

No Such Thing As A False Alarm

by

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CHARACTERS

LILY A high school senior

JUNE Her mother

These characters can be played by any female-identified or gnc/trans actors of any races, ethnicities, religions, sizes, shapes, ages within reason, and abilities. If casting a disabled actor or actors, please allow for their disabilities the same way they would be accommodated in life - this means please do not disguise any visible disability "for the show."

PLACE

LILY's bedroom

TIME

a cold morning in February

No Such Thing as a False Alarm

AT RISE a bed with a person hiding in it. We hear an alarm going off. JUNE enters and sing-song-speaks while she stops the alarm (she snoozes it accidentally) and tidies up automatically, picking up cast off clothing items, folding or putting them in the laundry hamper, etc. Perhaps there is a chair she works to uncover from the pile of stuff it's hidden beneath.

JUNE

Good morning! Rise and shine! It's a beautiful day. The pigeons are rustling. The garbage trucks are beeping. Everything's the way it always is. The way it should be. Sky is up, ground below. Life is good. You're a senior! At Einstein High! You don't have many more days there so cherish them! But you have a bright future! Harvard or Princeton or Yale awaits! I'm sure they're deciding today how to make you an offer. And decades beyond that. It's 26 degrees outside, a day for longs and longs, temperate for February. The city is alive and chugging! Rise and shine, Lily! Wakey, wakey! Little-Lily-Silly-Goose! Little-Lily-Silly-Goose!

LILY

Stop.

JUNE

I can remember when you would giggle when I said that. When you would tickle me with your tiny hands.

LILY

Sleeping in.

JUNE

School day!

LILY

Not going.

JUNE

What do you mean you're not going? You always go.

LILY

What I said. Not going. Leave me alone.

JUNE

Are you sick?

LILY

Yes. Shut my door on your way out, please.

JUNE

What's the matter?

LILY

Everything.

JUNE

Do you have a fever?

LILY

Mom. Stop. I'm going back to bed.

JUNE

You're fine, right? You're not sick. This is about what happened, right? Lily?

LILY

I'm not going to school today or any other day, just leave me alone.

JUNE

Any other day? So you're not sick. Can you please confirm? I don't want to go into sick Lily mode. I want to know what's going on. I need to know. I have work. It's a surgical day! I got people to save! Come on.

LILY

I can't go back there.

JUNE

So it's about what happened.

LILY's alarm goes off again. This time it startles her.

LILY

Stop, stop! I can't stand it! Stop!!!

LILY slams it across the room.

JUNE gets it and stops it.

LILY

Sorry. I didn't mean that. I just, I can't, I can't go, I just can't.

JUNE

O-kay. Do you want to discuss it?

LILY

No. I want to sleep. I want to stay in my bed for the rest of my life. Go. Go to work. I'll be fine.

JUNE

Lily. . .

LILY

Don't Lily me. I'm a senior. I'm capable. I'm not an idiot.

JUNE

I never said you were.

LILY

Then just go.

JUNE

I will. I'm going. I have work, as I said, only I won't be able to focus until we hash this out, just a little bit, so I can understand what you're going through.

LILY

You will never understand what I'm going through. You're old. Relatively. You live-- you grew up in a different world.

JUNE

Yes, that may be true, but --

LILY

Don't say it.

JUNE

Say what?

LILY

What everyone's saying.

JUNE

What?

LILY

That it was a false alarm.

JUNE

I didn't say it.

LILY

But you're thinking it.

JUNE

I'm not.

LILY

Just a false alarm. Everyone. Everywhere. All night. False alarm. No big deal. Get on with it. Yeah, no.

JUNE

And?

LILY

I can't. I can't just get on with it. I am not going to school. I'm done.

JUNE

But --

LILY

No buts, no bullshit, sorry, I am done. Done. I'm done.

JUNE

Sounds like you're trying to convince yourself.

LILY

I loved school til yesterday. You know that. I had no issues with school. I did well.

JUNE

You do well.

LILY

No more. I can't. Everyone saying it's just a false alarm, like they were just wrong, and they're so sorry, and it's all a misunderstanding, and everything should go back to the way it was, but I can't go back. I am different. I am not little-Lily-silly-geese, that's for sure.

JUNE

Oh Lily, I know that was a long time ago. You haven't been that for years now.

LILY

But there's a part of me that is. Still.

JUNE

And you can always be that too, if that's what you need. I'm here for you. Let it out.

LILY

There's nothing in me to. . .

I can apply to homeschool the rest of the year. It's a matter of filing some papers. I looked. Or I could keep on doing the work and just sending it in remotely. I think they'd understand if I asked to do that.

JUNE

I highly doubt it. And you have college to consider. You can't shift everything now.

LILY

I knew you would bring that up. But the truth is colleges like homeschoolers, I saw online that--

JUNE

Homeschoolers who have a system and a plan and portfolios, kids who do that for whatever reasons, but this, Lily, in the middle of the year, it's rash. Surely you see that.

LILY

Rash. You mean irrational. As in crazy. As in we're level-headed people, Lily. We don't do irrational things like drop out of school mid-senior year. But it's the most rational thought I've ever had. There's no shaking me. I'm going to stand firm. It'll be the hill I die on. Because it's irrational to go back. Doesn't make sense to go back. To where I lost my shit. In absolute terror. Thinking we're all gonna die. I was gonna die. I was gonna die, Mom. And I texted you goodbye. You have it. You have it!

JUNE

I know. I just thought --

LILY

How can you waltz in here singing? Waking me up as if the world hasn't changed? The world's nothing like yesterday. It's upside down. Backwards. Inside out. Completely transformed. What was normal is strange. I sat in a closet for twenty minutes. I know that sounds like nothing, but it wasn't nothing. In the dark, with the custodian's mops, and the bleach burning my eyes, I hid crunched down behind a yellow bucket I couldn't even see was yellow in the dark, so dark with

my eyes burning from the smell, and my nose under my shirt afraid to breathe, it wasn't nothing. I imagined everyone I know, even the ones I don't like, and the teachers, all of us, me included, covered in blood, bleeding out on the linoleum floors, multiple gunshot wounds, head wounds, things in my head I still see even though they never happened. Even though it was a false alarm. It felt real to me. So real I'm still afraid of it. Not afraid, terrorized, shaking, as if I'm living inside some other reality. So whatever the garbage trucks are doing, I don't care. It's wrong for the city to be buzzing along as if nothing happened. Something happened. Even if it was a false alarm. I'm never going back there. I texted Jack. She'll empty my locker and bring my stuff by later. It's the only rational thing I can think to do. If I have to contact the colleges and explain my situation, I can do that. I can start today while I'm not in school. I'll write an essay. I can do that. There are things I can do. There are other things I can't do. School. Not going back. Never.

JUNE

Never is a long time, but I hear you. I'm listening. I think it's terrible. And you're right, I can't imagine. I can't know what it was like for you. I'm sorry. I thank you for sharing with me. I thank you for trusting me with your feelings and your experience. And I believe you. I'm not gonna tell you that you should just get over it and move on. But I do think we have to figure out a different solution. I mean, I know you stand firm, and I'm not gonna make you go back. But I can reach out to the school and ask them about counseling and ways to help you.

LILY

I don't want to talk to anyone.

JUNE

Whether you ever go back there or not, you said yourself, things have changed. Fundamentally. And you should be able to get help to cope with these changes. Lily, this is trauma. You've been traumatized.

LILY

What?

JUNE

There are ways to manage it. Ways to heal. I don't know what they are. It's not my field. But we'll figure it out. You won't feel like this forever.

LILY begins to cry.

LILY

It hurts to feel like this. It hurts and it's heavy and I'm tired, I'm so tired, but I can't sleep. And I can't live like this, I just can't...

JUNE

I know. I hear you. I'm texting my office. I'll cancel my day.

LILY

But you have surgery.

JUNE

Sometimes things happen.

LILY

I'm sorry.

JUNE

We have to figure this out.

LILY

I didn't mean to --

JUNE

It's fine. We'll figure it out.

The alarm goes off again. LILY screams and dives under her covers/pillows. JUNE dismantles the alarm, removing the batteries.

JUNE

It's a false alarm. It's nothing. Just a false alarm.

LILY

I'm fine. I'm fine!

JUNE goes to LILY and holds her, rocks her until THEY can take a deep breath together.

JUNE

You're gonna be okay.

LILY

I'll be fine.

END OF PLAY