

SYNOPSIS 'BENNY AND JOON'

BENNY PEARL works at Benny's Auto Clinic as 'the doctor'. He is always in control of both everything at work with the help of ERIC, his friend who also works for him and his personal life with his sister, JUNIPER PEARL. June is Benny's 'sick sister' and a lot to handle. She makes all the housekeepers Benny hires run away easily and her relationship with her younger brother, Benny, is also not a easy one. She loves to paint, her paintings are her way of expression and also, she loves peanut butter. After June makes MRS.SMAIL quit, Benny calls Eric to let him know that he won't be able to attend their poker night because he can't leave June alone all night. Eric tells him to bring her as well since she isn't harmful when she doesn't set Kleenex on fire. As they eat their dinner, peanut and celery for June and pasta for Benny, before going to the poker night, June explains how she only went out alone to meet people and that is the reason why Mrs. Smail ran away. Benny gets concerned by this and tells her how dangerous it is for her. They argue over her irresponsible actions and the housekeepers and how they are making June feel, Benny tells June that she'll be coming to the poker night where they play in exchange of things like snorkels instead of money. With Benny's lousy driving, they still make it to Eric's after passing a small movie house with a poster saying 'BUSTER KEATON FILM FESTIVAL'.

During the game with THOMAS and MIKE, Mike mentions his 26 years old dyslexic cousin moving in with him and offers Benny to consider him as the next housekeeper. Benny meets with DR.GARVEY, June's doctor and he tries to talk him into group home options for June since they already ran out of housekeeper options. Benny doesn't consider it first, but Garvey takes him to see one group home for schizophrenics and this, finally reveals what's wrong with June. Benny finds June getting warned by a police officer on the street with her snorkel on when he gets back home. Then, he finds her playing with the fire and a Kleenex. Next day, as they have their breakfast Benny makes fun of June and her ways. This pisses June off and Benny gets a flashback revealing the accident that made June sick and killed their family. Benny rejects a woman's offer to go out since he has to look after June at work and finds his fish STEVE, dead when he gets home. He blames June for that and signs papers with the group home suggested by Garvey. Another poker night at Eric's, Benny tells them about what happened as June raises stakes with Mike and ends up losing and with SAM SHANKMAN to take home. Benny now has one month to tell June about the group home and a dyslexic Sam to take care of. Sam loves Buster Keaton and makes them stop for a bite at a deli near the theater where they meet RUTHIE the waitress, an ex-actress wannabe. Benny offers a job as the housekeeper to Sam who is childlike and chose to be cheerful about his traumatic past with his mother and illness that night after seeing June and him hit it off. He tells him about June's mental illness and Sam starts to take care of the house by cooking with an iron and cleaning in his own ways. Sam and June starts to get closer as Ruthie and Benny drawn each other. Benny and Ruthie go on an actual date as Sam and June keeps getting closer. Benny sees the apartment for rent in Ruthie's block as he drives her back to her house and at the end of their date, he rejects Ruthie slightly since he puts June first, as June gets in a relationship with Sam but they decide to keep it as a secret for now. On the

date, Benny lets Ruthie inside of his own world by telling everything about June's illness and his postponed dreams.

June and Sam fall in love with each other and Sam wants to know if there is a possibility for June to get better. Benny decides to build up a career for Sam by using his entertaining skills. June is not a fan of that however, since this change might drive them apart from each other and she finds it as one of overly controlling actions of Benny. He talks with someone at the comedy club and he mentions Benny about the possible future opportunities for Sam and his upcoming career in places such as LA. June effects Sam's decisions by making him decide between his own and Benny's needs. They decide to tell Benny about their relationship. Benny gets very angry at Sam thinking he used June as a mentally ill person and kicks him out. Benny and June get into a huge fight when he tells her she can't be in love since he is crazy and June sees the group home brochure as they get into a physical fight. Dr. Garvey comes and gives medication to calm June down.

Benny leaves June home alone to go and see Ruthie. June sets their picture together on fire and leaves the house with Sam leaving the burning picture behind. June has a major episode as they try to run away on the bus and they take him to the hospital. Benny realizes his over the top controlling ways when Sam makes an impression of him as they confront to each other. They put June at the psychiatric hospital Thomas works at and Benny loses himself with guilt. He drives around on the verge of an accident haunted by the accident that took the lives of their family in the past. Benny doesn't want to be the holder the control over June's own life. He gets himself together and goes to see Dr. Garvey who ends up saying June doesn't want to see him and she wants to stay at the hospital. He starts looking for Sam at Ruthie's apartment and they go to the City Hall to sign the papers for June's conservatorship. Benny signs off to give the control of June's life to her and they go to the hospital to get June who now, gave up on everything, out and back to life.

With Thomas's help, Benny manages to break-in to talk with June. He tells him about to conservatorship and the apartment for rent at Ruthie's block. He tells him that she respects her as an individual and is willing to give June her own space as an adult now and he is aware that at some point he started to need June sick to give definition to his life and his role in life. She doesn't listen to him first and doesn't believe in any of his words but then, he sees Ruthie and Sam waiting for her outside and changes her mind just when Dr. Garvey was about to call the police on Benny who has been feeling defeated. They manage to convince Dr. Garvey to release her, tell him about Sam and show him the apartment after promising him that she will never miss her appointments. Benny makes up with both Ruthie and June, they start to furnish June's future apartment together.

COMMENTS

Interesting dynamic between two siblings that only have each other left. A very controlling brother and a schizophrenic sister, trying to take care of each other. Even though the concept sounds very dark when phrased like that, the writer chooses to handle it in a surprisingly light way. This approach might be helpful in terms of making the movie more interesting, but it is certainly a hit on the underdeveloped premise and the dramatic aspect of the overall story. In this sad story that is given behind a pink filter, characters are crooked but highly goodhearted, sometimes too childlike even. Therefore, the hook isn't the sadness or the darkness of the story; it's the characters and their ways of dealing with their imperfections. They're all making lemonades in their own unique ways with the lemons given by life.

The author doesn't juxtapose plot and characterization by giving more importance on the characters rather than the plot itself, which makes the characters more relatable but degrades the story in a very predictable way and loses the direction for the second act. Benny tries to force Sam into a career but this stays underdeveloped as a threat since it doesn't really separate him and June, also, their solution to runaway is very predictable. The predictability of the underdeveloped story points, like the love story between Benny and Ruthie, that is being shadowed by the characterization decreases the tension of the events and leads into leaving no urgency. Even when the things reach into their climax, like when June has her episode, the stakes aren't that high because the illness has always been given in a pink bubble with the choice of the author to keep the story more as a fantasy than a dark reality. Inside this fantasy bubble away from every evilness and sorrow of the real world, the conflicts get easily resolved, such as June spending so little time after her breakdown, if there is any therefore there is no pressure for the reader since the ticking clocks are usually weak. Since the love story between Ruthie and Benny has no depth, Ruthie being the savior is also another thing that stays up in the air. Although the story has lots of dramatic components in it, the author's choice to 'keeping everything light' keeps the story away from reaching a highly dramatic level.

The characters are the most powerful element of the story since they are always lovable in their own genuine and childlike ways since the author chooses to tell his story in a fantasy style rather than being dramatic by focusing on their crooked sides in a realistic manner. However, this leaves them too naïve and almost passive with no specific character arcs. Even Benny's change, with him letting June finally go and be her own personality, isn't that deep since he never really had a decision that is too bad. He was always only slightly controlling although he was complaining a lot. Sam and June are always very relatable and lovable that at one point, their childlike love story shadows the main story, the relationship between Benny and June. However, even they don't really feel realistic sometimes and stay shallow with their important diseases with no dramatic damages in a way portrays June more as a spoiled person instead of someone struggling with a very serious illness sometimes. They are different indeed, but in more of a cute way than an ill way just like how Benny is never truly a control freak. In the meantime, Ruthie usually stays irrelevant with her cursory character description although she is the solution of everything at the end.

Sam, as the healer and the breaker, the outsider who brings a new dynamic and a color to the story of these siblings, generally has the best lines throughout the story even though he isn't a main character, just like when he summarizes the whole essence of the story when he tells Benny, how he decided to pick being sarcastic instead of pessimistic about his situation in life. The dialogues between Benny and June is also unconventional reflecting their relationship however, it doesn't always stay that way, when they have the heartfelt confrontation at the hospital with a very predictable dialogue that is almost too melodramatic.

The story loses its direction during the second act by focusing too much on Sam with no real threats and leaving Benny and June's story behind. The stakes never reach to the climax although the situation is very dramatic, because of the fantasy style that the author picks to reach more people. The characters are always too lovable and steal the scene like Sam and his relationship with June, but the ones like Ruthie stays almost irrelevant with the forced love story with no depth. It is a heartwarming story with easy solutions that are lacking threats or dramatic feelings.