

The Collected Rules of Gifted Camp

By Valerie Work

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Cast of Characters:

ANNIE, 15
 LEILA (pronounced Lay-lah), 15
 ROSE, 21
 KEVIN, 15
 OTHER GIRL, 15 (played by the same actor who plays KEVIN)

Setting:

ANNIE's, LEILA's, ROSE's and KEVIN's bedrooms at home.
 ANNIE and LEILA's bedroom at camp. Their hall. Their hall
 bathroom. The campfire, activity and dance sites. Other
 camp locations as needed. The present.

Note Related to Setting:

Since their origins in the early 1980's, academic summer programs for gifted teenagers have proliferated across the United States, and indeed around the world. These programs vary in structure, selectivity, cost, and non-profit vs. for-profit organizational status. Most are held on college campuses, a setting which enables them to rent or otherwise occupy existing classroom and dorm buildings, as well as, in some cases, to hire local faculty and graduate students seeking summer teaching jobs.

One popular model offers students aged 13-16 the opportunity to take a single, intensive course in a specialized subject area. Over the course of three weeks, these teenagers spend approximately 100 hours attending class sessions and also participate in a variety of organized, closely supervised evening and weekend social activities. To qualify, students must take a standardized test such as the SAT or ACT in seventh grade and achieve a score roughly equivalent to that of an average high school senior.

Preshow Music:

The music played between the time the house opens and the time the show starts should be the following, in order:

"It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)"
 by R.E.M.

"Time Warp" from The Rocky Horror Picture Show
"Forever Young" by Rod Stewart
"American Pie" by Don McLean

This playlist represents one version of the canonical end-of-dance music sequence for the dances held at this type of camp. The four songs together are roughly 20 minutes of music.

Scene 1

(Lights rise on ANNIE's bedroom at home. She is packing for camp. Her bedroom occupies only a small area of the stage, as there will need to be room for all four characters' respective bedrooms to appear at the same time.)

ANNIE

(to audience)

These are the rules of gifted camp. It is a board game, like the Monopoly game I played with my cousins last winter while eating chocolate. Whoever has the most money and the biggest houses by the end is the winner. If you lose you are Out, you are Dead.

(Lights rise on LEILA's bedroom at home. She is also packing for camp. ANNIE continues packing for camp in her own, separate space on the stage.)

LEILA

(to audience)

You are going to a college campus for three weeks to study Milton, astronomy, Existentialism, rocks.

ANNIE

You are headed into the wilderness.

LEILA

It will be hot and dry. Dusty, with wind blowing it into your hair.

ANNIE

You will change your routine, from showering in the morning to showering late at night, because as soon as you set foot outside in the daytime your back becomes wet with the sweat that beads your neck, below your hairline, and falls.

LEILA

It will be damp and green, a primeval forest.

ANNIE

Large ants make their way into the kitchen and crawl across the butter, leaving trails of grease on the counter, gleaming.

LEILA

Moss grows, ferns grow, wild mushrooms and fungus,
poisonous, shades of orange and red and purple and gray
against the background of dense dark brown.

(ROSE appears in her bedroom at her parents'
house, also packing for camp.)

ROSE

It will perch by a charming town where you will visit, on
excursions, a soda shop, a vintage store.

ANNIE

It will be anywhere but the suburbs.

LEILA

Here the trees are tall and groomed in neat and even lines,
pruned with great scissors by the hands of the manservants
visiting twice per month for that purpose.

ANNIE

They line the streets of the town where you live and you
imagine them to be prison bars, an iron cage mocking your
heartless ambitions.

LEILA

The adults are planted tall as pillars of salt, Ionic, no,
Doric columns, sentinels guarding the treasure, hidden, you
seek without knowing you seek it.

(KEVIN appears in his bedroom at home. He has
been packing for camp but has paused to read a
puzzling letter. He looks up from it and
addresses the audience.)

KEVIN

You will pack carefully, anxiously, checking each item off
the Recommended List. Three to five pairs of shorts.

(KEVIN lets the letter be and resumes packing.)

LEILA

Dental floss.

Swimsuit. ANNIE

Shampoo. KEVIN

Toothbrush. LEILA

Hat. ANNIE

LEILA
You will empty drawers and toss toiletries and stuff while leaping unnecessarily to childish music.

ROSE
However thoughtful you may be, however numerous your knapsacks, duffel bags and suitcases, you will forget one thing and exactly one thing which you will discover only after you arrive.

Alarm clock! LEILA

Adderall! ANNIE

Glasses -- ROSE

-- soap! KEVIN

ROSE
You have boarded the train and stare out of the window. You watch the landscape flow past like a river full of objects, indiscrete, blurring together.

END OF SCENE

Scene 2

(ANNIE and LEILA's bedroom at camp.)

ANNIE

Ideally you have planned your trip so as to be the first roommate to arrive.

(ANNIE drops her stuff. Surveys the room like a rising conquistadora. Lies first on one bed, then on the other, then gives the first one another try. Satisfied, she claims it, and proceeds to evaluate the remainder of the furnishings. LEILA enters.)

LEILA

Hi I'm Leila. Are you my roommate Marigold?

ANNIE

Annie is my camp name. (judicious pause) We should pretend to be cousins here, just because we can.

LEILA

Okay sure. (adjusting pause) Have you been to this camp before?

ANNIE

Twice. I've done Poetry and Law. I took one summer off to do Circus in Vermont, and now I'm back for Geopol. How 'bout you.

LEILA

It's my first time. I'm in Architecture.

ANNIE

Do you know the story. About the decs? The door decorations. Why it's just our first names now.

LEILA

No.

ANNIE

It's because last year, in Peterboro, this crazy stalker kidnapper man broke into the dorm building and lived there secretly in a vacant room on the topmost floor. He memorized the names while everyone was gone. When they came

back from break he had a clipboard and a hat and he told everyone he was a visiting administrator from another site and called over this one kid, first name and last, to meet with him in the room he had taken, for a survey. His plan was to slam the door and lock it and tie the kid up and knock him out and hold him for ransom. Too bad the kid he picked was a national youth league soccer player and totally kicked his ass.

LEILA

Whoa.

ANNIE

Yeah it's all true. And look, the hand sanitizer. I heard about this one on Facebook. Last session at the Clairmont site they had swine flu. They had this massive swine flu outbreak and 21 kids got sick with it, officially diagnosed in two days. They called all these specialists in and had a quote in the parent notification email and the posting on the camp wiki from the President of the college's Epidemiological Center that they had no other options, it could not be contained when it was spreading with such rapid speed and magnitude. They shut the whole site down and sent all the kids home on Wednesday of the second week and gave every kid's parent half their money back but they still paid all their staff. They're not having it at Clairmont this term they rerouted it so every site has got some of the Clairmont kids. And every room of every building we walk into all term has got a minimum required 40 fluid ounces of hand sanitizer gel. I dare you to drink it.

LEILA

Eeweew eeweew.

ANNIE

Somebody's going to do it. You wait.

LEILA

I will.

(ANNIE and LEILA unpack. This goes on for some time.)

LEILA

I forgot my nail file.

ANNIE

(recognizing she has forgotten bug spray)
Bug spray. Yes.

If you forget your belt you will become an oxymoron.

LEILA

If you forget your socks you will migrate to Quebec.

ANNIE

If you walk under that tree, the frondy one with the bench, you will fall in love with your youngest great-aunt.

LEILA

If you lie on that rock you will die.

(They regard each other, calculatngly, then resume unpacking. ROSE enters. She is in the hallway outside the girls' room. She is holding a handful of file folders, and reading from the top one, which is open.)

ROSE

I am Rose. I am a camp counselor. I am Annie and Leila's camp counselor. They have told me they are cousins. I do not believe them. But I will pretend.

I have been here, on this campus, living in this dorm, for four and one half weeks now.

The view is different. Different, if you are a staff member, than if you are a camper. You are older, for one. You must be at least a rising sophomore in college according to the program website and they do not make exceptions to this rule. I am a rising senior and this is my third summer. Last summer I worked here but I was a teaching assistant. I did not like it, I did not like it as much as being a counselor, and so this year, I am a counselor once again. It is my seventh year, my seventh year at this camp, with the first four years much earlier, as a camper myself. I keep coming back here.

There are patterns that develop. For staff. Each summer, you choose. Will you be, the Responsible One. The Staff Slut. The Cool Counselor. The Hearer of Problems. The Gossip. The Role Playing Game Guy. The Tattler. The

Alternagirl. The Asshole. The Emoboy. The Weird Guy. The Worm.

Each term the campers are different. But also, they are the same. We read their files before they arrive. Home town. School, grade, age. Course choices. Roommate preferences. Medical needs. On their medical form, every kid, or their parent, lists some kind of strange allergy. Penicillin. Pet dander. Cantalope. Cashews. Water. If you don't have one, you have to make one up, and then we have to guess, is it real, or not. Will it actually kill you. Neosporin. Spider bites. Cilantro, pollen, hemlock. Elm. Dust mites. Raisins. Latex. Cheese.

END OF SCENE

Scene 3

(It is hall meeting time the first night. ANNIE and LEILA are sitting in their hallway with their backs to the wall along with the ten other girls in their group, including OTHER GIRL. ROSE moderates.)

ROSE

It is important to always have goals for yourself. It is important to have camp goals. Take a moment and ask yourself, what do I want from this experience? What do I want to take home? What do I want? (reflective pause) I will illustrate.

I am a senior, a rising senior at a prestigious college. I want to choose my career. My post-college destination. I want to decide. I cannot be a counselor forever, at this camp.

Now you.

ANNIE

I want my mother to die.

LEILA

I want to fall in love.

ANNIE

To be the only person left alive in the world.

LEILA

Responsibility that I'm not actually ready for.

ANNIE

Magic powers.

LEILA

Unlimited chances.

ANNIE

Immortality. Cosmic significance.

LEILA

To have sex.

To die. ANNIE

To sleep. LEILA

To dream. ANNIE

Ringworm. OTHER GIRL

ANNIE
To grow up faster than everyone else and with less trouble
- a shortcut.

LEILA
To find a place designed entirely for me, where all my
formerly freakish qualities are suddenly assets, essential.

OTHER GIRL
Barbed wire. Tetanus.

LEILA
Fairness

ANNIE
Honesty

LEILA
Rules.

ROSE
Good. Very good.

Camp is like a video game. You only have so many lives to
lose before you complete your mission. Accomplish your
objective. Free the princess. Slay the dragon.

These are the rules of camp.

At first they seem strange, because many of them are, until
you hear the story.

The story is how the rule came to be.

There is always an incident, an incendiary incident, a first cause.

Don't go outside at night by yourself.

Don't go outside at night by yourself, on account of the cougar.

A cougar has been found in this area. Just last week, it carried away a sheep. They have been known to attack children, children. We cannot take that risk.

Drink water.

Drink water, because it is summer, and it is hot. If you do not drink water, you will become dehydrated. If you become dehydrated, you will have heatstroke, and if you have heatstroke, you will be taken to the emergency room. You will miss the day's activities. You may have to be sent home. If you have to be sent home, you fail camp. You fail.

We will now make posters, about how to prevent swine flu.

It is a contest, a contest for the best poster. If you make the best poster, we will give you ice cream, and recognize your poster in front of the whole camp. These are your materials.

(ROSE distributes materials. LEILA, ANNIE, OTHER GIRL and the rest make anti-swine-flu posters.)

ANNIE

(to audience)

You will not like the taste of the water, so you will not drink enough of it and will become dehydrated in spite of the warnings. You will not like the food. It will upset your digestion. You will lie awake that first night, listening to the surprisingly loud crickets, frogs, lacrosse players in the next dorm, snoring roommate in the next bed. If you are a boy, you may get lost seeking the bathroom while sleepwalking and urinate all over the stairwell. Your counselor will not be amused.

LEILA

You may discover a secret talent you never knew that you possessed. While engaging in an assigned task you would not

yourself have chosen, your universe of unfixed forces aligns, leading you irrevokably along a path. You will come to love your swine, flop-eared and snorting. It is yours, entirely yours, for you have drawn him.

You claim your prize, your campwide moment of fame. You have saved the day, prevented the flu, with nothing more powerful or obvious than yarn, markers and glue.

END OF SCENE

Scene 4

(Later. ROSE addresses the audience.)

ROSE

What do I want. I have to become.

I have always been attracted to these camps, these temporary places, since my days as a young child. These summer experiences. I have never understood my own fascination.

The summer before I started college I decided to be daring and complete the outdoor hiking orientation, instead of the indoor public service one, for the physical wimps. For seven days and six nights we went hiking in the Catskills. On the fifth night we climbed a mountain all day and camped that night at its peak. Giant's Peak. That was its name. A safe distance from our campsite was the great ledge. I stepped out on the rough, textured surface and could see. The intersection of mountain rock, the earth, essentially, and sky, the cavernous void hovering above the valley canyon below and beyond me. Everything besides those two defined spaces was a mere abstraction: the headlights of the cars so far away and distant, moving so slowly they appeared to be nothing more formidable, less magical than ants. The trees, all the varied shades of green-blue-yellow, blended together - it was impossible to see them as discrete plant entities, different species; they rather seemed to be a kind of watercolor canvas backdrop for my ruminations. As the sun set, the colors darkened, approaching the limit of black.

There was the obvious temporal boundary of sunset as I watched and ate hot dogs, of day blending into night. There was the more general one of my high school self bleeding into the self I have become in college, and the still more general one of child passing through adolescence, wending my way into adulthood slower than the ant cars on the asphalt below.

The changing of the seasons. At this moment, between my Mid-Atlantic summer becoming my first New England fall.

END OF SCENE

Scene 5

(Day three. ANNIE and LEILA address the audience.)

ANNIE

However great your roommate may be you will discover their annoying habit.

LEILA

My roommate sings.

ANNIE

My roommate snores.

LEILA

My roommate stores dirty socks beneath her bed and they really stink.

ANNIE

My roommate picks her teeth.

LEILA

My roommate picks her nose.

ANNIE

My roommate likes country music.

LEILA

My roommate likes Metallica.

ANNIE

My roommate does yoga.

LEILA

My roommate stole grape juice from the dining hall and is trying to ferment it into wine but it's covered with all this gross mold and she won't throw it out.

(In the bathroom. ANNIE and LEILA are facing the audience as if they are looking into mirrors placed above their respective sinks. They are brushing their teeth. On their little shelves, in addition to toothpaste and toothbrushes are two identical jars of Noxema

cold cream face wash. OTHER GIRL is also there, some distance away. ANNIE AND LEILA now address each other.)

LEILA

Which of the boys here do you think is hot.

ANNIE

Like none. There are no cute boys this year. It sucks.

LEILA

I know.

(more tooth brushing)

ANNIE

I totally think Rose is having sex with the fourth floor boys' counselor Steve.

LEILA

No way! But isn't he married, and doesn't he already have like two kids?

ANNIE

Yeah. That makes it worse. And also, he's totally sleeping with Cindy's counselor Jennifer.

LEILA

Eweew.

(They spit and rinse their mouths and brushes.)

Leila

And how is your class, Geopolitics.

ANNIE

It's good. Right now, we're doing the Middle East. Yesterday, we had a debate and I got to be, Iraq. It was cool. Really cool. What are you doing in Architecture?

LEILA

We are designing pavilions, and then we are going to build to-scale models of them. Like, outdoor pavilions, with pillars and fountains. Mine is going to be just for squirrels. The squirrels of this place, that leap out and scare people.

ANNIE

Yeah they totally do. I was going to spit out my gum, in this one trashcan. I lean my face over and press the lid to open it, and this insane squirrel flies out of it, and I jump back and yell, aaaahhhh! It could have been rabid and bitten half my face off.

LEILA

Whoa.

ANNIE

Yeah from then on I have just been spitting it on the sidewalk. Messy, but safer.

LEILA

You know what we should do. We should dye streaks in our hair with Kool-Aid. Have you ever done it before?

ANNIE

Sure. I did it last year. My mom was super mad and there was nothing she could do. What color should we dye it?

LEILA

I was thinking, purple.

ANNIE

Naw, that's too subtle. How 'bout green.

LEILA

Yeah. That's better. Let's do it.

ANNIE

Cool.

(They cover their faces with cold cream. Something happens and the two identical containers of cold cream are knocked to the floor. The face-washing girls grab them as they roll.)

LEILA

Eeww! This isn't my jar of Noxema! Look this one has a big gross hole dug in the center!

ANNIE

Eeww it's like the living room of a worm!

LEILA

Well I didn't dig a big gross hole in my Noxema! It's totally yours!

ANNIE

Yours!

LEILA

Yours!

ANNIE

Yours!

LEILA

Yours!

ANNIE

Yours!

LEILA

Yours!

ANNIE

You always make your bed but I can see the hidden secret behind that fastidious front.

LEILA

Yes but your tough girl act conceals your inner emotional vacancy and need. Hole girl! Hole!

ANNIE and LEILA

Hole! Hole! Hole! Hole! Hole!

OTHER GIRL

Hole! Hole! Hole!

ROSE

(entering)

Young ladies! What's this? What's this? What's this noise about? Quiet!

LEILA

Annie is totally stealing my Noxema!

ANNIE

Hole girl!

Hole!
LEILA

Hole!
ANNIE

Hole!
LEILA

Hole!
OTHER GIRL

ROSE
These Noxema jars are exactly the same. Girls, the only difference is this rather cavernous hole.

She made it!
ANNIE

She did!
LEILA

She did!
ANNIE

It was her!
LEILA

(ROSE takes her finger, swipes Noxema from one jar and plugs the hole in the other.)

ROSE
There. No more holes. Lights out is in five minutes girls! Five minutes, or no more free time, no more free time for you!

Eeeeeeeek! Eeeeeeeek! Eeeeeeeek! Eeeeeek!
ANNIE and LEILA

Eeeeeeeek!
OTHER GIRL

(ANNIE and LEILA run around the bathroom in circles, grab their toiletries and flee. OTHER GIRL also runs around then leaves. ROSE folds

her arms and nods, satisfied. She turns off the lights and exits.

END OF SCENE

Scene 6

(ANNIE and LEILA are carrying two extra-long twin-sized mattresses across the stage, one each. ANNIE leads the way.)

ANNIE

(pauses, thinking she hears something)

Sh, wait!

LEILA

What! What!

ANNIE

Okay. We can go.

LEILA

Where are we putting them where are we putting them?

ANNIE

Next to the toilets in our bathroom, so the boys can't get them back. Come on. You're being slow.

LEILA

Okay!

(They carry them off the other side of the stage.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 7

LEILA

(to audience)

I have started a war.

It is a Peppermint War, the peppermints being stolen from a large basket at the exit of the dining hall. They are new, they are new this term, so the counselors have not yet taken them away. We seize them, we hoard them by the hundreds in our pockets, in our backpacks, and we sneak them back into our dorms, and throw them, at each other.

ANNIE

(also to audience)

This is how it starts. Then, we grow craftier. We develop strategies, and also cannons. The counselors become involved, in a war for hall supremacy. The weapons become increasingly technologically advanced.

(ANNIE and LEILA squat behind a bunker made of mattresses and pillows. ANNIE has a small makeshift cannon, and LEILA a rudimentary sniper rifle. They fire peppermints at a target offstage. The target returns fire. ROSE enters from behind ANNIE and LEILA carrying a larger and more sophisticated weapon.)

ROSE

Hsst! Girls! You're never going to beat them with those! Move over!

(ROSE squats behind the bunker, loads her weapon and fires.)

KEVIN

(offstage voice)

Ah! Oh, no!

(ROSE, LEILA and ANNIE continue to fire. The return fire grows more and more feeble.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 8

ANNIE

(to audience)

One night each term, each hallway group gets to have campfire night. We sit in a circle marked off by a ring of light reflective white stones.

(ANNIE, LEILA and OTHER GIRL sit in a semicircle. ROSE holds a flashlight under her chin so that her face is lit up with eerie shadows.)

ROSE

Listen girls. Listen. This is the tale of The Boy Who Would Not Poop.

Once upon a time there was a boy who was afraid to poop in public. He came to this camp for the first time and held out for seven days.

ANNIE

Seven days!

LEILA

Eweew!

ROSE

In the meantime there was a conflict developing between our camp and the lacrosse camp in the dorm building next door. There was flexing, there was posturing, there were insults veiled and stated and hurled. High up in the wall of the boys' bathroom there was a window that was always kept open on account of ventilating the smell. Beneath that window on the seventh day appeared a plastic bag of poop.

LEILA

Eww!

ANNIE

Eww!

LEILA

That's gross!

OTHER GIRL

That is so gross!

ROSE

The boy who would not poop discovered it. He brought his counselor and pointed to it. Look Luke, he said. It's a plastic bag of poop. You're right, Luke said. That's gross. It was the lacrosse camp, the boy said. I saw them.

So Luke picked up the bag, assembled some other male counselors and went to confront the lacrosse camp counselors. This is unacceptable, they said. This is totally over the line.

Oh yes, they said. We'll speak to our boys. Not acceptable. Will not happen again.

Two days go by. It happens again.

GIRLS

Eeeeew!

ROSE

Lacrosse camp, Luke, the boy tells him. I saw them loft it through.

The assemblage of male counselors returns. The lacrosse men deny it. No way, they said. We've been watching our boys. It was not us this time. Not us. It did not happen again.

Luke calls his boys in, one at a time, determined to find the cause. Finally it comes out that the boy was pooping in his closet with the door closed while his roommate was out, filling the bag and placing it in the bathroom.

GIRLS

Oh! Oh, eewww, gross!

LEILA

So what happened?

ROSE

They unlocked the handicapped bathroom. I don't know. When you are a counselor, you always figure something out.

LEILA

Oh Rose that story was awesome!

ANNIE

You are the best counselor ever.

LEILA

Tell us another!

ANNIE

Tell us another!

LEILA

Another story!

OTHER GIRL

Story!

ANNIE, LEILA, OTHER GIRL

Story! Story! Story! Story!

ROSE

All right. How about, the Claw Knife Saga. It was the beginning of first term, last year. Although the counselors come four days before the campers and the administrators arrive even earlier than that, somehow, no one noticed that during the previous school year, an underground weapons shop had opened up on campus.

ANNIE

Oh!

LEILA

No way!

OTHER GIRL

Weapons?

ROSE

For real. It was just within the boundaries where the fourth years are allowed to go during free time. It was underground, not in the sense that it was illegal - in fact it was not - but that it was actually under the ground. You had to go down this steep flight of stairs and across this long hallway and through a door in the back, and there wasn't a very good sign. That is why none of the adults had found it. Naturally, a trio of fourth-year boys found it on the very first day.

LEILA

Eeek!

(ANNIE giggles mischievously)

ROSE

Ah-hem.

LEILA

Annie was poking me! Annie was poking me! Okay.

ROSE

The leader of the pack - let's call him Adam - had a photographic memory, and naturally had lodged the exact wording of the camp rules into his brain. At that time weapons were on the list of items you were forbidden to bring to camp - no one had ever thought to prohibit their acquisition once there.

GIRLS

Oooohhhh.

ROSE

The smallest of the boys was still concerned. So just to be safe, they decided not to purchase your more basic, switch-blade or long-handled knives, but rather this type of extended brass knuckle. It slid on like a ring -

(demonstrates)

but poking out from the top of it was a sharp, steel-bladed claw-knife.

(ROSE crooks her pointer finger like a claw and makes a swiping motion.)

ANNIE

Aww! No way!

LEILA

It's just like Wolverine!

ANNIE and LEILA

(while making the swiping motion towards each other)

Claw-knife! Claw-knife! Claw-knife! Clawknife!

OTHER GIRL

(makes swiping motion)

Clawknife! Clawknife!

ROSE

Exactly. So each of the three boys purchases his very own claw-knife.

(She makes the swiping motion. From this point onwards she makes the swiping motion each time she says 'claw-knife. The girls squeal.)

ROSE

The knife-seller wraps them up and places them discreetly in thoroughly non-conspicuous bags. The boys return and hide the wrapped claw-knives in their underwear drawers. Of course, there's no point to possessing such an item if one does not show it off. So that night the boys take them out and show them to all their friends. Everybody wants one. The next day six more boys head out to purchase their very own claw-knives.

GIRLS

(making the swiping motion)

Claw-knives! Claw-knives! Claw-knives! Claw-knives!

ROSE

Naturally with nine of them in the dorm, the counselors find out and tell the administrators, who immediately begin the investigation.

LEILA

What happened?

ROSE

Well, it was truly a situation. Nobody wanted to send nine boys home on the third day, when after all, they had not technically broken any rules. In the end, it was decided to send home, Adam, him having led the charge, and one other boy, who had purchased the longest and therefore most potentially dangerous claw-knife.

(pause)

Of course, after that, they changed the boundaries and amended the rules.

(pause)

The end.

ANNIE and LEILA

Oooooohhh! Oooooooh! That was a good one! That was a good one too!

OTHER GIRL

(contemplatively)

We are not one single person from beginning to end of life, but rather, a series of consecutive selves. Growing up is not a line. It is a cycle: death, rebirth, death, rebirth. It is like being stabbed with kitchen knives, and then, you are haunted, always, by the ghosts of your previous selves.

(awkward pause)

ROSE

Eat your vegetables or you'll get scurvy.

Come on girls. Let's go. Nobody wants to be the slow antelope.

END OF SCENE

Scene 9

(It is the after-dinner evening activity period. Each night, each camper must sign up for the organized, supervised evening activity in which they will participate the next day.)

ANNIE

No matter what kind of camp you are at there will always be strange activities. Lanyard making. Scherenschnitte. Candle dipping. Bocce.

(ANNIE, LEILA and KEVIN engage in a strange activity.)

KEVIN

Man. This activity sucks.

LEILA

Yeah.

ANNIE

This isn't working at all.

KEVIN

Yesterday, I did Penuckle. That one was fun.

LEILA

You should try Modern Dance. You get to express yourself.

ANNIE

We liked that one. Also, Archery, and Etruscan Pottery was pretty good.

KEVIN

That's the thing. I don't really understand how it can be Etruscan pottery, if we are the ones who make it. It's not like we're Etruscan.

LEILA

I think they mean, Etruscan style pottery. But yeah, it's pretty dumb. What I really want to do, is Tissue Paper Kite Flying. I think it would be hard to make a kite out of tissue paper, but somehow they do, and they look really pretty when they are up there, with all the colors.

KEVIN

Oh yeah, my roommate did that one. He said it was kind of like, origami, the way you fold it into shapes, and then you use this kind of special glue to attach it to dowel rods and popsicle sticks. He has his now hanging in our room, only the front part got smashed up when it landed. We should totally try to sign up for that one tomorrow.

LEILA

Oh yeah, we totally should. I'm going to make mine, pink with orange and red on the sides.

KEVIN

I like red, blue and green. That's my favorite color.

LEILA

Oh, that's mine too!

ANNIE

My first year at this camp, in the talent show, I chugged four liters of Dr Pepper and threw it up onstage.

LEILA

Eeewww.

KEVIN

They let you do that.

ANNIE

I would practice in the dining hall at lunch. I ate nothing, nothing at all for 48 hours beforehand so my stomach would be totally empty. I had an assistant, an assistant and two plastic cups. He would be filling the one while I drank from the other. There was a musical backdrop but I forget what music we played. They had a trashcan, they put a trashcan on the floor in front just over the lip of the stage. They were expecting my vomit. It wasn't like normal vomit though, with chunks, it was fizzy Dr Pepper mixed up with my mucus.

KEVIN

Last week, I left muddy shoes in the bathroom.

LEILA

That's not so bad.

KEVIN

Well, it was the second time the bathroom got trashed, and it was only the first week. Somebody knocked over the trashcan, and someone else forgot to turn off the shower. They called all the second floor boys into the dining hall and the camp director yelled at us and then he made us all put our heads down until someone confessed. It took twenty minutes but all three of us went up there. That night they called a special assembly of the floor again at hall time and the three of us had to each give a separate individual speech of apology.

ANNIE

That sucks.

LEILA

Why'd you leave your shoes there in the first place? That was dumb.

KEVIN

We had just come back from field day and we had like fifteen minutes to change and I left them there because they were all muddy, but then I forgot to go back and get them.

LEILA

Also you guys should just move your trashcan to a better spot so you don't keep on knocking it over. That's what the girls did.

ANNIE

Yeah. We're smarter than that.

KEVIN

Where did you guys put yours?

LEILA

We put ours next to the shower.

KEVIN

Huh. That's much better than in the shower where we have been putting it. That's how it gets knocked down, when people keep trying to move it, so they can bathe.

LEILA

Did you ever come to this camp before?

KEVIN

No. Last summer, I went to a filmmaking program. This summer, I was supposed to go the Clairmont site, but then they got swine flu and shut that one down.

LEILA

I heard about that! That's how come we have all this hand sanitizer.

KEVIN

Yeah. The first night, we were having like water gun fights with it, you know, using those big pump nozzle spouter things. The floor got all wet with it and sticky and the counselors were stepping in it and falling, and then they made a rule against it so now we have to do it in our rooms on the sly.

LEILA

The first thing we did was spray all those stupid posters they made us make on the first day.

ANNIE

Yeah, no swine flu on the no swine flu posters, ha.

KEVIN

And then we got that crazy guy Marcus to drink two sprays of it on a dare.

ANNIE

That's my guy.

KEVIN

Oh that's right. I forgot you were Marcus' girlfriend.

ANNIE

That's me.

KEVIN

You should have seen it. You should have seen it Annie. He held out for twenty minutes, and his face turned bluish red, and then he threw it up.

LEILA

You guys are totally made for each other.

ANNIE

Ha-ha. (pause) So, I'm going to take my strange activity project, and use it to clog the toilet. You guys want to come watch?

LEILA

No, I'm going to help Kevin with his. I think I might have just figured it out.

KEVIN

Okay. Okay, sure.

ANNIE

Okay. See you later.

(ANNIE stalks off purposefully, confident of impending success. LEILA and KEVIN gaze into each other's eyes, increasingly smitten.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 10

(Later, that night. LEILA sneaks a peak from the side of the stage. The coast is clear. Gleefully, she drags KEVIN's mattress across the stage. KEVIN peaks out from the opposite side and spots LEILA. He drags LEILA's mattress across the stage with equal enjoyment. Perhaps they bump butts or pull each other's hair in crossing. ANNIE appears with a peppermint canon and bombards KEVIN and LEILA with mints. KEVIN and LEILA finish dragging the mattresses and exit when they have finished crossing. ANNIE ventures off in search of new prey. ROSE enters, and notices the scattered mints. She puts her hands on her hips and sighs. Then, she takes a peppermint sniper rifle out of her bag, loads it up with mints, and goes off to hunt campers.)

END OF SCENE

Scene 11

(LEILA and KEVIN are flying their tissue-paper kites during activity hour the next day. ANNIE is in the background, still working on her kite. She folds and glues with focus and determination, but cannot get the pieces to all stick together.)

LEILA

I love it. I love it here, this moment. I love this camp, never having been to it before. I love the swine flu, the swine flu posters, the closets, the mattresses, the bathrooms, the peppermints, the people, the strange activities, Architecture, the stories, the rules, Annie, and you.

KEVIN

Leila. I love you too, Leila.

LEILA

You do?

KEVIN

Sure. You are the hottest girl on campus, and also, the nicest. I like your eyes and hair.

LEILA

Oh thanks. You're really special too. Kevin. (pause) Does this mean that we are officially going out?

KEVIN

It does if you want to. If you want to, I mean.

LEILA

Oh yes. I want to. I want to go out, and also to be in love with you. We can go to the dances. We can dance, and hold hands, and kiss when the counselors aren't looking.

KEVIN

We can sign up for all of our activities together. Every day.

LEILA

Oh Kevin. We can start rumors. Inspire jealousy. We can set up all our friends. I have never been so happy.

KEVIN

Me neither. You are what I came to camp for, Leila.

LEILA

Yes. Me too. This.

KEVIN

Leila. Kiss me, Leila.

(They kiss. Their kite strings become tangled together, and fall. ANNIE watches for a moment, then rises to address the audience.)

ANNIE

So Leila and Kevin are officially going out. They have claimed the third floor study lounge as their free time makeout spot, from Arnold and Beatrice who had already broken up. Marcus and I, we don't bother with that. We host exclusive invite-only co-ed orgies in the laundry room. The counselors have not yet discovered us.

END OF SCENE

Scene 12

(ROSE addresses the audience, wearing an astronaut costume.)

ROSE

On Saturday nights here, there are dances. Each dance has a different theme. Select the mythological or other fantastic creature that most closely embodies your current psychological state. This will be your costume.

(It is the Saturday evening dance of the second weekend at camp. ANNIE wears an old-fashioned, Count Dracula-style vampire costume. LEILA wears the costume of a mermaid who has grown legs in order to walk on land. KEVIN is dressed as a garden gnome.

There is a montage of brief mini-scenes of the dance, like clips cut and pasted into an end-of-camp video. The campers dance individually, in pairs and in groups to a variety of songs. ROSE serves refreshments, offers directions, supervises, prowls, at one point pushes a slow-dancing KEVIN and LEILA further apart.

The dance ends. ROSE switches to attempting to round up campers, including ANNIE, who evades her. KEVIN and LEILA find a moment alone.)

LEILA

Oh no! Oh no, the song is over! The dance is over! Oh Kevin, I never want it to end!

KEVIN

I love you Leila.

LEILA

I love you Kevin. You are the best thing about this camp.

KEVIN

You too Leila. (pause) You know, I've been thinking. I know it might be a little early in our relationship, but I have been thinking about the future. For us. You live in Chicago, and I live in Denver. When camp is over, we would be totally long distance. And what if we can't do long distance. I mean I've never done long distance, and you've

never done long distance, and my roommate says long distance is hard. I don't think, I don't think I could handle it, the emotional stress. What do you think? I think, we had better break up.

LEILA

Kevin! Oh Kevin, are you breaking up with me?

KEVIN

No! Yes. I mean, I am provisionally breaking up with you. Provisionally, because what else are we supposed to do! I don't know. I don't know what we are supposed to do.

LEILA

You know what Kevin? You are so stupid. I mean you are really dumb. We could have had like, six more days together. But, whatever. You SUCK. I am totally over you.

(LEILA storms off.)

KEVIN

But Leila. Leila, I love you.

END OF SCENE

Scene 13

(The dorm common room during free time the next day. KEVIN sits on the sofa, perhaps playing with a Rubic's cube or other non-electronic puzzle. ANNIE addresses the audience.)

ANNIE

The next day my hall group wins the Scavenger Hunt Mega Challenge. Yes.

Later in the common room Kevin sits looking totally dejected. (to KEVIN) What up Kev.

KEVIN

Hey.

ANNIE

You look totally dejected.

(KEVIN sighs.)

ANNIE

I know you guys lost but gosh. It's not that bad.

(KEVIN sighs again, more dramatically.)

ANNIE

I heard you broke up with Leila.

KEVIN

Leila broke up with me! Oh Annie. It's so messed up.

ANNIE

I'm sorry. Leila was upset too. I caught her crying out by those azalea bushes. You know what would make you feel better? An orgy. In the laundry room. 4:15 to 5.

KEVIN

I don't know Annie. I'm just so distraught. Maybe I should get back with Leila, and just wait and break up with her later. I feel, I could never love anyone but her right now.

(ANNIE sprouts fangs.)

KEVIN

Wait, Annie? What's up with your face?

(ANNIE transforms into an actual old-fashioned, Count Dracula-style vampire.)

ANNIE

(as vampire)

I'm telling you, it's all about the orgies. Here's a sneak preview.

(ANNIE sits next to KEVIN. She leans over as if to kiss his mouth but puts her nose there instead. Her lips travel down his chin and settle on his throat. She bites him. LEILA suddenly walks in. Her face turns white.)

LEILA

KEVIN! ANNIE! Oh my god no!

(LEILA rushes out. ANNIE and KEVIN freeze. ROSE enters. It is as if she is at the campfire again, but speaking this time to a different audience.)

ROSE

Leila was so upset upon seeing Annie biting Kevin's neck that she rushes out, distraught. She misses him. She misses his smell. She does the only thing she can think of to do: runs upstairs to his room on the second floor, grabs his aerosol deodorant and huffs it until she passes out and dies.

(LEILA becomes a ghost.)

ROSE

We take her to the emergency room but it is too late. She is already dead. Kevin hears she has been taken to the ER. He still has feelings for her. He did not really want to break up. He does the only thing he can think of to do. Runs upstairs to his room on the second floor and grabs his shaving razor. Slits his wrists, up and down his arm.

LEILA

(as ghost)

Kevin! No!

ROSE

We take him to the ER but it is too late. He, too, is already dead.

We phone the parents. Send the bodies home.

What else could we do?

Mourning is declared: a different costume. An assembly is held with speakers.

Days pass. Time turns chunky. Class periods glide into meal periods into activity periods into nights. Study halls. Counselor pranks. Baseball games.

The eventual banning of peppermints. Ketchup bottles. Contact lenses.

Mysterious episodes of biting.

The talent show. The final dance.

Camp ends.

END OF SCENE

Scene 14

ANNIE

Fulfilling my destiny, I have become a vampire. I suck out all the marrow of life.

LEILA

I have become the ghost of camp, a haunter of temporary places. A household god without a house.

ROSE

This one was the last. The last one of the collected stories of gifted camp. I have completed my degree in astrophysics, journalism, organic farming, or golf. I have acquired a suitable entry-level job in the field of my choosing and moved out to the suburbs. Become a tree, a column, a sentinel. I guard the secret treasure.

(A moment passes, then all look over at KEVIN.)

KEVIN

I am simply dead.

(Peppermints rain down from above. ROSE catches one in her hand, unwraps it, puts it in her mouth, crumples the wrapper, and walks offstage.)

THE END