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.

3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.

4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.

5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!
Sour Plums

A Short Play

by

Jill Elaine Hughes

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED

Performance Rights Available Exclusively through
Heartland Plays, Inc. at heartlandplays.com
playsnow@heartlandplays.com
customer service: 406-431-7680

Copyright © 2001/2020 Jill Elaine Hughes
Sour Plums  
by Jill Elaine Hughes

CHARACTERS

2F

DAISY: Over 50

PEARL: Her sister; wheelchair bound

SETTING

1999

PREMIERE CREDIT

World Premiere Production June 2001 at Theatre of Western Springs, Western Springs Illinois, as part of their Shorts for a Summer’s Evening festival.
Sour Plums
by Jill Elaine Hughes

SETTING: PEARL and DAISY are sisters living together in a small apartment. They have hated one another since childhood but have never quite been able to sever their ties with one another. PEARL has been wheelchair-bound since she was a teenager.

AT RISE: PEARL and DAISY are in the kitchen. PEARL is looking for something to eat; DAISY is absently reading a newspaper.

PEARL
(Wheels over to refrigerator and looks inside)
Where’s the can of plums I had in here?

DAISY
Don’t know what you’re talking about.

PEARL
You very well do. The can of plums. The Valencia brand plums that Howard Mill brought me back from Burlington as a present. I left the can in the fridge to chill on the bottom shelf so I could reach it from my chair.

DAISY
Still don’t know what you’re talking about.

PEARL
I left it right here. A twelve-ounce can of fresh spring plums. You can’t buy those around here. You can’t get plums like that down here in Texas. It’s a Northern thing. The Safeway don’t carry ‘em. They got cans of peaches, cans of pears, cans of mandarin oranges even, but nobody’s got plums round here. Howard went right to the place they were grown and packed to get me that can. It even had the sweet syrup sauce. I can’t believe you took it. You know I was saving it for a special occasion.

DAISY
(Doesn’t look up from her newspaper)
Today’s no special occasion.

PEARL
Yes it is. It’s Friday. I love Fridays.
DAISY
You love Fridays.

PEARL
Yes, I do. You know that.

DAISY
Can’t say as I do.

PEARL
Yes, you do. I love Fridays. Especially this Friday. It’s the first Friday of the month, the day I get my disability check and watch the shopping channel.

DAISY
You never buy nothin’ you see on that channel, so why do you watch it? Ain’t nothin’ on there but junk and all the hostess ladies look like they’s made of shiny plastic.

PEARL
(Wheels back away from refrigerator)
You don’t have to buy anything to enjoy the shopping channel.

DAISY
Don’t see how that’s possible.

PEARL
It is possible. (Wheels her chair over to the table where DAISY is sitting; the refrigerator door slams behind her) The ladies who model the jewelry all have such pretty hands. Their nails are all done with the shiny white tips and they all have the pretty jewelry and wristwatches on and they all smile like it’s just the end of the world.

DAISY
You would like that. You think it’s the end of the world all the time. (Rises from table and goes to open the refrigerator) You’re like Chicken Little, always runnin’ around saying “the sky is falling.” You think it’s the end of the world when you run outa cold cream.

DAISY rummages around in the refrigerator

PEARL
Well, you try spending all your time in a rickety wheelchair cooped up in a smelly clapboard apartment with your grouchy humpbacked sister, see what you start to say.

DAISY
I ain’t grouchy. An’ I ain’t humpbacked, neither. That’s just a little osteoporosis.

DAISY returns to the table with bread and jam; sits.
PEARL
Yes you are. Mercy. No, I was saying that the ladies on the channel are all just so lovely, with their pretty hands and their soft voices. All they do is smile and smile and laugh all the time. They get so thrilled over the smallest things. It don’t take much to please ‘em. Just show the Excalibur Jewelry Show hostess a sterling silver ring with aquamarine chips pretty enough to be the Selection of the Hour, and she talks like all the world’s problems are solved.

DAISY
I wish you were pleased that easy. Then all my problems would be solved.

PEARL
Aw, shut up, you old coot.

DAISY
You’re calling me the old coot. That’s a laugh. You’re two years older, and in that chair to boot.

PEARL
(Wheels to other side of the room, near the trash can)
I’ve been in this chair for forty-six years. [Adjust for age of actors] Think you’d be used to it by now.

DAISY
Well, I ain’t. All you do is mark up the floors with your wheels and bang that thing into the paneling so it looks like we had the World War Three in here. I’ll never be used to that.

PEARL
You should be. All I’ve done since the accident is wheel around under your nose. And all you do is stick your nose up in the air that much higher. Like you’re so much better than me. Like since you can walk that makes you less of an old maid than me. Well, I’ll tell you something, Daisy. When you figure out how to drag yourself up onto the toilet with two useless legs and not spill anything out onto the floor or mash it into the cloth of your dress while still navigatin’ around a Deluxe Maidenform Girdle, and your only survivin’ relative in the world won’t even help you onto the toilet, we can talk about which one of us is better than the other.

DAISY
I do not need to listen to your toilet habits, Pearl. That’s—well, that’s just unladylike. You know I can’t stand to be around you when you’re like this. Out on your little tirades. I’m going in the back room to eat. I never saw such a.. (Starts to get up)

PEARL
You’re mad ‘cause Howard Mill keeps comin’ to visit me, aren’t you?

DAISY
I ain’t mad. Why would I be mad?
PEARL
Nobody ever comes to visit you.

DAISY
That’s not true. Jeb Howard came to visit me a few times.

PEARL
That was three years ago. And he’s dead now.

DAISY
Oh. Well. . .

PEARL
See, it’s because nobody wants to come see you. You’re so nasty and unpleasant that nobody wants to be around you. Least of all me, but I don’t have a choice.

I am not unpleasant.

PEARL
Oh you are so. All you do is ruffle everybody’s feathers, all you think of is yourself. I can’t even get my chair out the front door unless you help me, and when was the last time you did that?

DAISY pauses to think.

PEARL, Continued
See! What did I tell you. You can’t even recall the last time you helped me. What does that say about you, you—you—bugbat!

DAISY
Goddamn a mercy—.

PEARL
See, there you go again with the foul language. Mama always said that a lady never. . .

DAISY
“A lady never bends or speaks below the waist.” Yeah, I remember that. Lotta good Mama’s advice did us, two old maids, an’ one of us a cripple.

PEARL
You shouldn’t speak ill of Mama.
DAISY
I’ll speak ill o’ whoever I please. Not like Mama’s doin’ anything about it. She’s been dead
since the week before Kennedy was shot. That was so like her—she had to mess up
everybody’s plans, even when she up and died. She sure knew how to kill the mood at a
party.

PEARL
Daisy, now that ain’t—now that just ain’t nice.

DAISY
She did it every time—so much so that Dad wouldn’t take her anywhere with him, not even
to the country club. She even managed to take all the fun out of being let out of work for
three days when the President kicked the bucket and LBJ took over since I had to plan the
wake and the funeral and all. I didn’t even get to see Lady Bird when she came through town
on the entourage, ’cause I was holed up in that smelly ol’ funeral home.

PEARL
It was Dad who planned most of the funeral.

DAISY
Well, I helped.

PEARL
See, that’s what I mean about you, Daisy. You’ve got no respect for anyone, even the dead.
No wonder nobody comes round here no more. You’d probably speak ill of poor Jeb
Howard if he hadn’t been sweet on you.

DAISY
He wasn’t sweet on me. Man just had too much damn time on his hands. He didn’t do
anything but hang around and bother people. Wasn’t his fault he lost his hands in the war,
but it didn’t really make him good for anything except ripping up weeds with his hooks and
generally being the town freak. I never liked him much anyway. He had psoriasis on his
scalp and he smelled like Ben-Gay.

PEARL
(Under her breath)
That was probably your own Ben-Gay you were smellin’, not his. (Out loud) Well, it’s no
wonder you never married, Daisy. Your standards always were way too high.

DAISY
That’s pot callin’ the kettle black, ain’t it? I don’t see a ring on your finger!

PEARL
Well, I’m in this chair! I was lucky if anybody gave me the time o’ day, let alone showed
any romantic interest. You of all people should know that. Now I finally got somebody
payin’ attention to me for the first time since 1954 and I would sure appreciate it if you
would stop gettin’ in the way. (Tries to wheel out of the room, but DAISY obstructs her path)
DAISY
How exactly am I gettin’ in the way?

PEARL
What I was startin’ to say before we got off on this other—track. The plums that Howard brought me that I was savin’. I know you took ‘em, don’t even try to deny it.

DAISY
Why would I want to eat up your nasty cheap old can o’ Yankee plums?

PEARL
I never said nothin’ about you eating them. I said you took ‘em.

DAISY
I—I mean, why would I—

PEARL
Oh—oh—there you go! Trippin’ up on your words again! See, I caught you! You do that every time. You trip on your words and your eyes do that little flicker over to the right. I’ve seen you do it so many times I could recognize it in my sleep.

DAISY
Here you go again, imaginin’ things.

PEARL
I am not imaginin’ anything. I know what I see before my very own eyes, and what I’ve been seein’ over and over since we was kids. You never could lie well. I can always see it in your eyes. My cataracts ain’t so thick that I don’t know what I see right in front o’ my own nose.

DAISY
Now I am goin’ in the back room. I don’t have to listen to this.

DAISY picks up the bread and jam and exits, slamming the bedroom door behind her.

PEARL
(Calling offstage)
You think that I don’t know about all you’ve done to me over the years? Well, you’re wrong. I know everything. Everything. I even know what you did with Bob Booster in the back of the bus on that class trip to Houston we took senior year.

DAISY, Offstage
Will you please just be quiet! You ain’t impressin’ nobody.
PEARL
I ain’t tryin’ to impress anybody. I don’t see nobody else here to impress besides you. And I don’t want to impress you.

*SFX: From off; the sound of old-time Big Band music begins to blare.*

PEARL, Continued
Now you got your music a-blarin’. Think you can hide yourself from me, do you. Well, you can’t. Not this time, little Miss Railroad Longhorn Queen 1952. (Wheels over to the door and bangs on it.) Daisy! DAISY! (Continues to bang on door) Don’t you hide from me when I’m in the middle o’ tellin’ you off!! You know how much that aggravates me!

*SFX: Music lowers for a moment.*

DAISY, Off
You should be used to disappointment by now.

*SFX: Music now plays even louder.*

PEARL begins ramming her chair into the doorframe.

DAISY, Off; Continued
(Shouting)
Will you stop that??!! You’ll break the door down!!

PEARL
I ain’t gonna stop until you come out here and let me finish my say.

*SFX: Music stops.*

DAISY opens the door reluctantly.

PEARL, Continued
There now. That’s better. Now I can get down to my business.

DAISY
Out with it.

PEARL
Like I said, I always know when you lie. You’re lyin’ now. You lied to Mama about Bob Booster, you lied to Mama and Papa about how you went down to Mexico to take care o’ what you and Bob Booster done, and you’re lyin’ now.

DAISY
Prove it.
PEARL
All right, I will. In a minute. But I know you took them plums just like you’ve always taken everything else from me. And then you try to lie about it. Even after the accident, when you tried to tell the police you didn’t see that other car coming, you couldn’t even lie right about that.

DAISY

I . . .

PEARL
(Rummages in garbage bin and pulls out empty can of plums)
Here! I knew it! You ate these up yourself when you knew I was saving them! It’s always the same with you. Always the same. Always jealous of my good fortune so you have to go and spoil it.

DAISY
Don’t know what you’re talkin’ about.

PEARL
You very well do. It’s been the same old story ever since we were in high school.

DAISY
I’m going back into the bedroom now. Can’t take no more of you.

PEARL
Oh no you don’t. (Rams her with the wheelchair) You stay right where you are. (Continues)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes