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THOUGHT TRAPS

A DRAMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Thought Traps
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Characters

2M + 5W + 1M or W + 2 Non-Binary

- Ariane (she/her):** A deeply moody teen who walks around with their own personal black cloud.
- Kate (she/her):** Presents as a perfect, happy girl. But is she?
- Essa (she/her):** Ariane's older sister. Left home a year earlier. Exists in the play only in Ariane's memory.
- Benita (she/her), Barbara (she/her), Brad (he/him), Billie (they/them):** a.k.a. The Buzzy Bees. This improv group is always thinking. The problem is they overthink everything and can never agree.
- Andy (he/him):** Kate's older brother. Exists in the play only in Kate's memory.
- Shane (they/them):** Ariane's foster parent. Non-binary. Uses the honorific Mx. (pronounced Mix) Very easy going even though they have faced opposition to their choices.
- Mr./Ms. Lang (she/her OR he/him):** The Vice Principal. A little out of touch but trying.

On diversity

It is the expectation of the author that this group of characters can and should be played by a diverse group of actors.

While Ariane is currently identified as she/her, the character could be portrayed as a non-binary character if the actor wished to portray them as such. The Buzzy Bees could absolutely be made up of different cultures, (see the Appendix for a Spanish version of Benita's lines), different gender identities and more. This is by no means to suggest some roles are less important and thus easily changed. The Buzzy Bees, for example, are actually the most important characters in the play because they drive the pace of the show through humour, allowing the Kate/Ariane story to unfold. Andy, who appears only momentarily, is the catalyst that causes Kate to take a huge turn. You are encouraged to represent the diversity of your community in all ways, on stage. You may change pronouns as needed.

Time

The play takes place in the present day. Your hometown.

Set

Cubes for seating and platforms to create different playing areas. Alternatively, use set pieces that can easily represent more than one location so that scene changes are not necessary.

DO NOT use blackouts to facilitate scene changes. The flow of the scenes is more important than a realistic set.

Text Note

This one-act play was adapted from the a cappella musical *Shout!* by Lindsay Price and Kristin Gauthier.

Bell rings. Lights up on ARIANE sitting on a cubel chair, waiting outside the Vice Principal's office. She is writing intently in a notebook. ESSA sits either behind ARIANE, or on a cube with her back to the audience. There, but not fully visible.

The BUZZY BEES are centre stage, in a huddle, talking animatedly to one another. KATE enters. As soon as she does, one of the BUZZY BEES sees her and indicates to the others. They all nod and clap in unison (in a "go team" kind of way). The BUZZY BEES run to get in front of KATE.

BENITA: Kate, give us an object!

KATE: What?

BILLIE: Give us an object. Anything at all.

KATE: *(thinking)* Um...

BRAD: Don't think too hard.

BILLIE: Anything at all...

KATE: *(she takes off her shoe)* Here you go. *(handing the shoe to BRAD)*

BRAD: Nice!

BARBARA: Good thinking!

BILLIE: We're using her shoe?

BENITA: Billie! Don't insult the volunteer.

BARBARA: *(to KATE)* A shoe is an excellent offer.

BILLIE: No one said anything about other people's shoes.

BARBARA: Use the object as something else. Go!

BRAD: *(putting the shoe on his chest)* I need triple cc's stat! *(passing the shoe to BARBARA)*

BARBARA: They'll never find the microfilm. *(evil laugh)* Ha ha! *(passing the shoe to BENITA)*

BENITA: *(as a phone)* One large pizza extra cheese! *(passing the shoe to BILLIE, who holds it as far away as possible with two fingers)*

BILLIE: Toe fungus is real, you know.

BARBARA: Billie!

BILLIE: Sorry, Kate. (*tosses the shoe to KATE*)

BRAD: What do you think?

KATE: Sounds great.

BRAD: We've been practicing a lot.

BARBARA: We've been... talking a lot. Loudly.

BRAD: It's important to hone in on our brand.

BARBARA: Our brand requires a lot of loud talking. And voting.

BILLIE: Should we descend into anarchy?

BENITA: And we've hardly been fighting.

BARBARA: All we've been doing is fighting! That's what loud talking is!

BRAD: Fighting is good. It means we're passionate!

BENITA: You may fight. I do not.

BARBARA: We spent two weeks fighting about our name.

BRAD: Honing in on our brand...

BENITA: Fighting is bad for my skin.

BILLIE: I still think "The B Team" is better than The Buzzy Bees.

BARBARA: How many times do I have to say this? If we call ourselves the B Team it suggests somewhere out there there's an A Team and A teams are always better than B teams!

BILLIE: But it makes more sense. Brad, Barbara, Billie, Benita – The B Team.

BARBARA: Our name is The Buzzy Bees. End of story.

BILLIE: Let's take a vote.

BARBARA: No votes!

BILLIE: Anarchist!

BRAD: Branding!

BENITA: (*putting a hand to her face*) Stop shouting! You're going to make me wrinkle!

KATE: (*easing away*) I've got a meeting with Mr. (Ms.) Lang. See you later!

The BEES argue as they exit. KATE sits beside ARIANE. NOTE: If ESSA is sitting in the spot that KATE will occupy, ESSA moves right beforehand and stands behind ARIANE. KATE never sees or acknowledges ESSA. ARIANE does not look up.

KATE: Hi! (*ARIANE says nothing*) Are you part of this meeting? I don't think we've officially met. I'm Kate. This school isn't as big as the one I went to in Vancouver but it's amazing how many people I still don't know. That's my goal, by the end of the year to be able to put a name to every face. I've got the faces, but I'm not so great on names with the faces. Which is kind of important.

ESSA: Who is this?

ARIANE: (*to ESSA, but still focused on her writing*) I have no idea.

KATE: What are you writing?

ARIANE: What?

KATE: What are you writing?

ARIANE & ESSA: None of your business.

KATE: (*shrugs and continues on*) So. Mystery meeting. Suspense! Usually Mr. (Ms) Lang's not that keen to see me. I have to beg for five minutes to discuss the school's recycling policy which is ridiculous. Has he (*she*) come out yet?

ESSA: Ugh. She's giving me an ice cream headache.

ARIANE: Do you always talk so much?

KATE: Huh?

ARIANE: (*puts away her notebook*) Mr. (Ms.) Lang's still in his (*her*) office.

KATE: Great. So. What are you here for?

ARIANE: I'm about to get suspended.

KATE: Really???

ARIANE: You've never even borrowed a paperclip, have you.

KATE: I have. Sure I have.

ARIANE: But it was an accident.

KATE: Why would I steal a paperclip? What did you do?

ARIANE: (*leaning in*) What do you think I did?

KATE: (*almost a whisper*) Did you kill someone?

ESSA laughs out loud.

ARIANE: Do you think I'd be sitting outside the VP's office if I did that?

KATE: I don't know. I don't even borrow paperclips. What did you do?

ARIANE: I was provoked.

ESSA: (*as if responding to hearing what the teacher said and can't believe it*)
What did he say about me?

KATE: About what?

ARIANE: Teachers shouldn't be allowed to – he shouldn't have... (*she doesn't finish*)

KATE: What? Allowed to what? What?

ARIANE: Do you think you could make your eyes a little less like a deer in the headlights?

KATE: Sorry.

ARIANE: You don't talk back to teachers.

KATE: (*as if that would never cross her mind*) No.

ESSA: (*rolling her eyes*) Shocking.

ARIANE: That's why you're talking trash and I'm getting suspended.

KATE: Recycling.

ARIANE: Whatever.

KATE: And actually not that either. It's something else.

ARIANE: I don't care.

KATE: Do you really get suspended for talking back to a teacher?

ARIANE: If you shove them while you're talking back you do.

ESSA: Should've done more.

KATE: You shoved a teacher? *Shoved* a teacher?

ARIANE: What century do you live in? Teachers get shot, knifed, all I did –

KATE: You shouldn't shove people. Physical violence doesn't solve –

ESSA: Don't lecture her!

ARIANE: Don't lecture me. I'm about to be suspended, so I have nothing to lose.

KATE: Sorry. *(beat)* But still. *(beat)* It's not nice.

ARIANE: Nice? I have to be nice too? Do I look nice?

KATE: People don't always act the way they look.

ESSA: You do.

ARIANE: *(same time as ESSA)* You do.

KATE: How do you know?

ARIANE: You have Pollyanna stamped on your forehead.

KATE: I don't. Do I? *(rubs her forehead and smiles)* Ha. What did he do?
The teacher.

ESSA has picked up a flashlight and a blanket (which are behind the cubes) and runs centre. She is in a much younger memory.

ESSA: Ari! Ari, where are you?

ARIANE: *(looking at ESSA)* He insulted my sister.

Lights change. ESSA and ARIANE become 5 and 7 years old. ARIANE runs over to ESSA.

ESSA: Ari! I got the flashlight aaaaaaand the blankets!

ARIANE: Yay! Where should we build the fort?

ESSA: Here!

They sit downstage. They throw the blanket over their heads and shoulders, giggling.

ESSA: Perfect. What should we call it?

ARIANE: Uhhhhhhhh – Oh! Rainbow Sisters Secret Super Club!

ESSA: Rainbow Sisters Secret Super Club!

ARIANE: We should get kitty and lady mermaid, and Snow Princess –

ESSA: (*putting the flashlight under her chin and a low scary voice*)
Ariannnnne... Ariannnnne... (*she gives an evil laugh*)

ARIANE: (*with a little bit of a cry, scrambling back and standing*) Oh! Don't do that!

ESSA: (*immediately sorry*) Hey, did I scare you? I'm sorry. I'll never do it again. Ok?

Lights change. ESSA shakes her younger self off and stands. (leave the blanket and flashlight on the floor) ARIANE watches her.

KATE: I hope you don't get suspended.

There is a pause. ARIANE is still staring at ESSA.

ESSA: You should answer the idiot.

ARIANE: Huh?

KATE: I hope you don't get suspended.

ARIANE: (*turning to KATE*) What do you care?

KATE: Smart people who do not so smart things should get a second chance. (*stands*)

ESSA: (*moving to stand beside ARIANE*) She doesn't know you.

ARIANE: (*same time as ESSA*) You don't know me.

KATE: Not yet. It was nice to meet you, Ariane. (*looking off*) Oh! Hi Mr. (Ms.) Lang. (*exits*)

ARIANE: You don't know me! You don't know anything.

ESSA: Stupid nut-job.

ARIANE: (*same time as ESSA*) Stupid nut-job.

Music plays. ARIANE takes a postcard out of her pocket. It is worn, and well read.

ARIANE: (*reading*) Ari! Everything's great.

ESSA: (*speaking out, not to ARIANE*) Jimmy's the best.

ARIANE: He's up for this great job.

ESSA: As soon as we're settled, I'll send details.

ARIANE & ESSA: Love you. Essa.

ESSA: P.S. Don't worry. I mean it.

ARIANE: (*reflecting*) Don't worry...

ESSA: (*turning to ARIANE*) That's what I said. Everything's fine.

ARIANE: A postcard is not fine. I need to talk to you.

ESSA: You are.

ARIANE: The real you, not the voice in my head, not memories on constant replay. I'm a mess. I'm shoving teachers.

ESSA: You hardly touched him. I would have shoved him into next week.

ARIANE: (*holding her head*) I can't do this.

ESSA: I told you. Don't worry.

ARIANE: Then why am I always worried? I haven't heard from you in months. I don't know if you're alive or...

ESSA: Don't you trust me? That's not fair, Ari. (*moves away*)

ARIANE: Fair. Huh.

Music fades. ARIANE shoves the postcard back in her pocket. MR.(MS.) LANG, SHANE and KATE enter. ESSA watches.

LANG: Ariane, join us, will you?

ARIANE: Why?

KATE: Hi! (*she waves sheepishly at ARIANE*) Remember me?

ARIANE: It's a stretch but I think I can manage.

LANG: We have a situation to discuss.

ARIANE: I don't want to discuss anything. Tell me how long I'm suspended for and (*to SHANE*) how long I'm grounded for and I'll be on my way.

SHANE: You know we don't ground at MainSpring.

LANG: And I'm not going to suspend you.

ARIANE: (*not happy*) Why not? I shoved him.

LANG: (*with many appropriate gestures*) Yes, yes, indeed. Physical contact did in fact occur and there are, absolutely, rules and protocols to follow but I have found that unique situations need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. And in this case, this is the first time we've had to discuss consequences at the VP level and given that, and given the circumstances of the situation, of which I have been made fully aware of, it is my conclusion that the traditional route might not be best in this case.

ARIANE: What are you talking about?

SHANE: In short, the school is going to try something different. And I think I support it.

ARIANE: Shane, please, not counselling. I don't want to talk to anyone.

LANG: Now, Ariane, you're among friends! We understand what you're going through.

SHANE: Oh dear, don't say that.

LANG: Ms. Mula and I have had a long conversation about – (*or, if need be depending on the actor, change the "Ms." to "Mr." as the example of misgendering*)

SHANE: It's Mx. (*Mx is a non-binary option for an honorific. It is pronounced Mix.*)

LANG: What?

SHANE: Mx. Mula. Mx instead of Ms. Thanks.

LANG: Oh! Sorry. I thought I heard wrong.

ARIANE: They (*not he or she*) said Mx. What's so hard to understand?

SHANE: Ariane.

LANG: Mx. Huh. I love it!

SHANE: I thought about Captain but I didn't have the right hat.

LANG: What?

SHANE: I'm kidding. (*referring to ARIANE*) Should we...

LANG: Right. (*back on track*) Ariane. We understand what you're going through.

SHANE: Oh dear.

ARIANE: You don't understand anything!

Lights change. ARIANE runs to ESSA. ESSA calmly folds up the blanket. ARIANE paces. This is a memory.

ESSA: Stop pacing.

ARIANE: How can you be so calm?

ESSA: Because there's nothing to worry about.

ARIANE: What are we going to do?

ESSA: Relax.

ARIANE: Relax? Relax? Dad's not coming back.

ESSA: Good riddance. His sentence (*as in prison sentence*) isn't long enough. (*beat*) Listen to me. Ok? We're in this together.

ARIANE: I guess.

ESSA: You guess? I know. We're together. Always. And if they try to separate us, I'll have something to say. Tell me you're not worried.

ARIANE: (*not convincing*) I'm not worried.

ESSA: Good.

SHANE: Ariane. Are you listening?

Lights change. ARIANE turns back. ESSA slowly exits with blanket and flashlight.

LANG: We're going to start you in a peer mentor program. And Kate will be your mentor.

ARIANE: (*not happy at all*) No.

KATE: Hi!

LANG: I know she hasn't been at Clearmount long but she's really fit into our student leader community. Perhaps we'll keep the shoving to a minimum with someone your own age to talk to.

ARIANE: You can't be serious. This can't be serious. Shane?

SHANE: We're serious.

LANG: I think Kate will be a perfect companion.

ARIANE: I do not need a babysitter.

KATE: Peer mentor.

ARIANE: That sounds so much better. Mr. (Ms.) Lang, I'll do anything else.

LANG: Given all the factors in the circumstance and the situation, this is what –

ARIANE: (*interrupting*) Shane, please!

SHANE: Not this time, Ariane.

ARIANE: Can't I get solitary confinement? Or bathrooms? Seriously, I'll clean bathrooms.

SHANE: That's not a bad idea.

LANG: Now Ms. Mula, um, Mx. Mixla, No –

ARIANE: I won't do it. You can't make me! (*runs off*)

SHANE: That went well. Good luck, Kate.

On the other side of the stage, the BUZZY BEES enter mid conversation. BRAD has his nose in his phone. LANG, SHANE and KATE exit.

BENITA: I can't wear black and yellow and I definitely can't wear stripes.

BILLIE: Why not?

BARBARA: We need a look. It doesn't have to be black and yellow. It doesn't have to be stripes.

BRAD: Did you know butterflies can taste with their feet?

BENITA: (*ignoring BRAD*) What's next, antennas and wings? Stingers?

BARBARA: I didn't say anything about stingers! You're overthinking this.

BILLIE: I could wear wings.

BARBARA: We're not wearing wings.

BENITA: We're not wearing stripes.

BRAD: Did you know a group of parrots is called a pandemonium?

BILLIE: (*ignoring BRAD*) Let's take a vote!

BENITA: What good has voting ever done?

BRAD: Did you know an octopus will punch a fish for no reason?

BARBARA: Brad. What are you doing?

BRAD: We should have fascinating animal facts at our fingertips to sprinkle into scenes. That would be good for our brand.

BENITA: Sprinkle? I don't sprinkle.

BILLIE: If we're the Buzzy Bees, shouldn't we have fascinating bee facts?

BRAD: *(as if this is a really bad idea)* No. Way too obvious.

BARBARA: But an octopus punching a fish is on brand.

ARIANE stomps on with KATE following. The BUZZY BEES silently continue their conversation.

ARIANE: Would you stop following me around?

KATE: I'm not following you. I'm supposed to be with you.

ARIANE: *(whirling around to face KATE)* No. You're not.

KATE: But Mr. *(Ms.)* Lang –

ARIANE: I don't care what Mr. *(Ms)* Lang says. Got it?

KATE: *(happily, singsong)* Got it!

ARIANE: *(whirling away and on the move)* This is embarrassing. I have a reputation.

KATE: *(following)* Oh, I know.

ARIANE: *(stopping suddenly, causing KATE to stop suddenly)* What's that supposed to mean? *(KATE doesn't say anything. ARIANE turns.)* What does 'Oh, I know' mean?

KATE: It means I know you have a reputation. People talk... about you?

ARIANE: *(stepping even closer to KATE)* Who?

KATE: People. That's how you get a reputation. Are you going to shove me? *(ARIANE steps away)* It's not bad. It's not like you embezzled money or tried to steal an old lady's identity or poisoned the water supply or – *(ARIANE steps forward again)* There are worse things than being called Doom and Gloom.

ARIANE: *(she's never heard this)* Who calls me that?

KATE: I don't know. Not me. Some people.

ARIANE: *(glaring around)* They do not.

KATE: Absolutely. They do not.

ARIANE: (*stepping toward KATE*) Now you're lying.

KATE: (*stepping back*) It does seem that my survival instincts kick right into the gear of liar, liar, pants on fire.

ARIANE: Fine. (*takes a few steps back, folds her arms across her chest*) Go.

KATE: Go where? Oh, go on? Right! Well... You're somewhat of a dark cloud, Ariane. Not that I'm saying you don't have stuff to be dark about.

Lights change. ESSA enters, as if sneaking in late at night. She kicks a cube as if stumbling over something in the dark. ARIANE turns. KATE is frozen, not aware of the conversation.

ESSA: (*after kicking the cube*) Ow!

ARIANE: Essa?

ESSA: Oh. You're up.

ARIANE: Where were you?

ESSA: Why are you up? It's almost two o'clock.

ARIANE: I was waiting for you. You said you'd take me to the book signing. You promised.

ESSA: Oh yeah. Was that today? (*shrugs*) We'll go tomorrow.

ARIANE: She won't be there tomorrow! I told you Rubaszek's my favourite writer, I told you this was the only day she'd –

ESSA: It's a book signing, Ari. It's not the end of the world. So you didn't get an autograph. We'll do something else, just as good. Ok? (*beat*) I'm starving. Did you eat? I bet you didn't. Come on, I'll make us something. (*she exits*)

Lights change. ARIANE turns to KATE.

ARIANE: What do you know about my stuff?

KATE: Nothing.

ARIANE: Let's keep it that way. Got it? (*exits*)

KATE: (*happily, singsong*) Got it! (*takes a deep breath and lets it out*) Round one and no one got a black eye. Success!

Just as she's about to follow ARIANE, BRAD waves her over.

BRAD: Kate! We need an outside opinion.

BARBARA: You're overthinking this.

BILLIE: A simple vote would solve everything.

BENITA: *(to KATE referring to ARIANE)* Still stuck to "Doom and Gloom", huh?

KATE: I like her.

BILLIE: You're the only one.

BARBARA: She's changed a lot.

BENITA: Didn't her mother... I don't know...?

BILLIE: Something with her dad...?

BARBARA: He's in prison.

BENITA: Oh. *(with a shudder)* Gross.

BARBARA: And her sister took off – It's all a mess.

BRAD: She should join the choir. Singing always puts me in a good mood.

BARBARA: That's your answer? Singing? Singing will solve all her problems?

BRAD: It might.

BARBARA: That's the stupidest thing I ever heard.

BRAD: Singing makes the world go 'round, you know!

KATE: *(trying to get back on track)* Um, there was something you wanted to ask me?

BILLIE: Would you expect an improv group called "The Buzzy Bees" to visually represent their name?

KATE: Like with wings and stingers?

BENITA: Ah ha! Ah ha! See, she doesn't like it!

BILLIE: She didn't say she didn't like it.

BENITA: We'll be laughing stocks!

BARBARA: I didn't say anything about wings and stingers! A little black and little yellow that's it! We'll all wear garbage bags and be done with it. *(she throws her hands up and exits)*

BENITA: *(following off)* You're making me wrinkle!

BILLIE: *(following off)* I want to vote on the wings!

BRAD: You're lucky, Kate.

KATE: How so?

BRAD: You don't have problems like Gloomy does. Count your lucky stars. *(exits)*

Music plays. KATE turns to leave. As she does so, ANDY, KATE's brother enters. He is a memory in her head (like ESSA). The two stare at each other before ANDY speaks.

ANDY: If I die, it's your fault. Remember that.

KATE grabs her head and runs off. ANDY exits. ARIANE sneaks on, ESSA follows. ARIANE looks left and right and is satisfied she's alone. ARIANE sits, opens her notebook and pulls out a postcard. ESSA stands behind.

ARIANE: *(reading)* Ari! Everything's great.

ESSA: *(speaking out)* Like the picture? Weather's warm. Jimmy's job didn't pan out.

ARIANE: Don't worry. Lots of options.

ARIANE & ESSA: Soon as we're settled I'll –

ESSA: Send you my address. Essa.

ARIANE: *(turning the postcard over)* It's a stupid picture.

ARIANE puts the postcard in her notebook. She buries her head in her writing. Music fades.

ESSA: *(hovering)* What are you writing?

ARIANE: Things.

ESSA: Are you writing about me?

ARIANE: You think everything is about you.

ESSA: I don't think anything. I'm just hanging out. (*taps ARIANE on the head*)

KATE enters, sees ARIANE and waves. ARIANE groans. She tries to focus on her writing.

KATE: Hey!

ESSA: How does she find you?

KATE: There you are. (*sits beside ARIANE.*) You ran out of class so fast, I didn't get a chance to ask – what do you think of that website analysis assignment for Ms. Pallo? I think it sounds like busy work and I don't want to do it, I will of course, but what's the purpose –

ARIANE: Stop!

ESSA: I am not getting another ice cream headache. (*strolls off*)

ARIANE: (*to ESSA, KATE does not hear this*) Go ahead, leave me alone to deal with this! (*to KATE*) If you're going to hunt me down, fine. But don't talk. (*continues writing*)

KATE: No talking. Got it. (*pause*) This is nice. You're looking at a parking lot but it's quiet. Great for writing. I'll bet that's why you sit here. Nobody bothers you.

ARIANE: (*not looking up*) You're bothering me.

KATE: Well, there's sitting and there's bothering.

ARIANE: Talking is bothering.

KATE: Technically, we're not talking. The exchange of words is happening, success, but this isn't talking. Talking-talking is a more –

ARIANE: Talking about not talking is talking! We are not talking. Got it? (*goes back to writing*)

KATE: (*singsong*) Got it! (*pause*) I talk a lot, I know. (*pause*) When I get going, it is hard to stop. No breaks. It's a word tsunami, I am riding the wave train – watch out! She! Won't! Stop! Talking! Whoa! (*ARIANE snorts and immediately tries to hide it. KATE smiles.*) My brother used to say... (*she stops*) Andy used to call me Niagara Falls. I "Niagara Falls" at the mouth.

ARIANE: (*not looking up from her writing, but she likes the image*) That's appropriate.

KATE: Ha. *(beat)* I should come with a safety warning. *(beat)* And an umbrella.

ARIANE: And a rain poncho.

KATE: And wellies.

ARIANE: *(now looking up)* What are those?

KATE: You've never heard of wellies? Wellington boots?

ARIANE: That is of no help.

KATE: They're the only suitable footwear for extreme weather.

ARIANE: It's a ridiculous name for footwear.

KATE: Come on, galoshes is so much worse. Wellies for life!

ARIANE: You wouldn't catch me wearing anything called – *(standing abruptly)* What are you doing?

KATE: Sharing my vast knowledge of rain gear?

ARIANE: I told you, we're not talking.

KATE: *(happy, singsong)* Got it!

ARIANE: *(warily)* And, why, why are you always happy about that?

KATE: Because. Saying "Got it" today, doesn't mean that "Got it" is forever. Things change. People change. "Got it" is temporary. That fills me with hope. One day, we could even be friends.

ARIANE: Never gonna happen. *(ARIANE is on the move)*

KATE: Oh, we're moving. *(following ARIANE)*

ARIANE: *(whirling around to face KATE)* I don't have any friends and I don't want any friends. Friends are a waste of time. Friends do nothing but leave you when you need them most. Got it?

KATE: *(astonished by that last statement)* Wow.

ARIANE stares for a moment and runs off. KATE exhales and stands.

KATE: I have to get more exercise.

Light changes. Music plays. KATE freezes. ANDY enters. He is holding a small box. KATE does not look at him, but she can feel him. She sighs, slowly sitting,

slumping forward with her head in her hands. She loses all of her “happy” facade.

ANDY: Hey Katie Kate.

Lights change. The ANDY music morphs into Upbeat “intro” music. KATE and ANDY are frozen as the BUZZY BEES run on. They are practicing their introduction. They neither see nor acknowledge KATE and ANDY.

BARBARA: Ladies and gentlemen, we are the Buzzy Bees!

BENITA: Welcome to our show!

BRAD: Wait a minute. (*the music cuts out*) I thought we talked about pronouns.

BARBARA: It’s the introduction.

BILLIE: It’s important.

BARBARA: Billie, I respect your choices. Truly. But right now, at this moment, we’re saying our name with energy. That’s it.

BENITA: And doing the welcome.

BARBARA: Name. Welcome. Energy.

BILLIE: Pronouns. It’s not like we’re doing *War and Peace*.

BRAD: We can be energetic and inclusive. Start again.

BRAD shoos everyone off stage. The music starts up. The BUZZY BEES run on.

BARBARA: Hello, everyone! We are the Buzzy Bees!

BENITA: Welcome to our show!

BARBARA: Barbara! She/her.

BRAD: Brad! He/him.

BILLIE: Billie! They/them.

BENITA: Why do I have to go last?

The music cuts out. BARBARA throws up her hands.

BILLIE: We should take a vote to decide the order.

BARBARA: I give up. (*exits*)

BENITA: (*following off*) We should do it alphabetically.

BRAD: (*following off*) Doesn't that mean you're still last?

BENITA: What alphabet are you following?

The BUZZY BEES exit. Lights change. ANDY strolls over to KATE.

ANDY: Hey Katie Kate.

KATE: Leave me alone, Andy.

ANDY: Why would I? You have everybody fooled, don't you. Happy Kate, positive Kate...

KATE: Shut up!

ANDY: Awww. (*tapping KATE's head*) You try so hard to keep me stuffed into a dark corner. It never works. (*KATE buries her face in her hands*) Why do you always remember me this way? Huh? Why don't you remember the good times? Like when we ate all our Halloween candy on the way home before Mom could take it away, and we both puked all over the front lawn. (*laughing*) She was so mad.

KATE: (*holding her head*) Please go away.

ANDY: Why don't you remember calling me your hero? Huh? Isn't that what you said once? Andy, you're my hero. (*right in her ear*) And this is how you remember me? Tragic.

KATE: (*shudders and stands, getting away from ANDY*) I can't help what I remember.

ANDY: Poor Kate. Stuck in her head. What's this, replay number 3,000? Tragic.

KATE turns to face ANDY. This is a replay of a memory. It is the last time KATE saw ANDY.

KATE: Andy? What are you doing here?

ANDY: (*tries to hide the box he's holding*) Oh hey, hey Kate. I was just, I was –

KATE: Did you break in?

ANDY: Just a basement window. Nothing big. What's with Dad putting super locks on the doors? Paranoid much? How can I see you if I don't break in?

KATE: (*referring to the box*) That's mine.

ANDY: Look. I need a little bit of money. Just a little. I'm going to get clean you see, I got it all lined up so one last fix won't harm anyone. Right?

KATE: I'm not giving you anything.

ANDY: Don't be like that. Give me a chance. You believe me, don't you? It's going to work out, this time. I'm telling the truth. I'm going to get clean. Isn't that what you want?

KATE: Yes.

ANDY: So let me take the money! (*beat*) This is your fault, really. You've always kept it in the same place. I knew exactly where to look. (*refers to the box*) Haven't you ever heard of a bank?

KATE: Put it down.

ANDY: I need money.

KATE: No.

ANDY: Please?

KATE: I'm going to call the police.

ANDY: Fine! (*throws the box down*) Happy? Feel good about yourself? There's your precious stash. What are you going to do with it? Nothing good. Waste it on stupid, pretty, plastic things. Why bother to actually help someone? (*KATE picks up the box and looks inside*) I didn't take anything. I've changed.

KATE: You should go. Before Mom and Dad get home. They don't need to see this.

ANDY: Fine. (*beat*) If I die, it's your fault. Remember that. (*exits*)

KATE: How could I forget?

Music plays. KATE starts to exit. She feels her phone buzzing. She pulls it out and reads a text. It's not good. KATE runs off. On the other side of the stage. ARIANE enters. LANG follows on. Music fades.

LANG: Ariane, Ariane!

ARIANE: Oh. Hi Mr. (Ms.) Lang.

LANG: Glad I caught you; you're hard to find.

ARIANE: I do my best.

LANG: Ha ha. Oh, you. How are things with Kate?

ARIANE: Swell.

LANG: Really?

ARIANE: Couldn't be better. We're lifelong friends.

LANG: *(with a little fist bump into the air)* Wonderful! I knew it! *(looking around)* Where is she?

ARIANE: No idea.

LANG: What?

ARIANE: I mean...she's in the bathroom. I have no idea how long she'll be. Nor should I, it's kind of rude to ask personal questions like that, don't you think?

LANG: Right. Ah... *(with no idea what to say, turns and walks quickly away)*

KATE enters from the other side of the stage. She is a changed girl. Her shoulders are slumped.

ARIANE: *(seeing KATE)* Speak of the devil. Haven't seen you in a couple of days, Pollyanna. Back for another kick at the can? *(KATE continues crossing. ARIANE stops her.)* Hey, hey! You bug me like a leech on a bloody knee and now you ignore me? I know you're up to something. *(KATE tries to get past but ARIANE stops her again)* Hey! What's going on?

KATE: *(wrenching away)* Leave me alone.

ARIANE: Hey...

KATE: You don't care.

ARIANE: I know, I know, but you look... upset.

KATE: *(mocking)* Even Pollyanna gets upset.

ARIANE: I didn't mean – *(really bad at this)* Do you, uh, is something wrong? Something's wrong.

KATE: You're going to have to talk to Mr. (Ms.) Lang. I don't know when I'll be back.

She continues to cross, ARIANE gets in her way again.

ARIANE: Back? Where are you going?

KATE: None of your business.

ARIANE: That's my line. (*KATE tries to get around and ARIANE stops her again*) Wait. Wait, a second. What happened? Are you ok?

KATE: I'm fine.

ARIANE: You're not fine.

KATE: Get out of my way.

ARIANE: No! (*she surprises herself*) I mean...you should...I should...
What happened?

KATE: My parents have to go to Vancouver. They have to identify a body. It's probably my brother.

ARIANE: (*this is huge*) What?

KATE: And I can't go. I'm not allowed to go. So I'm going to sit at home and wait for a result that is going to tear my family apart, again.

ARIANE: I didn't know.

KATE: Why would you? You've never bothered to find out anything about me. Why would you think I'm anything other than the label you stamped on my forehead from day one.

ARIANE: That's not fair...

KATE: Go find yourself another punching bag. (*exits*)

ARIANE: Kate!

Music plays. ARIANE moves to sit. She is pacing and thinking, at a loss about what just happened. She sits, tries to write in her notebook and nothing comes. She throws the book down, gets up and resumes pacing. The music fades.

SHANE: (*offstage*) Ariane.

ARIANE: What?

SHANE: (*offstage*) What are you doing?

ARIANE: Nothing. (*suddenly calls out*) Uh, I'm very busy, I'm doing – I'm cleaning my room. I'm really busy cleaning! I'm too busy to do anything you have planned.

SHANE enters with an amused smile on their face.

SHANE: Now that was too much. Homework, maybe. Cleaning your room? Never.

ARIANE: Did you want something?

SHANE: Everything all right? You seem worried.

ARIANE: (*defensive*) Are you spying on me?

SHANE: (*smiling*) It's an old house with squeaky floors. The others are requesting a pacing moratorium. At least until they're done their homework.

ARIANE: Oh. Sorry. (*beat*) I'm fine. I have – I'm thinking about something. Leave me alone.

SHANE: Ok.

ARIANE: (*defensive*) You're not going to ask what it is?

SHANE: (*not offended*) Ariane, I get grief if I ask you what you want for breakfast. If you want to work it out yourself, that's fine. I'll be downstairs if you want to talk.

ARIANE: I don't want to talk.

SHANE: Ok.

ARIANE: (*blurting out*) I think I know someone in trouble. Not big trouble. I don't know. I don't know what's wrong with her. And she's not my friend, it's – never mind. And I don't care what she does. But I don't want her to – she's not – It's not my fault, she's always so stupid happy, how was I supposed to know there was something wrong? (*beat*) Really wrong. I saw it and I didn't... I didn't do anything. Why can't I... (*beat*) I don't give you grief over breakfast, do I?

SHANE: Not too much. Only if there's no toast. (*turns to leave*)

ARIANE: Shane? (*SHANE turns back*) Do you...do you get a lot of grief, in general?

SHANE: (*this is an unexpected question from ARIANE*) Sure. Comes with the territory.

ARIANE: How do you handle it?

SHANE: Different ways. I try to talk nicely to myself when others don't. And I didn't handle it so well at the beginning.

ARIANE: What did you do?

SHANE: Let's say I didn't stop at shoving teachers. *(beat)* I'm here if you need anything.

ARIANE: I don't. *(SHANE starts to exit)* Shane? *(SHANE turns around)*
Thanks.

SHANE exits. During the above, ESSA has slowly (really slowly) entered to stand beside ARIANE. ARIANE pulls a postcard out of her pocket.

ESSA: Ugh! What a phoney. Do not trust her. Not for a second. *(This is an intended misgendering. If need be, change the "her" to "him.")*

ARIANE: *(reading)* Ari! Everything's great. In LA now. Very sunny. Every girl I see is blonde and tan. Jimmy and I broke up. As soon as I'm settled you can come out. We can go to the beach! Essa. *(ARIANE stares at ESSA)* You're never settled. *(realizing, sad)* You're never settled.

A school bell rings. ESSA exits. ARIANE paces. THE BUZZY BEES enter, all talking at once about what game they're going to play. Once they move to a designated spot, they all nod and clap in unison in a "go team" kind of way.

ARIANE turns and approaches. But the BEES are too caught up on their improv to notice. Note: This is scripted as a One Word at a Time game. If your group would like to change the game or improvise here, go for it! The BUZZY BEES are focused on their improv, not noticing ARIANE until she interrupts. She keeps waiting for them to stop until she boils over.

BARBARA: The Best Birthday Ever!

ALL FOUR: The Best Birthday Ever!

BILLIE: Today

BENITA: is

BRAD: my

BARBARA: birthday

BILLIE: and

BENITA: there

BRAD: is

BARBARA: a

BILLIE: GIGANTIC

BENITA: RAINBOW

BRAD: covered

BARBARA: present

BILLIE: in

BENITA: the

BRAD: driveway.

BARBARA: I.

BILLIE: have

BENITA: NEVER

BRAD: seen

BARBARA: anything

BILLIE: SO

BENITA: HUGE!

BRAD: It

BARBARA: could

BILLIE: be

BENITA: anything.

BRAD: It

BILLIE: could

ARIANE: (*interrupting*) If you don't stop I'm gonna pull all your tongues through your noses!

This stops the BUZZY BEES in their tracks. They are shocked into silence.

ARIANE: Kate Crosbie, do you know her? (*silence*) Do you know her?

BRAD: Is it all right to talk?

ARIANE: (*rolling her eyes*) Yes.

BARBARA: Everyone knows her.

ARIANE: Then where does she live?

BILLIE: Uh, I don't know.

BENITA: Me neither.

BRAD: We see her at lunch, but she hasn't been around for days.

BARBARA: Is there something wrong?

ARIANE: I'll tell you what's wrong. Everyone in this school knows her and everyone likes her and no one can tell me where she lives!

BRAD: Why don't you ask at the office?

ARIANE: (*with menace*) Are you telling me I should go to the office and ask and they'll tell me?

BARBARA: Um, I'm pretty sure it's illegal to give out student information.

BILLIE: You might have to growl a bit.

ARIANE: Good idea.

ARIANE stomps off. The BUZZY BEES look at one another.

BILLIE: I was kidding.

BENITA: Do you think it's safe to start again?

BRAD: Maybe we should put a little distance between us.

BILLIE: Do tongues fit through noses?

BARBARA: Let's not find out.

The BUZZY BEES scurry offstage. KATE enters carrying a bag and sits. ARIANE re-enters, with ESSA right behind. ESSA is also carrying a bag. ARIANE wants to go to KATE, but hesitates. She turns away to face ESSA. The lights change. This is a memory.

ARIANE: Essa? What are you doing?

ESSA: You're home early.

ARIANE: What's the bag for?

ESSA: You're going to be happy for me no matter what, right? You're going to trust me.

ARIANE: About what?

ESSA: I gotta go. Jimmy asked me and I can't pass it up.

ARIANE: You're leaving?

ESSA: It's not forever.

ARIANE: You're leaving me?

ESSA: Don't be so dramatic! *(beat)* I'm... going ahead, that's all. *(thinking fast)* And when I'm settled, you'll join us.

ARIANE: Let me come with you now.

ESSA: No.

ARIANE: Why not?

ESSA: You have to stay.

ARIANE: Why?

ESSA: Because I said so. It's better. Ok? Don't worry.

Lights change. ARIANE turns to look at KATE.

ARIANE: Essa. What should I do?

ESSA: Why are you asking me, huh? I'm long gone.

ARIANE: *(sighing)* Yeah. I know.

ESSA: Maybe I didn't care about you, Ari.

ARIANE: Don't say that!

ESSA: I didn't say it. You did.

ESSA moves upstage. ARIANE takes a deep breath and walks over to KATE.

ARIANE: Hey...

KATE: What are you – How did you find me?

ARIANE: I'd like to say razor-sharp intellect... but I might have growled at a student secretary, who didn't really know the rules. Then I saw you leave your house and here we are. *(beat)* What's the bag for?

KATE: None of your business.

ARIANE: How come you're at the bus station? (*KATE doesn't answer*)
I'm going to take a wild stab and say you want to take the bus
somewhere.

KATE: Will you please – (*she sits bolt up*) It's 12:30!

ARIANE: So?

KATE: We have English. You're going to run out of chances.

ARIANE: Nice to see you haven't completely changed.

KATE: Mr. (*Ms.*) Lang knows why I'm not at school.

ARIANE: But not, I'll bet, why you're at the bus station.

KATE: It's a free country. I can be wherever I want. (*she sighs, weary*)
Go away, Ariane.

ARIANE: I'm sorry your brother died. (*pause*) You can't go out there
on your own.

KATE: Why not?

ARIANE: Something will happen to you. You're –

KATE: I'm what? Huh? What am I? Not as tough as you?

ARIANE: (*backing down*) I don't know.

KATE: Exactly. I have to catch my bus. (*she stands*)

ARIANE: (*leaping up*) Don't go. Really. Kate, I'm asking you as a, as a...
friend.

KATE: A what?

ARIANE: Are you going to make me say it twice?

KATE: Yes.

ARIANE: A friend. I would like to be your friend. (*makes a face*)

KATE: It doesn't count if you make a face afterward.

ARIANE: Ok, I suck at this. I know it. (*beat*) Don't go.

KATE: Give me one good reason why not. (*ARIANE doesn't say anything*)
Thought you couldn't.

ARIANE: (*blurting out*) I want to be a novelist. That's what I'm writing.



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