

CHARACTERS

Kath — twenties

Danny — twenties

TIME & PLACE

The present. Two a.m.

A tent in a wilderness area.

Start

GO LOOK

DARKNESS. FOREST NOISES. KATH switches on a flashlight.

KATH. What was that?

DANNY. Hunh?

KATH. I heard something.

DANNY. What did it sound ...

KATH. Shhh.

DANNY. OK.

KATH. It's stopped.

DANNY. Good.

KATH. Go look.

DANNY. What?

KATH. Go look outside. Around the tent.

DANNY. What for?

KATH. It might be something.

DANNY. Kath ...

KATH. Please.

DANNY. I'm not dressed.

KATH. Who's going to see you?

DANNY. Whatever made the noise.

KATH. It won't care if you have clothes on.

DANNY. It? What kind of it?

KATH. I don't know.

DANNY. You mean like a bear?

KATH. No. Not necessarily.

DANNY. You want me to go look for something that's not necessarily a bear. In the middle of the night. In the middle of nowhere.

~~KATH. [REDACTED]~~~~DANNY. Why don't you go?~~~~KATH. You're the man.~~~~DANNY. Right. I forgot.~~

KATH. I was kidding.

DANNY. No gun, no knife

KATH. You are gross.

DANNY. Thank you.

KATH. I was only kidding anyway—about you being the man.

DANNY. Why don't you go?

KATH. Me?

DANNY.

think you're really dangerous.

KATH. You are disgusting. Just forget it.

(Beat.)

DANNY. There aren't any bears around here.

KATH. I'm sleeping.

DANNY. There isn't a bear within a hundred miles. Snakes, maybe.

KATH. Get off of me.

DANNY. There might be one in your sleeping bag.

KATH. Quit!

DANNY. But no bears.

(Beat.)

KATH. I never said it was a bear.

DANNY. So, what? Wild animals?

KATH. No.

DANNY. Murderers? Monsters? Your mother?

KATH. Shut up.

DANNY. Come on, Kath. What did you think?

KATH. What I always think in the woods.

DANNY. Which is?

KATH. That it will come for me.

DANNY. Ooooh. What?

KATH. I don't know.

DANNY. What does it look like?

KATH. I don't know.

DANNY. Now we're getting someplace.

KATH. I don't want to talk about him.

DANNY. You said "him." How do you know it's a he?

KATH. I've heard his growl. It sounds deep.

DANNY. Like this? I mean, (Bass.) like this?

KATH. You're a riot, Danny.

DANNY. The growling bogeyman.

KATH. It's not a bogeyman.

DANNY. If you say so.

KATH. It's a real man.

DANNY. Oh, a *real* man.

KATH. I mean a person, moron. On the outside. But inside ...

DANNY. Yeah?

KATH. Rage.

DANNY. Rage?

KATH. No limits.

DANNY. Right. And where does this angry guy come from?

KATH. Far from here. Deep in the forest. Where there are no footprints, not even animal tracks. Just thick vines and roots and leaves that shine icy white in the moonlight.

DANNY. He lives there.

KATH. No. That's where he's born. Sometimes at night the leaves and vines shift, all by themselves, to make a clearing, as if an invisible hand was sweeping away the underbrush.

DANNY. Uh, oh.

KATH. The bare ground forms a mound that puckers at the top.

DANNY. Sounds like a pimple.

KATH. Danny ...

DANNY. All right. Then what?

KATH. There's a groaning sound that starts way underground. It builds up, louder and louder.

He bursts out of the ground. Running. On all fours. No hesitation. Tearing over fields and rocks. Straight toward me. The closer he comes, the faster he runs. Until he sees where I am.

Then he stops on the side of a hill. He stands there. Looking down at me. At our tent, lit like a Chinese lantern. I can't see his

end

face. But I know he's waiting. Teeth bared. Grinning. Growling.

DANNY. That's the end?

KATH. I never let myself think further than that.

DANNY. What would happen?

KATH. If he got me?

DANNY. If he got you.

KATH. I would be destroyed.

DANNY. You mean killed.

KATH. More than that. Everything. Gone.

DANNY. Why is he after you?

KATH. I attract him.

DANNY. In what way?

KATH. I don't know.

DANNY. Maybe he knows you won't face him.

KATH. What?

DANNY. You'll consent to be destroyed.

KATH. That's awful.

DANNY. But true.

KATH. No. I don't think so. You never know until the moment.

DANNY. Some people do.

KATH. They say they do.

DANNY. But not you. The innocent victim. The noble victim.

KATH. That's a terrible thing to say.

DANNY. A worse one to be.

KATH. Why are you being so nasty?

DANNY. Because I hate this [REDACTED] An angry Man erupts out of the night. He's going to destroy the Woman. It's straight out of a cheap horror movie. I can't stand all this self-righteous ...

KATH. Danny ...

DANNY. Poor, helpless you. Big, bad men. I'm sick of taking the blame.

KATH. Shut up a second. I heard it again.

(THEY listen. Silence.)

KATH. Turn off the flashlight. *(HE does so.)*

DANNY. That won't matter.

KATH. Why not?

DANNY. He doesn't have eyes.

KATH. How do you know?

DANNY. You said so.

KATH. No. I didn't.

DANNY. Well, he doesn't. He doesn't need them. He knows where he's going. From the instant he comes out of the ground. Spit out of the earth like something rancid.

KATH. Are you making fun of ...

DANNY. Running. Speeding over hills, tree stumps, a dry creek bed. Sharp stones cut his feet. Racing, fast as a pulse. Closer. On the horizon. Closer. On the hillside. He pauses.

KATH. All right, Danny.

DANNY. Facing but not seeing. No eyes. Or nose. A blank face. A jagged hole of a mouth. Breathing fast. Grinning. Now he's ready. He starts moving.

KATH. Stop. I mean it.

DANNY. Sweeping down the hill. Toward the dark tent. Doesn't need eyes or nose. Not stalking. Drawn. Reeled in. Fast. Almost here. Outside the tent. Growling.

KATH. Quit!

DANNY. Through the flap. Past you. And into me. *(HE turns on the flashlight.)*

KATH. OK. The end. Roll the credits.

DANNY. I know your Wild Man, Kath. I've met him.

KATH. The movie's over.

DANNY. Whenever we go to the woods. And other times. The line gets stretched very thin. I could cross it. Couldn't you?

KATH. I don't know what you mean.

DANNY. I mean I know I could do terrible things. Violent things.

KATH. You're serious.

DANNY. For me, it would be easy. I could pick up a hammer or a flashlight and pound everyone and everything into pulp. Even the people I love most in the world. Pick it up and do it. And sometimes I want to, I really want to, for no reason at all. It pulls at me. Don't you ever feel that way?

KATH. I don't know.

DANNY. If you did, you'd know it.

KATH. Everybody has bad thoughts, Danny.

DANNY. It's not the thoughts. That's not it. It's what's underneath. The exhilaration. The savage, howling joy of hurting. Or killing. The release. That's what makes me wonder what I am.

(Beat.)

KATH. I don't know what to say.

DANNY. Well, you're a [REDACTED] saint.

KATH. No. It scares me.

DANNY. It must be the testosterone talking. Since I'm the man.

KATH. I'm going to sleep.

(Pause.)

KATH. Danny?

DANNY. What?

KATH. Last weekend at Mother's. It was a nice day. She told me to push her out on the back patio.

DANNY. So?

KATH. She said something. I don't remember what. Not very nasty, not for her. Something about my shoes. It was nothing, really. But for an instant I felt like letting go. Just letting go and watching gravity work. I imagined her chair rolling down the slope, over the edge, and bouncing down the back steps. All the way to the garage. And when the police and ambulance would come, I'd be crying and sobbing and explaining. But inside I'd be dancing.

DANNY. But you didn't do it.

KATH. No.

DANNY. Too bad. We haven't been dancing for a long time.

(Beat.)

KATH. When you have those thoughts—do you have them toward me, too?

DANNY. Yes. Sometimes. I'm sorry, Kath.

KATH. But you don't do anything.

DANNY. No. Not so far.

KATH. So far, so good.

(Beat. There is a DISTINCT SOUND in the woods.)

KATH. What's that?

DANNY. I don't know. *(HE moves to exit.)*

KATH. Wait. *(SHE rises.)* Let's go.

(THEY exit together. Curtain.)

THE END