

Hotter Than Egypt

by
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Cast

PAUL American from the U.S., age range: mid 50s to early 60s, business man.

SEIF Egyptian, late 20s to early 30s, tour guide.

MAHA Egyptian, late 20s to early 30s, former tour guide, aspiring fashion designer.

JEAN American from the U.S., late 40s to early 50s, formerly a stay-at-home mother.

BOATMAN/ MUSEUM GUARD/ DOORMAN Egyptians, any ages between 30s and 60s.

Notes

The Boatman, Museum Guard and the Doorman are played by the same actor.

When Seif and Maha speak in Arabic they won't have an accent. When speaking to Paul and Jean in English Maha and Seif will have an accent, Seif more than Maha.

A slash (/) in a sentence indicates that overlap should begin at that point. Dialogue on the same line also indicates overlap.

The plays runs without an intermission.

Scene 3:

(Hotel room. Paul starts taking off his clothes. He will get into his pajamas.)

PAUL

(Perhaps he starts off stage in the bathroom.)

I can't believe you did that.

(Comes out with his pajamas.)

Ruined it. And why? Because I stopped you from making a fool of yourself? So next time I see a bit of food on your mouth, or you get someone's name wrong, or any number of things I should just ignore that?

JEAN

Why are you getting ready for bed? It's early.

PAUL

Yes, it is. We could be exploring a whole new part of the world but because you're suddenly too self-conscious, and feel everyone's staring at you...

JEAN

I don't think that. I never said that.

PAUL

I'm serious, Jean: make an appointment with your doctor. Because I don't know how to help you anymore.

JEAN

Don't make me out to be some crazy person because I didn't like what you said.

PAUL

You cried out in the boat for no reason.

JEAN

Of course there's a reason. There's always a/ reason.

PAUL

Then tell me what it is so I can help you.

(Jean considers how to reply.)

You know what, never mind. Let's just go to bed and get an early start on the museum.

JEAN

I may want to go out later.

PAUL

Tonight?

JEAN
Yes, tonight.

PAUL
Alone?

JEAN
If you don't want to come.

PAUL
I wouldn't advise that.

JEAN
Why not?

PAUL
You'll freak out when all the men start staring at you.

JEAN
I was fine by the pool; it's you who made me feel ashamed.

PAUL
Okay, we're not - I'm not going over this again. If you want to go out and endanger yourself go ahead.

(Silence as he continues changing into his pajamas. Whenever he's finished, he'll get a drink from the mini-fridge.)

JEAN
(Half to herself, quiet.)
The real problem is you've stopped wanting me.

PAUL
What?

JEAN
You don't. Not really. Not anymore.

PAUL
What are you talking about?

JEAN
You've stopped wanting me. Physically.
(Paul stares at her.)
It's true.

PAUL
What do you think I was trying to do on the boat?

JEAN
The motions, yes; you go through the motions.

PAUL

You're the one who recoils from me. I can feel your eyes rolling in your head whenever I start. "Here he goes again, time to check out."

JEAN

I've never felt that.

PAUL

You have many fine qualities, but a healthy sex drive is not one of them.

JEAN

I've never "recoiled."

PAUL

Not physically, but I feel it.

JEAN

That's not true.

PAUL

Arctic winds. The temperature in the room actually drops when I approach you. Now you feel *I'm* cold towards you?

JEAN

I don't know who you're talking about. I've always reciprocated.

(Perhaps at some point during this scene, Jean will distractedly try and fold the map along the right seams. Unfolding it when it doesn't align and starting again. She will finally give up and just fold it up as best she can.)

PAUL

Maybe in a subtle, spiritual way. So subtle I don't feel it. But that's fine. Couples settle down into a comfortable routine, I get it. There's only so many times you can look at each other before, you know - you stop checking each other out - in that way. I know *I'm* not much to look at these days.

JEAN

(Considers the implications of what he just said.)

Are you saying *I'm* not much to look at now?

PAUL

Would you stop always making this about yourself.

JEAN

Who else are you referring to?

PAUL

I'm speaking in general, couples in general, they start to - the spark - it fizzles out. A little bit. Entropy happens to everything.

JEAN

"Entropy"? That's pretty drastic when you start dragging in the laws of physics to describe a rough spot in a marriage. I've never stopped finding you attractive.

PAUL

Oh come on. We're past lying to each other.

JEAN

I still find you attractive. When you're not being so annoying that I can't look at you.

PAUL

I was the one trying to be romantic on the boat.

JEAN

You can't suddenly turn it on when that spigot's been dry for months. Years it feels like, and then expect me to know it's happening and respond.

PAUL

It's the *Nile*, at *sunset*, on a *boat*. If that's not a postcard romantic moment I don't know what is.

(Slight beat.)

JEAN

If only it didn't feel slightly condescending when you touched me. Like you're being charitable towards someone you don't want to be with anymore.

PAUL

What?

JEAN

(Overlapping.)

"Let me put in my two cents as a husband and give her some attention so I don't have to bother again for a while."

PAUL

I'm - genuinely shocked you think that. Two people can be this close and live in alternative universes.

JEAN

When was the last time we made love?

PAUL

That's why we're on holiday. So we can rekindle. That's the whole point.

JEAN

I don't feel rekindled.

PAUL

That's because you're stubbornly ignoring my romantic gestures.

JEAN

I must keep missing them. I guess I'm not the only one being subtle.

PAUL

Would you prefer I throw you on the bed and have at you.

JEAN

Wonderful, yes. Consider me thrown. In fact ...

(Jean removes the map from the bed and gets on it. She partly hikes up her dress)

PAUL

What are you doing?

JEAN

Well I'm not airing myself because the weather is balmy.

PAUL

And that's supposed to be a turn on?

JEAN

With some couples it might be considered that, yes. Voilà: romantic gesture.

(Paul goes to refill his glass. Beat. She lowers her dress. Beat.)

I was reading in Islam that if a man fails to satisfy his wife sexually that's grounds for divorce. What do you think of that? The woman has the right to leave. I think they're onto something....Would you ever tell me if you were seeing someone else?

(Paul doesn't respond. Which alarms Jean.)

Are you?

PAUL

(Hesitates.)

No.

JEAN
Hold on. - Hold on. Are you?

PAUL
Talking with you lately...

JEAN
Paul?

PAUL
You get emotional for no reason. I don't know if you think it'll force me to open up, or what?

JEAN
You *are* seeing someone?

PAUL
Oh God, I want to say yes just to throw it in your face.

JEAN
So it is "yes"?

PAUL
It's called being mature enough to understand any marriage goes through phases. And if we've slowed down in one area it's because we're exploring other - equally important areas of our marriage. It's so strange to have you be the one to complain about this.

(Taking note of her look.)
What? - It's times like these *I* want to scream.

JEAN
Just tell me if you've met someone else.

PAUL
Why isn't the life we have enough?

JEAN
Because I don't know what that is anymore.

(Beat. Then:)

PAUL
I love you.

JEAN
Oh, crap. That sounds ominous.

PAUL
I do. But...sure. As will happen, often, it's not uncommon... that, yes - I...I don't find you as...in that way. - I can't fake that. If you're hell-bent on "let's all be honest."

(Slight beat.)