SAN MARVELOUS

A FULL LENGTH PLAY

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

Kurt Robert Engh

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SAN MARVELOUS
A FULL LENGTH PLAY

By
Kurt Robert Engh

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ABSTRACT

This is a full-length play that had its first reading in Texas State University’s Playwright’s Lab in the fall of 2015. In it, Sara and Sam are looking for their place in the world. Sara chooses not to be identified, to be her own free spirit, but that’s not getting her anywhere. Sam jumps from bed, to bush, to tent with strangers seeking pleasure. Each character must ask themselves, “Does the structural framework I have been using suit me? How can I be happier?” Along the way, Sara and Sam are helped by idiosyncratic and offbeat neighbors, lovers, and new friends.
San Marvelous

A Full Length Play

by

Kurt Engh
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<tr>
<th>CHARACTER NAME</th>
<th>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>AGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Dreamers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BEAR</td>
<td>Leader of the pack, kind of gross but everyone's okay with it</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Bisexual, searching for love</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELINDA</td>
<td>Party girl, body-ody</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAVANNAH</td>
<td>Melinda's compatriot, kind of a mess</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>HARMONY</td>
<td>Musician, dancer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>JEFF</td>
<td>Savannah's deadbeat boyfriend</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lovers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Following three played by same actor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMINIC</td>
<td>Mix between jock and hipster, sexy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOSH</td>
<td>Dangerous, disillusioned youth</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>TATUM</td>
<td>Assistant Scoutmaster, kind</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED SHORTS</td>
<td>Broseph hottie, ripe</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Campers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRENDA (doubled as Melinda)</td>
<td>Outdoorsy type, soothing and present</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEAN (doubled as Jeff)</td>
<td>Her husband, also an outdoorsy type</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catalyst:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARA</td>
<td>Strawberry curls, festive, like out of a polaroid</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

San Marcos, TX. Summer 2015. Heat is another character in the show. It should effect how the actors move and talk.

It is important that everyone is at some stage of sunburn, either peachy red or tan as all get out.

Food and drink are consumed throughout. This is paradise.

Music is played intermittently throughout. I was thinking tropical house music or pumping electronic music, but this can be tuned to the discretion of the designers and director.

Every scene change is a party.

Have fun!
To John Hood,

who was one of the people who made San Marvelous so marvelous
&
told me to write what I wanted to write
ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Dusk. A train blares through town. The sky is blue and pink and orange.

Outside the little HEB on Hopkins. In the alleyway near the church. Generic grocery store music.

DOMINIC sits on the ground nomming on a delicious sandwich. His T-shirt sticks to his pectoral and abdominal muscles. He has sideburns and a fohawk. It’s really sexy.

He sits there for a while, oblivious to passersby, or too cool to notice. He pushes his skate board back and forth.

SAM enters, eating a Rhea’s ice cream Raspberry Goat’s Milk and Corn double scoop on a waffle cone.

SAM

Hi.

DOMINIC

Hi?

SAM

That sandwich looks delish.

DOMINIC

Do you want to try it?

SAM

Are you serious?

DOMINIC

Only if I can get a lick of your ice cream.

SAM

Dealio.

They exchange items.
DOMINIC
Is this Rhea’s? I thought they shut down.

SAM
They’re changing owners. I thought I’d head over before it all went down. Probably will never be the same.

DOMINIC
All that’s old is new again.

Huh?

DOMINIC
Nothing, it didn’t make sense. Sorry, I was at the river all day and my brain’s kind of fried.

SAM
Couldn’t be the pot?

Huh?

SAM
Huh? Don’t play dumb. I’ve seen you around before. You’re friends with Alexa. Plus, I can smell it from here.

DOMINIC
Which Alexa?

SAM
Hayes.

DOMINIC
You know Alexa Hayes? Shit, man. She’s kind of a tornado.

SAM
Oh, you don’t have to tell me.

DOMINIC
Jeez.

SAM
You know I’m just playin’ with ya, right?
DOMINIC

Oh, yeah.

SAM

It’s kind of enduring, the pot. You smell like *au naturel*.

DOMINIC

Ha.

Dominic finishes his sandwich, smacking his lips. He gets up to go, doing something really cool with his skateboard.

SAM

You wouldn’t happen to have a light?

Yeah, man.

SAM

...And a cigarette?

Do you smoke?

Totally.

DOMINIC

But you don’t have a lighter or a cigarette? The lighter I can understand. No one has a lighter, the cigarettes on the other hand...what are you playing at here, bud?

SAM

I’ll go get some right now.

Are you sure?

SAM

Yeah.

DOMINIC

Alright.

SAM

Don’t go.
Sam sprints inside. Dominic waits for a few seconds, then hops on his skateboard.

SAM
Woah, hey man! Hey!

Dominic skids to a stop.

SAM
What are you doing?

DOMINIC
I don’t know, this just feels kind of weird. I think I’m going to peace out.

SAM
Don’t crap out on me here. Do you have a preference?

DOMINIC
The cheap stuff.

SAM
My kinda guy. Don’t go this time, okay? Bear with me. Just like be another human sharing this space.

DOMINIC
Okay...I’ll, hang around, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, alright. I got nowhere to be.

SAM
Cool. Seriously, just sit right there.

Dominic reluctantly leans up against the wall. He bends his knee ala James Dean. He does a wall sit. He falls on his ass. Looks around to see if anyone saw him. Waves at an old lady who witnessed him.

DOMINIC
Hi, how are ya?

He scruffs the ground. Sam rushes back out.

SAM
They gave me a bag just for the cigarettes. Wasteful mothafuckas.
Dominic smiles. Sam hands the box to Dominic. He starts to unwrap it as he leans against the wall, but can’t get it open. Defeated, cutely hands it over to Sam with a smile.

Sam quickly unwraps the box and hands it back to Dominic, but won’t let go. Dominic tries tugging again. Dominic is kinda into it. He play shoves Sam. Sam retaliates. Dominic shoves him again, this time a little too hard.

DOMINIC
I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.

Dominic walks over to check on Sam. They are close together now, a boundary has been rift. Sam lifts his head. They lock lips. It is slow and tentative and beautiful. They continue. It is sweet and sensual and free. Intense electronic music. Psychedelic lights spin. Sparklers.

SARA enters with a backpack and two bags from the little HEB. She strolls by but notices the smooching young men. She stares, transfixed.

Dominic and Sam cool down. They notice Sara staring at them. She keeps eye contact. Music disipates.

SARA
Hi.

DOMINIC & SAM
Hi.

SARA
I’m sorry, but that was really beautiful.

DOMINIC & SAM
Thanks.

SARA
Okay, bye.

DOMINIC & SAM
Bye.
She departs, besotted.

DOMINIC

I’m not gay?

SAM

Neither am I.

DOMINIC

I thought you were dating someone, like a guy someone.

SAM

Yeah, still doesn’t mean I’m gay. I’m bisexual.

DOMINIC

Okay, same difference.

SAM

Um, not really, breeder.

DOMINIC

Huh?

SAM

Nothing. It’s way over your head.

DOMINIC

Your lips tasted like wax and lemonade.

SAM

Yellow or pink limonda?

DOMINIC

Pink. Definitely pink.

SAM

So, now’s the time when I ask you if you want to, like, come hang out. I live right past Sanctuary, like past the preschool thing.

DOMINIC

I don’t know how to do anything.
SAM
I knew I could get you to break. I’ll show you everything. Or nothing, whatever you want to do.

Sam brushes his hand over Dominic’s belly, tugs on his polo.

SAM
Let’s go.

DOMINIC
Okay, I just have to text my girlfriend I’m gonna be late.

SAM
Lolz. Okay, didn’t know that.

DOMINIC
No, it’s fine. I’ve been wanting for a gay guy to hit on me for a long time. I think I’d be like really good at it.

SAM
Bisexual.

DOMINIC
Bisexual. Right.

SAM
Not getting enough poutine at home?

DOMINIC
What do you mean?

SAM
Poutine, you know.

DOMINIC
No I don’t know. Where are you getting all your references.

SAM
I don’t know, the Internet?!

DOMINIC
You’re weird.

SAM
Says the straight guy who just kissed me. Check please!
DOMINIC
It’s all sorted out with the girlfriend. You have one hour.

SAM
I’m gonna have to take a rain check. The girlfriend thing is just weirding me out. Like, I knew you were kind of twisted, I just didn’t know the caliber, so...

DOMINIC
Really? This is the only free time I have all week.

SAM
I’m totally fuckin’ with you. But shit, you really want this. Come on, honey.

Dominic goes to pick up the cigarette box, but decides against it. He and Sam stroll away.

SCENE TWO

In interim, visual of black and white letter board reads: “BE THE PERSON YOUR DOG THINKS YOU ARE”.

Sara’s apartment balcony. Second floor. Afternoon, the next day. She waters her plants. Underneath her, on their first floor concrete slab of a balcony, sit Bear and Melinda on lawn chairs. A ratty couch, wooden boxes, and dead leaves populate their slab. Water drips right onto Melinda’s lap.

MELINDA
Hey up there! Did you just spill something. Hey! You! Red!

SARA
Oh my god, did I just do that? I’m so sorry! That’s like my biggest fear that I do that but y’all are never down there! I was just watering my plants and, I don’t know, I thought the leaves needed some water or something so I sprayed it all over the place. I’m so sorry!

MELINDA
Well quit it with the green thumb for now!

SARA
Wait. Are you like actually mad at me?

MELINDA
You just sprinkled water all over me of coure I’m mad!
SARA
I understand that would be an initial reaction, but I didn’t mean to. I’m really really really sorry.

BEAR
That’s three sorrys. She means it.

MELINDA
Cunt.

Melinda walks inside to change. Sara stands, pondering what to do.

SARA
Is she gone?

BEAR
Long gone.

SARA
I’m gonna come down, is that okay?

BEAR
You’re welcome whenever.

Sara exits through her apartment. She reenters on the first floor with shoes on and a loaf of banana bread in tin foil.

BEAR
You sure know how to make friends.

SARA
That’s me.

BEAR
She’ll be fine.

SARA
I think you can tell a lot by the way a person reacts to someone spilling something on them.

BEAR
It’s that sort of carnal, basic instinct--
SARA
Yes, basic instinct. Just fight or flight. Cut to chase. What does this person think of me? I accidentally spilt water across the table. And this girl I used to be friends with glared at me. Like you know how in movies there’s that zoom in effect thing where the person gets bigger but their background gets smaller. I could see into her brain that she just wanted to jump me, throttle me. She wanted to taste my blood. Two weeks later, someone spilt red wine on my white summer dress. I said no problem. I dyed it the next day. Now I have a wine colored summer dress. The place I took it to didn’t even charge me they felt so bad.

BEAR
It all turns out right in the end.

SARA
Not always. I brought banana bread. Still warm.

BEAR
Banana bread?

SARA
A peace offering. Have you never had it?

BEAR
No, I’ve had it. Like when I was a kid and my family was happy and my parents were still married.

He drinks.

SARA
So this isn’t going to bring up any PTSD if I give this to you?

BEAR
How about we share it?

SARA
You keep it. I wanted to have a gathering last night, so I cooked two loaves, but I couldn’t think of who to invite, so I just sat in my room in silence eating an entire loaf of banana bread.

BEAR
That’s the saddest thing I’ve ever heard.
SARA
I bet you have similar stories, you just don’t share them. By sharing my grief, it sets me free.

SAVANNAH and HARMONY enter, music blaring from inside. They cannot resist dancing.

BEAR
Uh oh!

SAVANNAH
Doesn’t this music make your bones so happy?

HARMONY
Happy goober tunes!

SAVANNAH
I’m seeing The Crash Food Dragons at Hop It Fest in September I like couldn’t be more excited!

HARMONY
You’re going? How did you get tickets? They’re like two hundred bucks a pop.

SAVANNAH
Remember that guy from Denver?

HARMONY
Oh my God, shut your whore mouth! Shut your dirty little pie hole.

Sara starts to walk away.

BEAR
Guys? Guys. This is our upstairs neighbor...

SARA
Sara.

SARA
Sara.

HARMONY
Are you the one who spilt water on Melinda?

SAVANNAH
Yeah, that was pretty shitty.
SARA
I didn’t mean to do it. It wasn’t like I saw your friend and purposefully dumped water on her.

SAVANNAH
You should just say sorry and be done with it.

SARA
Um. I’ve said sorry multiple times to the respective parties. I didn’t do anything to you and I feel like you’re just trying to pick a fight. I’m expressing my emotions and communicating transparently with you here. I I I don’t know what else to say!

BEAR
I think Sara has a point here. She can’t stay sorry her whole life. That’s Savannah and Harmony. They’re kind of Melinda’s groupies.

HARMONY
We are not. If anything, they’re my groupies.

SAVANNAH
Sorry Sara, we were just standing up for our friend.

SARA
I’m right there with ya, yeah.

SAVANNAH
She should come to our party tonight! You should come to our party tonight!

HARMONY
Yeah, come! I’ll be playing some tunes. We have a plethora of grass. It’s BYOB, really chill.

SARA
I’ve had a pretty rough week. I think I’m just going to have a night in.

SAVANNAH
Okay.

HARMONY
If you change your mind...

The two girlies exit through the sliding glass door. Bear opens his mouth. Savannah slides open the door.
SAVANNAH
We’re making some food if you want.

SARA
Um, I’m not really that hungry.

SAVANNAH
I’m making you a plate.

She exits.

SARA
Well then. That was nice.

BEAR
They change on at dime, like middle school tweenagers, but I love ‘em. They’re fun.

SARA
Real fun. Is that her given name: Harmony? Like I’m a musician and my name is Harmony?

BEAR
Her parents are musicians she has a sister named Melody and a brother named Beethoven. No joke.

SARA
That’s too bad.

BEAR
You’re funny.

SARA
You’re flirting. What’s your name?

BEAR
Barrett, but everyone calls me Bear.

SARA
Can I call you Teddy?

BEAR
I’d love that.

SARA
I’m not going to fuck you. At this party.
BEAR
I thought you weren’t going.

SARA
I’m still mulling it over. I may change my mind.

BEAR
I’d love it if you did.

SARA
I’m gonna go back to being sad and thoughtful.

BEAR
Happy and stupid aren’t all that bad.

SARA
I’ve been here for six months and you’re the first person I like.

She kisses the tin foil and offers it to him. He takes it and kisses it.

SARA
There’s nuts in it.

BEAR
I love me some nuts. But Melinda’s allergic.

SARA
No way! Good.

BEAR
You’re the worst!

SARA
Bye.

SCENE THREE
Meanwhile.
Bushes near elementary school. Classes are not in session. Dominic and Sam exit from the bushes, sweaty and with some mud stains.

SAM
Oh, look a pacifier. How charming.
DOMINIC
I gotta rush off man, can we do this again sometime?

SAM
We can, but I can’t have you being coy with me. I don’t want to expect this to happen and then you come up with a ton of excuses. Don’t pull that shit with me.

DOMINIC
Um...I’m not gonna do that.

SAM
But how do you know?

DOMINIC
Because you give really good head.

SAM
You just know how to make a girl feel special.

DOMINIC
Shut up, you love it. Tomorrow?

SAM
Tomorrow’s no good. You think it sounds good, but it’ll be here sooner than you know it and your libidinal reserves, from my experience, won’t be stored up again. Prosperous trysts take time.

DOMINIC
Wednesday?

SAM
You really don’t want to wait, do you? Well, you aren’t very good at waiting.

DOMINIC
I’m late. Girlfriend.

SAM
Okay, yeah.

Dominic high fives Sam, and jogs away skateboard in hand. Sam brushes himself off, picks a leaf off a branch and throws it into the wind.

SCENE FIVE
In interim, visual of insurance’s black and white letter board reads: “WHAT YOU PLANT NOW, YOU WILL HARVEST LATER”.

Bear’s party. Midnight.

They blare the music. Happy fun tunes. They dance.

Melinda and Savannah enter with XL Sonic cups. They are downing their Slushes and mixing it with vodka, stirring with their straws. It is ingenious. Dancing and spilling throughout.

MELINDA

Woo!

SAVANNAH

I want to feel this way forever!

MELINDA

Bebes! My babiez! Let’s pray to the moon!

SAVANNAH

Holy shit I just saw a lightning bug.

MELINDA

In some place at some times, fireflies can synchronize their flashing.

SAVANNAH

That’s beautiful.

MELINDA

And they can only be yellow, green or orange. They’re bioluminescence does not extend past this spectrum.

SAVANNAH

You’re actually a genius.

MELINDA

I had to do this bug project in middle school and the only time I had to actually catch the freakin’ bugs was at night. I got a C because we were supposed to have like other types of bugs and I just had pinned like forty lightning bugs onto some styraform and handed it in.
SAVANNAH
It was literally a nuclear holocaust.

MELINDA
Pretty much ha!

Harmony emerges from the apartment. She is in a full orange mumu and huge sunglasses. She is wasted.

MELINDA
Woo!

SAVANNAH
That’s like the biggest lightning bug I ever saw!

BEAR
Kill it! Kill it!

MELINDA
No don’t kill her. She’s the mother of the extinct lighting babies.

HARMONY
Welcome to my lightning bug show. With me today is my uke Charlita. She has been sitting in the closet for the month of June, resting. But she thought that this would be a nice time to come out and play.

She stand on a chair and sings her diddy:

HARMONY
Whenever I feel helpless and afraid,
I just keep on nodding my head,
Pretending I know what’s going on.
But often I don’t have a fuckin’ clue.
So now I sing this song to you:

What’s going on?
What’s going on?
What’s going on in the world today?

What’s going on?
What’s going on?
Am I ever gonna feel okay?
When the light comes down from our Lady Sun,  
Those rays fill me up with that Vitamin D.  
All I want to do is just splash in her glory and day  
And namaste nameaste.

MELINDA  
Love that D! Love the vitamin D.

SAVANNAH  
Harmony loves the D! Harmony loves the D! Harm love the D! Harm love the D!

She tries to start a chant, but no one joins her. She swigs a huge gulp of her Sonic Slush Vodka mixer, absentmindedly drenching herself and Melinda.

MELINDA  
What the fuck, dude?

SAVANNAH  
I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.

MELINDA  
It’s fine, just like watch where you’re pouring. Twice in one day! Fuck!

Harmony laughs and hops down off the chair while this is happening. She takes a swig of Bear’s red Solo cup.

HARMONY  
What is that? Water from the crapper?!

BEAR  
It’s vermouth.

HARMONY  
Who even drinks vermouth? Especially in the summer?

BEAR  
I do. We live in a post-modern society. I’m steeped in anachronisms.

HARMONY  
You’re steeped in something.

SAVANNAH  
Harmony, come help us change!
Okay, one second. Let me try that vermouth again.

She takes a swig. She let’s it settle. Everything is copacetic until she ralphs on Bear’s shirt. It isn’t much but it’s so so so disgusting.

Aw no. I think that’s my cue.

I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.

Don’t be, just go with the girls and have them take care of you.

Get your shit together Harmony!

We’re a sloppy ass mess.

Girls just get gone to Mel’s place. I’ve got to get some rest in the morning.

Sam arrives.

Party’s over? Just when I walk up?

It started five hours ago at the pool.

My brains are soaked in chlorine.

Is Harmony drunk? Hi drunk Harmony!

Hi Sammy boy! Como eras tu?

Don’t get to close to her, she spits.
MELINDA
Come on Harmony. This night is over. O. Ver.

SAM
Where’s Jeff?

SAVANNAH
Fuck you.

SAM
Still fresh I see.

BEAR
Not cool man, not cool.

SAVANNAH
Yeah, let’s go. I suddenly just became profoundly restful.

SAM
You girls go on ahead. The men have some talking to do.

MELINDA
Yeah, more like blowing to do.

SAVANNAH
Oh my God, they’re totally going to like jerk each other off.

HARMONY
Faggots! Hahaha.

SAM
Bye.

The girls begrudgingly trample off, singing and spinning.

BEAR
Woofta, never thought they’d leave.

SAM
You have a little something there.

BEAR
A souvenir.
Bear takes off his shirt. He is hairy and pudgy. It’s enduring.

SAM
Woah, you didn’t think the girls were serious, did you?

BEAR
Why so serious?

SAM
Naw man. That was kinda a one time thing.

BEAR
That we both try to forget about.

SAM
You were depressed...

BEAR
...and you were there for me.

Bear hand him a beer. They clink.

SAM
Cheers.

BEAR
Cheers.

SAM
What are you drinking?

BEAR
Beer. Same thing that everyone else drinks. Nothing fancy.

Sara tromps downstairs in owl pajamas and men’s loafers. She has never been more awake in her entire life.

SAM
Hi.

SARA
Hi.
BEAR
Howdy neighbor.

SARA
Happy harvest. Do you still have that banana bread I gave you? I just looked all over my kitchen and all I have are two pounds of moldy strawberries, baking soda, vegetable oil, and ketchup packets.

SAM
And you still couldn’t whip something up?

SARA
Not a chance, blondie. I’m Sara. The upstairs cat lady.

SAM
I’m Sam, the next door bisexual.

SARA
No shit?

SAM
Yes shit.

SARA
Wait a sec. I saw you kissing that guy outside the hebito. The little HEB.

SAM
That wasn’t me.

SARA
Is this like a thing? Should I not have brought this up?

BEAR
Nothing surprises me anymore with this one.

SAM
Nice to meet you. Again.

BEAR
I have something even better than banana bread. I was saving these until the girlies left.

From some hidden crevass of his jeans, he yanks out the most delectable pot brownies ever baked.
BEAR
Double chocolate chunk pot brownies with a peanut butter mint frosting.

Sam actually tears up.

SARA
Are you crying?

SAM
It’s just, it’s just, the most scrumdiddlyumptious treat I ever did see.

SARA
I’ve never done pot.

SAM
You don’t do pot. Pot does you.

BEAR
Ganja has a very Chuck Norris quality to it, it’s true.

SARA
I’m a big girl. Hit me.

BEAR
You’re not even going to taste the pot. That’s what the brownies are for.

He unwraps the brownies. He breaks it into chunks, saving some for later. There is a religious quality to the affair.

SARA
I don’t know, I kind of like the smoke. Summers and smoke go hand in hand. I walked past this guy today who was smoking and I totally just sucked in his second hand smoke on purpose. I was like blow that steam right down my windpipe motherfucker. He took blatant notice of my kinky fantasy and I think he was kinda down.

SAM
Hi, I’m Sam. Were we separated at birth?

SARA
My kin! Do you do that same thing?

SAM
Totally.
BEAR
Children! Children! We may continue this conversation after the service.

He passes each their brownie and also hands Sara something to drink, perhaps a random Solo cup sitting on the railing.

BEAR
I swear to God it’s not rooffied.

SARA
I don’t mind a gang bang.

SAM
Duly noted.

BEAR
Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”

They sardonically follow his instructions, gravely serious about this ritual.

BEAR
And he took a cup, and wine he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you.”

They do. A moment passes between them. Sam begins to hum, a deep Tibetan monk chant. Bear follows suit. Sara tries to, but it's all so absurd she just cannot get into it.

SARA
Wait, what’s happening?

BEAR
Just let it be, man.

SAM
Let it be, lady.

SARA
Okay.
She centers herself and begins to hum. Just when she’s in the groove, connected to the Earth, a train horn blares through the thick night air. It catches her completely off guard. She stumble away from the duo and walks nearer the train horn. It magnetizes her. She looks for its source, completely intoxicated by this singular moment.

She turns back to the duo to see Sam rubbing Bear’s belly. She turns away, centering herself again. Too tempted not to look again, she triple takes to see the two tenderly smooching. They brush each other’s cheeks and then lips and then part. Sara is transfixed.

SARA
Where can I get some of that?

SAM
It’s not really planned. It sort of just happened. It’s amazing what life will do to you when you let loose the reins.

SARA
People have been telling me that for a long time, but when I do that all that ends up happening is I end up dog and cat sitting for all my friends and watching Netflix. It’s usually more ensnaring than freeing.

SAM
Yeah, I don’t think you were doing it right.

SARA
I wanted to hear what you were saying about smoking in the cold.

BEAR
That’s what’s up. You weren’t living in the moment. You’ve wanted to hear this story the whole time.

SARA
If I had lived in the moment, I would’ve forgotten to ask Samantha here to tell her little story. Which I really wanted to hear. I think it might change my life. In fact, it might help me to be more present.

SAM
You’re a trip.

SARA
The smoke.
SAM
Right, the smoke. Alright little lady. It’s even better when it’s cold outside. I’m talking negative degrees here. Like throw-boiling-water-off-your-front-door-step-and-watch-it-evaporate kind of cold. You’re walking by this guy. He’s standing outside some sandwich shop, or some nondiscript office building that was built in like the 80s.

SARA
Everything was built in the 80s.

BEAR
And then every educational video was filmed in the 90s.

SAM
True. So this guy is standing there all dressed in grays and blacks. Scuffed black boots with melting snow over his warms toes. Gray selvage denim jean knotted up with a thick black belt. He’s got this light coat. He’s a guy; he’s always warm. You know those guys who like never get cold.

SARA
Totally.

SAM
That’s this guy. He’s one of those guys. He’s wearing this like perfect wool stocking cap rolled up just past his ear lobes. You can’t see his tattoos, but he’s definitely got some weird shit up under there. And he’s smoking Marlboro’s from a beat up pack he’s been carrying around in his back pocket. He’s puffing from his chilled lips. Gnawing the tobacco leftovers with his scruffy jaw. And just as he’s sucking in that last bit, that last little chode of a cigarette you pass by in your full length down overcoat and ear muffs. He sees a nice girl like you and knows that you haven’t got tattoos underneath your coat, but you’re hiding something too. But it’s deeper than your skin. It’s your heart. You’ve got something carved into your heart that needs healing and he’d love to play doctor with you. But you hardly see him because you’re texting, looking down at the ground, trying to get somewhere. Go go go. He blows his last puff right in your trajectory. It passes into your nostrils and down your throat. You can actually feel the heat of it all. It burns. You lock eyes as he snuffs the butt out with his foot onto the icy pavement. At first his eyes seem black, beady little eyes. But as you fall into them, you realize they’re hazel with flecks of green and yellow. You are weary of his kindness. He could destroy you with all that love. You continue walking, only to turn back and see him still standing there. You’re parched. You know that the snow on his boot will taste better than a freakin’ Dasani at a water park. You move to lick his boot clean, but he walks throw the revolving door, his appearance refracted a thousand ways in the gray sun.
SARA
Missed encounters of the third kind.

SAM
We don’t seize these opportunities that are presented to us.

SARA
I have two problems with your story: Dasani tastes like plastic and he’s a litter bug.

SAM
Everyone loves a naughty guy.

SARA
What if it was a woman smoking? Could she do the same thing?

SAM
Most women with tattoos smoking when it’s freezing outside usually don’t have any teeth and are pushing a shopping cart full of bags.

SARA
Because their husbands left them for younger women and they couldn’t support themselves. So don’t get me wrong, you’re story is really hot, but kind of misogynistic.

SAM
I told the story from a female perspective. It couldn’t possibly be misogynistic.

SARA
But you’re still a guy.

SAM
So girls can’t be misogynistic?

SARA
If they hate themselves.

SAM
Do you hate yourself?

SARA
She throws back her head and laughs. The effects of the brownies are in full tilt.

SARA
I do! I hate myself! I’m actually the worst person!
SAM
From experience, I think you’ve just been living inside yourself for too long. I do that. I just get in an abusive relationship with myself and kind of start spiralling out of control. Or eating away at myself.

SARA
It’s completely toxic.

SAM
It’s completely chemical. Do you masturbate?

SARA
Like a lot. Like too much.

SAM
Do you kiss yourself when you masturbate?

SARA
I kiss my hands. I kiss my breasts...and sometimes...I kiss the mirror. And she kisses back.

SAM
It’s easier to fuck yourself, but it’s always more climactic with someone else.

SARA
Usually it’s just depressing.

SAM
But you don’t get the full effect. You know when you orgasm, the big “O”, not some little itch you have to scratch, the part of your brain behind your left eye just shuts down. Off. This is your voice of reason. And in women, when you climax, your amygdala and hippocampus decrease. These control your fear and anxiety. So your reason, your fear, your anxiety shut down or decrease for those few seconds.

SARA
How do you know all this.

SAM
I’m a generalist. And my old man’s a brain surgeon.

SARA
And here you are.

SAM
Don’t judge. You’re in the same place I am.
SARA
Touché. The first time I orgasmed I thought I was going to die.

SAM
It felt like my body was separated into three parts. One was dragged down into the muck and the manna beneath the earth. The other shot through the stratosphere and parachuted down and the other part of me, my identity hovered laterally over the cool chill of my uncle’s basement. Then they all found each other again and, rearranged, I was whole.

SARA
The first time you orgasmed was in your uncle’s basement?

SAM
I was molested.

SARA
Oh my God.

SAM
I’m kidding.

SARA
You’re actually a monster. That’s dark.

SAM
No, my parents were on vacation or something and I stayed there for a week. Was bored out of my mind until I found his magazine stash.

SARA
There’s one in every household. All those nooks and crannies holding all those secrets.

SAM
It’s overwhelming.

SARA
Truly.

Bear enters from inside. He is in his boxers.

BEAR
Going to bed lovebirds! See ya in the morning. Or not.

SARA
Goodnight!
SAM
Sleep tight. Don’t let the--

SARA
Look lightning bugs!

SAM
Don’t let the lightning bugs bite!

They sit looking at the lightning bugs.

SARA
See that bench over there?

SAM
Where?

SARA
Right over there, under that tree.

SAM
I’ve never seen that before.

SARA
I always park my car over there and every time I look over there, I think there’s going to be this old lady in a blue pastel suit sitting there with her face melting or something. It’s terrifying.

SAM
Yeah. Can I kiss you?

SARA
You don’t have to be a coy boy. You can just do it.

SAM
But isn’t that like, rape?

SARA
You’re way too institutionalized. If you want to kiss me, you can kiss me.

SAM
Girls always get so fussy about this.

SARA
I think they get fussy because guys think we’ll get fussy about it. It’s a self affirming prophecy.
SAM
Like how if you don’t expect much of someone, they’ll never amount to much?

SARA
Exactly.

SAM
What do you expect of me?

SARA
Nothing and everything.

They kiss. Fireflies dance around them and the world has an underwater feel to it. It’s magical. Sara pushes him against the wall and presses into him. He lifts her legs up so she is on him like a koala. Their passion dissipates.

SAM
Yeah, I’m not feeling it.

SARA
Me neither.

SAM
I was really going for it.

SARA
Me too.

SAM
I liked the part where you pushed me up against the wall.

SARA
I liked the part where you lifted me up. But I didn’t feel anything.

SAM
I think all I felt was the idea of it, not the reality.

SARA
Me too. I fell into the romance of the moment, not the romance of you and me.

SAM
Do you want to cuddle?
SARA
I’d love to cuddle. One second.

Bear has left the brownie laying out in the open. Sara daintily picks it up and throws a mini-celebration. She leads Sam upstairs to her humble abode.

Electro music dissipates into:

SCENE SIX

Morning tunes.

Bear awakes, nursing a cup of jo. It’s a moment before banshee wailing is heard. Savannah’s ex-boyfriend has returned to repair the love they once had. Savannah has transitioned from the supportive friend in a romcom to a wild, uncaged animal. It is startling. JEFF, the ex, handles her with caution. She is fragile. He chews tobacco. She chews gum.

SAVANNAH
Get away from me! You asshole! You are not welcome here! I’m calling the police you asshole! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Ahhhhhhhhhhh! Loser!

Get lost!

I can’t have you back in my life anymore! Ever!

You destroy everything in your wake!

JEFF
CAN WE JUST TALK ABOUT THIS?

SAVANNAH
I have spent nights talking to you. Talking to myself. Talking to my friends. There comes a time when you just stop talking and start doing!

You broke my heart you asshole!

JEFF
It’s always worse the first time.
SAVANNAH
I’m not going to let you do it again.

The two are at a stand still. The initial outburst of the fight is over.

JEFF
Where do we go from here?

SAVANNAH
We don’t go anywhere. You get out. I TOLD YOU I DON’T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAAAAAAAAIN! LEAVE YOU ASSHOLE!

JEFF
I love you.

She sits on the curb. As to not disturb or provoke her, he sits on the curb on the opposing side. Although they don’t talk for a while, their energy can be felt throughout. Perhaps they shift positions or move to other spots.

Sara enters above, coffee in hand. She sees Bear through the slates of the balcony.

SARA
The morning bell chimes!

BEAR
It’s actually one p.m..

SARA
Good morning anyways.

BEAR

You are my sunshine
My only sunshine
You make me happy
When skies are gray

You’ll never know dear
How much I love you
Please don’t take my sunshine away
Sara claps.

SARA
Yay! That was lovely. Why didn’t I hang out with y’all before?

BEAR
I don’t know, dude.

SARA
I was just cooped up in there with my generic kitchen set and scratchy carpet. Like what the hell was I thinking?

BEAR
The world is your oyster!

SARA
And I’m the pearl! Who’s that?

BEAR

Sara takes one last sip from her cup and pours the rest of into a fern. Some drops onto Bear.

BEAR
Again, dude?

SARA
Shoot. I didn’t mean too!

BEAR
Was that coffee?

SARA
Yeah. This one only drinks coffee. It’s a very particular fern.

BEAR
What’s it called?

SARA
Believe it or not, it’s called a lady fern.

BEAR
Ladies are very particular.
SARA
M’ladies.

BEAR
Ha.

SARA
_Athyrium filix-femina_. But I call her Flossie.

BEAR
You have names for all your plants.

SARA
Of course. This is Cassiopeia, Virgo, Sagitta, Hercules, Andromeda, and this one I just call Fern. And you already met Flossie. Fern is technically a schrub but don’t tell her. She’s sassy.

BEAR
You named your plants after constellations?

SARA
I can never pick them out in the sky, so this way I can see them on my balcony. Same to me.

BEAR
There’s an app for that. That’s the most sagacious insight I’ve ever heard. You’re a modern day Holly Golightly, Sara...

Meanwhile, Jeff thinks of all the sweet times they had, the way he held her when they were happy. Savannah fumes.

SARA
Sara Boone.

BEAR
Sara Boone.

SARA
It’s Sara without an “h”. I know, edgy. My stupid parents didn’t know this but Sarah Boone (with an “h”) was actually an African-American inventor. Guess what she invented?

BEAR
Is this like some racist test?
SARA

Just guess.

BEAR

ABC Family?

SARA

The ironing board. The fucking ironing board.

BEAR

Oh shit.

SARA

I know. People used to just iron on the floor or their tables and chairs. Here comes this African-American woman just trying to make some good honest dough and ends up creating this torture device for an entire century of her descendants.

BEAR

You’ve thought about this a lot.

SARA

I forget about it and then it comes back to me and I have to sit down for a second. But she was one of the first women to get a patent. Her ironing board was special because it had the end part to iron sleeves.

BEAR

Brilliant. I never iron anything.

SARA

Me neither! And then she dies eight years later at the age of - get this - thirty.

BEAR

Tragic.

SARA

I’m twenty-eight and I haven’t done anything.

BEAR

You’ve done more than you could ever know. That’s what happens to us. We think we’re so so small but actually we have a large presence. I can tell you could move mountains, Sara with no “h” Boone.

SARA

Thanks Teddy. The whole history of the ironing board is a history of women.
Invention derives from necessity.

Meanwhile, Savannah moves over to Jeff. She pulls on his shirt and messes with him, the way she used to.

Exactly. But now, women are trying to be like men. I can’t help thinking that if I just ironed all day and did housework, I might come up with something of value instead of just comparing myself to men. By “destroying the patriarchy” all we’re doing is building one of women who act like men. Like it’s still the same but just with different genitals.

What’s wrong with a taco fest?

Okay, ew. Do you know what I’m saying though? I’ve tried doing the whole feminist thing and I’ve also been the loose chick. I’ve played all the roles and really I just want to go away and live in an end of the world bunker and recite names of geographical landmarks to myself: tombolo, atoll, estuary, sound, archipelago.

You’re one weird chica.

They just feel so good in my mouth. Don’t even go there.

Meanwhile, Jeff kisses Savannah. She pushes him away. They have a private conversation. Whispers. They come to the conclusion that although they once loved each other, it has faded and it’s not worth kindling. They depart together to get a couple of his things from her apartment.

I’m right there with ya. I’d love to marry a career woman and stay at home with the kids and sip my coffee while little Heather, Channing, and Maximilian play Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs. We’d have supper for breakfast and breakfast for supper. We’d break all the rules and I’d be a father to them. Not that guy who tries to make you into the man he wishes he could’ve been, but support them for who they really are.

Marry me?
BEAR
Deal.

SARA
You have a very feminine sensibility.

BEAR
Thank you?

SARA
Wait. Do you have your kids names picked out?

BEAR
Yeah. The older girl and two maternal twin boys.

SARA
You mean fraternal?

BEAR
Which ever one means that they look the same.

SARA
Identical?

BEAR
I’m an idiot. Do you still want to marry me?

SARA
I love a man who can admit his mistakes. IT’S RARE. Where’s Sammie boy?

BEAR
I need to get that boy a collar. On second thought, he probably already has one.

SARA
Ha. Speak of the devil.

Sam saunters on, paper bag in hand.

SARA
Please tell me those are breakfast tacos.

SAM
Righto, Little Red!
BEAR

Oh boy, I real live taco fest!

SAM

I’ve never lost my appetite so quickly. Now all I’m going to be able to think of is pubic hair in my pico.

SARA

What are we doing today?

The two don’t have an answer. Sam hands off a taco to Bear. Okay, two tacos.

SAM

Fine. I’m comin’ up!

SARA

I better get two as well!

Sam bounds up to Sara.

Meanwhile, Savannah walks by with Jeff. He is carrying a heavy cardboard box that says FRAGILE HANDLE WITH CARE. Savannah carries a Chinese set of porcelain old men. She is glad to be getting rid of them. Maybe they’re also carrying an ironing board? Is this too obvious or is it funny? They get to a point (presumably at his pickup truck) where she sets the men on top of his cardboard box. She bids him goodbye. He walks off as she watches him.

At the same time, Sam arrives through Sara’s sliding glass door. He hands her one, then two tacos, crumples the brown paper bag and watches her eat.

SARA

Mmm.

They exit to eat and talk inside.

A crash is heard (the Chinese men). Savannah decides not to deal with it. Not her problem anymore. She casually walks away.
SCENE EIGHT

In interim, visual of black and white letter board reads: “AIM FOR THE MOON. IF YOU MISS, YOU MAY HIT A STAR”.

That night. Outdoor dance patio. Lasers and lights.

Melinda and Harmony bump and grind on one side, keeping tabs on Savannah during her black out. Sam and Sara stand away from the girlies, sipping gin and tonics.

SARA
I never do this.

MELINDA
Bear’s late.

SAM
San Marcos can only take you so far. Austin will fuck you up.

HARMONY
He’d never come to this. Weh! Haha

SARA
I just never have reason for doing so.

MELINDA
I think I love him. Like a daddy haha.

SAM
For the hell of it. Let yourself go!

HARMONY
Ew, gross.

SARA
It’s just so against me. When I get drunk it’s always by accident. I can’t like make it happen.

MELINDA
I think we should Uber back pretty soon.

SAM
Whatever, Red. You’re in charge of your own life. Alcohol is highly encouraged.

HARMONY
Savannah was our D.D..

SARA
Cheers!

MELINDA
Really? Fuck.

MELINDA
Yo we need to go before this one gets really sick.

SAM
Okay, we’re going to hang out here more.
You’re not going to help us?

You got it.

Are you fucking kidding me?

I didn’t come all this way to take care of y’all.

You’re a disease. Sam, watch your back.

Mel, calm down. I can handle it.

I’ve known you for a week and I don’t you.

I’m fine with that.

You don’t take other people in!

I’m not your mom.

Mel, let’s just go.

I’m seriously thinking of punching this bitch out.

Savannah, time to go.

I want to stay here forever!

I have snacks.
SAVANNAH

Done.

MELINDA

Sam, if you’re going to keep hanging with this bitch, I can’t be around you.

SARA

Woah.

SAM

Okay, yeah. Bye.

MELINDA

Whatever.

With a hair toss, Melinda is gone. Harmony leads Savannah off.

SAM

Youse a bad bitch.

SARA

You said lose control. This is me, sans control.

SAM

I’m in love.

SARA

Drink up. Doctor’s orders.

In walks Josh, a hipster tattooed, black stud earring boy. He’s lurking, stealing casual yet charged glances at Sam.

SAM

Fuck.

SARA

What.

SAM

I’ve been cruising that guy online for the whole summer. I’ve seen him twice in the real world. I’m obsessed.

SARA

You’re practically slobbering. What is he doing?
SAM
Oh my God he works here.

SARA
Go ask him a question. Just be like a stupid bitch.

SAM
I can’t!

SARA
Shut your whore mouth. Yes you can.

SAM
It’s an unwritten rule. Bottoms can’t initiate the flirting. They’ll assume you’re a top.

SARA
And you just want to be fucked?

SAM
Pretty much.

SARA
With a stranger?

SAM
He’s not a complete stranger. It’s not like I’m walking into the rice paddies of Eastern Asia and calling upon a farmer. He’s, like, within reach. We have a similar purview.

SARA
Is that how you rationalize anonymous sex?

SAM
Shut up. I’m living my life. It’s for my memoirs.

SARA
That is if you live to tell the tale.

Josh notices them glancing at him. He drifts over.

JOSH
Can I take those from you?

They both down their drinks.

SARA
Yeah, sure.
He takes them and just stands there.

JOSH

Okay.

He walks away.

SARA

Pfft. He’s socially inept. You’re attracted to a sociopath.

SAM

He’s not a sociopath. He’s just shy.

SARA

You can try to explain it away as much as you want. Boys are lame.

SAM

I’m going to follow him.

SARA

Are you kidding?

SAM

No. I’m desparate.

SARA

Fine.

He leaves. Sara starts dancing on her own. Letting loose.

While she has her moment, time cuts forward. In another space, we see Sam and Josh making out against a wall. Their intensity increases as Sara’s abandon manifests. They are each having intense revelations, epiphanies about how their entire lives up to this moment have been a series of mistakes.

SARA

Wee! Yeah! Uh!

SAM

I need to stop.

JOSH

Shut up.
Stop!

Josh pushes Sam against the wall and unzips his pants.

No.

He pulls down Sam’s pants. Bare ass.

Don’t dude.

The song changes. Sara’s moment is over. She walks away, exhilarated. Alive. Sam fights against Josh’s force. His protestations can barely be heard over the music.

Take my dick, pussy.

Help.

Shut up!

Help!

Sara crosses their path. She hardly takes note, walking by, avoiding the situation not knowing her friend is in distress. She glances back for a quick look.

Sam?

The two boys look to her.

Get the fuck away from him! I’ll mess you the fuck up!

She pummels Josh, knocking him to the ground. Sam collapses. Josh hurriedly restores himself and sprints away.
SARA
Are you okay? Sam! Sam!

SAM
I’m find. Take me home.

SCENE NINE

In interim, visual of black and white letter board reads: “MISTAKES ARE THE PORTALS TO DISCOVERY”.

The San Marcos River. Bikini Hill. The next afternoon.

Harmony dances with poi balls or a hula hoop. Music plays. Her skin sparkles with water and sweat droplets. Sara and Sam sit on bath towels in the grass. They watch Harmony. Sara wears sunglasses with lips for frames. Sam is sunglassless.

They turn their attention to the right, toward the sidewalk.

SARA
Ouch.

SAM
You’ve never lived until you’ve gone down a flight of stairs on a unicycle.

SARA
They’re not even wearing helmets.

SAM
They’ve got nothing to protect.

SARA
Apparently. Why didn’t Bear come?

SAM
Girl trouble.

SARA
His time of the month?

SAM
Exactly.
Sam removes a large pitcher from a tan and canvas beach bag. It is yellow and has ice cubes that rattle.

SAM

Want some?

SARA

What is it?

SAM

Vodka lemonade.

SARA

You know the way to a girl’s heart.

They take turns swigging and returning the pitcher to the bag, swigging and returning, swigging and returning throughout the scene.

SAM

I’m gonna go take a dip.

SARA

You’re not gonna go talk to Red Shorts over there?

(Red Shorts is a sexy muscle bronzed God who is standing near the river. They call him “Red Shorts” as if it were his name.)

SAM

That’s why I’m going swimming. So I can talk to Red Shorts.

SARA

I bet he has a small dick.

SAM

Oh totally. But with a body like that, it has to be good.

SARA

I think it’s really the brown curls he’s got goin’ for him.

SAM

And dat ass.
SARA
Dat ass though. Good luck!

Sara lies down on her back as Harmony continues bumping and twirling her poi balls. After a few beats, she sits down on Sam’s towel for a rest.

SARA
Hi Harmony. Feeling better?

HARMONY
Way way better. I’m sorry you met me when I was that wasted.

SARA
It’s really fine. I’ve been living in college towns for a while. I understand the pattern.

HARMONY
Thanks.

SARA
What I don’t get is what are you partying for?

HARMONY
I guess it’s just kind of a way of life, forget what going on in our real lives?

SARA
Okay...but, is your life all that bad that you constantly have to escape from it?

HARMONY
I don’t know, I just do it.

SARA
What’s your major?

HARMONY
I’m undecided, still finishing my generals.

SARA
What are you passionate about?

HARMONY
Partying. And food I like food a lot.
SARA
So maybe you could try some culinary classes? Or public representation?

HARMONY
Yeah, I’m not really interested in diving into a consumer culture. I’d really be fine living on a nudist commune with my hubby and little naked rascals running around. Life is for the living, you know?

SARA
Did you have some of Bear’s brownie?

HARMONY
He was a brownie and didn’t tell me? Butthole. I didn’t. Why does everyone always think I’m high?

SARA
You’re just very thoughtful.

Harmony grins at Sara, then runs toward the river. Sara watches in delight, then terror, then awe. She giggles to herself and looks around bikini hill.

Sam returns with a map of San Marcos.

SAM
The Outdoor Recreation center had maps. I thought you might want one. Did you know you can rent camping supplies there?

SARA
Harmony just took off her top.

SAM
Again?

SARA
She’s done this before.

SAM
She’s been traveling abroad for like a year. She has a very European sensability to the whole situation.

SARA
But all the people watching?
SAM
She’s also very self involved and unaware.

SARA
Welcome to Generation Y. So are you going to go get her? There are people on their cell phones, dialing.

SAM
I think they’re just taking Snapchats or making the next viral Vine video. They don’t really care what’s happening, just that they were here to see it.

SARA
Did you hear about the girl who sat on the steps of the library with the nude underwear and tape over her nipples?

SAM
I actually know her.

SARA
No way.

SAM
Yeah. She’s what I’d call an acquaintance. Harmony has this like shrine devoted to her.

SARA
Stop right there.

SAM
She has this whole wall in her bedroom of magazine covers and posters and photographs of nipples. It’s every straight man’s fantasy.

SARA
They’re like...bigger than I thought they’d be.

SAM
Would you ever do that?

SARA
I can get past the legal and social ramifications, but I just think it’s uncomfortable. Like: these girls need some support, momma.

SAM
You’ve got a nice pair of hooters.
SARA
Hoot! Hoot!

SAM
Tig ‘ol bitties!

SARA
This one’s bigger. Here look.

I can’t see it.

SARA
You can feel it.

She places his hands on her breasts.

SAM
You know this isn’t doing anything for me?

SARA
I girl can dream. I’m pretending you’re red pants over there. By the by, how’d it go?

SAM
He’s definitely bi. If anything, he’s curious.

SARA
That’s like the hottest classification: curious. It’s like the only sexual category that inspires intrigue. It’s mysterious. It’s enigmatic.

SAM
It’s confusing.

SARA
You want the world painted for you in black and white?

SAM
I want to know who I can fuck and who I can’t.

SARA
Where’s the fun in that? All the adventure is gone. The passion, the lust, the intrigue. If you’re just hooking up with guys, it’s just a transaction.
SAM
I honestly see no difference between a hookup and a date. You’re getting to know each other just in closer spaces.

SARA
Honestly, I think I’ve masturbated so much I’ve just fallen in love with myself.
WHERE’S MY PARADE?

SAM
You’re like a komodo dragon. The female komodo dragon can produce offspring by herself through the process of parthenogenesis.

SARA
I always thought I was my own spirit animal, but now it’s totally the komodo dragon. Wicked. Don’t tell me your mom is a zoo keeper.

SAM
I just happen to know things that don’t get me anywhere in life.

Harmony returns, topless.

SARA
Hi hi hi. Forgot something there girlie? Just use my towel.

HARMONY
I’m fine. (to on-lookers) What are you staring at? Over half the population has them!

SARA
Let me just go get your top so you can put it back on.

Sara jogs off.

HARMONY
I’m not doing it. This is a protest.

Police lights and sirens. Sara returns.

HARMONY
Okay, fine. I’ll put it on I’ll put it on.

SAM
Officer, she’s putting it on. He’s saying you still have to go talk to him.

HARMONY
Fuck. Every time.
She stomps up the hill.

SAM
Do you want to get away from here?

SARA
What do you mean?

SAM
Like, do you want to get out of town? My odd jobs can wait. You’re not working or in school?

SARA
I’m convalescing. I’m looking for a reason to keep going.

SAM
How about we keep going? In the woods. Camping.

SARA
I’ve never been camping.

SAM
It’s been a sec.

SARA
A camping virgin! I’d be happy to pop your cherry.

SAM
We can go kayaking and cook real food underneath a crackling fire and tell stories as we pick out the Big Dipper.

SARA
This town is turning me to mush.

SAM
Let’s go rebuild something.

SARA
If you go ask for Red Short’s number, I’ll go camping with you.

SAM
No way, he’ll sock me in the face.

SARA
No he won’t, he’s get all bashful and ask you why. And you’ll say, I think you’re cute and we should be friends.
SAM
Easy for you to say. Promise?

SARA
Promise.

Sam goes over to Red Shorts, glancing back at Sara as he
goes. Harmony returns, giddy.

HARMONY
The cop--

SARA
Sh. Sh. We’re watching a master at his work.

HARMONY
What’s he doing?

SARA
I convinced him to go get Red Shorts’ number.

HARMONY
The cop gave me his number.

SARA
What?!!

HARMONY
And he didn’t even give me a ticket.

SARA
What kind of utopia do y’all live in? That would never happen to me! Ever!

HARMONY
Look. He’s taking out his cellphone...oh my God a high five. That’s bro code for I love
you.

SARA
This is absurd. Y’all are freaks.

HARMONY
Freaks of nature!

Sam arrives, giddy.
SAM
I totally got his number.

SARA
I sent you over there as a joke. I didn’t really think you’d do it.

SAM
Well, I did.

SARA
How?

SAM
If you’re nice to people, they’ll be nice in return.

SARA
Not in my experience. No siree.

HARMONY
It’s not that hard.

SARA
Give me the play by play.

SAM
I don’t know, I just went over there and said, “Hi, my name is Sam. How are you today.”

SARA
Okay.

SAM
“My redhead friend over there is too shy to ask herself, but she thinks you’re cute and wants your number.”

SARA
You absolutely did. NOT.

SAM
Did to.

HARMONY
He’s looking he’s looking he’s looking.
SAM
Wave or something! Don’t just stand there.

Sara meekly waves.

SARA
Hi. (to Sam and Harmony) He waved back he waved back.

SAM
Good. Now just act like a person.

SARA
I never do this kind of thing. Ever.

HARMONY
Life is for the living.

SARA
He’s walking away. Good. Whew.

SAM
What’s the matter?

SARA
I don’t want to be defined by him! I’m responding to my fore...mothers to rightfully claim my place on my own. Without a red short by my side.

HARMONY
You can still do you and have Red Shorts on the side.

She babbles on. At some point, Sam and Harmony slink away, realizing she isn’t really talking to them but at them.

SARA
But I want it to be meaningful. I want my relationship to be a symbiotic one. We must work together and I cannot do that if I suddenly need to up and move somewhere or work a sixteen hour day. I want a fecund, lavish life! I don’t want to be a burden like my family. I want to be free, liberated, unfettered from any and all obligation. But of course, that means sacrifice. Sacrificing love. But who’s to say I can’t love without first loving myself. That’s it: I do love myself! That’s really all I need, right? Right? That’s what I’ve been taught. Of course the movies and media say I should find my Prince Charming, but I don’t like guys in white tights and red capes. I’m not even looking for a partner in crime I’m just looking for I’m looking for. I don’t know!
I honestly don’t know but every relationship I’ve ever been in just makes me feel worse about myself. Worse and worse and worse and I’ve finally built myself up again to be someone I love. To be someone I love. To be someone I love. Why should I want to ruin that? Does Red Shorts love himself? Could he ever love me? Does he have a dog? If he does, I bet it’s some boring perfect golden retriever. If he took me on a date, would he pay for my meal? Do I want him to pay for my meal? I bet he’s a sweetheart. I bet he’d spoil me rotten and take me to the movie theater and we’d share a bowl of popcorn and afterwards we’d drive home listening to mariachi music and then I’d lay my head down on his firm chest since we’d be so exhausted from our happy day that he didn’t need to consummate it with a sloppy climax. That the beating of our two hearts would suffice. Why should I deny myself that just to break a stereotype? But now I’ve already fallen in love with him. I haven’t actually put on my galoshes and trampled through the reality of it all with him. With anyone. With even my friends. With even my family. I’m too hesitant to shift the status quo. Everyone else tries to be so different that they end up being the same and here I am just...floating. I want to live in a fantasy. A Red Shorts fantasy. Something so unromanticized and real, our sharing hearts overflowing, that it bypasses into the absurd. I want us to trample and trip over each other like baby gazelles and argue about how to operate a compass. I want him to say to me, “At night, right before you fall asleep, you gently hum.” And for me to say, “The scars on your stomach are better than the veins in your forearms.”

She exhales, lost in her bliss.

A frisbee hits her.

SARA

Ouch.
ACT TWO

One week later. August 2015. Late afternoon.

A camp site in Lost Maples State Natural Area. Two tents - one red, one blue - with a fire place in the center. Miscellaneous camping supplies (chairs, coolers, a slack line, backpacks) are strewn about. It is clear that although they planned for this trip, there is still a novice quality to their camping abilities.

No one present, or so it seems until the sounds of lips smacking and tongues licking can be heard from one of the tents. Whispers. The tent russells. Heavy breathing and a couple shushes. A loud climax. Perhaps the sounds of birds flying away. Pants zipping.

Sam unzips the tent fly and emerges. Moments later, TATUM exits wearing an Assistant Scoutmaster uniform. His badge sash gets caught on the tent zipper. Tatum rearranges himself, getting comfortable.

SAM

Can I see an ID?

TATUM

I told you, I’m an Assistant Scoutmaster. I’m nineteen. We have to be eighteen to qualify.

SAM

I’m just joshing ya. I really don’t care.

TATUM

I think I’m gonna head back to camp. The den will think I’m gone.

SAM

You know, when I was in school, boy scouts got bullied pretty bad.

TATUM

So did sissies.

SAM

Touché.
TATUM
This badge has gotten me out of more tickets than you could imagine.

SAM
Is that how it works? You can get in trouble because you have the facade of a good little boy? I, too, have played that game.

TATUM
Fuck off, man. (Pause.) So can I still come over later?

SAM
It’s not like I’m going anywhere.

TATUM
You’ll be here?

SAM
Scout’s honor.

Tatum scoffs and departs.

Sam pokes around the campsite. He finds some trash and throws it into the fire pit. He tries standing on the slackline but immediately falls. Hard. He crawls over to a reclining camping chair and relaxes.

Birds chirp. The wind blows through the trees. A branch snaps.

Sam bolts up, only to aggravate his injury. Sara has arrived carrying two large tubs of fresh water and a purifier pump. She wears a tank top and hiking boots and a bandana. She sweaty and dirty. She is a changed woman.

SARA
Everyone is so nice here!

SAM
Ugh.

SARA
You have everything set up! I must have been walking around for hours. I made some friends with like everyone at the campsite, like you’ve been encouraging me! I. Made. Friends. Me! The honorable hermitess herself!
And then it took me forever to find the lake. Plus, I forgot where I put the water jugs, so that was just this whole other...undertaking.

    SAM
    Ugh.

    SARA
    I invited some other campers over for dinner and s’mores tonight! Brenda and Dean. They’re down the hill there and around the bend. They’re the most adorable couple. I bet they live off berries and fresh water and each others’ company.

    SAM
    Ah, someday.

    SARA
    I’m having a good time with Red Shorts.

    SAM
    Have y’all fucked?

    SARA
    Yeah, no. But we have these really heavy makeout sessions. And then we make food and talk.

    SAM
    You mean you talk.

    SARA
    I mean I talk and he listens. He’s really sweet. I don’t think you’re giving him enough credit.

    SAM
    You better get it in before he gets away.

Harmony enters with a bundle of firewood followed by Bear carrying another bundle.

    HARMONY
    We got firewood!

    BEAR
    Faggots.
What?

A bundle of sticks is called a faggot.

It is not.

I’m not even joking on this one.

I’m gonna look it up.

She pulls out her Iphone.

No service.

Sam takes away Sara’s phone.

I told you not to bring it. We’re going prehistoric here. That’s why we came here: to get out of that dizzying trap of a gas chamber and breath in the fresh air of the wild.

They all pause, immigrants in a foreign land. Bear farts.

How’s that for fresh air?

Bear!

Where?! Kidding.

Who was that kid you were talking to? That boy scout?

I was asking for directions.

To his pants?
SAM
No for the...the front office...the camp counselor ranger person.

SARA
Did you get a little, a little side tracked?

SAM
No.

Harmony picks up a merit badge of a squirrel holding a nut.

HARMONY
What’s this, the bust a nut badge?

BEAR
Caught red handed, sucka!

SARA
Sam!

SAM
Don’t act like such a good girl, Sara. Fine, I gave a handj to a boy scout. Sorry, assistant scoutmaster. He’s nineteen.

BEAR
Dude, you live in some other dimension.

HARMONY
Do you inhabit, like, the pornographic universe? You’re always living some fantasy.

SARA
Bring your feet to the ground. This is a problem.

SAM
Just because y’all don’t have the guts to live my life doesn’t mean you can tell me it’s wrong.

HARMONY
We’re just concerned with the effects, man.

BEAR
Where do all these boys leave you?
SAM
I’m not ashamed of my behavior. I enjoy the freedom it gives me.

SARA
Short thrills.

SAM
You haven’t even fucked Red Shorts! That’s what makes me sick!

BEAR
Sam.

He looks at each of them, marches over to Harmony and takes the merit badge from her.

SAM
Y’all better not ruin this vacation for me.

He leaves.

BEAR
Well that went well.

SARA
We needed to have an intervention at some point. He’s going to get hurt, if he already hasn’t.

HARMONY
I had a slut phase.

BEAR
Had?

HARMONY
Shut the fuck up I’ll murder you.

They play fight. It becomes something more than play. Sara takes note.

BEAR
Okay, we were gonna go look for some kindling.

HARMONY
We’ll be back soon.
BEAR

But don’t wait up.

SARA

Gotcha. I’m going to take a nap.

She lays down amongst the plethora of sleeping bags and mats, leaving the tent half-zipped.

Savannah enters on the side, binoculars in hand.

SAVANNAH

Hi, tree. My name’s Savannah. I’m here on a walkabout. (She sings.) “Walking Matilda, walking Matilda, you’ll go a walking Matilda with me.” It’s a common rite of passage for aborigine males, but fuck gender constructs. They stay in the wilderness for upwards of six months. I’m cutting it down five months and three weeks. Or I might just stay here forever. I know you’re a part of this place, this environment, but has anyone actually explained it to you? No one did for me. No one told me where I was and how I was meant to fit into it all. They thought they gave me tools, but I’m just crumbling. Is it easier for you? What’s it like to stay sedentary for hundreds of years? Did you ever want to move? Is it too late now? Is that other tree your friend or a pesky neighbor you’ve grown accustomed to? Is that love?

We’re on the Edwards Plateau bound by the Balcones Fault to the south and east, the Llano Uplift and the Llano Estacado to the north, and the Pecos River and Chihuahuan Desert to the West. Llano Estacado means staked plain, like, “This is my spot!,” but estacado can also mean the place for a duel or wounded. Llano means plain. Not like boring, but a flat piece of land. I like to think of it as a smooth piece of wounded skin. You’re surrounded by drought, oasises, and wounded earth and now you know.

Savannah drifts away slowly, looking for wildlife in her binoculars.

Red Shorts enters wearing nothing but Red Shorts (hence the name), socks and running shoes. He is a sweaty Greek God. He takes in the space, looking for friends.

RED SHORTS

Sara?

No answer.
Bear? Harmony? Savannah?

Still no answer. A branch snaps.

Ah!

He scurries into the red tent. Sara exits the blue tent, groggy from her nap. She too takes in the space, looking for her fellow campers.

A branch snaps. She runs into the red tent. The following happens inside the red tent, which we can see through a screen.

Oh, hey.

Hi Sara.

Go for a run?

Yep.

I took a nap.

How was your nap?

Lovely. I just was talking with Bear and Harmony. They brought firewood over and then there was this whole situation with Sam again then I dreamt that Savannah was talking to a tree - how are you?

Great.

Great how?
Um. I’m having a good time. Nice scenery.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Ha.

Are you okay?

She touches his chest, running up his abs and pectorals, following his biceps and forearms.

Everyone else stepped away.

Okay.

She knocks him down and practically tackles him. He’s astounded by her force and enthusiasm. He goes along with it.

One sec.

She zips the tent screen shut. They continue unseen, giggling and revelry continue.

You’re really strong.

You’re really hot.

I don’t have any condoms.
I came prepared.

Look at you.

Woah, okay.

What?

Nothing. Let’s stop talking.

They do, until:

I’ve never done this before.

What?

...I’m a virgin.

How old are you? I’m not judging.

Twenty-three.

But you’re gorgeous.

I’m not a very sexual person. You’re not a virgin, are you?

What makes you say that?

I didn’t mean it like that! I’m confused and vulnerable right now. I can’t plan what comes out of my mouth.
SARA
I’ve done the deed once or twice.

RED SHORTS
How many times? Are you clean?

SARA
I’m not going to validate those highly inappropriate questions with an answer. I am clean, that I can answer. You really shouldn’t ask those questions in the future.

RED SHORTS
I’m just trying to be safe.

SARA
It makes me feel cheap.

RED SHORTS
I’m sorry.

SARA
Don’t be sorry just don’t do it.

RED SHORTS
I won’t. This is why I waited so long. I’m scared.

SARA
I’m being a bitch, right? I’m being a bitch.

RED SHORTS
You’re being honest. I shouldn’t have said anything.

SARA
I can’t breathe in here.

She exits the tent in a bra and her pants undone. Red Shorts follows after her in his Red Shorts.

RED SHORTS
I was hoping you’d deflower me or whatever on this trip.

SARA
Ha. Fornicating in the woods?

RED SHORTS
Seemed only natural. Isn’t that why people go camping?
SARA
Drugs, mainly. Unless they’re with their families, then they’re just proving to other families that they’re better.

RED SHORTS
I used to go camping with my family and we had a great time. It wasn’t a competition.

SARA
Not all of us grew up in a cereal commercial.

RED SHORTS
Not ever can be as cool as you.

SARA
You’re sweet.

RED SHORTS
You’re sexy.

They kiss. Attraction increases just as Brenda and Dean enter with s’mores supplies.

BRENDA
Maybe we should leave.

DEAN
They invited us here.

BRENDA
This is a private moment.

DEAN
They’re just kissing.

BRENDA
I’m telling you I want to leave right now.

DEAN
I’m not going to be late to this. We already walked all the way over here.

SARA
Oh! Hi guys.

She walks over to them, oblivious to her current physical state. Red Shorts is a bit more self aware.
BRENDA

Hi. So nice to see you again.

DEAN

I hope we’re not bothering you.

Brenda sharply hits him, which she hides by grabbing the rest of the s’mores supplies from him.

BRENDA

We brought s’mores!

SARA

Great! I told them we didn’t have stuff for s’mores. It’s my first time camping so I just packed the essentials.

DEAN

And s’mores weren’t on that list?

SARA

Well, make yourselves comfortable around the fire. We’re still getting set up here. First day.

RED SHORTS

Y’all want something to drink?

DEAN

I’m good.

BRENDA

He’s just being polite. We’ll have two beers.

RED SHORTS

Two beers comin’ right up!

Red Shorts exits offstage to grab cooler.

SARA

I’m gonna go change. The others should be returning soon.

DEAN

Great. No rush.

Sara exits to dress herself.
BRENDA
I’m starving.

DEAN
I said we could’ve cooked something at our campsite so we’d be fine waiting.

BRENDA
But then we wouldn’t eat anything.

DEAN
Then why even bother?

BRENDA
Because she invited us and it was the right thing to do.

DEAN
Not if you have to fake it the whole time.

BRENDA
Just pretend like you want to be here.

DEAN
I’m fine. I’m not the one complaining.

Red Shorts enters with a red cooler full of Lone Star Beer.
He hands them each a can.

RED SHORTS
No bottles here.

He opens a can with his teeth and downs half of it.

BRENDA
Nothing like beer after a run, huh?

RED SHORTS
Oh, yeah.

DEAN
How did you know he was running?

BRENDA
I saw him. Running.
RED SHORTS
Yeah, I went all over. Even up the road. Saw a coupla deer.

BRENDA
Yeah, they’re all over the place.

DEAN
Did you go on a run to darlin’?

BRENDA
This morning before you got up. He always sleeps in late outdoors.

DEAN
Won’t happen again.

BRENDA
You and I should run together.

RED SHORTS
That’d be great.

DEAN
All three of us should go. That’d be really fun.

Sara returns.

SARA
Sorry, I checked my phone and I had found this like pocket of service so I was just glued there for a while. And then I put my clothes on. Not interesting. What are we talking about?

BRENDA
Running.

SARA
I hate running. Like the only reason why I’d go running is for people to watch me run from their cars and feel horrible about themselves.

RED SHORTS
You would not. You’re just saying that to sound badass.

BRENDA
I always get catcalled when I go running.

SARA
I don’t really have to worry about that.
DEAN
Come on! I totally give you a shout.

SARA
That means so much to me like you don’t even know.

Lull in the conversation.

DEAN
You’re supposed to stake these puppies down.

SARA
I didn’t set those up. My friends did. I wouldn’t know though. First timer.

BRENDA
No way!

RED SHORTS
I know, right?

DEAN
We go camping all the time. You’re going to want to put a tarp under here. That is unless you don’t want to be sleeping in an inch of water.

SARA
We didn’t bring a tarp.

DEAN
We have a few extras.

BRENDA
Mr. Overprepared.

DEAN
You never know, honey.

BRENDA
Didn’t leave until two hours later after we planned.

DEAN
Will you give us one second?

Dean pulls Brenda aside.

RED SHORTS
They’re funny. I think we should let them be.
They’re fine. I love couples who fight.

Okay. Do you want to fight with me?

No. Why would I want to fight with you?

It seems like that’s how you define a couple.

It’s not.

Then what are we?

Friends with benefits.

Is that what you think of me?

You couldn’t possibly be interested in me. You were supposed to just be a quick lay.

Then why wasn’t I?

Because you listened to me and were too goddamn sweet to me. You’re too perfect! I need some conflict.

Sorry for being perfect.

Of course only I’d want to change perfection.

I can meet you halfway.

I don’t want you to!
RED SHORTS
Then what do you want me to do?

SARA
I don’t know!

RED SHORTS
This environment is toxic. I’m going to take a walk.

SARA
And leave me here with these two?

RED SHORTS
You invited them.

SARA
Whatever.

Red Shorts walks off.

BRENDA
Should we go grab those supplies for you?

SARA
Yeah, that’d be great.

BRENDA
Okay, girls trip! You stay here, honey.

DEAN
I’m not going to argue with that.

SARA
Are you sure you’ll be okay alone?

BRENDA
He thinks he’s Bear Grylls. He’ll be fine. And if not, I’ll have so much material for the rest of my life.

SARA
Okay, bye.

DEAN
See ya!

Sara and Brenda depart.
Dean pokes around the camp. He spots the slackline. He mounts the slackline and balances. He’s actually pretty good. Surprisingly good. He takes a few steps. The sound of leaves. The wind changes direction. Harmony and Bear enter. Tension. They don’t notice Dean on the slackline. At some point, Dean hops off the slackline. The pair still don’t notice him. He hides behind a tent.

**BEAR**

We can’t let anyone know about this.

**HARMONY**

It’s not like a big secret.

**BEAR**

For me it is! I’ve got a reputation to uphold.

**HARMONY**

And I don’t?

**BEAR**

You’re reputation would pretty much be upheld by sleeping with me.

**HARMONY**

Is that what you think of me?

**BEAR**

I think very highly of you. You’re a free spirit...who makes the rounds.

**HARMONY**

I don’t care. It’s fun.

**BEAR**

Exactly. This was fun.

**HARMONY**

Come on, Berry. You know this was more than that.

**BEAR**

Not for me, no.

**HARMONY**

You can keep telling yourself that, but it won’t make it true.
BEAR

You’re crazy, girl.

HARMONY

Crazy for you. I think I’m in love with you. Like soul-splattering-messy-chocolate-and-roses in love with you.

Bear is speechless.

HARMONY

Can’t you see it? We’ve been on this path for quite some time dude. Remember when we went to see that movie together? Like that wasn’t a date. And then you went to eat very spicy Thai food even though you don’t like spicy food when I was sick? And we walked your cousin’s dog at Purgatory Creek? Like come on! You’d’ve never done that with Melinda or Savannah.

BEAR

You’re like my sister.

HARMONY

That’s what you want to think. We’re not blood. We can be very comfortable with each other and still sleep together. We can watch a movie and make love and commiserate together. I kind of knew you were the one when I first met you. Has it really taken you this long to realize?

BEAR

I just never saw you that way.

HARMONY

Too busy looking at yourself in the mirror?

BEAR

Woah. My universe just kind of exploded.

HARMONY

Then let me put it back together.

She goes to kiss him.

BEAR

But let’s still not tell anyone.

HARMONY

You’ve gotta be kidding me. Love breeds love.
BEAR
People will freak out.

HARMONY
I don’t care. Let them! They’re only jealous.

BEAR
I don’t know, Harmony.

HARMONY
Well that’s really lame. You know that? That’s really lame.

BEAR
Just give me some time.

HARMONY
You’re making me feel like shit right now.

BEAR
Do you expect me to just instantly be in love with you too?

HARMONY
I expect you not to be an asshole. To at least acknowledge that there’s another person here besides yourself!

BEAR
I guess I’m just not interested in loving you at this moment in time.

HARMONY
Neither am I it just happened!

BEAR
Well make it not happen.

HARMONY
I can’t.

Dean trips on the tent, falling over and collapsing the tent.

BEAR
What the hell?

HARMONY
What are you, some kind of sick pervert?!
BEAR
Settle down. Can I help you?

HARMONY
Can I help you? He was spying on us!

DEAN
Sara invited me here. I’m the camper down the hill. Dean. I’m Dean. My name is Dean. Y’all just came storming in, I didn’t know what to do.

HARMONY
A “hello” would do.

BEAR
You can’t tell anyone what you just heard.

HARMONY
Tell ‘em.

DEAN
I can’t do that. I don’t want to be an accomplice in this...battle.

BEAR
This ain’t no battle. This is all out war. Not a word.

HARMONY
But you kind of have to tell. If I tell everyone, he’ll be bad at me and won’t be able to see how much he loves me. If you tell, then he can be mad at you.

DEAN
I don’t want anyone to be mad at me.

HARMONY
Too late for that.

BEAR
You are a co-conspirator whether you like it or not.

HARMONY
And we’ll know where our information comes from.

BEAR
See you around.
HARMONY
Toodle-oo! (To Bear.) Get away from me.

Bear and Harmony go their separate ways. Dean scurries off to help Brenda and Sara.

Savannah enters with flowers in her hair. She sees the firewood and inspects it.

SAVANNAH
We can’t have a fire! There’s a burn ban in effect! Only you can prevent forest fires!

Silence. She sits down and loosens her hiking boots.

Red Shorts clambers into camp.

Are you okay?

SAVANNAH
I just saw a mountain lion.

RED SHORTS
I looked up on this rock cliff right above me and there she was, perched.

SAVANNAH
I’ve just seen birds and trees all day! Where did you see her? I want to go!

RED SHORTS
Don’t. They’re dangerous.

SAVANNAH
I don’t care. You’re right, I should probably stay right here. Don’t want to get hurt.

RED SHORTS
I felt my cells realign. You know when you really feel fear? When you become primordial and your instincts are at one-hundred percent?

SAVANNAH
I felt that way when I visited my mom in prison, totally.
RED SHORTS
Okay. Yeah, like that. So I’m just walking along. Kinda got in a fight with Sara, no biggie, just had to get out of that space. And it’s like she drew me in. I was trapped. The path ended right where I found her. So pretend you’re the mountain lion. Like you’re right here, just higher up. Okay. And I just sort of take off my sunglasses, like where the heck am I? And then I catch a swish of her tail.

Savannah imitates the mountain lion, the swishing of her tail.

RED SHORTS
Yeah, like that. And I look into her eyes, these amber marbles surrounded by golden puffs of short fur.

They look into each others’ eyes.

RED SHORTS
And I see... pain. All her past hurt and terror. A life lived. And all I want to do is hug her. Cuddle up right next to her and tell her it’s going to be okay. Take care of her. Then she sort of turned her head away, like I wouldn’t be good enough for her. Like I didn’t cut it.

Red Shorts gets on his hands and knees and crawls over to Savannah. She rubs his head, then knees down. They embrace. They make their way inside the tent.

Sara, Brenda, and Dean return with mallet and tarp.

DEAN
We can start Operation Campsite over here.

BRENDA
He’s always making these little names for everything.

SARA
That’s cute.

The trio moves to the blue tent to place a tarp underneath and move the tent back to its place.

SARA
How long have you guys been together?
BRENDA
I can’t even remember anymore.

DEAN
Five ye-

BRENDA
Five years. Yeah. We love each other.

DEAN
We know everything about each other.

SARA
What’s that like, morphing into one being?

DEAN
It’s wonderful. She’s my partner in crime.

BRENDA
Sometimes you lose sense of who you are.

DEAN
Well, yeah. But we let each other have their own nights.

SARA
What do you mean?

DEAN
You know.

SARA
I’m afraid to say.

BRENDA
Don’t be. We have an open relationship.

SARA
Wow. I’ve heard of that, I’ve just never known a couple that that lifestyle works for.

Dean pounds in stakes behind the tent. The girls move over to the red tent.

BRENDA
We make it work.
SARA
But, I’m afraid to ask this. How do you remain faithful?

As the girls try to move the tent, they feel the weight of Red Shorts and Savannah. Sara opens the tent. She sees Red Shorts’ bare ass and shrieks.

SAVANNAH
Shit!

RED SHORTS
Hey!

SARA
Get out!

SAVANNAH
Sara!

RED SHORTS
I’m so sorry!

SARA
What are you doing?!

RED SHORTS
We were just kissing.

SARA
With your pants around your ankles. I don’t even want to hear about it. Just get out. We have to put a tarp underneath this.

Savannah and Red Shorts put themselves together and exit the tent.

RED SHORTS
Sara-

SARA
Just move the tent.

Sara and Brenda watch Savannah and Red Shorts move the tent.

SARA
The tarp’s over there.

They watch Savannah and Red Shorts lay down the tarp.

SARA
Now put the tent back over it.
They do.

SARA
Don’t come back until dinner.

SAVANNAH
There’s a fire ban so we can’t cook anything.

SARA
Great, thanks.

And with that, Savannah and Red Shorts leave.

The sun has begun to set.

BRENDA
Was that your boyfriend?

SARA
Sort of.

BRENDA
He’s cute.

SARA
You can’t have him. And you can’t have me either.

DEAN
We weren’t trying to do anything of the kind.

SARA
Okay. I was just getting some weird vibes.

BRENDA
Sure. We understand.

SARA
Ha. How do you stay faithful then?

DEAN
We leave room for human error.

BRENDA
Every statistical algorithm leaves room for a margin of error.
DEAN
We figure relationships are the same way. We’re people of the world.

BRENDA
We’re not pagans, but we’re naturally imperfect.

DEAN
Why not allow ourselves to do what we want?

BRENDA
Marriage can be pretty oppressive.

SARA
I figured.

DEAN
It allows us to love each other even more when we reconvene.

Sam enters, legs covered in a poison ivy rash.

SAM
I’m fucked.

SARA
Sam! I thought you left.

SAM
No. I just went for a swim. Skinny dipping.

SARA
With the boy?

SAM
By myself. It was incredibly boring and I hated it.

SARA
I’m proud of you.

SAM
And then I walked through poison ivy on my way back. I was like seriously?

BRENDA
Oh no.
DEAN
We have natural remedies in the car.

SARA
Of course you do.

SAM
Aren’t you supposed to pee on me or something?

DEAN
That’s for jellyfish. You’re gonna wanna put some rubbing alcohol on that right away.

SAM
Can you still pee on me? I’m kidding.

DEAN
I’ll be right back.

SARA
We don’t have rubbing alcohol.

Sam takes a beer from the cooler and pour it on his legs, drinking the last of it.

SAM
There. What’s for dinner?

SARA
We can’t cook because there’s a fire ban.

SAM
Ah! I’m starving.

SARA
Tell me about it.

SAM
We can’t make a campfire on a camping trip? That’s the best part.

BRENDA
I have an idea. Where’s your phone?

Sara pulls out her phone from her pants pocket. Brenda turns it on and place it in the fire pit. The phone lightly glows.
Welcome to the 21st century.

Know any good ghost stories?

I got one!

She prepares. Silence. This story will be most effective, like all ghost stories, if Brenda is really into it. Everything leads up to her yelling “JOE!” to make everyone jump. The story gets more intense each time she tells it and the campers get more titillated each time she repeats. As she tells the story, Tatum emerges in the background.

On a night like this, not very far away from here, three men sat around a campfire. One turned to the other and said, “JOE! Tell us a story.” So Joe began, “On a night like this, not very far away from here, three men sat around a campfire. One turned to the other and said, ‘JOE! Tell us a story.’” So Joe began -

Pst!

Fuck! Jesus Christ!

Dean?

No. It’s Tatum. I’m hear to talk with Sam.

You scared the shit out of us. What were you thinking?

I told you I’d come by later.

It’s fine. We were scaring each other anyway.

Can I talk to you in private, Sam.
SARA

Uh oh.

SAM

Sure.

Tatum and Sam walk off.

SARA

Tatum and Sam kissing in a tree. K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage.

BRENDA

It’s just us.

They look down at their 21st century fire. The phone goes off. They look at each other. Then they look up.

BRENDA

Look at the moon.

SARA

Woah.

The two look at the moon for a while. Lights shift to another part of the woods while the other campers (Savannah, Red Shorts, Dean, Harmony, and Bear) arrive.

SCENE TWO

In another part of the woods. The sun has almost set. Tatum is hiding something behind his back.

SAM

Speak your peace and let me go.

Tatum hands Sam flowers.

SAM

What are these, pipe cleaners?

TATUM

They’re wildflowers. They’re called...gayfeathers.
SAM
Gayfeathers? That’s too perfect.

TATUM
*Liatrus mucronata*. Otherwise known as blazing star and button snakeroot. The roots are used to cure snakebites.

SAM
Are you giving me these because I’m poisoned?

TATUM
I found a patch of them on the way over here and couldn’t pass up the opportunity.

SAM
You’re really cute.

TATUM
Thanks.

SAM
No one’s ever given me flowers.

Tatum walks over and kisses him on the cheek, then on the nose, then on the lips. It’s adorable and childish and the most romantic thing that has ever happened to him.

SAM
You taste salty.

TATUM
You taste like lemons.

SAM
That’s weird.

TATUM
What?

SAM
No it’s just. Deja vu.

TATUM
Oh.

SAM
This is really really sweet, buddy, but I think this is taking things too far.
TATUM
I know we just met, but I thought I’d spoil you.

SAM
It just feels like you’ve already attached yourself to me. Like immediately.

And?

SAM
And I don’t even know you!

But I really like you.

SAM
Woah. I’m not here to rescue you, man.

He hands back the flowers.

TATUM
What?

SAM
You’re surrounded by adolescent straight boys, or at least so they think or so they say. For now. Their greatest fear is that they won’t be masculine enough. Whatever that means. So what you do is you repress yourself to fit in with them, but you’ll never be one of them. It just doesn’t work that way. So when someone like me comes along, living the life you long to lead, you magnetize to me. It happens to me all the time. The gay lost boys. I suggest you put those boy scouting tools to good use and find yourself in the woods.

TATUM
Okay. Can you be my guide?

SAM
I’m not that kind of guy.

Tatum goes to undo Sam’s pants.

SAM
Stop stop stop. We’re not doing that.

TATUM
Okay.
They are at a stand still, unsure of what happens next. Tatum moves in closer. Their bodies are touching. Tatum kisses up Sam’s neck, then his cheek, then he holds the back of his neck and pecks Sam’s lips.

Sam pushes him back. They look at each other. Sam snatches the flowers back from Tatum.

SAM

Come on.

Sam returns to camp. Tatum does the tiniest of celebrations and follows.

SCENE THREE

Back at camp. Everyone is sitting around the “campfire,” now a collection of phones turned on and glowing.

Sam and Tatum enter the campsite. Sara pops out from behind the tent and flashes the boys. Harmony snaps a picture.

SAM

My eyes! They’re burning!

TATUM

Oh.

BEAR

I can’t believe you did it!

SARA

I’ll do anything to win True or Dare.

SAM

Seems like we’ve missed quite the party.

SARA

We thought y’all were having a party of your own.

RED SHORTS

Party in the pants.

SAM

He gave me flowers.
BRENDA
That’s adorable.

TATUM
I’m embarrassed.

DEAN
Smooth, dude. Smooth.

SAM
So what did we miss? Who’s kissed who?

SARA
Brenda here fit a dozen marshmallows into her face, Dean shared with us a secret he’s never told his parents...and Savannah kissed Red.

SAVANNAH
Bear dared me to.

TATUM
I want to play.

HARMONY
It’s Sara’s turn since she went last!

RED SHORTS
You should totally make them make out!

SARA
Yeah, because that would be fascinating. What’s your name again?

TATUM
Tatum.

SARA
Tatum, truth or dare?

TATUM
Truth.

RED SHORTS
Ah, come on! That’s boring!
DEAN
Let him pick.

SARA
If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be? And who with?

TATUM
Um.

BRENDA
And don’t say something like right here with us because that’d put way too much pressure on us.

TATUM
I’d want to be waking up in my old bed to the smell of my dad making breakfast on a Saturday morning. I’d come down the stairs and sit on the steps to watch his fishing show. And my mom would come out in her robe and we’d sit around having pancakes and laugh.

SARA
Yeah.

BRENDA
Woah.

RED SHORTS
Shit, that’s a lot.

TATUM
Okay, my turn! Sam, truth or dare?

SAM
Truth.

BEAR
What is wrong with you pussies?

HARMONY
Shut up!

TATUM
I’m never good at coming up with these questions. What was your first impression of each of us?
SAM
Are you kidding me?

SAVANNAH
This is dangerous territory.

DEAN
Come on, we can take it.

BRENDA
I want to know!

SAM
Are you sure? Okay. Brenda: I thought you had nice legs and were very beautiful. Dean: I thought you were a good counterpart to Brenda. I could see you two being very happy together. Red: I thought you were sexy and dumb. I was partially right. Tatum: I thought you were a dweeb and I still do. Savannah: I thought you were a space cadet. Still do. Harmony: I thought you were lovely. Bear: I’d never met anyone like you, man. I thought, here’s a guy that needs to be in my life. Sara: My first impression of you was...who is this girl? She says she doesn’t know what she’s doing and yet she does everything with such radiance and ease. I hope she’ll be my friend.

DEAN
Are you sure y’all aren’t dating?

SARA
That was so sweet.

She gives him a peck on the cheek.

RED SHORTS

BRENDA
That could’ve gone much worse.

SAVANNAH
I think about that a lot: how our first impressions may be correct, but still doesn’t give us an accurate depiction of the person.

DEAN
It’s a way of writing off their humanity. Like, oh, there’s a boy scout, he’s a nice guy.

TATUM
Hey!
DEAN
Sorry, just using you as an example.

SAM
He’s pretty much what you’d expect.

HARMONY
It’s the stereotype threat. If we’re expected to comply to characteristics of a stereotype, we’re going to fit in that stereotype. It’s inevitable.

RED SHORTS
Y’all are too much for me.

BRENDA
But then if we break the stereotype, it’s like we still know it’s there, we’re only acting in opposition to it.

SARA
How so?

BRENDA
I’m sure Dean told you I had a girlfriend in college.

DEAN
Here we go.

BRENDA
Shut up, you love it. Well, we’d try to dress “normal”. Like girls, I guess. I don’t even know what that means. But by the act of that, we were only more trapped by the stereotype.

RED SHORTS
Sort of like reverse racism.

SAVANNAH
That’s not a thing. Racism is racism.

RED SHORTS
But sometimes it does flip around. Like, I’m one hundred percent German, and somehow I’m responsible for the Holocaust? Like every time I’m around a Jewish person, I can feel their eyes seering into me.

SAVANNAH
That must be really hard for you.
SAM
Red, let the grown up speak.

RED SHORTS
You can’t make me shut up! I know I’m not that smart, but it’s because of people like y’all that never let me get a word in edgewise that made me this way. You talk about stereotyping and how righteous you are of your inclusion and diversity, but then you write me off! You look at me and all you see is muscles. Working out is a hobby to me. I respect my body, but it turns into a life style because people like you make it into one.

SARA
Welcome to the life of being a girl.

RED SHORTS
But then y’all think it’s okay to objectify us but it’s not okay for us to do the same to you.

BRENDA
It’s more of equal retribution.

DEAN
Payback?

BRENDA
Yeah, but you’ve got nothing to worry about.

DEAN
Fuck you.

SARA
But Red, you’ve gotta admit it’s nice to be pretty.

RED SHORTS
Not really.

TATUM
We all want what we can’t have.

SARA
Are you saying I’m not pretty?

TATUM
Shutting up.
SARA
Do you think I’m pretty?

TATUM
I like boys, so...

SARA
But you can still tell, right? Your eyes still work?

TATUM
You’re pretty.

SARA
But not attractive?

TATUM
Not to me, no.

SARA
Dean, would you fuck me?

DEAN
That’s not really a fair question. I feel set up.

BRENDA
He’d fuck a corpse.

SARA
What does that mean?

BRENDA
He’s just being polite. You’re gorgeous and he’d love to sleep with you.

SAM
Sara, cool down. What’s gotten into you?

SARA
I just thought this trip would be more an escape.

SAM
We just got here.
SARA
I know, but I can already tell that all my problems are still here. They’re just tenfold and projected right in front of me. And there are bugs and no air conditioning.

SAM
I thought you were doing really well.

SARA
Well I’m not!

DEAN
We go camping all the time and you don’t get acquainted until you get a good night’s sleep under the stars.

BEAR
I was going to save it until later in the trip, but I have some goodies.

He unpacks some mushrooms.

HARMONY
You did not.

SAVANNAH
Dude!

TATUM
Woah. I really think I should skedaddle.

SAM
Stay, it’ll be fun.

SARA
No. We’re not doing drugs.

BRENDA
We’re gonna pass.

DEAN
What? I want to do it.

BRENDA
I’ve done it before. Had a bad trip. You wouldn’t have a good time. You’d lose yourself.

SARA
We’re not doing mushrooms.

BEAR
It’s natural.
SAVANNAH
It’s so different from what you’ll think it’ll be!

SARA
You’re not allowed to talk to me. We’re not getting high to bring us closer together. That’s not how this works. We’re going to sit here sober, well other than the couple of beers, and have a good time. We’ll have a good time.

BEAR
I think it would be beneficial to the group if you just chilled out.

SARA
Fuck off, Teddy. Your way isn’t the only way. You are incessantly trying to alter my manner of being when you could never be like me. Or who I used to be.

BRENDA
Is everything okay?

SARA
It’s fine.

SAM
She’s been fractured lately.

SARA
Lately? You’ve known me for one month.

SAM
I thought we knew each other pretty well. We’ve been through some shit.

SARA
I feel numb. Like nothing will ever go well again.

RED SHORTS
Things’ll turn up. You’ll see.

SARA
No you’ll see. Not everything in my life goes as swimmingly as yours. People don’t throw themselves at me.

HARMONY
Do you let them?

SARA
Of course! I’m an open book!

DEAN
We should head out.
BEAR
You seem pretty guarded.

BRENDA
I want to stay and support her.

SARA
Because I have to be. I don’t know how to change this pattern.

DEAN
We just met them. Let them have their space.

HARMONY
I’ve been there, sister. We’re hear to support you.

SAVANNAH
Y’all should feel totally welcome to stay. This happens pretty often.

SARA
Fuck you Savannah!

SAM
Woah woah woah woah.

SARA
You betrayed me. You stole the one good thing going for me. And now it is sullied. You make me feel dirty and used. And Red, what the hell? We had a good thing going. It was fun.

RED SHORTS
It can be repaired.

SARA
But do I want it to be repaired? That’s not a rhetorical question.

RED SHORTS
I don’t have the answers.

DEAN
I think we should go back to playing the game!

Pause. They all look at him.

HARMONY
I have a better idea.

She pulls out her ukelele. As she sings, each couple connects - Sam and Tatum snuggle on a blanket, Brenda rests her head on Dean’s shoulder, Red Shorts walks over to Sara and sits in her lap.
HARMONY

This’ll be improvised so just bear with me:

Some days seem to go forever along,
But now I’m singing this song.
To sing a sweet lullaby
To all the buzzing fireflies:

Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.
Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.

I don’t know what tomorrow will bring,
And that’s why we need to sing
To all the birds and the bees
Whatever may come,
I’ll still be dumb and need a friend to sit with me

And so I sing:
Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.
Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.

At least we can still be blessed and grateful
That we have this company
And without a roof over her head,
And so hungry that we’re dead,
I’d like you to sing this song with me:

They all join in.

ALL

Everybody now!
Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.
Campfire song,
Campfire song,
I’m singing the campfire song of the twentieth-first century.

HARMONY
That was dumb.

RED SHORTS
I like dumb.

SAM
We know!

SARA
My phone!

Her phone buzzes or lights up.

SARA
There’s service!

BRENDA
Don’t do it.

SARA
I’m just going to use the Stargazing app.

DEAN
What is it?

TATUM
It shows you constellations. Where they are in the sky.

DEAN
Cool. I have most of them memorized.

SARA
Got it! Woah. It even tells you which constellations are underneath us. There’s a whole population of people beneath us who are doing the same thing we’re doing.

TATUM
Or maybe there’s no one at all and the stars are shining down on icebergs or a tropical rainforest.
SAVANNAH
Or maybe no one can see them at all due to cloud coverage.

BRENDA
Or smog.

RED SHORTS
Or they’re blind and have to have someone explain to them what stars look like.

DEAN
Or maybe they don’t care because they’re so wrapped up in their own insular world that they don’t take a second to step outside and look up.

SAM
Shooting star. Make a wish.

They each make their own tiny beautiful wishes, shutting their eyes or praying, whatever centers them.

SARA
I’d like to say something. Yet I don’t really know what I want to say. First of all, sorry for being a raging bitch. This is a lot for me.

Nextly, our generation is boundless, universal. Speaking of stereotypes and conforming, we all want to be so different that we kinda end up being the same. I’ve always felt like my own invention, and in that respect like I didn’t fit in. Like I was something to be admired, to entertain people but not to be touched. I’ve maintained that people would love me if I were a character on the screen, but in real life I’m invisible.

Where do we stop? When can we quit pushing boundaries, tearing down the social order, and just be ourselves? When can the expectations be lowered? Or if not lowered, at least realistic? That’s why I came out here: to get away from the clocks and the beeps and dig my hand in the earth and feel her heart beat. Feel the blood in my veins, the marrow in my bones, and the sun on my skin. And still I’m attached to this thing!

What am I talking about?

We don’t have to keep fighting. It is okay to coast. Breaks are needed. And if to stop a downward spiral, you have to run away, then do it, if by doing so you can confront those gnawing nasty thoughts and feelings. I haven’t led a difficult life, but I do overcomplicate things. I have to live with Sara. She’s my own. And she’s not always the nicest person. You’d think I’d be able to throw myself into a job or school, but when I do that, the problem only exacerbates itself.
When I’m asked to meditate, be calm, breathe, all I do is tense up. But I think what I’m learning is that presence does not mean calm. Anger requires vulnerability. So does love. But so does rage and jealousy and hate. Glossing over humanity doesn’t make it better. It makes it worse by denying it.

I’m leaving tomorrow morning I’ve decided. I’m not cut out for the wilderness like I had expected. Ha. But I’ve greatly enjoyed your company. Cheers.

ALL
Cheers, well said, here here, etc.

SAVANNAH
Does anyone have some tunes?

SAM
I’ve got a speaker.

TATUM
There’s a noise ordinance after midnight.

SAM
Do you want to hang out with me or not?

Sam puts on music and everyone dances in their own weird way.

EPILOGUE
A week later. Two tubes on stage. Sam and Sara are tubing down the San Marcos River. They drink pink wine coolers.

SAM
...so he’s kinda paling around with me. Like nudging and winking the whole night. And then he fucks off to who knows where. No texting. Nada.

SARA
You’re cursed.

SAM
It’s the camping trip from hell. I mean your hell. Mine was pretty sweet.

SARA
Mine was fine. Red and I snuck out of the tent and did it behind a tree.
SAM
And you’re just now telling me this?! This is major.

SARA
I wasn’t going to tell anyone and now I’m kinda telling everyone.

SAM
I’ve taught you so well.

SARA
And you? Any prospect?

SAM
Um. Well actually I wanted to hang out with you today to tell you I’m moving. In a week. To Chile.

SARA
WHAT?!

She almost falls off her tube.

SAM
Yeah. Major life change. Or not. My dad knows a guy who works at a bar in Santiago. It’s super kitschy and touristy, but who cares? It’s Chile.

SARA
I bet you’ll meet some sexy Chilean miners.

SAM
I just want to lay low. Change it up, right?

SARA
Change it up. Dat’s right.

SAM
School’s starting up soon.

SARA
Don’t I know.

SAM
Are you going?
SARA
Yeah. I’m going to Harvard.

SAM
You’re shitting me.

SARA
I’m not. They have free online classes. I’m going to Harvard.

SAM
Okay.

SARA
Let me live my fantasy.

SAM
You’re crazy.

SARA
And that’s why you love me.

SAM
That I do. That I do.

The two continue to float the river and take in the sun’s rays.

Lights fade to one shining beam.

A train blares through town.

END OF PLAY