

ITINERANTS

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Characters

EMILY	23, bright, dangerous, dark
HARPER	24, outgoing, optimistic, handy
PATTIE	35, athletic, gregarious, dependent
KAYE	42, bright, dangerous, dark

Time and Place

Present
A remote campground

Two tents. The back end of a 1985 Buick might be in view behind them. Emily sits in a plastic lawn chair reading a magazine. She swats mosquitoes with it.

Harper enters carrying helium filled balloons and a half-filled plastic grocery bag. She can't believe him.

EMILY

Is this how it begins?

HARPER

(Can't make sense of her) You're weird. Put yourself together, would you? We have guests.

He sets the bag on the ground and disappears into a tent with the balloons. Emily looks around.

EMILY

What do you mean, guests?

HARPER

Guests.

EMILY

Where?

HARPER

They're coming.

EMILY

What, like a pack of coyotes? Mountain goats?

Harper emerges with the balloons, tying their strings to the grip of a machete.

HARPER

A couple I met at the general store. Only others in the campground.

EMILY

A couple. You mean, people?

HARPER

Yeah.

EMILY

They'll smell the body in the trunk.

HARPER

They're lesbians.

EMILY

They have noses, right?

HARPER

What? (Emphatically) There's no body in the trunk.

EMILY

There's always a body in the trunk, Harper. Believe me.

HARPER

I just felt like company. Having some. Since you stopped ... communicating.

Harper sets the machete on the ground, goes into the tent, and returns with a folding table, which he unfolds and sets with food stuffs from the bag ... hummus and pita chips.

EMILY

This is a bad idea. Another bad idea in a long string of bad ideas. I didn't stop communicating. I just don't have anything to communicate to you. There's a big difference.

HARPER

I got hummus and pita chips.

EMILY

What if these lesbos --

HARPER

(Overlapping) Don't call them lesbos --

EMILY

What if they call the cops on us? We're wanted in five states.

HARPER

For parking violations.

EMILY

And a fender bender.

HARPER

And lewd conduct.

EMILY

(Sarcastic) Brilliant idea. Oh, Emily, you drive me wild, you're so hot, you're so hot, let's just pull over and do it in the car. In a church parking lot. On Sunday morning.

HARPER

It seemed like a good idea --

EMILY

(Overlapping) No, joining the Peace Corps is a good idea. Graduate school is a good idea --

HARPER

(Overlapping) It's not a crime to want to see a little bit of the country --

EMILY

(Overlapping) A cross-country crime spree is not a good --

Pattie and Kaye enter. Pattie carries a six-pack.

HARPER

Will you shut up? Hey, Pattie.

PATTIE

Hey, Harper.

HARPER

Hey, Kaye.

KAYE

Hey.

HARPER

This is Emily.

PATTIE / KAYE

Hey.

EMILY

Hey.

Beat.

PATTIE

What smells?

HARPER

Smells? Nothing smells, I don't think.

KAYE

Like, I don't know, sewage?

EMILY

Harper.

HARPER

Hummus. It's the hummus.

Pattie sniffs.

PATTIE

No, it's like something dead.

HARPER

Emily, Pattie is a basketball coach.

PATTIE

Go figure.

She and Kaye laugh.

HARPER

And Kaye is a licensed family therapist.

KAYE

We come out here every year, just to get away.

EMILY

Aren't you afraid? Two ladies out here all alone? You might run into a couple of psychos on a crime spree.

PATTIE

We're not worried.

EMILY

You haven't seen what's in our --

HARPER

I got balloons to make it festive.

He sets the balloons tied to the machete on the table. Kaye crouches next to Emily, puts her hand on the arm of her chair.

KAYE

Are you worried out here? This is one of the big problems today, that I see all the time in my practice. Fear. Immobilizing fearfulness.

EMILY

(Looking into the sky) Oh, great, vultures.

PATTIE

I saw those earlier.

HARPER

Have some hummus and pita chips. I got grapes too.

PATTIE

I brought beer.

Pattie opens beers and passes them around. They all drink beer and eat hummus and pita chips. It's awkward.

EMILY

Are you two in therapy?

HARPER

Emily.

EMILY

What?

HARPER

That's rude.

EMILY

What? I just thought, you know ...

PATTIE

Thought what?

EMILY

Just that, you know, people who are therapists often ... need it themselves.

KAYE

Is that so?

EMILY

And because of ... you know ... your situation.

PATTIE

What situation? That we're a same-sex couple?

HARPER

She didn't mean that.

EMILY

I mean, everybody has problems. Harper and I have problems. God, do we have problems. But when you throw that into the mix, well ... just because of the stigma, or whatever.

PATTIE

You know that's a myth, don't you? Gay couples don't have any more problems than straight ones.

She finishes one beer and opens another.

HARPER

I'm sorry.

KAYE

(Enjoying this) No, it's good to talk about these things. It helps us to recognize our misconceptions, stereotypes ...

PATTIE

Bigotry.

EMILY

Jeez, I'm just being honest. I'm not judging you.

KAYE

We are in therapy, actually.

PATTIE

Kaye.

KAYE

It's okay, Pattie. It's a lot healthier to be in therapy, to deal with opportunities head-on, (at Emily) than to be in denial.

EMILY

Opportunities. (At Kaye, with a sinister cheeriness) You're a little button-pusher, aren't you? You like to push buttons. Is that your therapeutic style? Button-pushing?

HARPER

(Swallowing a chip) I'm gonna smell like garlic.

KAYE

(Laughs) I take it you're not in therapy.

EMILY

You think we need it?

KAYE

Speaking not as a therapist, now, but as an uninterested third party, I'd guess you could benefit.

EMILY

Couples therapy.

KAYE

Yes. Or just you. You yourself might benefit.

Emily smells her prey.

EMILY

Well speaking as a very interested party I'd say you don't know jack shit.

HARPER

(Panicking) Emily, would you just give somebody a fucking break? Just give anybody a goddamn break for once.

EMILY

Because we're not even a couple anymore. That's how much you know. That's how acute your powers of observation are.

PATTIE

All right, look, we're on vacation. Kaye, you can't fix everybody.

KAYE

Who's fixing anybody?

EMILY

Who needs fixing? Does she try to fix you, Pattie? Is she always on you about your shit? Try to get you to join AA?

PATTIE

I think we found our psycho.

EMILY

You know, I have a BA in English.

PATTIE

So? I've got a masters in physical --

EMILY

(Interrupting) No, I'm saying ... I'm saying there's this poem by Robert Frost.

HARPER

Nobody wants to hear about that poem. (To Pattie and Kaye) She's got this thing.

EMILY

It's about a husband and wife and their dead baby.

PATTIE

Let's get out of here.

KAYE

No let's hear about the dead baby poem. This might be --

EMILY

Let me tell you about the fucking poem! (Beat) So we're in class talking about this poem, and I say, "Between every husband and wife" ... or wife and wife ... "there's always a dead baby." Something always dies. Some innocent little thing that was the start of something. That had such promise. And it will always be a wedge between the two of them because it failed to thrive. It's a failure they share. (At Harper) That they're both guilty of.

HARPER

(To Pattie and Kaye) We've been on the road. She's not feeling well. You're the first people we've --

EMILY

So this woman who's also in the class, she gets in my face with this attitude. Fucking Barbie doll, just got married and she's all like, "That's not the way it is with her and Ken doll," or whatever the fuck his name is. Like I'm the one that's fucked up. Not her and her little doll-house make-believe.

KAYE

That's very interesting. You know, in some ways I think you're onto something.

PATTIE

Kaye! What she's saying is complete bullshit. It's just a fucking jerk-off.

EMILY

Oh, really? Want to see what's in the trunk of our car?

HARPER

Emily! Jesus!

Beat, while Kaye realizes she's playing the wrong game.

PATTIE

Why? You got a dead baby in there?

KAYE

Pattie, stop.

Beat.

EMILY

(Slyly) No. No dead baby.

KAYE

I guess we should go. It was nice --

EMILY

Oh, you're not having fun?

KAYE

Emily, we're just going back to our campsite. We're going to pack up and leave.

PATTIE

Leave?! We just --

KAYE

Thank you for the hummus.

She starts to pull Pattie away.

HARPER

I don't think you should go.

KAYE

We don't know anything. We don't know who you are.

Harper picks up the machete with the balloons still tied to it.

HARPER

Emily, what the fuck?

EMILY

I thought they should just see what's in the trunk.

KAYE

Emily, what's in the trunk is private. It's a private matter.

HARPER

That's right.

EMILY

NO! You need to face the facts, Harper. Balloons? Hummus? It's about time you faced the facts. Can we all just admit something right now? Once and for all? A metaphor is more than just a metaphor. It's like a joke. On some level it's not funny. On some level it's true.

KAYE

Run, Pattie. Get out.

HARPER

Don't run. Please. Don't ... try to run.

Pattie, defiant, takes Kaye's hand.

EMILY

This is how it ends, ladies. (Brightly) Who wants to see?

End