

You (U) *Lovely, Insatiable* Thing

By Jen Diamond

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... Much like its 13-year old stars (played by full-fledged adults), this play goes a lot deeper than might first meet the eye. You Lovely, Insatiable Thing by Jen Diamond is a strange and wonderful coming of age drama along the lines of a Blair Witch with Girl Scouts and a whiff of Clare Barron's Dance Nation. There's also like, a Bigfoot or something:*

EMILY

What was it?

KATIE

I don't know.
It looked a little like a person
when you saw it from afar, but not really.
Something was a little – off.

THE CREATURE is made of myth and metaphor, but its presence is palpable and real. In defining THE CREATURE without specific borders, the edges between the monster and humanity become blurred as well as the boundaries between the imagination and reality. And it becomes terrifying.

There is also a chilling casualness in the girls' banter as they talk about the missing members of their Girl Scout troop and their own chances of survival. But soon the cracks in their bravado start to reveal moments of authenticity and even heartbreak as they try to figure out the best course of action, whether to face uncertain doom – or run away from it. The play doesn't answer its hardest questions; rather it confronts the post-feminist adolescent angst within us all and asks to make the hard choices:

EMILY

We're girl scouts. Girl scouts thrive and survive in these kids of conditions.

(Spacing and format are playwright's own.)

Cast of Characters

KATIE

13 years old (played by an adult), female, at school she was quiet and a little wise beyond her years.

EMILY

13 years old (played by an adult), female, at school she was popular and outgoing. Think she's older than she is.

THE CREATURE

Like a human, but not quite. Any gender. Ancient.

Place

Deep in the woods.

Note

Katie and Emily should both be played by adult actors. Resist the urge to make the girls cartoonish.

It's nighttime. Dark – the moon is the only light. A long moment. The CREATURE walks across the stage. It walks like a human. It doesn't stop or do anything. Just walks.

It pauses for one moment in the middle of the stage. Stillness. Then moves along.

Later:

A campfire comes to life. KATIE sits at the fire. She is injured and in pain. Emily looks for firewood.

Did you hear that?
KATIE

What?
EMILY

Maybe we should get moving.
KATIE

We need to rest.
EMILY

I really think I heard something. Should we go check it out?
KATIE

No.
EMILY

I honestly don't know what I'd do if it turned out to be like a –
KATIE

Could you move your foot?
EMILY

*Emily puts a log of wood on the fire. She sits.
Beat.*

What if it's like watching us?
KATIE

The moon is super bright. We would see if it was in the bushes.
EMILY

What if it's really like good at camouflage?

KATIE

Well, then there's nothing we can do, huh?

EMILY

Katie thinks about this. Fire crackles.

Hey, Emily?

KATIE

Yeah?

EMILY

Do you like – feel traumatized?

KATIE

Traumatized?

EMILY

Yeah.

KATIE

I don't know what 'traumatized' feels like.

EMILY

Sure, but like – I like feel different you know? Right now. Versus before.

KATIE

Me too.

EMILY

Yeah?

KATIE

I feel a little taller.

EMILY

You know that's not what I mean.

KATIE

My mom told me that like you're always growing. Every day. Until you get your period and then you like stop... Do you have your period already?

EMILY

That's really personal.

KATIE

Beat.

KATIE (con't)

Yes.

EMILY

Justin from my French class – Justin M. who is like older because he keeps re-doing seventh grade – anyway, he told me periods attract predators.

KATIE

Why would you say that?

EMILY

I don't know – it's just like interesting. Jeez.

Fire crackles. Katie stands up.

KATIE

Um, could we like address the elephant in the room?

Katie stands.

EMILY

Okay. Go ahead.

They face off. A challenge.

KATIE

Okay. Um. I know that like, at school, we don't like hang out or whatever? And you don't talk to me because you're all popular and like kiss boys and I do like student government and sit by myself at lunch. But we have to like be a team out here. We have to survive.

EMILY

Did you really just like slut shame me right now?

KATIE

It doesn't matter! None of it matters, Emily.

Beat.

We are the only two left. Everyone else is gone. Probably dead. Doesn't that like, make you want to cry?

EMILY

We're girl scouts. Girl scouts thrive and survive in these kids of conditions.

KATIE

Yeah, well, the rest of our troupe sure didn't.

EMILY

The rest of our troupe was a bunch of babies.

KATIE

They're gone now! Okay? Who cares if Melissa cried that one time in gym or that like Zoe super religious or anything else! We're being picked off one by one and that totally sucks.

EMILY

The others were lame and that thing knew it. So it stole them and didn't get us. Whatever.

KATIE

That doesn't make sense.

EMILY

Well, I don't know! I don't know why it didn't kill us. We aren't the fastest or the thinnest or the prettiest in Troupe 44. So, I don't know – okay?

KATIE

Okay.

EMILY

You're right. We are probably going to die out here. I have no idea where we are. And *it* probably does.

KATIE

I wonder how long it will take for our families to come looking for our bodies?

EMILY

I don't know. We're way off the beaten path.

KATIE

Yeah.

EMILY

What do you think they'll say at our funerals?

KATIE

Probably, like, they were so young and they were angels and why were they taken from us so soon.

EMILY

Probably. They always say stuff like that when little girls die.

KATIE

We're not little girls.

EMILY

Yes, we are. In the scheme of things? We like totally are.

KATIE

I was not an angel. I did some bad stuff in my life.

EMILY

I've never actually kissed a boy. Just so you like know.

KATIE

Oh.

Beat.

EMILY

What's it like to get your period?

KATIE

That's personal!

EMILY

We're going to die here together.

Beat.

KATIE

It's sort of sticky.

EMILY

Oh. That makes sense.

KATIE

Do you want to tell a campfire story?

EMILY

Okay... I don't know any good ones.

Fire crackles.

KATIE

Me neither...

Fire crackles.

Um, when we were at the river – and it took Hannah –

EMILY

Hannah M. or Hannah C.?

KATIE

Hannah C. Hannah M. was taken near that ditch.

EMILY

Yeah.

KATIE

But, um, like when it came for Hannah C., I – I heard it speak.

EMILY

Really?

KATIE

Yeah. Like, when it lined us up, I was standing right next to her. Like *right* next to her – the way it shoved us together, I could hear her breathing. And remember how it came up really close, like, and leaned into her?

EMILY

I thought it was smelling her.

KATIE

Yeah, no, it was saying something to her. Whispering.

EMILY

What did it say?

KATIE

I'm not totally sure – but it sounded like, "Later will be better."

EMILY

What does that mean?

KATIE

I don't know. Maybe it was something else.

EMILY

Later will be better.

KATIE

Emily – what do you think it even is?

EMILY

I don't know. I guess some kind of animal – or mutated human. What do you think?

KATIE

My uncle used to tell me a story
about this ancient creature
that like
lived just on the outskirts of a town.
Just outside – like you could sometimes
catch a glimpse of it as you drove
by the woods on the edge of town,
or like if you woke in the middle of the night
and squinted out your bedroom window,
you might see it for just a second.

It was always nearby,
always just a little bit behind you.
Until it was your time.

It's very patient.

EMILY

What was it?

KATIE

I don't know.
It looked a little like a person
when you saw it from afar, but not really.
Something was a little – off.

But if *it* saw *you*, if it looked right at you,
it would
transform.
Into, like, the most beautiful thing
you had ever seen or
could like imagine.

EMILY

Oh.

KATIE

And it would talk to you –
like it knew you –
and knew like,

what you were afraid of
and what upset you

KATIE (con't)

and what worried you about the future.

And it would
tell you
what it knew
you needed to hear –
quietly, and with love –
so you would listen.

Because you couldn't help yourself.

EMILY

That doesn't sound so bad.

KATIE

Yes, but that's how it would draw you in.
You would end up seeking *it* out.
And when you found it,
you would lose track of where you were
or who you are.
And once that happened,
it would destroy you.

EMILY

Destroy you?

KATIE

Yes.
It would consume you –
you would become a part of it.
Disappear and join with all the others
it had ever taken before –
for generations and generations –
and together,
you would meld together
to become
this larger, stronger,
but insatiable thing
that knew all the secrets
of life and of strangers
and of happiness
and the intricacy of loneliness.
You would all become it

and it would become all of you.
And on it would go.

KATIE (con't)

Until everything and everyone had been
eaten up.

EMILY

I don't believe in monsters.

KATIE

But what if they believe in you?

Rustling. The girls jump to their feet.

Okay, I definitely heard something that time.

EMILY

Me too.

Emily looks at Katie. Emily walks offstage.

KATIE

Emily – !

*Katie looks towards where Emily exited. She looks around herself. She
grabs a stick and brandishes it.*

Emily reenters.

Did you see something?

EMILY

Nothing – not really.

KATIE

What do you mean “not really”?

EMILY

I did see tracks.

KATIE

Like a bear?

EMILY

No. Not like a bear's.

The girls stare at each other.

KATIE

I wish my mom was here. I am not big enough to handle any of this.

EMILY

I know. Me neither... Katie – I'm sorry I wasn't nicer to you. I'm sorry I lied about kissing boys and for that one time I made fun of you in the bathroom at winter formal. I'm mean because because I'm just really freaked out all the time of, like, being a person.

KATIE

That's okay. I get it.

EMILY

Yeah?

KATIE

Yeah.

EMILY

Okay, we need to keep moving.

KATIE

What does it matter? It keeps finding us. I wonder which one of us it will take next? I hope it's me. I don't want to stay out here by myself.

EMILY

You'll be okay.

They collect their bags. They prepare to leave.

I never even got my period. I never went to college or kissed a boy. I never read Shakespeare or saw an R rated movie. I never watched porn. I never grocery shopped by myself. I never got a job, or got fired, or said things like "just getting through hump day!" I never got to feel what it's like to fly on a plane for the first time.

KATIE

It isn't fair.

EMILY

I don't want the story to stop here.

KATIE

I know.

EMILY

I want to know it ends happily.

KATIE

We have to leave.

EMILY

Okay.

*They take a deep breath. They are brave. They exit.
The fire is still crackling.
It crackles for a while – and then:*

*The thing from before enters, slowly. It stands onstage. It looks at us.
It knows us.*

*It looks off where Emily and Katie exited.
It points towards their direction.*

*It looks at the fire.
It takes a deep breath.
It blows the fire out.*

Blackout.

End of play.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I love ghosts and ghost stories, even though I am scared extremely easily. I never went to a real sleepaway camp, so I've long fantasized about what it would be like to gather around a campfire with a group of girls I am simultaneously in love with and full of preteen rage and jealousy towards – all while having the shit scared out of us by a story about an old lady who appears in a haunted mansion.*

Did you ever notice how most ghost stories feel dated? Like they belong in the 1980s (landlines play a big role in scary stories) or a modern character only encounters a ghost because they wandered into a dilapidated carnival or ancient house. I think that we are due for a new crop of campfire stories – ones that involve problems and situations that are scary because they could happen today and because the fear they evoke is connected to something deeply human that transcends time. I want to write those kinds of stories – and I want to read them!

To me, one of the most emotionally vulnerable, terrifying states I've ever experienced was being a preteen girl. Girlhood is very scary. People are staring at you for the first time, your body is changing and you're not really supposed to talk about it, and everyone becomes weirdly mean

all at once (including you). It's like being possessed, but you also have a compulsion to look hot while doing it. You Lovely, Insatiable Thing is an attempt to transform the fear I felt as a pubescent girl into a story that could be told around the campfire by future girls as they roast marshmallows and wonder when they're going to kiss with tongue for the first time. I hope you enjoy it.

AUTHOR'S BIO: JEN DIAMOND is a playwright, comedian, and performer based in Brooklyn. Her plays include a new, American myth (HERE WE ARE – Johns Hopkins University Theatre, Kennedy Center/Page-to-Stage, Interrobang Theatre); a dystopian romance about the ways the internet ruins our brains (PORN: A LOVE STORY – Cohesion Theatre, Inkubator New Works Development Laboratory); and a murder mystery about fuck boys (THE ALIBI PLAY – Baltimore Theatre Project, Maryland State Arts Council Creativity Grant recipient). Jen was a 2016/2017 Cohesion Theatre Company Playwrights Fellow and a Wright-Right-Now playwright at Baltimore Center Stage. Her short play, THIS IS HOW GHOSTS SPEAK, was a 2019 finalist for the City Theatre National Award for Short Playwriting and her screenplay, PARALLAX, was a second-place winner of the Stephen Dixon Award. Her work has been presented at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre, the Kennedy Center, Baltimore Center Stage, and other stages across the East Coast. Jen makes up one-half of the indie comedy duo OLGA, with whom performed in a bunch of cool places up-and-down the East Coast. Jen's writing has been published in McSweeney's Internet Tendencies, J.Magazine, the Boston Theater Marathon's Collection of Ten-minute Plays, and Matchbook. www.jen-diamond.com