

IN TENTS

by

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Characters

Ms. Maggie - A teacher in her early 30s.

Mason - A male high school student.

Sophie - A female high school student.

Liam - A male high school student.

Emily - A female high school student.

Braden - A male high school student.

Ava - A female high school student.

In Tents

Scene 1

(A professional-looking armchair sits in front of the proscenium on the left. The stage is the rarely-used storage room of Brentwood High School. There is a door downstage left and a closet downstage right. Six chairs are scattered in various positions all around. A microwave is located in the downstage right corner and is plugged into an extension cord running offstage. There is a tent bag in the center of the stage. On top of the bag, there is a propped-up notepaper.)

(At rise, a spotlight shines on the armchair. After the following monologue from Ms. Maggie, stage-lights come up on all six students standing in a semi-circle around the tent bag. Each student is holding some sort of backpack and sleeping bag combination. All of them are looking down at the tent bag in shock.)

Ms. Maggie: (She enters into the spotlight; awkwardly speaking to the audience.) So what do I... **(Sees chair.)** Oh, the chair? Should I sit there? ... Ok, I'll just do that. **(She sits.)** Well...Hi, my name is Maggie Nolauna. My students call me Ms. Maggie... Anyway, I work at Brentwood High, an elite school for the gifted and talented - or as I like to call them: the super rich and slightly above average. There are only one hundred kids in the school. Four grades. Ninth through twelfth. Twenty-five to a grade... obviously... and yeah, I'm the homeroom teacher for all the grades. Fifty thousand dollars in debt, a Bachelor's in Psychology and a Master's in Youth Education will get you this glamorous job. **(genuinely:)** There *is* one perk in it, though: I get to take all the classes on an overnight camping trip each year! But, this time was a little different. You see, Pissed-Off-Parent lawsuits use one third of our yearly budget. And we always under budget in the false hope that parents will be less pissed off this year. We're always wrong and we always lose the cases... **(Beat.)** I guess, the real reason we couldn't do our normal trip this year is Jimmy. It's Jimmy's fault he got a B in his Lit class, which caused his mom to sue the school for ruining her child's education and future, which caused the school to dip into my department for lawsuit money, which caused me to cancel my overnight trip in the woods. So, it all comes back to little old Jimmy who should have read the assigned books... Regardless, there wouldn't

have been a class trip this year and the spare room next to my class is only big enough to hold a couple people at a time so I decided the kids would have their overnight trip in shifts. Brilliant, right? I hoped so...

(Spotlight out. Stage lights up. There is a moment of silence as each student looks down at the tent bag in awe.)

Sophie: So, what do we do?

Mason: Someone's got to read the note.

Sophie: I'll do it.

Mason: No, I'll read it.

Sophie: (She stays stationary.) I got it.

Mason: (He stays stationary.) No, I'll do it.

Braden: Will one of you two read it already?

(Mason and Sophie both reach for the note but Mason snatches it first. Mason begins reading the note to himself.)

Braden: Out loud, idiot.

Mason: (He clears his throat and begins reading.) Dear Students, ...

(Spotlight up on Ms. Maggie.)

Ms. Maggie: Here is a tent for shelter, a microwave for fire, and food has been hidden around the room for you to forage. There are only two rules: One, don't do anything harmful or illegal and, two, have fun! The door is unlocked so you can go at any time you choose. Just know: if you leave this room before time is up, you'll fail this class!

(Spotlight down.)

Mason: (He reads:) ...Much Love, Ms. Maggie.

(All the students look down at the bag again in another moment of shock. The stillness is broken by Emily who runs to the room's door. Everyone looks at her to see what she will do.)

Emily: Ms. Maggie! Can you hear me? I can't do this assignment! I have to work in the garden with my grandpa today! He's on his way out so it can't be any other day! **(She waits but there is no response.)** My parents will pay you, Ms. Maggie! Anything! Anything you want, they'll give it to you! Can you hear me? Anything!

(There is still no response.)

Sophie: It's no use.

Ava: Just let life happen as it is meant to happen.

(Emily looks around the room frantically and gets an idea.)

Emily: (calmer:) Ms. Maggie, I really need to go to the bathroom...like, really bad...and I noticed that there are no bathrooms attached to this room. Can you just let me out so I can go?

Braden: (annoyed:) She said you could leave at any time. The door is open.

Emily: (whispering:) I know, but I don't want to *fail*. **(to the door:)** Did you hear me Ms. Maggie? I need to use the bathroom!

(Suddenly, a note slides under the door. Emily picks it up and reads it to herself.

Emily then proceeds to throw the note and falls to the floor crying.)

Liam: Um...what does the note say?

Mason: I'll go look.

Sophie: No, I've got this one!

(Sophie rushes over to where the note had dropped and begins reading it.)

Sophie: (She reads:) There are buckets and jars in the closet for your *waste* storage...

(All the students look over to the closet and shuddering in disgust.)

Mason: Alright everyone, let's all calm down and just get through this one step at a time. The first thing we need to do is...

Sophie: Set up the tent. We need to set up the tent. My dad used to take me camping all the time and the first thing we always did was set up the tent.

Mason: I was going to say get everyone's name. You know, just to break the ice.

Liam: Yeah, good idea.

(Everyone waits for someone to start.)

Mason: I'll start. My name is Mason... **(sarcastically:)** ...and my favorite ice cream flavor is cookie dough.

Sophie: I am Sophie and I only eat gelato...and my favorite flavor of gelato is coconut.

Braden: (sarcastically:) Thanks for sharing, Sophie.

Liam: My name is Liam. I guess I like vanilla ice cream the best.

Mason: Hi, Liam. **(He gestures to Ava.)** What about you?

Ava: My name is what ever the world needs it to be.

Liam: That's cool.

Braden: Seriously?

Ava: You all can call me Ava.

Mason: (to Emily) Hey, how are you doing over there? Do you want to share your name?

Sophie: Her name is Emily. She's in my history class.

Mason: Let her share. It'll be good for her.

Emily: (She composes herself.) Emily. **(She starts walking over to the group of students.)** I like bubble gum ice cream.

Mason: Nice to meet you Emily. **(to Braden)** And what is your name?

Braden: You know my name, Mason.

Mason: Maybe, but not everyone else does. Will you share it please?

Braden: Braden.

Mason: And...

Braden: What?

Liam: What's your favorite ice cream flavor?

Braden: I'm lactose intolerant.

Mason: Let's pretend you weren't.

Ava: My Guru would say: Never make something out to be something it is not.

Braden: Chocolate raspberry swirl.

Mason: Thank you, Braden.

Sophie: Great! Now let's move on to setting up the tent. **(She unzips the bag and pulls out two small booklets.)** There are two instruction booklets. Great. **(She thinks for a second.)** Let's use this one it's newer.

Mason: What? And therefore better?

Sophie: No, it's just that –

Mason: I say we use the other one. **(He picks up the other booklet.)** This book has clearly worked many times before so it'll work again.

Sophie: But this one is newer and probably updated. It's more progressive. It's been adapted for the changing times so it will build the tent stronger and faster.

Mason: (getting agitated:) Why are you trying to fly in the face of tradition, Sophie? We're using the old book and that's that.

Sophie: Why do you have to be stuck in the past? This one is clearly better!

(Mason and Sophie are both holding up their books now; getting frustrated.)

Braden: What are they arguing about?

Liam: I'm not sure...

Mason: We are going to use the OLD BOOK!!!

Sophie: NEW BOOK!

Liam: Can we use both books?

Braden: Do we even need the books?

Sophie: NEW!

Mason: OLD!

Ava: (She separates Mason and Sophie.) Children, children, children. Might I point out that both books will bring us to the same end: we will have shelter. One of you must forfeit this pointless fight sometime.

Sophie: I will n-

Mason: Thanks Sophie for being the bigger person. So we'll use my book.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(Everything is the same as Scene 1 but the tent bag is gone and there is a fully built tent in the center of the stage.)

(After the following Ms. Maggie monologue: Liam is sitting on a chair working on what appears to be homework. Ava is meditating in a downstage corner. Emily cannot be seen because she is inside the tent. Braden is sitting on the ground twiddling his thumbs. Sophie is sitting at the front of the stage writing furiously in a journal. Mason is admiring his handiwork at the tent. After a moment, Mason realizes what Sophie is doing and decides to walk over to her nicely.)

(Spotlight up.)

Ms. Maggie: At first, I was worried the parents wouldn't like my idea. I thought they would pester me with a million questions and threaten to sue us all over again. If there's one thing I hate, it's dealing with obnoxious parents. They're like a flock of geese: wailing at

you until you throw some bread their way; and, of course, by bread I mean good grades. But, I thought the fight would be worth it. For the kid's sake, you know? The reaction I got when I told them was nothing like what I had expected... They loved it! They didn't care about learning all the details; they were just happy to have a night to themselves away from their little angels. These people obviously aren't quite as simple as they seem.

(Spotlight out. Stage lights up.)

Mason: (while walking; to Liam) How is the homework coming, Liam?

Liam: (He looks up.) The what?...Oh, good. It's going good.

Braden: I can't believe you actually packed that. Isn't this camping trip homework enough?

Mason: (He stands behind Sophie.) Hey, Sophie.

Sophie: (startled:) What? What do you want?

Mason: Can I just talk to you for a second?

Sophie: No. I'm busy.

Mason: (He sits next to Sophie.) Look, I'm really sorry for doing whatever it is I did to make you mad.

Sophie: I'm not mad.

Mason: You seem really mad.

Sophie: Do you honestly not know? Do you honestly not see what you're doing all the time?

Mason: Ok, calm down, Sophie.

Sophie: You're doing it right now! You're just like everybody else: telling me to calm down, making me feel like I'm the crazy one for wanting to take charge of a group or even just a conversation like this.

Mason: You're not crazy. Maybe just a little bit...bossy.

Sophie: No, I am not bossy. I have good ideas and I want to share them without being shut down, Mason.

Mason: Ok. Ok. I just think we need to stay calm and rational in order to get through this assignment, ok?

Sophie: Oh like *you*? Mr. Calm and Rational? **(She turns away for him.)**

(Suddenly, the sound of a cell phone ring comes from within the tent.)

Braden: Did you guys hear that?

Ava: No, Braden. When I am meditating I hear no sounds from the world around me.

(Phone rings again.)

Liam: It's coming from inside the tent.

Mason: Isn't Emily in there?

Sophie: She said she was going to take a nap.

(Everyone slowly sneaks up and surrounds the tent. They all gesture for other people to do something. Sophie takes charge.)

Sophie: Emily? You awake in there?

(Silence.)

Sophie: EMILY!

Emily: (from inside tent:) WHAT?

Sophie: Get out!

(Emily unzips the tent and comes out.)

Emily: (She pretends to have just woken up.) Why'd you have to yell, Sophie? I was fast asleep.

Braden: Sure you were.

Sophie: Cut the crap, Emily. We heard the noises.

Emily: What noises??

Mason: The cell phone. We heard it ringing from inside the tent.

Emily: Shhhhhh...(quietly:) Ok, I did bring my cell phone in. Can we all calm down?

Liam: Ms. Maggie specifically said no phones.

Mason: Yeah, we all had to hand in our phones before getting in here.

Sophie: I thought I saw you put yours in the box.

Emily: That was a fake one that I bought at a thrift shop for situations like this. Didn't you guys notice mine was the only phone in the box that wasn't a smart phone?

Ava: Often times, people cannot see what is sitting right in front of them.

Braden: (to Ava) Did *you* see it?

Ava: Nope.

Mason: Wait, do you smell that?

Ava: Is it my self-criticism? **(She sniffs herself.)**

Mason: No. It's...

Sophie: What?

Braden: Yeah, it's from inside the tent. **(He walks over to the tent's entrance and sniffs.)**

Yup, Emily farted.

All: (ad lib:) Gross! God, why?! Nasty! Ahh!

Mason: Girls don't fart!

Sophie: (re: Mason) You're so stupid.

Liam: Great! *Now* where are we going to sleep tonight?

(Everyone is upset.)

Braden: Guys, we're inside. We don't need a tent...

Mason: True... Besides, we wouldn't have been able to all sleep in there anyway – it's way too small for six people.

Liam: Well, yeah and...

Sophie: And what?

Liam: Well some of us are...you know...

Mason: Bigger than others?

Liam: No...

Emily: Some of us are boys and some of us are girls...**(She looks at Ava.)**...and some of us just *are*.

Ava: We are all just people here. Boys and girls. Brown-haired and blonde-haired. Should there really be any difference?

Emily: Yes, Ava. Boys shouldn't be sleeping in the same place as girls unless they're married. It's just wrong.

Liam: I agree! Just wrong!

Mason: We're going to be in the same room tonight whether we sleep in the tent or not, Emily...

Emily: I would rather stay awake all night than have to sleep together.

Sophie: How about this: girls sleep on one side of the room and boys sleep on the other? How does that sound?

Emily: It's better than nothing I guess.

Sophie: (She gestures as she talks.) Good! Girls get your sleeping bags and go over there. Boys you go to the other side.

(Everyone agrees and grabs their things. They go to their respective sides. Ava stands in the center of the room and starts to set up her bag.)

Emily: Ava, get over here!

Ava: I don't define myself by gender, Emily.

Emily: Why do you have to make everything so complicated? Just get over to the girl's side.

Ava: One day you'll understand. **(She joins the girls on their side.)**

Sophie: (yelling to the boys:) We'll reconvene for dinner around the fire!

Mason: (just to make Sophie mad:) Sounds like a plan, Boss!

(Everyone lays out their sleeping bags and sits around to chat. While one group is chatting the other is quietly ad-libbing. The two groups cannot hear each other.)

Emily: So...do you like any of them?

Sophie: Like?

Emily: You know...who do you *like*?

Sophie: Oh, I don't "like" anything about this whole situation. I just want to get through it, ok?

Emily: Come on, it's fun. It's just like a camp crush: you like them while you're at camp and then you go back to your normal life when you leave.

Sophie: I've never been to camp.

Ava: Me neither.

Emily: Clearly...Well, I kinda like Liam.

Sophie: Why?

Emily: He's so cute and quiet. He barely ever talks, you know? Also, he is just super hot.

Sophie: I guess I never noticed.

Emily: What about you, Sophie? You've gotta like at least one of them.

Sophie: I don't "gotta" do anything if I don't want to. I don't like any of those idiots, ok? **(She starts getting fired up.)** I am independent. I do not need a man. A man needs me!

Ava: Preach sister!

Emily: Whatever...**(mocking Ava:)** One day you'll understand.

Sophie: But I think Mason likes me.

Emily: I knew it! I knew it!

Sophie: And I mean, I guess he is kind of good looking.

Emily: Thank you!

Sophie: But he's also a complete idiot with the brain capacity of a goldfish and I never want to see him again after this camping trip. I mean, I would never want to...**(She continues to rant on.)**

Emily: I tried. **(She breaks into Sophie's rant.)** What about you, Ava?

Ava: I am in love with everybody.

Emily: Even girls?

Ava: Everybody.

Emily: Well that makes me feel super uncomfortable.

Ava: Would you rather I hated everybody?

Emily: Umm...

(Mason is about to finish a story he has enthusiastically been telling while the girls spoke. Liam continues to be engrossed in his homework while Braden looks away in boredom.)

Mason: ...And that's how I led my team to win the tournament AGAIN! **(He realizes that no one was listening.)** Were you guys listening to my story? It was awesome!

Braden: No, yeah, I was listening. Sounds awesome.

Mason: Liam, did you hear my story?

Liam: Umm...yeah I was just working on my homework at the same time.

Braden: How much homework do you have?

Liam: You know, a lot.

Braden: Which subject have you been working on for so long?

Liam: Well...can I trust you guys?

Braden: No.

Mason: Yes. Of course, man.

Liam: I haven't been working on homework at all actually. I've been drawing.

Braden: Of course you have.

Mason: Drawing what?

(Liam holds up his paper to reveal that there is a detailed face drawn on it.)

Mason: Is that, Emily?

Liam: Yup.

Braden: Oh my god. That is so creepy.

Liam: Why?

Braden: You've been drawing that for the past *three* hours.

Liam: It's not like we had anything else to do.

Braden: True...

Mason: Why do you like Emily? She's not even that hot?

Liam: She's beautiful! And besides, a girl is more than just looks. She so funny and she's just so honest too, you know?

Mason: I have a girlfriend outside of this room so I can't really talk about all this lady stuff...

Braden: (sarcastically:) How considerate of you.

Mason: But, since we're all being so open here I *can* say that I get strange feelings when Sophie talks back to me. I don't know why.

Liam: I thought something was going on there ... What about you, Braden? Do you like anyone?

Braden: Nope.

Mason: No one at all? Not even outside this room?

Braden: No one at all.

Mason: Are you gay?

Braden: Maybe.

Mason: What do you mean "maybe"?

Liam: We're all somewhere in the middle, Mason.

Mason: You sound a lot like Ava right now.

Liam: I guess...Is that a bad thing?

(Blackout.)

Scene 3