

SEZZE SUN

By Kate Mulley

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Characters:

Ben- mid-twenties, a struggling actor, British.

Anna- mid-twenties, a television actress, British.

Caroline- mid-twenties, Economics PhD student at Oxford, American

Pete- mid-thirties, lead guitarist from successful grunge band, American

Hannah- 60ish, Ben's mother.

Hugh- 60ish, Ben's uncle.

James- 60ish, Ben's father. A venture capitalist.

Time and place:

A villa in Sezze, Italy, present-day.

Production note:

In the Capital Fringe production, there was one camera and a videographer who entered the playing space on page 28 and represented all the CCTV cameras in the house. In the New York production, there were two additional "CCTV cameras" and a video editor who cut between the three camera angles in the moment. This started on page 28. Because he was backstage, but visible, he represented the producer that Ben receives a phone call from and later calls.

The stage is bright when the audience enters. A large space on stage resembles the back porch of an Italian villa. There are chairs and tables. There is a tripod downstage left. There are also two other cameras set up as if they are CCTV cameras.

Pete is on stage in the back corner, riffing songs from Nashville Skyline on the guitar. While this is onstage, it is not delineated as “playing space.” Other actors may sit here or not when they are not “onstage.”

A screen behind the action of the play shows an Italian morning, bright sun over an olive grove. The sea is in the distance. Ben enters and Pete starts playing Start Me Up. He speaks to the camera, and the screen shows a live feed of what’s being recorded.

BEN

(speaking into the camera)

Hello I’m Ben. Tomorrow is my birthday. To celebrate, my nearest and dearest have gathered at my house for a weekend of debauchery and creativity. To orient you, we’re in the town of Sezze, about an hour south of Rome, and a pleasant ride up the mountains from the sea. We have olive and fig trees down there and the sun sets over those mountains. In other words, little short of paradise.

He takes a deep “soul-cleansing” breath.

CAROLINE

(from offstage)

Ben!

BEN

The time is 9 am, our first morning in Sezze.

Caroline comes on stage.

BEN

Oh, hi Caroline.

CAROLINE

What are you doing over there?

New camera. Do you like it?
BEN

It's nice.
CAROLINE

Was your bed comfortable?
BEN

Yeah, was yours?
CAROLINE

I sleep better here than anywhere else in the world.
BEN

Great.
CAROLINE

Is something wrong?
BEN

No, I'm just confused by the sleeping arrangements.
CAROLINE

Sorry, my Mum's down the hall from me. I thought we talked about this.
BEN

Did we?
CAROLINE

Yes, she has a strict two bed policy.
BEN

Oh, well I didn't realize she still had rules for you.
CAROLINE

Welcome to being an only child. I made sure you got the best room in the house, though. Those windows have a great view of the sunset.
BEN

Thanks.
CAROLINE

My pleasure.
BEN

CAROLINE

Maybe you could sneak into my room tonight for a little while?

BEN

I'm sure that could be arranged. Take it up with my secretary.

Pete starts playing 'Over the Hills and Far Away' Led Zeppelin. Anna enters.

BEN

You remember Anna, she arrived after dinner, very late.

He takes a look at the scene and rearranges the camera so that it captures Anna and Caroline.

ANNA

Good morning.

CAROLINE

Hi, good morning.

BEN

She's the Anna from drama school.

CAROLINE

Oh, I've heard so much about you.

ANNA

Don't believe a word he says.

CAROLINE

Oh no, he speaks so highly of you.

ANNA

Well in that case it's all true.

CAROLINE

Last time I came down to London, Ben was going to take me to your show, but we couldn't get tickets.

ANNA

Oh Ben, you should have rung me. I would have set some aside.

BEN

You know, when Anna and I were together, we were going to get married here. Down past the olive trees, in that clearing.

Shut up, Ben.

ANNA

It'd be beautiful.

CAROLINE

Are you dating anyone now?

BEN

Not really. Nothing serious. How long have you been dating?

ANNA

Caroline and I are not slaves to labels, we don't define ourselves in those terms.

BEN

Yeah, it's not serious, apparently.

CAROLINE

Oh, actors. Is there coffee?

ANNA

In the kitchen.

CAROLINE

Ta.

ANNA

Anna exits. Hugh comes in wearing a bathing suit, with a towel.

I see the little prick is up. Pool?

HUGH

Nah.

BEN

Come to the pool?

HUGH
(to Caroline)

No, thank you.

CAROLINE

Anna returns with a French press and a mug.

Pool?

HUGH

ANNA

Not yet.

HUGH

Fine. Just sit there and roast without me.

Hugh exits.

BEN

That's Hugh, my bum-boy uncle. Hairdresser to the stars.

Pete enters the playing space and sits down.

ANNA

Morning Pete.

PETE

Anna.

BEN

Here's Pete Baldwin, guitarist, hotel room trasher, legend—

ANNA

Yes, we know who he is.

CAROLINE

Why are you being such a weirdo?

ANNA

Hungover?

PETE

Hair of the dog.

ANNA

Of course.

PETE

Caroline, right?

CAROLINE

Yeah.

PETE

Any requests from my fellow American?

Not yet. CAROLINE

You afraid I'll judge you? PETE

Yeah, maybe. CAROLINE

I probably will. PETE

How about Sweet Jane? CAROLINE

That I can play. PETE

He starts playing Sweet Jane. Hannah enters, she is wearing a sarong.

Good morning. HANNAH

Morning. ANNA

Morning. CAROLINE

My gorgeous and talented mother, Hannah. BEN

Go on. I hope everyone slept well? HANNAH

It was delightful. ANNA

Pete nods. Hugh returns.

The gate won't open. HUGH

Where are you off to? HANNAH

I thought I'd take a dip next door.

HUGH

And you pressed the red button?

HANNAH

I did.

HUGH

It didn't open?

BEN
(playing to the camera)

Stuck shut.

HUGH

Let me have a look.

HANNAH

Hannah exits.

Anyone want a top-up?

HUGH

No thanks.

ANNA

Did you get the playlist I emailed you?

BEN

Yeah, I thought it was a joke.

PETE

It wasn't. *(He takes out a printed playlist)* Play track 6.

BEN

Pete starts playing Play with Fire.

I liked that song.

CAROLINE

Yes.

BEN

Hannah returns.

It won't budge. HANNAH

Jesus. BEN

I didn't do anything. HUGH

Maybe it short-circuited. CAROLINE

You could call an electrician. ANNA

It's Sunday. HANNAH

So? CAROLINE

Italians don't work on Sundays. HANNAH

Oh Christ. BEN

I guess we're stuck here then. HUGH

Worse places to be stuck. PETE

Too much caffeine, darling? HANNAH

I wanted to eat at the trattoria tonight. BEN

Trattoria. I'm sure we could move it to tomorrow. HANNAH

Tomorrow? But I wanted to have my birthday dinner here. BEN

Why don't you try to fix the gate then, Ben? CAROLINE

BEN

Fine.

Ben exits. Pete starts playing Sweet Jane again.

ANNA

Why do you even need the gate?

HANNAH

James installed it last year. Poor man is worried about me when I'm alone.

ANNA

That's sweet.

HANNAH

I suppose.

ANNA

Where is James?

HANNAH

Bangalore.

ANNA

Wow.

HANNAH

He's in India once a month now.

ANNA

Things are taking off.

HANNAH

Here and there.

ANNA

It does seem like you've fixed up the place since I was last here.

HUGH

Blood money.

HANNAH

Hugh!

HUGH

Kidding. I'm sure whatever my brother is doing is honorable.

Ben returns.

BEN

Well, I can't figure it out.

HANNAH

I'll try to rouse someone in the village later, but I wouldn't hold your breath.

Pete fills his mug with whiskey from his boot.

PETE

If we're stuck here, might as well get pissed.

BEN

Classy.

PETE

Anyone else?

HUGH

Why not.

Pete pours whiskey in Hugh's mug.

HANNAH

Are you sure that's a good idea?

HUGH

I'm on holiday.

BEN

Salute.

PETE

Cheers.

ANNA

Is that on?

BEN

What?

ANNA

That camera.

No. BEN

Why's the light on? ANNA

It's charging. You have to charge it for a really long time before you can use it. BEN

It's nice. HUGH

Early birthday present from my Dad. *(Pause)* Has everyone met Caroline? BEN

Does she speak? HUGH

I do. CAROLINE

Caroline's an academic. She retains rather than disseminates. BEN

That's not true. I'm teaching next term. CAROLINE

Teaching what? ANNA

Introductory Economics. CAROLINE

Fuck. PETE

At Oxford? HANNAH

Yeah. CAROLINE

Then you must know Winston Greenhorn. HANNAH

Yeah, I took a great class with him last term. CAROLINE

HANNAH
Really? He was my first boyfriend. Eons ago.

BEN
I didn't know that.

HANNAH
He's Ben's godfather.

CAROLINE
Your godfather?

BEN
I told you that.

CAROLINE
You didn't.

HUGH
Is that how you two met?

BEN
Not really.

CAROLINE
Ben crashed a department Christmas party. We fought over the last grape leaf.

HUGH
Did Ben get it?

BEN
No.

CAROLINE
I think you did.

BEN
Maybe.

ANNA
I'm sure you got more than just a grape leaf.

Ben does not dignify Anna with a response. Caroline goes back to reading her book. Awkward silence. Anna's phone buzzes.

ANNA

Excuse me.

She picks up the phone and heads off stage.

HUGH

I seem to have misplaced my sunhat.

Hugh exits.

BEN

Maybe you'd be more comfortable in the library?

CAROLINE

Oh, I don't mind, it's gorgeous out here.

BEN

Well, with Pete playing and everyone chatting I thought—

CAROLINE

I like background noise.

HANNAH

You won't have a problem with this crowd. We're a very vocal group.

BEN

Mum was a singer.

CAROLINE

Really?

HANNAH

I was.

Pete starts playing All Along the Watchtower.

BEN

Are you sure you don't want to go to the library, Caroline?

CAROLINE

You trying to get rid of me?

BEN

Me? When have I ever tried to get rid of you?

CAROLINE

You want me to answer that?

BEN

It's a beautiful room. Full of old Italian books, come on.

CAROLINE

I'm fine here.

BEN

You're not, you haven't turned a page in 5 minutes.

She looks down at her book.

BEN

We'll come get you for lunch.

CAROLINE

I don't want to seem anti-social.

BEN

Don't be silly. If you work now, you can socialize later.

CAROLINE

Ok. Thanks.

Caroline stands and Ben leads her to the library.

PETE

Thanks for the invite. This villa is great.

HANNAH

Thank you.

PETE

Hopefully Ben won't burn it down.

HANNAH

What? Is my son an arsonist?

PETE

Don't tell me you forgot about the tent?

HANNAH

What tent?

PETE

The one Ben burned down in Australia.

HANNAH

Ben burned down a tent?

PETE

He didn't tell you about this?

HANNAH

No.

PETE

Oh man. So, we had a few days off between shows in Sydney and Melbourne and I decided to head to the Outback for some solitude. Didn't get any solitude because your wayward son dropped a cigarette on his sleeping bag and set his tent on fire. I found him huddled next to a pile of ashes, clutching his wallet and iPod. I let him stay with me until I went back to the tour. Even gave him my tent and sleeping bag when I left.

HANNAH

He never told us about that. He just said he met the great Pete Baldwin camping in the Outback.

PETE

Probably shouldn't have told you. Hell, he's an adult now, old enough to laugh at the stupid shit he did as a kid.

HANNAH

Poor Ben, shelter-less in the outback. Thank you for looking after him.

PETE

Oh it's nothing. I'm gonna check out the other side of the villa, didn't really see much of it last night.

HANNAH

Go right ahead.

Pete exits. Hannah picks up a laptop that's been sitting on a table and moves to Caroline's old seat; the camera is now focused on her.

HANNAH

Working?

The screen now shows James as she would see him skyping with her.

JAMES

I'm pretty busy, Hannah.

It's Ben's birthday tomorrow.

HANNAH

I know.

JAMES

We miss you.

HANNAH

I miss you too.

JAMES

We're locked in. Hugh tried to go to Carla's pool and the gate wouldn't open.

HANNAH

Where's Ben?

JAMES

Nearby.

HANNAH

Call me later.

JAMES

Okay. I'm looking forward to having you back in our bed, darling.

HANNAH

If I can get through the gate.

JAMES

What a euphemism.

HANNAH

It wasn't.

JAMES

Ben enters.

Are you talking to Dad?

BEN

I am.

HANNAH

Hi Dad.

BEN

Hi, Ben. JAMES

How's Inja? BEN

Fine, how's the new camera? JAMES

It's smart. BEN

Oh good. Well, I have to run. JAMES

Ok. HANNAH

Good to talk. BEN

Yes. JAMES

Hannah closes the laptop. The screen is back to showing her.

That was nice. BEN

Yes. HANNAH

He looks well. BEN

He does. HANNAH

I don't know how you do it. BEN

What? HANNAH

Put up with the traveling.

BEN

I don't really have much of a choice, do I?

HANNAH

You always have a choice, Mum.

BEN

Pete enters playing Pink Floyd.

I dig the Floyd.

HANNAH

You dig?

PETE

I dig.

HANNAH

Don't try too hard to be cool, Mum.

BEN

You forget that I was professionally cool when I was your age.

HANNAH

Yeah...

PETE

I was a rocker.

HANNAH

You weren't a rocker, you were in a girl group.

BEN

And what, pray tell, are you, Ben?

HANNAH

I'm a hyphen.

BEN

A hyphen or a stroke?

HANNAH

You've lost me.

PETE

