

"The Wool Hat"

by
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1 INT. OLSEN HOME - LATE MORNING

1

ALAN OLSEN, 40, a short, balding man wearing jeans and a long-sleeved T-shirt, opens the squeaky door to the attic and calls up the stairs.

ALAN

Are you up there, Dad?

MITCH OLSEN, 66, his father, calls back.

MITCH

Yes!

Alan trudges up the stairs to the attic, which is largely empty. Mitch is seated on an old chair, some dusty cardboard boxes, one on top of another, behind him. The white-haired man is wearing jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt, and a worse-for-wear blue cardigan.

Alan reaches the top of the stairs and wipes his brow with his hand. He walks to where Mitch is sitting.

ALAN

Phew! I had forgotten how *hot* it gets up here.

MITCH

It's not so bad. Besides, these old bones don't take the cold weather well.

ALAN

You're *not* old.

MITCH

I'm hardly middle aged.

Alan notices the stack of boxes behind Mitch.

ALAN

You haven't gone through those yet?

MITCH

(embarrassed)

No.

ALAN

You promised me you would.

MITCH

And I *will*.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

They're all that's left: You're moving into the condo on Saturday morning, and the Mitchells will be moving into *this* house on Saturday afternoon.

MITCH

(hopefully)
I couldn't just. . . leave them here?

ALAN

You can't ask the new owners to hold onto your stuff!

MITCH

Can I take them to the condo?

ALAN

No.

(beat)

You wanted *that* complex so you could be close to your friends, and there were only two available condos. Like you asked, I got you the one on the first floor - so you don't have to climb those stairs - and there's simply *not* a lot of storage space for that unit.

MITCH

(hopefully)
Could *you*. . .

ALAN

You've seen my house. There's hardly enough room for Cheryl, me, and the girls.

(beat)

Do you want me to look into one of those self-storage places?

MITCH

How much does *that* cost?

ALAN

I have no idea.

(beat)

They can't be *too* expensive. A lot of people use them.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

No. There's no sense in spending money on this stuff.

ALAN

(gently)

I'm. . . I'm sorry. I know it's mostly *Mom's* things.

Mitch speaks quickly to keep the tears away.

MITCH

Don't worry about it.

(shyly)

Maybe I could keep a *few* items.

ALAN

Sure.

(beat)

I know what we can do: While I'm here, let's go through *one* box together.

MITCH

Good idea.

Alan grabs the top box from the stack and blows away the accumulated dust. He takes a few steps and then drops the box to the floor by Mitch's feet.

He opens the box's lid, reaches in, and randomly pulls out a hideous pair of bell bottoms.

ALAN

Look at the *colors*!

MITCH

(chuckles)

Bell bottoms. Back in the day, you couldn't buy straight-leg pants if you wanted to.

Alan pulls out a threadbare pink bathrobe.

ALAN

Now *here's* something I remember Mom wearing.

Mitch takes it from him and holds it tight.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

I tried to get her a new one a few times, but she loved this old thing.

Mitch glimpses something familiar in the box and pulls it out, laying the pink robe on his lap. It is a brown and black knit wool hat. He turns it about in his hands, reminiscing.

MITCH

Linda knitted this for me for our first Christmas together.

He looks at his son.

MITCH

She was pregnant with you at the time.

ALAN

I didn't know she knitted.

MITCH

I don't think she ever knitted anything else. I remember when she gave it to me. She was so proud of herself.

He sniffs the air.

MITCH

It smells like mothballs.

Alan waves a hand in front of his nose.

MITCH

I remember her getting mad at me because I'd go out in the chill with no hat. "You'll catch your death of cold," she'd say.

He looks carefully at the hat.

MITCH

I wonder if it still fits?

ALAN

You're going to wear it?

(beat)

It's so old fashioned.

1 CONTINUED: (4)

1

MITCH

Fashion be damned.

(beat)

I wore it for *many* winters, and it
never let me down.

ALAN

I'm surprised it's still in one
piece.

MITCH

It's *strong*. It's held together by
sweat and love.

He slowly puts the hat on his head. It fits.

The attic begins swirling round and round, eventually
taking Mitch with it.

JUMP CUT TO:

2 INT. OLSEN HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

2

Things are very different in the house. Mitch hasn't seen
many of the furnishings that are there now in some time.
A sparkling Christmas tree stands blinking to his right.Before him, beautiful and natural in her pink robe, is a
very pregnant LINDA. She is young and healthy, but Mitch
is still his true age.He touches his head and realizes that he is wearing the
hat.

LINDA

Do you like it?

Mitch is very confused.

LINDA

I knitted it myself. The baby was
keeping me up with his kicking.

(beat)

Merry Christmas!

FADE TO:

3 INT. OLSEN HOME - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

3

Linda looks disappointed.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

You *don't* like it.

MITCH

(quickly)

No, I *love* it! I love you. I'll
never take it off.

He pulls her close to him and kisses her hard on the
lips. Linda giggles. Mitch keeps a hold of her.

LINDA

What's gotten into you?

MITCH

Can't a man kiss his wife on
Christmas Day?

LINDA

Sure you can - on *any* day.

Surprised, she grabs at her belly.

LINDA

There's a big kick. We may have a
football player in the making.

She gently takes Mitch's right hand and places it on her
belly.

MITCH

(chuckles)

That was a good one.

LINDA

Have a listen.

Mitch crouches and places an ear against Linda's belly,
attempting to hear through the hat. He squirms, trying to
get a better position.

MITCH

I can't hear *much*.

LINDA

You have to take the hat off,
silly.

She plucks the hat from his head.

JUMP CUT TO:

4 INT. OLSEN ATTIC - MOMENTS LATER

4

ALAN
(alarmed)
Dad!
(beat)
Dad, are you OK?

Mitch, still seated, starts coming to. He is not wearing the hat.

MITCH
What. . .

ALAN
You glazed over for a minute.
(beat)
Are you alright?

MITCH
(urgently)
Where's the hat?

Alan points to it on the floor. Mitch scoops it up and holds it to his heart.

ALAN
Let's go down to the kitchen.

MITCH
Why?

ALAN
It's hot up here. Let's get a drink.

MITCH
I'm not thirsty.

ALAN
Well, *I* am, and you know how I hate to drink alone.

FADE TO:

5 INT. OLSEN KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

5

Mitch and Alan sit around the circular kitchen table, the hat before them. Through a nearby window, we can see that it is snowing lightly.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

You *what*?

MITCH

I *swear* to you, son, I went back
in time.

ALAN

How?

MITCH

It must be the hat!

ALAN

That old thing?

MITCH

You said I glazed over for a
minute.

ALAN

That's right.

MITCH

When did that happen?

ALAN

Right after you tried on. . .
That's *not* possible.

MITCH

That's why I glazed over: I wasn't
in the present anymore.

(beat)

You don't believe me?

ALAN

I believe *you* believe it.

MITCH

I could see your mother, I could
hear her, I could *feel* her. I even
felt *you* kicking away inside her.
It was the day that she gave me
this hat. Christmas Day!

(beat)

Damn! If she hadn't taken it off
of me, I'd still be there.

ALAN

Dad. . .

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Will you try to believe me?

Alan grabs the hat and puts it on his head, making Mitch very angry.

MITCH

What are you *doing*?

ALAN

I'm still here, aren't I?

MITCH

Take it off!

Alan shyly takes the hat off and hands it to Mitch.

ALAN

(taken aback)

I'm. . . I'm sorry. I was only trying to prove -

MITCH

The hat wasn't made for you. It won't work for you - just *me*.

ALAN

"Work?"

Mitch looks down at the hat as he turns it around and around in his hands.

MITCH

Do you realize what I have here? A ticket to my past! I can go back in time to. . . to better days whenever I like, as long as I wear *this*.

ALAN

You *can't* be serious.

MITCH

When have you ever known me to have an imagination?

(beat)

I could *feel* Linda. I could smell her perfume.

Mitch goes suddenly quiet.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

(uneasily)

Alan, do you remember what the hat
smelled like when we found it?

ALAN

Yeah: Mothballs.

Mitch waves the hat under Alan's nose.

MITCH

Smell it.

ALAN

Smell the hat?

MITCH

Humor me.

Alan sniffs it a few times, and an amazed look comes to
his face.

ALAN

I *don't* believe it.

MITCH

(beat)
Your mother's perfume.

FADE TO:

Alan drops a dusty box from the attic onto the kitchen
floor.

ALAN

That's the last of it!

MITCH

Only the hat does anything. It
must be because she *made* it.

(beat)
You can give away everything else.

ALAN

Dad. . . uhm. . .

MITCH

You *still* don't believe it works?

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

Let's say that I'm. . . uncertain.

Mitch taps on the chair next to him.

MITCH

Sit down.

Alan does so.

MITCH

I'm going to put it on *again*.

ALAN

(quickly)

Do you think that's wise?

MITCH

The worst thing that can happen is
. . . *nothing*.

(beat)

If I glaze over again, I'm fine.
If I start to act at all weird,
pull the hat off my head. That
should bring me back to the
present.

ALAN

I don't like this.

MITCH

I didn't ask for your approval,
just your help.

Smiling broadly in anticipation, Mitch puts the hat on his head. The kitchen begins to swirl, as the attic did, eventually taking the older man along for the ride.

JUMP CUT TO:

A winter storm is in full swing. Mitch is bundled up in a parka, gloves, and *the* hat. The wind gusts strongly every now and again. Several inches of the white stuff have already accumulated.

Mitch, shovel in hand, is trying to clear the driveway. There is a fair-sized bare patch behind him that is already getting covered anew with snow.

(CONTINUED)

Cars occasionally slowly pass by on the snow-covered street. Linda stands beside Mitch, dressed in her winter coat, hood, gloves, and boots. She looks out at the street.

LINDA

The snow is *really* piling up.

Mitch scoops up a shovelful and tosses it aside.

LINDA

Is it the heavy kind?

MITCH

(getting winded)
Unfortunately.

LINDA

The radio said we're gonna get
another four to five inches.

Mitch takes another shovelful and tosses it away.

MITCH

(sarcastically)
Great!

LINDA

At least your head's warm.

Mitch smiles and shovels some more. Linda holds out her hands.

LINDA

Let me help.

MITCH

No way! Not in your condition.

A big wind howls, blowing the hat off of his head. He grabs for it, but misses.

JUMP CUT TO:

Alan is seated beside Mitch, who is no longer wearing the hat. He starts coming to.

MITCH

(hopefully)
Did I. . . glaze over?

(CONTINUED)

ALAN
Just for a minute.
(beat)
And then. . . it was the *weirdest*
thing.

MITCH
(eagerly)
What was?

ALAN
The hat blew off your head. . .
but all the windows are shut
tight.

We see the hat lying on the floor.

FADE TO:

Mitch brushes the hat to his cheek.

MITCH
This thing is *amazing*!

ALAN
You said the wind blew the hat off
your head?

MITCH
Yes.

ALAN
So it was winter again?

MITCH
It was.
(beat)
I *suppose* that makes sense. My
trips must be limited to when I'd
be wearing the hat.

Mitch's chin suddenly drops.

MITCH
Oh, no!

ALAN
What?

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

What if the hat won't work away
from the house?

ALAN

Why *wouldn't* it?

MITCH

Linda and I moved in here right
after we were married. You were
born here. We've never lived
anywhere else.

(beat)

We'll have to cancel the sale.

ALAN

What?

MITCH

Call the realtor, and tell him I'm
staying put.

ALAN

You *have* to be kidding?

MITCH

I'm *not* taking the chance of
losing this connection to the
past.

ALAN

You can't do this!

MITCH

Of course I can!

(beat)

You have *no* idea what I'd be
giving up.

Alan angrily stands.

ALAN

I *don't*? When Mom died, *all of us*
lost someone very dear. I lost my
mother; Aunt Sue lost her sister;
Grandma and Grandpa lost their
daughter.

(beat)

Mom was a *lot* of things to a *lot*
of people.

Embarrassed, Mitch slowly stands and places a hand on
Alan's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

I'm. . . I'm sorry, son. I didn't mean to make it sound like I had a monopoly on suffering.

Alan takes a few steps away and briefly turns his back on his father.

ALAN

I envy you.

(beat)

I'm not sure if that hat does what you say it does -

MITCH

It *does*.

ALAN

Something as simple as putting a hat on gives you the chance to see Mom again.

He turns around, tears welling in his eyes.

ALAN

I'd give *anything* for that.

MITCH

So you understand why I can't leave this house?

Alan looks at his watch.

ALAN

It's getting late. I have to get Belinda at soccer practice.

(beat)

Do you want me to come back later?

MITCH

No, that's OK. I'll be fine.

ALAN

Then I'll stop by tomorrow morning. We'll take that hat for a drive.

(beat)

You *can't* stop the sale, Dad. You'll get sued for breach of contract.

MITCH

I don't care.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (3)

9

He brushes the hat against his cheek.

MITCH
This hat is worth any price.

FADE TO:

10 INT. MITCH'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

10

Mitch lies in bed, tossing and turning. He looks at the clock on his night stand. 2:45 a.m. He sighs.

MITCH
Maybe if I tried the hat on just
one more time. . .

FADE TO:

11 INT. SOMEWHERE - MOMENTS LATER

11

Mitch, wearing the hat and his pajamas, is in a strange place. White mist, like clouds, floats around him. There is an underlying soft, wind chime-like sound, and everything is very bright.

MITCH
(alarmed)
What is this place?

Linda speaks, always in echo. She is faintly visible, dressed all in white, amid the mist.

LINDA
Mitch?

Mitch looks around anxiously.

MITCH
I. . . I can *barely* see you.

LINDA
I am here.

Mitch struggles to go to her, but he can't move his legs.

LINDA
Do not try to move. It is not
possible for those who still live.

MITCH
But you're *so* close!

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

I am never far away.

MITCH

(beat)

Why aren't we at the house?

LINDA

Not *this* time.

MITCH

You *know* what I've been doing?

LINDA

I do.

(beat)

That hat has some *remarkable* qualities.

Mitch touches the hat appreciatively.

MITCH

I'm going to use it more often.

LINDA

You *cannot*.

MITCH

Why?

LINDA

The powers that be have asked that you stop.

Mitch looks all around.

MITCH

Is this. . . Heaven?

LINDA

No. We're between Earth and Heaven - a rest stop.

(beat)

Mitch, *I* want you to stop using the hat too.

MITCH

Why, honey? I'm not hurting anyone.

LINDA

You're hurting yourself - the *younger* you.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

I don't. . .

LINDA

Consider the trips you've made.
You were able to experience two
events in your life that you had
already lived.

(beat)

The young Mitch Olsen is now
deprived of *ever* knowing those
moments.

Mitch is surprised at the repercussions of what he has
done.

MITCH

I. . . I didn't mean. . .

LINDA

Of course you didn't.

(beat)

You wouldn't want to be deprived
of *your* memories of our time
together.

MITCH

Definitely not!

LINDA

Neither does he.

(beat)

In order for you to gain, he has
to lose, and that isn't right.

MITCH

I guess I wasn't thinking. It's
only that I miss you *so* much.

LINDA

As I miss you.

(beat)

Promise me, my love, that you
won't use the hat again.

MITCH

It will be *awfully* tempting.

LINDA

Then give it away.

MITCH

But you made it for *me*.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

11

LINDA

You have so many memories of us in
your head. Let the hat keep
someone else warm in the cold
weather.

(beat)

It's past time for you to start a
new life.

FADE TO:

12 INT. OLSEN KITCHEN - LATER

12

Alan and Mitch are again seated around the table. A few
of the attic boxes are on the floor behind them.

ALAN

Are you *sure*, Dad?

MITCH

Yeah.

(beat)

I already put it into one of the
boxes.

ALAN

Why the change of heart?

MITCH

(chuckles)

Remind me to tell you sometime.

FADE TO:

13 INT. CONDO COMPLEX LOBBY - DAYS LATER

13

LYNN COOPER, a lovely older woman wearing a white
cardigan, and glasses about her neck on a faux pearl
chain, nearly collides with Mitch as they are both
getting their mail out of the locked postal boxes.

LYNN

Oh, excuse me.

MITCH

That's quite alright. My fault.

LYNN

I'm Lynn Cooper.

She holds out her dainty hand, which Mitch shakes.

(CONTINUED)

MITCH

Mitch Olsen.

LYNN

You must be new here.

MITCH

I moved in a few days ago - 1C.

LYNN

Welcome. I'm sure you and your wife will be very happy here.

MITCH

(beat)

I'm a . . . widower.

LYNN

I'm *so* sorry.

(beat)

My Harry died nearly five years ago. You never *quite* get used to being alone, do you?

MITCH

No, you don't.

LYNN

(beat)

I hope I'm not being forward, Mr. Olsen -

MITCH

"Mitch," please.

LYNN

Only if you call me "Lynn."

MITCH

(chuckles)

Deal.

LYNN

I've lived in this complex for several years. I can tell you all you need to know about the area, perhaps over a cup of tea.

MITCH

I would like that.

(CONTINUED)

LYNN

I'm in 1F.
(beat)
Would 2:00 be OK?

MITCH

Just fine.

LYNN

I'm also an *excellent* tour guide.
I can show you all the sights of
the neighborhood.

MITCH

I already know. . .

LYNN

Excuse me?

MITCH

Nothing.
(beat)
How can I refuse such a *pretty*
tour guide.

FADE TO BLACK.