

STILL WATERS

A romantic drama in one act
by
Bradley Hayward

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SYNOPSIS

Keith is 8 years old when he first lays eyes on Hazel. He's a ragtag prairie boy with dust on his overalls and she's the most beautiful girl he's ever seen. As the unlikely pair lowers a bucket into a wishing well, they have yet to realize how they will spend their entire lives making each other's wishes come true. Told over the course of two lifetimes, "Still Waters" is a comedy, a drama, and most of all, a love story...75 years in the making.

CHARACTERS

(5 females, 5 males)

HAZEL 8 (f).....8 years old.
KEITH 8 (m).....8 years old.

HAZEL 16 (f).....16 years old.
KEITH 16 (m).....16 years old.

HAZEL 32 (f).....32 years old.
KEITH 32 (m).....32 years old.

HAZEL 64 (f).....64 years old.
KEITH 64 (m).....64 years old.

HAZEL 83 (f).....83 years old.
KEITH 83 (m).....83 years old.

PLACE/TIME

Scene 1: Farm yard, 75 years ago.
Scene 2: School gymnasium, 65 years ago.
Scene 3: Mud room, 51 years ago.
Scene 4: Bedroom, 19 years ago.
Scene 5: Nursing home, the present.

RUNNING TIME

35 minutes.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Although the play presents a story over the course of 75 years, be careful that each individual scene is not set in an overly specific time period. It's not particularly important that a scene takes place in 1940 or 1950 or 1980; what's most important is that they all take place "a long time ago."

Similarly, while I love the thought of using music as a bridge between scenes, make sure the songs chosen are appropriate to the theme of the scene and not simply the era. The same is true of the costumes. What must come across is that Hazel and Keith have lived in a rural community their entire lives and have never had a lot of money.

If the actors are not the same age as the character they are playing, whether they be younger or older, resist the temptation to overdo the characterizations. Of course, 8 year old Hazel and Keith will be much different than their 83 year old counterparts, but err on the side of subtlety over caricature.

Each scene takes place in a location that is clearly delineated by a simple, yet specific set piece. Please resist the temptation to add more than is necessary. Ideally, all five locations remain onstage throughout the play (perhaps on different levels), thus eliminating the need for any blackouts. A simple cross-fade between locations is more than sufficient and will help keep the play moving along at a good pace.

SCENE ONE

The lights rise on HAZEL, 8 years old, playing jump rope next to an old stone wishing well. She sings to herself.

HAZEL 8

I love coffee. I love tea. I love the boys and the boys love me. How many boys love me?

She counts as she jumps.

One, two, three, four...

She continues as KEITH, also 8 years old, enters behind. He carries a bucket.

...five, six, seven, eight --

KEITH 8

(loudly interrupting)

Twelve, forty, seven, ten, one!

He bursts into laughter and HAZEL stops jumping.

HAZEL 8

Curse you, Keith Lawson!

KEITH 8

(sings)

Hazel, Hazel, voice is nasal.

HAZEL 8

And curse your smelly socks, too!

KEITH 8

I do not have smelly socks!

HAZEL 8

Do too! I can smell them all the way over here.

KEITH 8

I don't smell nothin'.

HAZEL giggles.

What are you laughing for?

HAZEL 8

You just said, "I don't smell nothin'."

KEITH 8

So?

HAZEL 8

So that means you do smell something, stupid.

KEITH 8

"Do" and "don't" are two different words.

HAZEL 8

I know that.

KEITH 8

So who's the stupid one now?

He laughs. HAZEL rolls her eyes.

HAZEL 8

Do you ever pay attention in school?

KEITH 8

Sometimes.

HAZEL 8

It's called a double negative. If you don't do *nothing*, it means you did do something. If you don't do *something*, it means you did nothing.

She proudly put her hands on her hips. KEITH opens his mouth to respond, but it suddenly hits him that he has no idea what she's talking about. He closes his mouth and stamps his foot.

What are you doing here, anyway?

KEITH 8

Ma sent me.

HAZEL 8

What for?

KEITH 8

To get water from your well.

HAZEL 8

You walked two miles from your farm?

KEITH 8

Yes.

HAZEL 8

Down the dirt road?

KEITH 8

Yes.

HAZEL 8

All by yourself?

KEITH 8

Yes.

HAZEL 8

Are you stupid?

KEITH 8

Yes.

HAZEL laughs uproariously. KEITH stamps his foot again.

Curse you, Hazel Davidson!

HAZEL 8

So what's stopping you?

KEITH 8

I get in trouble when I curse.

HAZEL 8

Not that. What's stopping you from getting water?

KEITH 8

Nothing. Or...something?

HAZEL 8

Give me your bucket.

KEITH 8

No.

HAZEL grabs the bucket, but KEITH will not let go. It becomes a game of tug-of-war.

HAZEL 8

I said give it to me!

KEITH 8

I said no!

HAZEL 8

Give me your bucket and I'll give you some water.

KEITH 8

Not until you apologize.

HAZEL 8

What for?

KEITH 8

For saying I have smelly socks.

HAZEL 8

I will not apologize for telling the truth.

KEITH 8

You don't know nothin' about my socks.

HAZEL 8

That's what I've been trying to tell you. I don't know nothing about your socks, which means I know something about your socks. And they're smelly.

KEITH wins the tug-of-war and takes back the bucket.

KEITH 8

I'm going home.

HAZEL 8

Why?

KEITH 8

You're confusing me!

He turns his back to her.

HAZEL 8

But you haven't got any water yet.

KEITH 8

(pouting)

I don't want your stupid water.

HAZEL 8

Your ma will get angry if you return home with an empty bucket.

KEITH 8

I don't know what makes your water so special, anyway.

HAZEL 8

It's clear, from a spring, and your well is all muddy.

KEITH 8

A little mud never hurt no one.

HAZEL 8

There you go again. If you say, "never hurt no one," that means --

KEITH 8

What?!

HAZEL 8

(hangs her head)

Nevermind.

Pause.

KEITH 8

You can go back to your jump rope now. I won't interrupt.
Promise.

HAZEL 8

You didn't interrupt.

KEITH 8

I'm always interrupting.

HAZEL 8

I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, you know.

KEITH 8

You didn't hurt my feelings.

HAZEL 8

But if I did...I'm sorry.

KEITH 8

I'll just get some water and go home.

HAZEL 8

Okay.

KEITH walks to the wishing well and hangs his bucket from the hook. As he does, HAZEL unravels her jump rope. She jumps, but her heart is not in it and she counts softly.

One, two, three, four --

KEITH 8

Hazel?

HAZEL 8

Yes?

KEITH 8

Do you really think I'm stupid?

HAZEL 8

No. Not really.

KEITH 8

Are you sure?

HAZEL 8

I'm sure.

KEITH 8

That's good.

HAZEL 8

Why?

KEITH 8

Because I need you to show me how to use the well.

HAZEL 8

(smiles)

Okay.

She stops jumping and goes over to the wishing well. She gently puts his hand on the crank.

All you have to do is turn it, like this.

With her hand on his, they slowly turn the crank and the bucket lowers.

KEITH 8

So...how many boys love you today?

HAZEL 8

What do you mean?

KEITH 8

The song you were singing earlier.

HAZEL 8

What song?

KEITH 8

"How many boys love me?"

HAZEL 8

(blushes)

Oh, that. None.

KEITH 8

None?

HAZEL 8

It's just a silly song.

KEITH 8

Oh.

(pause)

Hazel?

HAZEL 8

Yes?

KEITH 8

Do you...

HAZEL 8

What?

KEITH 8

Love any boys?

HAZEL 8

(shakes her head)

No.

KEITH 8

Not even one boy?

HAZEL 8

(looks at him warmly)

No. I don't love no boy.

Together, they keep turning the crank
and the bucket disappears out of view
as the lights fade.

SCENE TWO

The lights rise on a small table with a punch bowl on it, next to a bouquet of helium balloons. Music plays in the background. KEITH, now 16 years old and dressed in a home sewn suit, sits in one of two chairs next to the table with a small gift box in his lap. He looks toward an unseen dance floor.

KEITH 16

(to himself)

Curse you, Hazel Davidson.

All of a sudden, he sees her coming and straightens his tie. HAZEL, now 16 years old, enters. She wears a lace dress and has a corsage on her wrist. KEITH puts the gift box on the table and stands up.

Hazel.

HAZEL 16

Keith.

KEITH 16

You look...nice.

HAZEL 16

I do?

KEITH 16

(nods)

Very...nice.

HAZEL 16

Oh. Thank you.

KEITH 16

You're welcome.

Awkward pause.

HAZEL 16

So do you.

KEITH 16

What?

HAZEL 16

You look nice.

KEITH 16
I do?

HAZEL 16
I guess so.

KEITH 16
Thank you!

HAZEL 16
You're welcome.

Another awkward pause.

KEITH 16
It's nice of you to come over and say hello.

HAZEL 16
It is, isn't it?

KEITH 16
You're very nice.

HAZEL 16
I am, aren't I?

KEITH 16
Very.

Another awkward pause.

HAZEL 16
Are you thirsty?

KEITH 16
Very!

HAZEL 16
Me too!

In unison, they quickly grab two cups and dunk them into the punch bowl. They guzzle the punch. When their glasses are empty, there's another awkward pause. Together, they fill their cups again.

KEITH 16
I see you brought Billy.

HAZEL 16
Yes.

KEITH 16

Billy Armstrong.

HAZEL 16

That's the one.

KEITH 16

William Frederick Armstrong.

HAZEL 16

He's never been to a formal before.

They nod. Then they both finish off
their cups of punch. Every drop.

KEITH 16

He's nice.

HAZEL 16

Who?

KEITH 16

Billy.

HAZEL 16

Oh, Billy! Yes. He's...nice.

KEITH 16

(quickly)

When the music started and I saw him grab your hand and walk
you on to the dance floor and the two of you started dancing
together, really close, I thought to myself, "Boy, heeeee's
nice."

He immediately regrets everything he
just said and turns bright red. The
quickly sit in unison and turn away
from one another. Pause.

HAZEL 16

Who did you bring?

KEITH 16

Beth.

HAZEL 16

Oh. Beth.

KEITH 16

Beth Odgers.

HAZEL 16

Elizabeth Eleanor Odgers.

KEITH 16

That's the one. She's nice.

HAZEL 16

(quickly)

No, not really.

KEITH 16

No, she's not nice at all.

Pause.

HAZEL 16

So...where is she?

KEITH 16

I have no idea.

HAZEL 16

You don't?

KEITH 16

I asked if I could bring her and she said yes, but then I got here and it turns out she didn't bring herself.

HAZEL 16

See.

KEITH 16

See what?

HAZEL 16

Not nice.

Together, they set their cups down on the table. Pause.

Good punch.

KEITH 16

Mmm. Very good punch.

HAZEL 16

Good, good, punch.

KEITH 16

I brought it myself.

HAZEL 16

Really?

KEITH 16

(nods)

I did.

HAZEL 16

It's good!

KEITH 16

It's water!

HAZEL 16

I thought so.

Pause. Then HAZEL points at the gift box.

Is that for her?

KEITH 16

Yes. Well, it *was* for her.

HAZEL 16

May I see it?

KEITH nods enthusiastically. HAZEL puts the box in her lap and pulls off the lid. She takes out a corsage made of carnations.

Wow. It's pretty.

KEITH 16

(staring at her)

Very pretty.

HAZEL 16

Very.

KEITH 16

Would you like to have it?

HAZEL 16

(blushes)

Really?

KEITH 16

I want you to have it.

HAZEL holds up her arm, showing him the corsage on her wrist.

HAZEL 16

But I'm already wearing a corsage.

KEITH 16

Oh.

HAZEL 16
From Billy.

KEITH 16
(fake smiling)
Heeeeeee's nice.

HAZEL 16
I guess.

KEITH 16
You guess?

HAZEL 16
Well...to be honest, he smells funny.

KEITH 16
He does?

HAZEL 16
And he doesn't know how dance.

KEITH 16
No?

HAZEL 16
His hands are all clammy.

KEITH 16
They are?

HAZEL 16
And he steps on my toes.

KEITH wipes his clammy hands on his pants.

KEITH 16
There's nothing worse than clammy hands.

HAZEL 16
Except broken toes.

They both laugh nervously. Then simultaneously look away.

KEITH 16
You know, Hazel...

HAZEL 16
(quickly)
Yes?

KEITH 16

You have two arms.

HAZEL 16

(turns to him, confused)

And you have two legs?

KEITH 16

(turns to her, smiling)

No...I mean, you could wear both corsages.

HAZEL 16

Both?

KEITH 16

One on each arm.

HAZEL 16

Really?

KEITH 16

One from Billy. One from me.

HAZEL 16

Well --

KEITH 16

(standing eagerly)

Will you wear my corsage?

HAZEL 16

Keith --

KEITH 16

Please?

HAZEL 16

(quickly stands up)

I think I better go.

KEITH 16

Don't go.

HAZEL 16

Billy is waiting for me.

KEITH 16

(turns away from her)

Oh.

HAZEL 16

I'm sorry, Keith.

KEITH 16

It's okay.

HAZEL 16

It's just...he brought me.

KEITH 16

Right.

Pause.

HAZEL 16

Are you...?

KEITH 16

I'm fine.

HAZEL 16

Really?

KEITH 16

(nods)

Beth is waiting for me, too.

HAZEL 16

She is?

KEITH 16

No, probably not.

HAZEL puts her hand on KEITH's shoulder.

HAZEL 16

Thank you, Keith.

KEITH 16

For what?

HAZEL 16

The punch.

She exits. KEITH sits down and puts the corsage back in the box. He replaces the lid as the lights fade.

END OF PREVIEW. For a complete script, or to request production rights, please contact the author at haywardb@hotmail.com