

[SFX Claxon]

Opening Narration: It has been... oh, you can count, right? All the apocalypses happened, society is in recovery mode, the library is still doing what the library does best, the staff is ... well you'll see.

Step inside ... the Atomic Library.

(Theme Music)

SCENE 1 - Atrium

Hazel: **(holding a clipboard -- scribbling notes)** So, it looks like we have an event today to honor those who fought in the war. Karen will be leading that.
(pause) It just says "with special guest." Any idea who that could be?

Marjorie **(general, non committal "I 'unno" sound from Marjorie)**

Hazel You're always so helpful, Marjorie.

Marjorie Looks like it's time to open. **(nervous laughter)**

Hazel Why are you acting so weird?

Marjorie's answer is drowned out by the creaking of the door -- which is back to squeaking as it slowly opens.

Hazel ah, just like old times.

Marjorie Have you ever thought that maybe you're the weird one?

(Karen and Sheldon walk in from the main library, discussing the day's plans)

Sheldon So, this is like, a really important war hero, right?

Karen I would say he's very important to the *community*.

Sheldon I can't wait to ask him...

Karen Sheldon, sweet boy, I think it would be best to not talk to this guest too much. He can be... he can be... long-winded.

Sheldon Oh... Well, I don't mind. I'd love to hear some stories of the 2 Week War from a real live war hero!

Marjorie You know, Sheldon, Karen has a drawer full of her own medals.

Sheldon What!?! (**quickly interrupted by Karen**)

Karen Oh! Those silly old things -- I let the children turn them into refrigerator magnets a few years ago.

Hazel So, who is this big, amazing guest we have stopping by today?

Karen (**ignoring Hazel**) Okay Sheldon, I'm going to need you to make sure there is a table full of snacks for our guest and he dropped off these booklets [**SFX large box of books being dropped**] about himself. "For autographs," he said.

Sheldon Oh...

(Sheldon and Karen move further away, but you can still hear Marjorie and Hazel talking in the background)

Hazel I haven't seen anyone so demanding since my ex...

Marjorie (**nervous laughter**)

Sheldon So.. So... Miss Karen, How..how exactly DID you lose your eye? I know that's probably a rude question (**muttering to self**) stupid, stupid Sheldon...

Karen (**interrupting**) Oh, it's quite alright, Sheldon.

[SFX echoing footsteps as they walk toward auditorium]

Karen Well... (**centering breath**) We were all sitting around a fire one evening during the Two Week War, regaling each other with tales of the day's battles... it was me, General Simmons, Captain Armonde, a few young cadets, bless them, and Major Adams.

Sheldon Major Adams was there?!

Karen There are people in our lives who always seem to be around, Sheldon. It's not a good thing or a bad thing. It just... is. Anyway, Major Adams was telling us a story of how he single-handedly blasted his way through the Ember Valley Armoury, hands waving about in a fury -- and, the marshmallow that he had been roasting...

Sheldon (**gasps**) no!

Karen yes, a...marshmallow fireball... right into the eye.

Sheldon **(makes a retching sound)**

Karen Oh, Sheldon! It's not that bad, honestly! Since we were very low on medical supplies in those days, I turned my library card into my eyepatch and now checking out materials is easier than ever!

From behind them, heavy footsteps can be heard. Karen lets out a deep sigh before turning around.

Man Good Morning Colonel Lovemore -- it has been quite a long time.

Karen Good Morning Major Adams. **(sighs)** Indeed it has.

(long pause in which the two of them would be staring at each other if you could see them, but instead: SFX: long, incredibly intricate handshake here. SHELDON IS COUGHING FOR ATTENTION)

Karen Ah, yes, this is Sheldon, he's...

Man Karen -- has it been that long really? You have a son?

Karen Sheldon!? No! No, oh goodness no!

Sheldon Hi Mr. Major Adams, I'm a big fan -- I have your action figure and everything!

Man Weird. **(pause)** Anyway. Colonel Lovemore, I'm excited to be a part of this event today.

Karen Oh, no, no --- please call me Karen. My soldiering days are over, after all!

Sheldon Ms. Karen! I have your action figure, too. Well... I did. I honestly thought it was just, like, a princess that needed saving or somethin' but seeing as your a war hero too, it totally makes sense that THAT one is you....

M/K Uhhh...

Karen **(speaking directly to Man)** We are just about to set up your snack table.

Man Did you get my list?

Karen (you can hear her eyes rolling) Yes, we got your "list"

Man Jerky?

Karen It's not beef, but yes -- Jerky.

Man Beer?

Karen C'mon Man - no beer in the Library.

Man Ah. I forgot about your rules. I suppose I should try to keep my voice down, too?

Karen **(affronted)** That's a hurtful sterotype, Man!

[SFX heels can be heard coming into the lobby, followed by running footsteps. Enter Hazel and Marjorie]

Marjorie Hazel, no! -- Come back here -- I think the circulation desk is calling for you! I think the Director is calling for you! I think Brittle is writing letters again...

Hazel Marjorie! Quit it -- I need to check on our....

[SFX footsteps come to a stop stop]

Hazel **(gasping, airy)** Man! **(deep breath and pause)** I cannot believe it.

Man Hazel?

Hazel I... I cannot.. **(laughs to herself)** I can't do this today.

(Hazel runs toward Man. Chaos ensues)

Marjorie HAZEL NO!

Karen Oh! Shrapnel! NO!

Sheldon Why's Miss Hazel lookin' so mad?!

(Marjorie and Karen manage to grab Hazel before she can hit Man)

Hazel Let me go! LET ME GO RIGHT NOW!

Marjorie You know we can't do that!

Karen You're going to hit him!

Hazel So what!? He deserves it! Lying, spineless, joke of a MAN!

Man It's good to see you too, darling.

(Hazel is fighting to get loose)

Hazel DARLING!? Man, you leave me HERE... ALONE... and you have the audacity to call me Darling?!

Man You know it wasn't like that! I had a war to fight!

Hazel Oh PLEASE. You barely did a thing! You're a coward, not a man, Man!

Karen Hazel -- Let's do this another time. The Veteran's Day Event will be starting soon and it won't look good for either of you if you're fighting... **(Karren begins to lose her cool)** IN... THE... LOBBY. **(regains composure quickly)**

Man Yes, let's do **(sarcastically)** this...another time.

Hazel I oughta...!

Marjorie Okay Hazel! Let's go up to your office! Let's go look at the snow globes for a little while... Maybe check out some statistical data and the budget for the next fiscal year? Sounds like fun, right? Wanna hand-line a spreadsheet?

Hazel **(calming down)** Marjorie... Just... Uh! Yes, I suppose that does sound like fun... But YOU. I ain't done with you, Man!

Man Honey, it's not polite to point! Let's grab dinner while I'm in town. We can talk about the kids, your parents, everyone back home! It will be great!

Hazel I cannot even believe you would bring them up. **(voice wavering)** I do not want to talk about them here.

Karen The event will be starting soon. **(pause- annoyed but still calm and sweet)** Sheldon, can you help Mrs. Adams to her office?

Sheldon Aye Aye, Sir.

Karen That...isn't necessary, Sheldon.

(Sheldon, Hazel, and Marjorie begin to walk away.)

Man **(calling to Hazel from behind her)** The children **(coughs painfully)** Diana and Orion — they miss you. Well, they said so in their letter last week.

(everyone stops)

Marjorie Hazel.....I thought you said your kids were dead.

Hazel **(whisper)** I never said that. Just...gone.

Marjorie Gone usually means dead these days.

Sheldon Yeah. G-O-N-E, that spells dead.

Karen **(yelling from behind)** Sheldon... We've been through this — G-O-N-E does not spell dead!

(Transition to Ghost music)

SCENE 2 - 2nd Floor Bathroom

GHOST Did you know the Orson Welles Community Library has recently gained a new Vending Machine? With Spendy Vendy, you no longer have to wait while you decide what is yummy for your tummy! Spendy Vendy scans your tongue and decides exactly what you are craving.

Maybe you are picky for a snicky, Hurkin' for a Gerkin, or even feeling frazzled for a fizzy fruit-juice — Spendy Vendy has you covered. All you have to do is carefully walk up to the Spendy Vendy and let it sniff your hand while you gently whisper the code GHOST into its ear receptacle.

Not only will you gain its trust, but you will receive a 5% discount on your favorite Chocky Pocky! Remember — Sniff, whisper GHOST, and enjoy. Try SPENDY VENDY TODAY!

SCENE 3: Auditorium

(crowd sounds — murmuring, etc)

Attendee 1 **[SFX microphone feedback sound]** So, this question is for Colonel Lovemore. Colonel, what was it like fighting off the roving packs of Ember Valley wildmen as the only woman in the platoon?

Karen Oh! What a wonderful question! I found that... **(abruptly cut off)**

Man Karen allow me - you're telling it all wrong. **(with swagger)** The Wild Men of Ember Valley had never seen a woman such as Colonel Lovemore. In fact, at first they could not believe she was a woman at all, since she couldn't bring her makeup into battle. The platoon spent a good amount of time protecting the Colonel. See, to the Wildmen of Ember Valley women are like **(pause for**

effect) tiny little fauns who must be admired and protected. They have no real place in battle, other than to use for decoy and bribery.

Karen **(through gritted teeth)** Thank you for that... lovely explanation, Captain. However, it was not quite like that. The battle of the Ember Valley Wild Men was short and ended in a peace treaty where their Colonel, also a woman, and I decided to end the war and divvy up resources between our platoons. It was a great day of...

Man Blood! It was a day of blood and gore that will forever haunt our psyches, torment our sleep, and ensure the rift between our two municipalities will never heal.

Karen Actually, Colonel Michelle Swift and I still maintain a tight friendship. She helped me build my cybernetic leg, and we go to CafCon 5 once a week.

Man **(coughs)** Yes — you in the back?

Attendee 2 Hi there! Big fan, Colonel! **(Man sighs dramatically)** Do you have any tips for the young girls in the crowd on how to deal with, uhm, assertive personalities? I mean, not be pushed around or have your work taken credit for?

Karen Oh! Another great question! Listen up, ladies! The best thing you can do is....

(voice fades off)

Hazel **(sourly)** Karen looks like she is handling it well.

Constance Oh! He's cute!

Marjorie That's Hazel's husband.

Constance Whaaaat? How did YOU catch THAT?

Hazel Bomb-dammit, Constance! Why COULDN'T I get him?

Constance I mean, he's charming... and look at that chin. And his muscles. And those pants leave NOTHING to the imagination... look at that a**(is cut off before she can finish saying ass)**

Marjorie He's alright, I guess. I mean, he is a pompous jerk. He takes credit for all of Karen's work.

Hazel I still don't understand - why is it I couldn't get someone like him?

C/M (non committal “i ‘unno” sound)

(Hazel walks off toward Karen to help her end the ceremony)

Marjorie We probably should have been more supportive. I’m sure this whole thing is really confusing for Hazel.

Constance All I was saying is that Mr. Adams...ahem... MAJOR Adams -- I do love a man in uniform -- he’s like, really manly. He’s got swagger and he’s like...he could be a bomb-damned model, Marjorie. And Hazel (**questionably**) she’s just... Hazel. I mean -- she’s kind of boring. And she kind of has a stick up her as(**marjorie interrupts her**)

Marjorie Hey! Hazel isn’t boring. She’s... she’s perfectly fine. I mean, sure she isn’t a model or anything. And, maybe her hair is always a mess. And, maybe she has that strange snowglobe collecting hobby... but -- she’s kind of pretty. BUT -- she’s smart! That’s probably it. Maybe he really likes smart women.

Constance (**laughing**) She does have a stick up her...

Marjorie I neither agree nor disagree, Constance.

(Hazel is talking to the crowd now)

Hazel Thank you all for coming to our veteran’s day program. If you have the extra, please feel free to donate some straws to the Friends of the Orson Welles Community Library. Without our Friends, programs like this just aren’t possible. (**crowd exiting room**) Thank you...Thank you...yes, it was a lovely program. Please come back soon!

Karen Okay, I’m going to go and take a lunch break. (**irritation can be heard in her voice**) It was great to see you Major Adams. See you... some other time. [**SFX servo leg sounds as she hustles out of the room**]

Constance Hey -- Hey Major Adams, question for ya!

Marjorie I swear by the ghost of Miriam Welles, if you even DARE, Constance...

Man Oh, Marjorie Slump -- always a pleasure. (**M makes a dismissive “hmph” sound**) Okay, maybe not. (**he sighs irritably**)

Constance So, Hazel is your wife? (**she’s laughing to herself**)

Hazel Estranged.... For what, four or five years?

Man Four years, seven months, two weeks, three days, and four hours.

Hazel **(her eyeroll can be heard in her voice)** Romantic. I'm sure you had that little tidbit prepared.

Man Why do you have to be like this, Darling?

Constance This is going to make a fantastic addition to my blog.

Marjorie Constance. No. Just. No. **(pause)** Hazel -- let's go get some lunch. Doomsday Danny's is still in the old City Manager's office.

Hazel Thanks Marjorie, but... I can't handle the heart burn right now.

(Hazel turns around and walks away, almost running into Brittle)

Brittle Whoa -- Secretary, watch where you're going. **(pause)** What's going on here? **(chuckles to himself)** The secretary looks like she's seen a ghost or something...

Marjorie Not a ghost... more like a personal demon.

Man **(coughs)** I'm going to head out. Can you give this to Hazel?

Marjorie She doesn't have a phone, Man.

Constance Ya she does -- she calls into my show... I mean, she calls into Mystery Girl all the time.

Marjorie Constance. I think Starla needs you at the desk.

Brittle Starla isn't here today. But yeah, Hazel has a phone. I'm sure she would love a call. She's got to be the LONELIEST woman alive and **(whispering)** this guy? If he wants to talk to Hazel, sheesh -- let him.

Man Well, she is my wife.

Brittle **(incredulously)** whaaaaaaaaa!?!

Constance I KNOW, RIGHT?!

Marjorie BOTH OF YOU GO AWAY. SHOO -- GO!

Brittle I can't believe she's married **(voices fading out as they walk away)**

Constance I know -- I figured she was still a vir **(her words get drowned out)**

Brittle She had kids, you dunce. **(they continue to talk as they walk out of the scene)**

Marjorie Now, YOU. You can't just show up here, Man. Man, I honestly never expected you to pull a stunt like this.

Man Just...give her my card, okay?

Marjorie No promises, Man.

(Hazel is in her office, typing on a typewriter)

Hazel to whom it may concern **(clicking of keys)** ugh. NO. this is all wrong. **(resets typewriter)** Manchester Lee Adams, the events which unfolded today were despicable, even coming from you.

(Hazel pauses. Crying softly, she sits alone in her office. A soft knocking is heard.)

Hazel **(sniff)** One... **(wiping face and sniffing)** one moment. **(to self)** Heaven's Gate I have makeup running down my face... **(knocking resumes)** ONE MOMENT, PLEASE.

(Karen and Marjorie open the door as Hazel continues to try to clean herself up)

Karen Hazel... I am SO sorry. I guess I didn't even realize.

Marjorie I'm sorry, I just assumed that you wouldn't...

Karen He has a lot of fans... I thought he could help bring some more people to the Library.

Marjorie I thought you were divorced **(her voice raises questionably as if to make an excuse)**

(pregnant pause)

Hazel I... am so angry.

Marjorie I'm so sorry --- it was a mistake!

Karen Yes, we should have talked to you first.

Hazel No. I don't care about that. I'm angry because.. He has my kids. He has my kids because I lost it after... everything...and... and he was just a better parent. He has my children because I couldn't cope.

Marjorie I always assumed they were dead....

Karen **(makes an agreeable noise)**

Hazel They might as well be to me...

SCENE 4 - Lobby

Benjamin How's the Secretary?

Marjorie Well, *Benji* -- I'd say she's just peachy, you childish little... Ugh. Nevermind. I need to do the safety message -- get out of my way.

[SFX: three tones of the PA system]

Marjorie Good morning, Orson Welles Community Library! This is your Safety Liaison and Collection Development Diva, Marjorie Slump with today's Safety Tip. Really, it's more of a warning. Stay away from our vending machine. It has achieved sentience and does not appreciate having its buttons pushed. Attempting to use the vending machine will only cause it to dispense sugar free ribbon candy. If you do not heed this warning and are punctured by rapid-fire sugar-free ribbon candy please let a staff member know immediately so we can fill out an incident report. Remaining non-sentient vending machines can still be found on Bike Trail #49 (good luck finding that one), and down the third dark alleyway in the Murderbot District. Goodbye.

[SFX: three tones]

[SFX Karen is walking through the lobby -- Sheldon runs up behind her]

Sheldon Miss Karen! Miss Karen!

Karen **(irritation in voice --SIGH)** Yes, Sheldon?

Sheldon I.. I just wanted to make sure you're ok. You seemed a little upset earlier.

Karen Well, sometimes bringing up the past can be difficult. I think I'm just a little tired. It has been a long day.

Sheldon Oh... I... I just had a question for you.

Karen **(sighs quietly to herself -- an attempt to regain patience)** Yes?

Sheldon So, uh, you know how earlier you told me the story about your eye?

Karen **(slowly as if talking to a child)** Uh-huh...

Sheldon Well... I was just wondering... What happened to your leg?

Karen **(slightly offended)** Sheldon hasn't your mother ever taught you not to ask a woman about her limb status?!

Sheldon Oh! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to upset you Miss Karen!

Karen It's.. It's okay. **(they begin walking together)** So, this story goes back to Major Adams, a campfire, and a game of charades that I will never forget.

(Closing Music)

OUTRO You have been listening to The Atomic Library, written and produced by Chriss Chaney and Lara Tabri. You can chat with Library Staff at TheAtomicLibrary@gmail.com, Follow us on Instagram @TheAtomicLibrary, on Twitter @AtomicLib or visit us at theatomiclibrary.com.

Chriss voiced Hazel and Sheldon -- Hey wait! That's me!, Lara voiced Marjorie, Aleya Stone voiced Dr. Benjamin Brittle, Rebecca Hale voiced Contance the Temp, Erin O'Quinn voiced Karen Lovemore, Alisha Skelton-Donley voiced the ghost. Introducing Nathan Hood as Manchester Lee Adams -- you can hear more from Nathan at (plug something)

And remember - use your local library -- It's more than books.