

Boundary Waters

By Dennis Fisher

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CHARACTER NAME	AGE	GENDER
George	A confident 30	male
Judith	An insecure 40	female
Clyde	An oblivious 45	male
Katiana	A mysterious 25	female

Setting:

Boundary Waters National Park in northern Minnesota.

Time:

The present.

The boundaries of this world are forever shifting - from day to night, joy to sorrow, love to hate, and from life itself to death; and who can say at what moment we may suddenly cross over the border, from one state of existence to another.

- Michael Andrew Cox

SCENE ONE

Only front of stage is lit. We see GEORGE and JUDITH, who are surrounded by bags of camping gear. Surroundings suggest they are in a garage.

GEORGE

Everything is ready to go. I am so pumped.

JUDITH

Oh George. This is so exciting. I love you so much.

They embrace and the embrace lingers. They kiss.

GEORGE

I love it when one of my plans comes together. This time tomorrow we'll be on an island in paradise, taking care of the urn, embracing solitude ...

JUDITH

Celebrating two years together.

GEORGE

Away from the troubles of the world.

JUDITH

Just us.

GEORGE

I can't wait to try out some of this gear.

JUDITH

I can't wait to spend time alone in the wilderness with the love of my life.

She embraces GEORGE again.

GEORGE

Let's go over the list one more time.

JUDITH

I think it's covered honey. Let's get some sleep. We have a long day tomorrow. George?

GEORGE

Yes.

JUDITH

I can express no kinder sign of love, than this kind kiss.

She kisses him.

GEORGE

Shakespeare?

JUDITH

You know me well. And I know you.

They embrace as lights fade.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE TWO

The shoreline of a lake as light is fading late in day. It is unusually warm. Open area on a shore surrounded by pine trees with a path leading offstage. Stage is dominated by green colors. We hear soft paddling sounds. From stage right GEORGE appears, pulling a kayak. He is dressed in expensive, fashionable paddling gear. He gazes around the campsite, takes it all in, smiles a broad smile. He begins to unload bags of lightweight camping gear from hatches on the kayak to set up camp. He sets out a few bags of gear. He takes two stuff sacks, goes to a tree at far stage left and hoists the bags into the tree with a rope and carabiner. He takes another bag, removes a metal jar, sets it gently on log, steps back and admires it. He opens another bag, pulls out a bottle of wine and metal cups. He sits on another log. He takes a swiss army knife from a lanyard around his neck and opens the wine and pours into cup. He looks around the campsite again, stares at the metal jar, smiles, and takes a long drink of wine.

GEORGE

Ahh. Solitude. (He giggles).

We hear the sound of a paddle splashing against water - then JUDITH's voice offstage.

JUDITH

Hey!

GEORGE takes another drink, looking straight ahead.

JUDITH

Hey! George! George! Dammit!

GEORGE gets up and disappears offstage and reappears pulling another kayak.

JUDITH is at the end of the kayak lifting it with a handle. They place it next to his kayak.

JUDITH

What the hell was that all about?

GEORGE

What?

JUDITH

Why did you get so far ahead of me? I was getting scared. I wasn't sure I could find the campsite. It's getting dark. I was alone. That was mean. That was just mean. God you're a child.

GEORGE

Come on, there was no way you were going to miss the camp site.

JUDITH

That's easy enough for you to say. You've got the GPS.

GEORGE

I'm sorry. I just got excited and the adrenaline took over. Here we are in paradise. It worked out OK. I forget that you're older.

JUDITH

Older. Sometimes you can be such an ass.

GEORGE moves to her, smiles broadly.

GEORGE

But I can be such a loveable ass.

Tries to hug JUDITH.

JUDITH

Not now. I'm pissed.

GEORGE

Can you give me a hand with setting up the rest of the camp? I've done everything so far.

JUDITH

(exasperated) You self absorbed shit.

GEORGE

So this is how it's going to be?

JUDITH

Day one. This is how it's going to be on day one.

GEORGE

Day one of our wonderful romantic week kayaking the Boundary Waters. Celebrating two years of conjugal joy. Leaving our troubles behind. Spreading my dad's ashes.

JUDITH

Nothing says romance like lugging the incinerated remains of a dead person across the countryside.

GEORGE

Timeout. Time. Out. I apologize. I shouldn't have gotten ahead of you. You don't like to be alone. I do. It's how I recharge. But I was wrong. You - are - right. Here. Have some wine.

He pours her wine and hands the cup to her.

GEORGE

To the best vacation ever - with the most beautiful woman in the world. (He clicks her cup, JUDITH reluctantly takes a drink). Forgive me?

JUDITH

I love you. I forgive you. If only you didn't have to open your mouth.

She sighs and kisses him. He smiles broadly. She raises her cup.

JUDITH

To my Commitment Phobic man child. No offense.

GEORGE

No offense taken. I've got a romantic surprise planned for you.

JUDITH

A surprise that will top spreading human remains on a romantic weekend?

GEORGE

If you're patient. Timing is everything.

JUDITH

Like your precision in timing our arrival to the campsite?

GEORGE

I said I was sorry. What do you say we wait to set up camp and take the sleeping pads to the shore and watch the sunset? With this amazing backdrop we can, you know, become the beast with two backs.

JUDITH

(looks at him incredulously) You really know how to get a woman in the mood don't you? I just forgave you and you say something crass like that.

GEORGE

Come on. It's Shakespeare! I'm quoting Shakespeare. Your favorite. You teach him. You should be impressed.

JUDITH

How about a sonnet? The beast with two backs? Of all the Shakespeare your Neanderthal brain could grasp on to, that's what you committed to memory? Yeh, sure, I've never wanted you as much as I do right now. You're such an adolescent goof.

GEORGE

But I'm your adolescent goof - and life partner.

JUDITH

Don't remind me.

GEORGE

And Neanderthals were really smart. And they bred with homo sapiens.

JUDITH

Men will breed with anything they can outrun.

GEORGE

You're sexy when you're insulting an entire gender. Look at that sunset (he points). We have a week of those sunsets ahead of us.

JUDITH

Only if I don't murder you before the end of the week.

GEORGE

(Laughs) You aren't just beautiful and smart and sexy, you're the sassiest, funniest girl I know. That's why I love you. Now let's get these mats down to the shore and practice our Shakespeare. Follow me.

He giggles - JUDITH pokes him in the ribs and they grab sleeping pads and dash towards the shore line - They poke each other and laugh along the way as they disappear offstage.

END OF SCENE

SCENE THREE

It is morning. We see that tent and the rest of camp site has been set up. GEORGE pours coffee prepared on a camp stove into a mug, which he hands to JUDITH. They sit on log next to old fire ring. The morning sun cuts through a mist hanging over the campsite.

GEORGE

Bliss.

JUDITH

Bliss

GEORGE

Heaven on earth.

JUDITH

It really is.

GEORGE

The mist is so beautiful.

JUDITH

Indeed.

GEORGE

Indeed?

JUDITH

Yes?

GEORGE

Indeed sounds kind of pretentious.

JUDITH

I was agreeing with you. This is beautiful.

GEORGE

Indeed sounds kind of smug.

JUDITH

Do you really want to start this? You have the most expensive camping gear money can buy, you have a kevlar kayak, you're wearing an Apple Watch. You are a walking monument to pretension.

GEORGE

I like quality stuff. That's no excuse to be an elitist.

JUDITH

Because words are more important windows into the soul than behavior.

GEORGE

Your family can be kind of pretentious. Wealth does that to people.

JUDITH

Now your insulting my entire family?

GEORGE

People from Minnesota shouldn't be full of themselves. It's unbecoming.

JUDITH

You're certainly full of something.

GEORGE

Guilty. Sorry. The mist is beautiful though. (Pause) Wasn't our interlude on the beach last night amazing?

JUDITH

It was nice.

GEORGE

Nice? It was fantastic.

JUDITH

It was ok.

GEORGE

OK? That was one of the greatest lovemaking sessions of my life.

JUDITH

Of "your" life. "My" life . . .? (Shrugs)

GEORGE

Aw come on, it was remarkable.

JUDITH

For a man orgasm is as simple as lighting a stick of dynamite. Light the fuse, stand back, try not to pull a muscle when it goes off.

GEORGE

My back *is* a little stiff.

JUDITH

The female orgasm, for those who are aware of it's existence, is more sublime. Imagine those little maze toys in a Cracker Jacks box. You tilt it back and forth, trying to get the BB to go down the right path

She mimics rocking the toy to get the BB in the middle.

You go down some blind alleys, you backtrack, you get frustrated, you have to be persistent, you have to be patient, you must display empathy, and if you *do* - (she sighs, mimes BB going into hole in maze center) the person you profess to care for experiences a transcendent sort of pleasure. It does take an attention span longer than a grunt. You should try it sometime.

GEORGE

I didn't hear you complaining last night.

JUDITH

Correct. You didn't hear me.

GEORGE

Quiet. ... Did you hear that? (She frown and listens) Loons. Beautiful. What were you saying?

JUDITH

(sighs) I was just wondering why all women aren't lesbians.

GEORGE

You couldn't just praise my technique instead of being a smart ass?

JUDITH

At best I could give you a participation award. George, it's not the strongest that survive, it's the most adaptable. Don't be surprised if you wake up one day and find that men are as necessary as an appendix.

GEORGE

We've got an appen - dage that's necessary. Ever hear of procreation? Men are kind of necessary to the propagation of the species.

JUDITH

Ever hear of cloning? Hello Dolly.

GEORGE

Huh?

JUDITH

Give it a minute George.

GEORGE

I don't get it.

JUDITH

We can agree on that.

GEORGE

Time out. Let's go kayaking. (Smiles) Men still have the edge in upper body strength.

JUDITH

That will be your epitaph. This dust is George. His biceps were stronger than his love making skills.

GEORGE

Wow. That's just hostile.

JUDITH

Indeed. I'm sorry. We hurt the ones we love.

GEORGE

Is that the royal we or are you speaking for yourself?

JUDITH

I do love you George.

GEORGE

And I love you.

JUDITH

But ... I feel like we've crossed a threshold. Something shifted in me when you left me behind in the kayak. I'm tired of following your lead. We always do what you want to do. I'm ready to grow. I'm ready to work on my self esteem. That's what this trip is really for. You need to grow too.

GEORGE

Growth sounds good. You tell me what you want to do.

JUDITH

This is more like it. Well - I need to finish my coffee, then do my yoga, then meditate, and oh, put on my lotion and makeup. Then maybe we can hop in the kayaks and explore that island across the way.

GEORGE

Makeup?

JUDITH

You've got a problem with that?

GEORGE

Do you think you are going to run into someone in this wilderness who might judge you harshly? Is it the age thing? You know I think you are beautiful even though you're older.

JUDITH

The age thing? Again? You know I'm self conscious that you're younger. This is why I'm glad we don't have a gun around. (Points finger at GEORGE as if it's a gun) Bang.

GEORGE

I think we've moved from clever repartee into hate crimes.

JUDITH

I take back my bang.

GEORGE

Thank you for the bang withdrawal. (Pause) It looks like it's going to take you a while to get ready to go. I think I'll take a short hike while you perform your rituals.

JUDITH

Why don't you reflect on possible paths for growth.

GEORGE

If I must.

JUDITH

You must.

GEORGE

Ok then. We can paddle across to the other island when I get back.

JUDITH

Wait. Do you have any lip balm? My lips are chapped from yesterday. I forgot mine. I'm concerned about the sun.

GEORGE

We should all be concerned about the sun. We depend on it for life. (Smiles) I think that there's some extra Burt's Beeswax gunk in my toiletry bag. See you in a bit.

GEORGE kisses JUDITH on the cheek, grabs his day pack, and walks down the path into the forest. JUDITH goes to GEORGE'S pack, pulls out his toiletry bag and rummages through it to find lip balm. She stops, looks intently into bag. She reaches in and pulls out a long package of condoms and holds them up. She is incredulous. She angrily takes one out of the package, blows it up like a balloon. She is enraged.

JUDITH

That sonofabitch!

She uses her hand to explode the inflated condom with a loud bang. We hear it echo across lake, and the sound of frightened birds fluttering between trees. She takes out the condoms and repeats until package is empty, getting angrier by the moment.

LIGHTS FADE

END OF SCENE

SCENE FOUR

JUDITH is sitting on log as GEORGE returns from hike.

GEORGE

Hey babe. Did you hear a bang after I left? I hope there aren't any gun nuts out here on the lakes. You can't get away from those simple minded idiots.

JUDITH

When was the last time we used a condom?

GEORGE

(Surprised. Wary) And you would ask that question because ...?

JUDITH

When was the last time?

GEORGE

I believe this is a trick question. As you know, we don't use condoms.

JUDITH

Then how do you explain this?

JUDITH holds up empty package of condoms.

GEORGE

(Takes a deep breath) Where did that come from?

JUDITH

Yes. The question of the moment. Where did that come from? From your toiletry bag you ass! Why are they in there?

GEORGE

I have no idea. Why were you looking in my bag?

JUDITH

Lip balm. Remember?

GEORGE
Aaah.

JUDITH
Who are they for?

GEORGE
As I said, I have no idea.

JUDITH
You have no idea why condoms are in your travel bag, even though we don't use condoms?

GEORGE
As God as my witness I have no idea.

JUDITH
You don't believe in God.

GEORGE
I may start believing.

JUDITH
You may need to.

GEORGE
By which you mean ...?

JUDITH
If you don't come up with a believable answer for these things you may have to confront your mortality.

GEORGE
I resent the implication that I'm being unfaithful.

JUDITH
Because you are the victim here and I'm a shrill, emotional woman?

GEORGE
Don't put words in my mouth.

JUDITH

I'm about to put my fist in your mouth! You promised me a romantic surprise. You sure delivered.

She walks away towards path into woods.

GEORGE

Where are you going?

JUDITH

For a walk.

GEORGE

You know there are bears out there.

JUDITH

Good. Bears aren't lying, immoral pigs. But thanks for trying to frighten me, asshole.

GEORGE

Bears aren't pigs? Profound. Let me make a note of that.

JUDITH

Fuck you.

JUDITH stomps away down the path into woods.

JUDITH

Fuck you!

GEORGE

(He shouts after her) At least the Phd. in Rhetoric isn't going to waste!

GEORGE walks around the campsite angrily rearranging camping gear. We hear a loud scream coming from the forest path. GEORGE runs to path just as JUDITH appears, flailing, screaming. She runs into GEORGE'S arms.

JUDITH

A bear! I saw a bear!

GEORGE

(Tense) It's ok. It's ok.

JUDITH

I think it's chasing me!

George spastically retrieves his day pack, stumbles on the way, takes out a leather bag, quickly unzips it and removes a handgun. He is hurrying, he juggles the gun, it gets away from him, it flies through the air, hits the ground and goes off with a great explosion. They both drop to the ground and cover their heads with their hands.

JUDITH

Oh my God!

GEORGE

Shit!

JUDITH

(gasping for breath - checking body for wounds) What the hell was that about?!

GEORGE

(hyperventilating) I screwed up. I got in a hurry.

JUDITH

You didn't tell me you had a gun! We always make fun of gun nuts. It's against our values. We're liberals for God's sake!

GEORGE

We are in the forest with hungry bears. It's prudent dammit. You can't kill a bear with your hands. Safety trumps values!

JUDITH

Yes. I feel much safer after that. Good job George. I out ran a bear but almost got shot by a flying gun.

GEORGE

I'm sorry. I dropped it. I made a mistake.

He cautiously looks down the path for the bear.
He is still breathing heavily.

GEORGE

The bear's gone. It's probably more afraid than we are after the gun went off.

JUDITH

Condoms, guns - who are you George? You're frightening me.

GEORGE

I'm not going to eat you. A bear might. Hence the gun ... About the condoms...

JUDITH

What about the condoms?

GEORGE

I'm not your ex-husband you know. Just because he cheated doesn't mean I do. I think I figured out how they got there.

JUDITH

Can we sit down for this? My head is spinning.

GEORGE

Sure.

JUDITH

Can we have some wine?

GEORGE

It's 10 in the morning.

JUDITH

(frantic) I don't care. I just got chased by a bear. And you almost shot me and you're about to tell me god knows what. I need some wine.

GEORGE

Ok. Fine.

He gets bottle and cups and pours them both a cup of wine - JUDITH drains the cup.

JUDITH

As if my self image isn't screwed up enough. So how did the condoms you don't need and the gun you don't believe in get into your bags?

GEORGE

Uh, well I think guns are dangerous, too dangerous for most households. But I read online about some bear attacks in the area so I borrowed my brother Joe's gun. I was just thinking about you and your safety.

JUDITH

Always thinking of others. You're a saint. Thanks for making me feel safer by almost shooting me And the condoms?

GEORGE

Joe borrows my camping gear. We loan each other stuff all the time. He must have brought some to use with that new girlfriend of his and left them in my bag. They just went camping. He said she was pretty ... uh, rambunctious.

JUDITH

Rambunctious. How romantic. So you two discuss your sex lives?

GEORGE

Not really.

JUDITH

Just when it's convenient for your cover stories.

GEORGE

I did not put those condoms there. Joe uses my stuff. It's the only possible explanation.

JUDITH

So I've discovered that the loyal, tree hugging pacifist I share my life with travels with condoms and guns, but only because of his scamp brother. That makes perfect sense. In lying asshole world! Pour me more wine.

He pours more wine. She immediately throws it in his face.

GEORGE

Well. I fell for that one, didn't I? Bravo.

JUDITH begins gathering gear.

GEORGE

What are you doing?

JUDITH

I am paddling back to the car and driving home and hiring a mover for your things. You'll find them in the street. You can have custody of the condoms and the gun. Don't mix them up. It could have repercussions for your penis!

GEORGE

Before you go are you ready for the surprise?

JUDITH

I just got chased by a bear and almost shot by my cheating boyfriend. I think I've had enough surprises. I thought you were bull shitting about bears. Turns out that's the only thing you weren't bull shitting about.

GEORGE

I didn't cheat, I didn't almost shoot you.

JUDITH

You dropped a gun Dirty Harry. It fired. The bullet could have hit me.

GEORGE

No. You were over there (points toward forest) ... and the gun was pointed (points towards shore) that way when it went off so it was nowhere near you.

JUDITH

That was just luck. You're no better than those Christian gun fanatics that accidentally shoot their kids on Christmas morning.

GEORGE is not paying attention. He is walking in direction of bullet.

JUDITH

What are you doing?

GEORGE

Oh no.

He looks at metal urn with his father's ashes. He picks it up. It has a bullet hole in it.

JUDITH

(laughs) You just shot George Senior. Lucky he was already dead. Careful. Don't let the ashes spill out. That would be disrespectful.

GEORGE

Funny. You're a funny person.

JUDITH

So what was your big surprise? Shooting your dad's urn sure surprised me. How are you going to top that?

GEORGE gently sets down urn. Grabs bottle of champagne from bag. Reaches into pocket. Gets down on one knee and reveals a ring.

GEORGE

(Big sigh) I planned on doing this tomorrow on the anniversary of me moving in with you, but here goes. Will you marry me?

JUDITH

(Shocked) I didn't see that coming.

GEORGE

Please say yes.

JUDITH

George, your timing, as usual, is appalling.

GEORGE

You wanted to get married. I'm doing this for you.

JUDITH

Instead of because you genuinely want to? I've stressed myself out for ages wondering if you'd ever ask. All along I could have arranged a bear attack, a gun accident, and brazen infidelity to realize my dream. Silly me.

Put the champagne away for now and pour two cups of wine. We need to have a discussion.

GEORGE

Are you going to throw the wine in my face?

JUDITH

We'll see. It depends on what comes out of your mouth in the next few minutes. Can you get a signal with your iPhone?

GEORGE pours wine then looks at his phone.

GEORGE

No. I haven't had a signal pretty much since we got here.

JUDITH

(looking at her phone) Me either. I really need to talk to your brother. I need to ask him what brand of condom he uses. His answer will determine if we drink this wine or you wear it.

GEORGE

So the answer to my proposal is no?

JUDITH

You should be a psychic with that kind of insight . . .

GEORGE moves to pick up the handgun. Judith grabs it first.

JUDITH

On second thought it occurs to me that I should take possession of the gun. Why do men love guns? I'll believe I'll take custody of the gun for a field study.

GEORGE

Be careful.

JUDITH

Careful like you Quick Draw? The obvious thesis is that a gun is a compensatory device for guys with short wienies. No offense.

GEORGE

How could a man find that offensive?

JUDITH

Let's go to the middle of the lake and try to find a cell signal. We need to talk to Joe or leave him a message to sort this out. Our future is in the balance. The gun could be helpful once we hear his answer.

GEORGE

It's not an divine object. It's a tool.

JUDITH

Instead of all those expensive personal growth seminars I could have just held a gun. I suddenly feel overwhelmingly confident.

She waves the gun.

GEORGE

Your confidence is visible from space. Careful.

JUDITH

I didn't realize guns were so tactile. It feels good in my hand. It's like a talisman.

She puts the gun in her day bag.

JUDITH

Follow me George.

She grabs kayak paddles and head for the lake.
GEORGE follows, walking behind her.

END OF SCENE

SCENE FIVE

End of day. Dusk approaches. They are pulling kayaks onto shore from the lake. They notice an old beat up canoe at their camp site.

JUDITH

What the hell is this? The rule is that the first group to a camp site gets it. This is unacceptable.

GEORGE

Where are they?

JUDITH

I don't like people that ignore boundaries.

GEORGE

We aren't supposed to have to share a camp site. They've crossed a line. It'll kill the romance of the trip.

JUDITH

Romance? Until I hear from your brother there won't be any romance. I could have used some closure on this. No bars on the phones all day. I don't think my message to Joe went through.

GEORGE

I didn't cheat.

JUDITH

There's an old Russian saying, "Trust but verify".

GEORGE

When did you get literate in Russian?

JUDITH

When I started packing a gun. It makes me an expert on everything. Including Russian. Do you want to disagree? (She waves gun. GEORGE shakes head)

GEORGE

I don't like you handling a gun.

JUDITH

You don't like that you've lost control. I feel powerful.

GEORGE

And the record shows that power is always used wisely. (he turns away) I'm exhausted. I'm going to lay down for a bit. We can have supper later.

JUDITH

Pour me some wine first.

GEORGE

You're awfully bossy.

JUDITH

I am now a gun owner. I'm feeling more assured. I've achieved gunlightenment.

GEORGE

Gunlightenment. Really?

JUDITH

I'm discovering that a gun increases self assurance in manifest ways.

GEORGE

Indeed.

JUDITH

(She pulls gun from holster) Case in point. I feel like I'm being mocked (she points gun to sky). I've never cared for that part of your personality. I like it less post condom. You may want to stop.

GEORGE

I think I'll stop. And I think I'll pour some wine.

GEORGE pours wine and hands JUDITH a cup - she puts the gun away.

JUDITH

At last, evidence of wisdom. I have to confess that it's always been a concern that I have a Phd and you have a simple bachelors. In finance. A field for philistines. But finally, a hint of personal growth. I should have started packing a gun long ago.

GEORGE

I should point out that perhaps your vast education is what led you to choose me as your romantic partner.

JUDITH

Yes, everything before you was prologue. As it is with anyone who gets entangled with a narcissist.

GEORGE

You are entangled with a man brimming with confidence.

JUDITH

I am entangled with a confidence man.

GEORGE

Confident man.

JUDITH

Con man.

GEORGE

Portfolio Manager.

JUDITH

I've sensed that perhaps the managing may have hit a bump in the portfolio road. You aren't buying toys with the same oblivious abandon these days. A girl notices these things. Just how is the portfolio doing?

GEORGE

It's doing fine. Every portfolio has an ebb and flow.

JUDITH

Which is it right now? Ebb or flow?

GEORGE

There might be a little ebbing.

JUDITH

Ebbing. So your cash flow has about as much integrity as your love life.

GEORGE

I get it. I'm a man. I'm a scoundrel. (Sighs) Wake me up in a half hour. I just need to recharge. If I wake up I'll continue my role as a bad guy.

JUDITH

If you wake up?

GEORGE

You never know. Eternal life doesn't seem to be an option.

JUDITH

You're weird.

GEORGE

It's an asset.

JUDITH

Debit.

GEORGE

Do you have a frog in your pocket?

JUDITH

That's ribbit.

GEORGE

(excited) This is fun.

JUDITH

Speak for yourself.

GEORGE

I do.

JUDITH

I do too.

GEORGE

I now pronounce us Neanderthal and wife. Let's continue this scintillating repartee after I recharge.

He moves towards the tent. We hear a loud voice from the forest. A man and a woman appear on the path. The man is huge. Both are dressed in flannel shirts and jeans. They have muddy boots. Both are carrying tools and shovels. The man has a gun on his hip and a large knife in a scabbard on his belt.

CLYDE

Hello friends. Do either of ya know how to read Swedish?

JUDITH

And hello to you. I'm Judith. This is George.

CLYDE

Sorry. I'm Clyde. This is Katiana. Nice campsite we got here. Now, any chance either of you can read Swedish?

JUDITH

And you ask this because?

CLYDE

I got something I need read.

JUDITH

And that is?

CLYDE

You ask a lot of questions. A coin. I need a coin read.

GEORGE

You want us to read a coin?

CLYDE

A coin.

JUDITH

Neither of us know Swedish.

CLYDE

Shit.

JUDITH

We were kind of surprised to see your boat here. We thought it was a first come first served campsite.

CLYDE

Yeh. About that. We're gonna have to camp here the next few days. (Clyde is sizing up JUDITH and GEORGE)

JUDITH

I don't think the rules work that way.

GEORGE

No. They don't work that way.

CLYDE

I'm not a fan of rules. What do you say we have a drink and talk this out? Kat, open up the whiskey bottle. (he mimes opening bottle) And break out the jerky (mimes eating).

KATIANA open up a big bag of homemade beef jerky. They cautiously gather around the fire ring. GEORGE turns on two camp lanterns. CLYDE digs into the jerky.

CLYDE

You folks want to try some jerky? I made it myself.

GEORGE

What's the shiny stuff there on the edge of the meat?

CLYDE

(He looks closely at the bag of jerky) Oh. That's fly eggs. Flies musta landed on it.

He scrapes fly eggs off with his fingernail.

CLYDE

It's fine now. So. You want some?

GEORGE AND JUDITH

No thanks!

CLYDE

Suit yourself.

He eats a big piece of jerky and throws back a shot of whiskey. There is a flash of heat lightning.

CLYDE

Damn that's jerky's good! Must be a storm down by Gitchi Gumee.

GEORGE

Gitchi Gumee?

CLYDE

The big lake. Lake Superior. Too far away to hear thunder. You don't want to be on a lake when there's 'lightnin'. You're the highest point on the lake. A human lightning rod. Kaboom. So what are you folks doing here?

GEORGE

We're on a kayak trip and we're going to spread my dad's ashes on the lake. He loved the Boundary Waters. And we just got engaged.

JUDITH

(Quickly) Actually George asked me to marry him and I haven't answered yet. I'm gathering data for a decision.

CLYDE

(looks at her with confusion) The hell you say. You know it ain't none a my business, but spreadin' a dead man's ashes on the same trip you ask a woman to marry ya seems like kinda, I don't know, fucked up.

JUDITH

You are a very perceptive man Clyde.

CLYDE

Just feels like a bad omen kind of way to start a marriage. Feels wrong.

JUDITH

Thoughtful people do consider feelings, don't they?

GEORGE

Clyde to be honest with you, Judith and I planned this trip for a long time. We were planning to spend the night alone. You know.

CLYDE

George, I don't see that happenin'. (Laughs)

GEORGE

What?

CLYDE

I ain't gonna bullshit ya. I'm gonna let you in on somethin'. We're digging for some stuff. What we come across could be worth a lot of money. Anyway, we'll be stayin' right here even after the lightnin' passes.

GEORGE

Ok. What are you digging for?

CLYDE

Do you think I'm a dumb ass?

GEORGE

No. No. Of course not.

CLYDE

Then why do you think we would tell total strangers the valuable shit we're searching for? (KATIANA looks uncomfortable)

JUDITH

You already told us you have a coin you need deciphered. It's kind of obvious you're digging for coins.

KATIANA

Clod.

CLYDE

Shit. It might be best if you go to another camp site. You got to go.

GEORGE

You just said paddling with lightening isn't safe. And this is where my dad always camped. For almost 60 summers. He would have been 80 the day after tomorrow. So we're going to have a little ceremony with his ashes.

CLYDE

That's sweet. But so's a hyena's asshole to another hyena. So it looks like we're gonna be camp mates. Kat, some more whiskey. (mimics pouring) You guys sure you don't want some?

JUDITH

No thank you.

GEORGE

Uh. Sure. I'll try some.

CLYDE

Nice. Have some jerky. It's awesome.

He wipes flies eggs off a piece of jerky and eats it.

GEORGE

Clyde, I think I'm gonna pass on the jerky for now. But after a few shots, who knows?

CLYDE

That's the goddamn spirit! Got a big day tomorrow trying to find those artifacts. (everyone looks at CLYDE) Well shit. Forget that. Understand?

No response.

CLYDE

Do you understand!?

GEORGE and JUDITH

Yes.

CLYDE

Good. Whaddya say we celebrate our new friendship and get hammered? Whiskey fellowship. I like to throw hatchets at trees when I get a buzz going.

GEORGE

Hatchets?

CLYDE

Yeh. How about we have an ax throwin' contest? You guys like to bet? Nothin' like a friendly wager to make a competition interestin'

GEORGE

That sounds like fun doesn't it Judith? Drinking whiskey and throwing axes. I knew this was going to be a day to remember.

JUDITH

Clyde, I vaguely recall that it's illegal to take native artifacts off of park land.

CLYDE

I told you to forget about that.

GEORGE

She's sorry Clyde. Judith, listen . . .

CLYDE

These ain't native artifacts. (Take deep swig of whiskey)

JUDITH

Oh.

CLYDE

These are Viking artifacts.

JUDITH

Vikings? In Minnesota? Sure.

KATIANA

Clod. Nyet.

CLYDE

Some rich guy in Minneapolis ...

KATIANA

Clod!

GEORGE

Ok. I hear an accent. Where is Katiana from?

CLYDE

The Ukraine. But she's Russian. She don't speak more than a couple of words of English.

JUDITH

How did you two meet?

CLYDE

It's personal. You guys ready to throw axes?

GEORGE

Wow. I guess. Uh, what are the rules?

CLYDE

Well. We throw the ax at a tree. Ah, that tree. (He points to nearby tree). We each get 3 throws. Whichever team hits the tree the most wins.

JUDITH

Teams?

CLYDE

Yeh. Me and Katiana are on one team, you two are on the other.

GEORGE

You guys have played this before?

CLYDE

No. This is the first time. (He giggles) Wanna make a little bet?

JUDITH

Maybe next time.

CLYDE

What a couple of ... OK. Judy, you're gonna go first. You strike me as an outdoors woman.

JUDITH

Judith. It's Judith. Are you making fun of me?

CLYDE

Oh no. (Chuckles).

JUDITH glares at CLYDE, takes the ax, rotates her arms as if to get loose. She holds ax in both hands concentrating fiercely. She turns and stares intently at GEORGE and raises ax. GEORGE looks uncomfortable.

GEORGE

Uh. The tree is that way.

He points. JUDITH quickly turns, pulls back arms over her head and throws the ax with all her might, screaming as she throws. It goes high in air, misses the tree by ten feet and goes deep into woods. KATIANA races into woods to look for the ax.

CLYDE

Holy shit Judy. You coulda killed somebody if we weren't behind ya.

JUDITH

Sorry.

KATIANA comes back with the ax head in one hand, the handle in the other. The ax is broken.

KATIANA

Slomanny.

CLYDE

Goddammit! That was my favorite ax (He gulps whiskey)

JUDITH

How many axes do you have?

CLYDE

One. That's why it was my favorite. Shit. We still gotta have a contest. (gulps more whiskey) Oh yeh! We're gonna shoot at the tree with my gun. We each get three shots. Team with most hits wins.

CLYDE pulls out handgun and waves it around.
JUDITH and GEORGE jump to the ground.

CLYDE

Come on you big pussies!

JUDITH

Do you kiss your mother with that mouth, you sexist ...

GEORGE

Careful now, ah, Clyde.

CLYDE

You think I don't know gun safety? I owned a gun since I was nine years old!
(Waves gun around) Gun's save lives. So don't insult me.

GEORGE

Sorry. I'm sorry.

CLYDE

You first George. (He hands gun to George)

GEORGE

Oh man.

GEORGE aims and fires 3 loud shots.

CLYDE

No hits. That's a shame. Your turn Judy. (She takes gun from George)

JUDITH

Judith. Do you have any tips for me?

CLYDE

That would be cheatin'. So no. I ain't gonna be a part of cheatin'.

JUDITH

I see.

JUDITH takes aim. She fires off three shots.

CLYDE

Not bad - you got one hit.

CLYDE

My turn.

CLYDE steps back, fires four extremely loud shots.
Splinters fly from tree.

JUDITH

(Scared witless) Wasn't that four shots?

CLYDE

Sounded like three to me. (Goes to tree) Wow. Four hits with three shots. No need for you to shoot Kat.

JUDITH

Clyde. We each got three shots but you got four hits. That doesn't add up.

CLYDE

Judy. I'm just a dumb old country boy. I don't understand fancy stuff like math. But I know that four holes in that tree came from my turn and one from your turn. And I know that four is more than one. We win. (He holds up gun) So do you still want to argue?

JUDITH

That's bullshit.

GEORGE

Judith. I think they won fair and square.

JUDITH

Dumb old country boy my ass. I don't care if you're drunk and and dishonest, It's three to one, not four to one.

GEORGE

Judith, for God's sake, it doesn't matter.

CLYDE

Judy. I like your attitude. But I'm gonna teach you a life lesson. (He gets close to her) The guy with the gun is always right.

JUDITH

Sometimes there are two people with guns Clyde. Who's right then?

CLYDE

Damn good question. The guy with the biggest gun is right, don't you think? (laughs) What did we bet again? (Gulps more whiskey)

JUDITH

We didn't.

GEORGE

Listen everybody. Let's sit down and have a drink. I think I'm ready to try some jerky.

JUDITH

It's got fly eggs in it George. Do you want flies hatching in your stomach?

CLYDE

It's good shit George. Here.

He hands GEORGE a big piece of jerky. GEORGE looks at it, scrapes it with his finger and chews a big bite.

GEORGE

I'll be damned. That's really good.

CLYDE

You bet your ass it's good. Like I said, made it myself.

JUDITH

You sure couldn't buy something that repulsive in a store.

GEORGE

Judith, please.

CLYDE

Have a snort George. (Hands GEORGE the bottle. He takes a gulp)

GEORGE

Wow. That's some serious booze. Tell me about these artifacts Clyde.

CLYDE

This guy in St. Paul ...

KATIANA

Clod. Nyet.

CLYDE

Aw, fuck it. It don't matter. A guy we met online has a shit load of money, and he's bat shit crazy about Viking shit.

JUDITH

You just said shit three times in one brief sentence Clyde. With a fuck on top. Impressive feat of literacy.

CLYDE

George. I'm startin' to wonder about the wisdom of you askin' this women to marry you. Anyway, we done some work for this guy. A rich guy that thinks he's a Viking in Minnesota is a fuckin' gold mine.

GEORGE

You think you'll find this stuff?

CLYDE

We got a map off the internet. I'd like to find the real thing, but it don't matter.

GEORGE

I don't understand.

KATIANA

Clod. Nyet.

JUDITH

You trust a map you got off of the internet?

CLYDE

If we don't find the real shit we got a plan B. The rich bastard is gonna get his collection to show off to his rich buddies. Who's gonna complain that they're dumb enough to buy fake Viking shit?

KATIANA

Clod! Nyet.

GEORGE

But you have a coin.

CLYDE

We bought it on the internet too, just in case we didn't find anything for the rich guy usin' the map. We need to give him a taste to reel him in. But I started wonderin' if the coin's really Swedish.

JUDITH

Vikings used the Norse language. Old German. Not Swedish.

CLYDE

The guy that sold it to us said it was in Swedish.

JUDITH

Imagine that. Someone on the internet who isn't honest. Weird, huh Katiana?

KATIANA smiles at JUDITH.

CLYDE

Shit. It's supposed to be like a thousand years old. It's got a picture of a knot or somethin' on it.

KATIANA

Clod. Piss.

CLYDE

Go piss. (He points)

KATIANA

Piss! (CLYDE looks intently at KATIANA)

CLYDE

Yeh. Sure. Gotta piss. Back in a minute.

CLYDE and KATIANA get up and walk down path away from fire ring, out of sight.

JUDITH

That was weird. What are they talking about out there? She doesn't speak English, aside from the word piss. Something isn't right.

GEORGE

They're goofballs. They're harmless.

JUDITH

They're drunk, they have guns. Clyde is a freak. They are not harmless. Her English is limited to "piss" but she seems to follow everything we say.

GEORGE

You're imagining things.

JUDITH

Are you paying attention! Katiana is mad that Clyde is telling us about their scheme. I tried to talk to her and got nothing other than a weird look. And how are they talking?

GEORGE

I don't feel so good.

JUDITH

Now who knew that eating greasy, rancid meat with fly eggs on it and chasing it with whiskey could make you sick? Shocking.

GEORGE

I may need to lie down.

JUDITH

Did you see her look at me? I could have sworn she was leering at me.

GEORGE

I feel like I'm spinning.

JUDITH

We need to pack up and leave. Now.

GEORGE

We can't leave this late. Being on the lake with lightning is more dangerous than an illiterate communist and a drunken log splitter. I think I'm gonna puke.

CLYDE and KATIANA return on path.

GEORGE

Hey you guys!

CLYDE

We got to get some sleep. Big day tomorrow.

GEORGE

I thought we were partying?

CLYDE

(Looks at Katiana) Things change. I'm beat.

JUDITH

Where are you sleeping?

CLYDE

Under the sky.

JUDITH

You don't have a tent?

CLYDE

We got whiskey, beef jerky and a gun. That's all the campin' gear you need.

GEORGE

You need to hang the jerky from a tree before you go to sleep.

CLYDE

Ain't gonna happen.

GEORGE

It's got to happen.

CLYDE

No.

GEORGE

It's the protocol when you are in bear country. They'll tear up the campsite looking for food if we leave it out.

CLYDE

Protocol my ass. I got a gun. They fuck with my campsite they'll be dead bears.

GEORGE

Come on. Just hang up your food and we won't need a gun.

CLYDE

There is no such thing as not needin' a gun. Ain't no bear gonna fuck with me.

CLYDE grabs his sleeping bag, as does KATIANA, and they lie down away from the tent. CLYDE lays the gun on ground between them.

JUDITH

So you're not going to hang up your food?

CLYDE

Goddamn Judy. Are you not listenin'? I'm tired. Night.

GEORGE and JUDITH get in tent and turn off lantern.

JUDITH (FROM INSIDE TENT)

That illiterate slob didn't hang that smelly, greasy, jerky crap up. Every bear in the Boundary Waters is having an orgasm right now.

GEORGE (FROM INSIDE TENT)

Speaking of which, I feel better. You want to fool around?

JUDITH (FROM INSIDE TENT)

Nyet.

END OF SCENE

SCENE SIX

Morning. JUDITH is up, making coffee on camp stove. KATIANA rises, comes to JUDITH with blanket wrapped around her. GEORGE and CLYDE are still sleeping.

JUDITH

Coffee? I make some? (She mimics drinking coffee.)

KATIANA looks back at CLYDE, making sure he is asleep.

KATIANA

Yes please. Although I would kill for some Turkish coffee like we get in the Ukraine.

JUDITH is shocked.

JUDITH

Whoa. I didn't think you spoke English.

KATIANA

I studied English in school. And I lived illegally in England for four years. I speak French as well. And a little German.

JUDITH

I thought something was up with you last night. So why you don't speak English around Clyde? I don't get it.

KATIANA

I control him with sign language. It is not to my advantage to let Clyde know that I am an English speaker.

KATIANA

But he's your husband.

KATIANA

Exactly. Do you let George know everything about you? If you do you are a foolish woman.

JUDITH

It's foolish to be honest?

KATIANA looks at sleeping Clyde.

KATIANA

Listen. I had no prospects in the Ukraine, especially being Russian. So I came to America in the most demeaning way possible. A mail order bride. Dependent on a man. Clyde and I will part in one fashion or another very soon. He usefulness is complete. This trip is the final indignity.

JUDITH

That sounds just ... awful.

KATIANA

You have options in America. Not so much in the Ukraine. The hangover from Soviet rule nurtures under-achievement. And black out drinking.

JUDITH

So Clyde's not much of a change for you. God. I can't believe the choices you've had to make.

KATIANA

Count your blessings Miss America. (She looks over at Clyde) Let's keep this conversation to ourselves. Women have to look out for each other, no? A million years of men controlling everything seems to be drawing to a close. I plan to help it along. Men have made a mess of the world. We can do better. It's time for a women's revolution.

JUDITH

You're amazing. You're so confident, so strong, so willing take risks. I've never been a risk taker. George has ... what you are saying resonates with me. Tell me more.

KATIANA

Women have always done all the work Judith. It's time for women to share in the spoils. I'm not going to be dependent on fools like Clyde any more. You should not be dependent on George. It's a new era Judith. We've got to take risks to succeed, like the men children that run this world.

We've got to step on people. Like men do. We spend too much energy hoping to be loved. It is better to be feared.

JUDITH

This is weird to hear this. I've been mad at George. He seems to have done something awful. He tries to control everything. I want to be in control.

KATIANA

Try fear.

JUDITH

Since I got custody of the gun I'm taking fear baby steps.

KATIANA

So you have a gun. A gun is a nice tool. But there is something more powerful than a gun. I'm a Rodnovian. A Pagan. It defines me. It gives me power. You want to kill a man use a gun. If you want to make a man's testicles ascend into his abdomen - tell him you are a pagan. It is more useful in the long run. Pagans worship Goddesses instead of a psychotic old man in the sky. Goddesses are our future.

JUDITH

That's a future I could get behind, as long as we're only kidding about killing a man with a gun. I want to control them. I don't want to kill them.

KATIANA

Of course. It's better to kill a man metaphorically. It's not as messy. We always have to clean up the mess.

JUDITH

You have a way with words Katiana. You use words like weapons. I like that.

KATIANA

You should join me Judith. You and I might be able to get into some sort of limited partnership. Paganism is open that way. (She looks deeply into JUDITH's eyes. She smiles).

JUDITH

This is so foreign to me. You're a real live, practicing Pagan?

KATIANA

Oh yes. Paganism is big in the Ukraine. It comes from the earth, not the mind of a man. It seems to be the best fit for a woman.

JUDITH

Wow. My family was scandalized when I told them I didn't believe in God. Their heads would explode if they thought I was a Pagan.

KATIANA

Isn't it exciting?

JUDITH

It kind of is.

GEORGE emerges from tent rubbing his eyes.

GEORGE

Can I get a cup of coffee?

JUDITH looks at KATIANA

JUDITH

A command before a greeting. How manly. Get it yourself.

GEORGE

But.

JUDITH

No buts.

GEORGE gets a cup and pours his own coffee.

GEORGE

Good morning Katiana.

KATIANA

No not. Ya ne ponimayu.

GEORGE

She doesn't even know "good morning"? Jesus, hasn't Clyde taught her anything?

KATIANA

Clod. Tupitsa.

GEORGE

What's she talking about?

JUDITH

Haven't a clue. But it makes more sense than your gibberish.

GEORGE

Gibberish?

JUDITH

Meaningless talk. Websters.

KATIANA

George. Tupitsa. Dolling.

GEORGE

Jesus. I've got to go drain the lizard. I'll be right back.

He goes down path to latrine.

KATIANA

Drain the lizard. Men have lizard *brains*. Do you see why it's time to start writing our own history?

JUDITH

You're preaching to the choir. What's a tupitsa?

KATIANA

(Laughs) An ignorant dumb ass. Clyde thinks it's a term of endearment. Like "my darling" or something. I never miss a chance to use it. It makes me happy. I dreamed of a cosmopolitan American picking me up at the airport. Instead I got Paul Bunyan with a learning disability.

JUDITH

(Chuckles) You have a really interesting way of looking at things.

KATIANA

I'm an artist. An artist of life.

JUDITH

Yes you are. And so I shall be.

GEORGE returns from latrine.

JUDITH

Hello my tupitsa!

GEORGE

What?

JUDITH

It appears to mean "my darling".

GEORGE

Appears to?

CLYDE gets up and staggers to the others.

CLYDE

Goddamn. I need some coffee.

KATIANA

Clod. Tupitsa.

CLYDE

I love you too darlin'.

JUDITH

(To GEORGE) You see my tupitsa? I really *am* literate in Russian. It's verified.

GEORGE has an uncertain smile on his face.

GEORGE

So it would seem.

JUDITH

George, go catch some fish.

GEORGE

What? But ...

JUDITH

No buts. Stay out of my sight for a while. Fish. Make yourself useful for once. And Clyde, Katiana will be helping me around the campsite today. Go do whatever it is you have to do.

CLYDE

Now I'm in charge here so Katiana will be going with me. Kat, let's get our stuff and go dig.

KATIANA folds arms and does not move.

CLYDE

Let's go. Dig.

CLYDE uses gestures to communicate that they will leave campsite and dig.

CLYDE

Go! Dig!

KATIANA

Nyet!

CLYDE

Aww. Come on darlin'. You're embarrassin' me.

JUDITH

Clyde, She's spoken. You'll be digging alone today. There's a new order to things.

CLYDE

Kat ...

KATIANA

Nyyyyettt!

CLYDE

Judith. I don't know what you're up to, but remember, as ye sew, so shall shit happen.

JUDITH

That clears it up.

KATIANA points to the trail.

KATIANA

Eedtee.

JUDITH

I think she means go Clyde. Now.

CLYDE

I can't fuckin' believe this.

GEORGE

They weren't my condoms.

JUDITH

Exactly what a cheater would say. Make yourself useful Go catch supper.

CLYDE

Condoms?

GEORGE

I'm not going to be bossed around for something I didn't do. I'll do what I want. Uh, I think I'll go fishing.

JUDITH

Good choice. Don't hurry back.

GEORGE pulls his kayak off stage, out of sight.

CLYDE grabs the shovel and walks down the trail and out of sight, mumbling as he walks.

KATIANA

That was beautiful. They don't know what hit them.

KATIANA reaches into bag, pulls out Clyde's handgun and points it at the sky.

JUDITH

No. They really don't know what hit them.

JUDITH reaches into day pack, pulls out George's handgun and points it at the sky.

KATIANA

They got hit with the future. And the future is estrogen.

KATIANA moves over and kisses JUDITH on the lips. JUDITH is startled but doesn't resist.

END OF SCENE

SCENE SEVEN

Late in day. George is cooking fish on camp stove.
CLYDE comes down path holding shovel.

GEORGE

Hey Clyde. Any luck finding Viking coins? (he chuckles)

CLYDE

Hell no. Found a whole lot of stinging nettles though. If stinging nettles was gold I could retire. (he scratches arms)

GEORGE

Well, it isn't all bad. I caught a bunch of walleye. We are going to be eating really well this evening.

CLYDE

A mess of fresh caught walleye is the best goll durned eatin' you'll ever have.

GEORGE

So we've got that going for us. That's about it right now. (we hear sound of women laughing) Shit. Here they come. If pissed off women were gold we could both retire.

CLYDE

They don't sound pissed off.

JUDITH and KATIANA arrive in bathing suits, holding hands, carrying canoe paddles. They are giggling.

GEORGE

Judith.

CLYDE

Katiana.

The women look at the men and laugh.

JUDITH

Hey boys. Kat and I just had a glorious day on the beach at the island across the way. We had the best time bonding. I can't believe I've never, ever been skinny dipping before. It's amazing.

GEORGE

Skinny dipping? With Katiana?

JUDITH

Do you have a problem with that?

GEORGE

Hell yes I do.

JUDITH

It's none of your damned business Mr. Trojan.

GEORGE

They belonged to my brother. To Joe!

JUDITH

It's almost magical how they got from your brother's pocket into your shaving kit. Magic condoms. I bet there's a market for magic condoms.

GEORGE

I can't win. I don't know what to say.

JUDITH

There's something I want to say to you George. Your usefulness to me is complete. That felt good saying that.

GEORGE

That's just mean Judith. I got us some fish. I provided.

JUDITH

That's cute. Kat and I need to put our clothes on. Back in a minute.

The women go into GEORGE and JUDITH's tent. We hear giggling in the tent. CLYDE goes to closed tent door.

Kat.

CLYDE

(from inside tent) Nyet!

KATIANA

CLYDE turns to GEORGE.

What just happened here?

CLYDE

A ceremonial orchiectomy?

GEORGE

Huh?

CLYDE

They just cut our balls off.

GEORGE

Oh.

CLYDE

It's gonna be a long night.

GEORGE

You seen my gun?

CLYDE

Clyde they hold all the cards right now. A gun isn't going to make a difference. Behave yourself.

GEORGE

I ain't gonna shoot her dammit. I just don't know where my gun is.

CLYDE

Judith took possession of my gun. If I had to bet, I'd bet Katiana's taken custody of your gun.

GEORGE

Talk about de-nuttin' a guy. She took my gun. This just ain't right.

CLYDE

GEORGE

No shit. I don't think they're kidding Clyde. I think they are serious about this. We just got outsourced.

CLYDE

Goddammit.

Women emerge from tent in camp clothing, still energized and happy. JUDITH holds champagne bottle.

JUDITH

George, I'm going to open the champagne you brought. Kat and I had so much fun it seems like a celebration is in order.

She opens bottle.

GEORGE

You're going to drink the champagne I brought to sanctify our engagement to celebrate a day of skinny dipping with a woman?

JUDITH

I prefer to think of it as champagne that was purchased to sanctify a failed enterprise being used to sanctify a successful enterprise.

She pours four cups and hands them out. She raises cup.

JUDITH

To a wonderful day on the island that Kat and I christened the Isle of Lesbos Too. (They look at each other and laugh).

GEORGE

(George spits out champagne) Wait. What? The Isle of Lesbos?

CLYDE

What's that mean?

GEORGE

How could you decide on a name for the island? She can't speak English.

JUDITH

We used sign language. And the sense of touch. And smell.

GEORGE

Jesus Christ Judith.

CLYDE

Goddamn you Judith!

CLYDE moves towards JUDITH. KATIANA jumps in front of him.

KATIANA

Tupitsa!

CLYDE

How could you darlin'?

JUDITH

Let's calm down here. Let's have some fish before it gets cold.

She quickly hands everyone a plate, and serves fish. The men glare at her. JUDITH and KAT sit next to each other, leaving CLYDE and GEORGE to themselves. JUDITH draws attention to a coin on a leather strap around her neck.

JUDITH

Look at the necklace Katiana gave me. It's a goddess symbol.

CLYDE

Hey. That's my Viking coin! How'd you get that? I might need that to sell to my nutty rich guy.

JUDITH

(laughs) Well, unless your rich guy is into proto-feminist, goddess fertility coins you might have a problem. (laughs) No matter, it's my coin now. Thank you Katiana.

CLYDE

Kat?

KATIANA

Tupitsa.

CLYDE

Goddammit darlin'.

GEORGE

How do you know that thing on the coin is a goddess symbol?

JUDITH

Woman's intuition. It's a powerful force.

CLYDE

My ass.

JUDITH

Clyde, I can't imagine why you had to use the internet to find a woman.

CLYDE

Fuck you.

JUDITH

Charming. George when you're done eating you can clean up the dishes. Clyde and Kat brought cards. Kat and I are going to get in the tent with the lantern and play some poker.

GEORGE

Isn't it better to play poker with more than two people?

JUDITH

Not the way we plan to play it.

GEORGE

I get it. You're trying to torture me aren't you?

JUDITH

Make sure to get the leftovers and that damn jerky into bags and hang it all up in the food tree. Don't leave anything around that will attract bears. George, Clyde has shown himself to be lackadaisical about food safety. Make sure to police his work.

CLYDE

What kind of mind game are you playin' on us?

JUDITH

Fellas, the opposite of love isn't hate, it's indifference. We aren't really concerned with you two. We discovered we're both life long learners. I'm teaching Kat about the humanities and she's teaching me how to be a Pagan.

CLYDE

Pagan?

GEORGE

Wait a minute. Pagan? And how can she teach you when she doesn't speak English!

JUDITH

I told you. Touch and smell.

CLYDE

Bullshit.

JUDITH

It's the spirit of the thing. Let's go Kat.

They've finished eating. JUDITH motions and the women head for tent, holding the champagne bottle and deck of cards.

GEORGE

Wait. What about you and me Judith!? I love you more than anything in the world. Why would you do this to me?

JUDITH

Things change. The most adaptive survive. I've adapted.

GEORGE

Aw Judith Where am I going to sleep?

JUDITH gets his bed roll out of tent and throws it on the ground.

JUDITH

You can sleep out here next to Clyde. He's a fascinating conversationalist. Enjoy.

The women enter tent. Lantern illuminates it from within.

GEORGE

Unfuckingbelievable. It's going to be a long, long night. I don't know if I can sleep on the ground without a tent. Especially with my fiance playing some weird kind of poker with a woman.

CLYDE

Fiancee? She didn't say yes Georgie. And that's my wife she's with. Goddammit! We should do something.

GEORGE

They've got the guns and I don't think they are in a mood to be told what to do. Poker. Is poker code for something? And what's up with this Pagan stuff?

CLYDE

I don't wanna know. Six or seven shots of whiskey real quick and sleepin' won't be an issue. And while I'm fallin' asleep I gotta ponder how I'm gonna deal with all this tomorrow. I blame Judith. This has got to be a one day problem Georgie boy.

GEORGE

I'll drink to that. To a one day problem. It's just a phase. Please let this be a one day problem. But it seems to me like Katiana kind of started this.

CLYDE

Katiana's an angel! It's all on Judith!

CLYDE stands over GEORGE menacingly.

GEORGE

Sorry Clyde. I'm sorry. I don't know what to think at this point.

CLYDE relaxes and hands GEORGE the whiskey bottle. He sits.

CLYDE

Looks like we're in this together.

GEORGE

I'm in a state of shock. Once we get through the evening I'm going to fight like hell for Judith. She's the light of my life. How did it come to this?

CLYDE

Kat's the love of my life. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't get to hear her call me "Darlin" everyday. I'm takin' steps to end this shit tomorrow.

They take turns taking swigs from the bottle.
CLYDE takes out jerky, offers some to GEORGE.

GEORGE

I don't see how stinky, rancid jerky could make this evening any worse.

He eats a handful of jerky and they continue passing the bottle back and forth.

GEORGE

Hey, shouldn't we clean up and get the food up in the tree?

CLYDE

Fuck that. I ain't takin' no orders from JUDITH. Gimme that bottle.

The men sit forlornly, passing the bottle and occasionally looking over their shoulders at the tent as we see the women's backlit outlines on the wall of the tent, along with sounds of giggling.

END OF SCENE

SCENE EIGHT

It is dark. Heat lightning occasionally lights up the camp site for a brief moment. GEORGE and CLYDE are asleep in the open. JUDITH and KATIANA emerge from tent. They have on head lamps that dimly shine the direction their heads are pointed. JUDITH has daypack with champagne in it.

JUDITH

They're sleeping the sleep of the befuddled (she giggles).

KATIANA

And oblivious.

They sit on log, snuggling against each other.

JUDITH

I can't believe how quickly you got the BB in the center of the maze.

JUDITH mimics moving a BB around a crackerjacks maze.

KATIANA

You have a gift for metaphor.

JUDITH

You have a gift for bringing metaphor to life. That was the greatest sexual experience of my life. How was it for you?

KATIANA

It was nice.

JUDITH

Nice? It was fantastic.

KATIANA

It was OK.

JUDITH

OK? That was the greatest sexual experience of my life . . . Oh . . . Oh my goodness. That's what . . . Are you trying to be mean?

KATIANA

I'm trying to be honest. It is not you. When your husband is Clod, the muscle memory of joy is crippled.

JUDITH

That still kind of hurts.

Long silence.

KATIANA

So you come from wealth?

JUDITH

What makes you think that?

KATIANA

Every item in your campsite is the best of the best. The kind of things only wealthy people would own. A kevlar kayak? Patagonia clothing? A titanium Apple Watch?

JUDITH

Very observant of you.

KATIANA

One unaccustomed to wealth somehow expects wealth to be based on merit. The reality is different if our wealthy Viking artifact patron is taken into account.

JUDITH

They don't ask you in the womb is you want to have money. It's just fate.

KATIANA

Afterwards you have choices. You are wealthy yet you are with George.

JUDITH

Everyone has choices. You could have chosen not to go with Clyde.

KATIANA

Irony. The glue for the universe. I was desperate.

A heat lightning flash illuminates the campsite.

JUDITH

Another night of heat lightning over the lake.

KATIANA

Our own light show.

JUDITH

Just for us.

KATIANA

I could use a drink. Let's finish off the champagne to nature's light show.

JUDITH

Capital idea. Das Kapital idea.

KATIANA

What?

JUDITH

A pun. You know Das Kapital. The communist economic manifesto.

KATIANA

If you are suggesting I have a connection to communism, I must point out that I've never been a communist.

JUDITH

But you *are* Russian.

KATIANA

I was born after Russia and the Ukraine embraced free markets.

JUDITH

It was just a joke. A pun. Relating to the fact that I'm with a gorgeous Russian.

KATIANA

But it was imprecise.

JUDITH

Oh. Ok.

JUDITH takes the champagne from daypack. She pours champagne into cups.

KATIANA

Puns are more American than European. Childish.

JUDITH

I see. Americans are childish.

KATIANA

Puns are not sophisticated.

JUDITH

I see. Like Americans.

KATIANA

Don't be so sensitive. Tell me about being a professor. This is impressive to me. You are an impressive, beautiful woman. A wealthy, impressive, beautiful woman.

JUDITH

Not buy a congressman wealthy. But I can do what I want. Sometimes I wonder about becoming an academic though. Especially when I'm faced with another section of freshman Shakespeare. The work ethics of a modern college student is appalling.

KATIANA

Americans are so spoiled they don't count the blessings of their opportunities. Imagine being privileged enough to go to college and not trying.

JUDITH

Well, they're just kids. They don't know any better.

KATIANA

In other countries young people are hungry, they burn with the desire to work to get ahead. Here they waste opportunity. This is why America is doomed.

JUDITH

Doomed?

KATIANA

Of course. While your children are drugged by pop culture and social media and are learning to be soft, children in the rest of the world are toughening up, developing skills that will allow them to push Americans aside. With a level playing field the young people of the Ukraine would crush American youth.

JUDITH

I see. Of all the countries in the world, you came to the United States because it's childish, unsophisticated, and doomed. Interesting.

KATIANA

I'm sorry if the truth is difficult.

JUDITH

Then why did you come here?

KATIANA

Because this is the land of wealth and suckers. Which makes it the land of opportunity. Look at Clyde. Look at George.

JUDITH

Clyde is an idiot. George is pretty sharp.

KATIANA

Clyde is a moron but at least he is a physical specimen. You are wealthy and educated and you end up with George? I'm surprised George didn't drown himself fishing. And anyway you never miss a chance to insult him.

JUDITH

George isn't all bad. He has a lot of nice qualities.

KATIANA

You think that? Like I said, a land of suckers.

JUDITH

You've crossed a, a boundary here Katiana. Don't insult me. Or George. Or my country!

KATIANA

Well this is the boundary waters, no? I'm just telling it like it is. Isn't that an American ideal?

JUDITH is distracted. She looks around.

KATIANA

What?

JUDITH

Dammit. They didn't clean up the dishes and frying pan. Where's that awful jerky?

We hear CLYDE scream. Heat lightning flashes. The women jump. We hear another blood curdling scream. Heat lightning briefly illuminates what appears to be a furry outline. Darkness. Next flash of light briefly reveals a shaking, furry hulk on CLYDE. Darkness. Flash of lightning reveals CLYDE'S face covered in blood. Darkness.

We hear another scream. A flash reveals KATIANA getting up with her gun, JUDITH emerging from tent with her gun. They both are moving frantically. Darkness. We hear a dozen or so gunshots and see bright muzzle flashes from both guns briefly illuminate the camp site. Darkness.

We see a cloud of smoke rise into air during muzzle flashes. We see outline of man running towards trees. We see image of CLYDE covered in blood and a furry silhouette moving into the trees. The guns continue firing until we hear clicks suggesting all the bullets are gone. Darkness.

Screams. A camp lantern comes on, lit by JUDITH. A second camp lantern comes on, lit by KATIANA. Camp site is now visible in a dim, creepy light. We see outline of CLYDE's body, bloody and still.

The women are in shock. They are charged with adrenaline. They scream their dialogue.

JUDITH

What if the bear comes back?!

KATIANA

Clyde?!

JUDITH

George. Where's George?!!

KATIANA goes to CLYDE and examines his body. JUDITH runs around campsite looking for George, overwhelmed by adrenaline.

JUDITH

Oh god, oh god, oh god!

KATIANA

Clyde is no more.

JUDITH

The bear got him!?

KATIANA

Yes. But he has a bullet in his head.

The women meet in middle of campsite and hold on tightly to each other.

JUDITH

Where's George! Where's the bear?

KATIANA

I think it ran away. For now.

KATIANA walks towards tree that was used to hang food, holding JUDITH's hand and guiding her. They see GEORGE next to the tree. Blood covers the top of his head and his neck. He is not moving. JUDITH looks away, screams.

JUDITH

No! No, no, no, no, no.

KATIANA

This will not be good for my citizenship.

JUDITH

How could you think of that?! Oh my God.

She collapses.

JUDITH

What have we done?

KATIANA

We? Speak for yourself. It could have been you that killed both of them.

JUDITH

No. Katiana. Don't say that!

JUDITH sees the urn on ground. It has another hole in it.

JUDITH

This goddamned urn is cursed.

KATIANA

The whole campsite is cursed.

KATIANA helps JUDITH stand. We hear a rustling in bushes.

JUDITH

We've got to climb up a tree to be safe.

KATIANA

Bears can climb.

JUDITH

No they can't.

KATIANA

Yes they can.

JUDITH

No they can't. Can they?

KATIANA

I'm taking the canoe back to our truck. My truck. I'm not staying at a campsite with bloody bodies and a bear that's tasted blood out there.

JUDITH

Wait! Clyde said you're a lightning rod on the lake. And it will take hours to canoe back to your truck. No! It's not safe.

KATIANA

Neither is a wounded bear. I like the odds on the lake better.

JUDITH

Can bears swim?

KATIANA

No.

JUDITH

You said they can climb. If they can climb they can surely swim.

KATIANA

I don't know. But I still like my chances on the lake better.

JUDITH

We can't just leave George and Clyde here.

KATIANA

They're dead dommit! I don't like it but I didn't leave everything I've ever known in the Ukraine to get eaten by a fucking bear.

KATIANA grabs a few belongings and a paddle and heads for the canoe.

JUDITH

We can't paddle across a big lake at night in a lightning storm. I'm afraid. Don't go!

KATIANA

I'm going. No bullets. You can't kill a bear with your hands.

KATIANA tries to kiss JUDITH. JUDITH pulls away.

KATIANA

I had high hopes for a while there. But who knows what the future will bring.

JUDITH

Don't go! ... Someone has to come get ... them. Will someone come to get me? Oh god.

KATIANA

I should contact a sheriff shouldn't I?

JUDITH

Of course. Yes. I feel sick.

KATIANA

I've got to go. With you or without you. The bear can come back at any moment.

JUDITH

We shouldn't have been so mean to George and Clyde.

KATIANA

(exasperated) Judith, listen to me. We are women. We are alchemists. We create life! Men kill life. Goddam men wave their dicks at each other and kill each other for sport. We make something from nothing. We are goddesses. I'm determined that it's time for me to run my life, not men. I don't want to be like them. Do you?

JUDITH

No. . . (She sobs) But tonight we were.

KATIANA

I did not plan this.

JUDITH

You didn't shoot Clyde on purpose did you?

KATIANA

I was shooting at a predator. I'm getting the hell out of here. Good luck.

KATIANA pulls canoe off stage.

JUDITH

Don't leave me alone. Katiana! I can't leave George here.

We hear the sound of KATIANA paddling away. JUDITH panics and runs in a circle around the campsite. She sees GEORGE up close and gasps. She runs and trips over CLYDE's body and gasps again.

When she stands up we see that her face is smeared with Clyde's blood, like war paint. She notices CLYDE's knife and removes it and its scabbard from his belt and puts it in her daypack. She picks up the urn and puts it in the daypack.

There is a bright flash of lightning and an explosion. We hear a blood curdling scream echo across the lake. Judith is in shock and looks out to the lake in horror.

She runs to tree with the food hoist, gingerly climbs over George's body, and with great difficulty climbs up the rope to a branch on tree. She rests on a tree limb, exhausted. We hear rustling in bushes and sounds of bear. As she catches her breath we hear a sound from her phone. She takes it out of the daypack and looks at it.

JUDITH

A signal! It must be the height.

She presses buttons frantically.

Hello! Hello! Can you hear me? There's been a terrible accident! Hello! Hello! Shit! (looks at phone) The signal's gone.

She stares intently at screen.

A message from Joe. It must have come through when I had the signal.

She clicks to hear message.

VOICE FROM PHONE MESSAGE

Hey Judith, it's Joe. That's one weird message you left. I can't imagine why you give a shit what kind of condoms I use but yeh, I borrowed George's gear. Trojans. They're mine. Turns out I didn't need 'em. Pam may be a keeper. Oh - what was your answer? You better have said yes. George loves you so much. He's is so excited about the future. See you soon.

JUDITH

Oh god. Oh. God.

JUDITH turns off phone. She throws it to the ground. She stares into middle distance. We hear more sounds of the bear in bushes below.

She closes her eyes, leans against limb, goes limp for a moment. She opens her eyes, takes urn out of daypack, removes the lid, and tearfully speaks.

JUDITH

Oh George. This was so important for you and I helped screw it up. I will complete this for you . . . What are we but dust said the bard. This dust is George Senior. Rest in peace.

She tilts the urn and pours the ashes downward. A grey, powdery mist, lit by heat lightning, descends to the ground. JUDITH watches it descend.

We hear sounds of the bear below. She takes the knife out of her daypack and holds it tightly. She looks around campsite, her head lamp beacon dancing off of the trees. She becomes still.

JUDITH

Solitude.

JUDITH stares straight ahead, holding the knife, blood smeared on her face. Scene is illuminated by flashes of heat lightning as grey powder continues to fall to the ground.

VOICE BELOW - GEORGE

Ahhchoo!

JUDITH snaps to attention, leans out, stares towards the ground and gasps. She composes herself and climbs down the tree. GEORGE is alive. He begins moaning. He does not open his eyes. She leans to comfort him.

JUDITH

George, oh George.

There is a rustling in the bushes, then the growl of a bear. She has CLYDE's knife. JUDITH puts herself between the bushes and GEORGE. She takes a deep breath and has a look of intense determination on her face.

She screams, and jumps into the bushes wielding the knife. Heat lightning flashes, illuminating the shaking bushes for a brief moment. We hear snorts and screams and sounds of a bear and JUDITH in a death battle. Silence.... JUDITH stands up from behind the bushes in the dim light, her hands now covered with blood along with her face. She is holding the knife. She raises her hands in air.

She screams in joy and relief and triumph, a scream from the center of her being. She leans over, appears to be cutting something behind the bush, then holds up the bear's bloody ears. She carries them back to GEORGE, and sits down. She removes leather necklace, and with an intense look on her face, bores holes in the ears with her knife and threads the ears onto the leather necklace with the Goddess coin on it. She puts the necklace with the bear ears around her neck.

She turns off lanterns and sits in the dark, her head lamp still providing faint light. Heat lightning flashes and briefly illuminates the campsite, casting light on JUDITH and GEORGE. We see CLYDE's body behind them. In the dim light JUDITH lifts the necklace and stares at the coin and ears intently. With her other hand she gently strokes GEORGE's face. She leans in and kisses him on the lips, spreading blood to his lips and face.

Heat lightning flashes. We hear sound of loons on the lake.

BLACK OUT - END OF PLAY