

Field Work
by
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a 10 minute farce

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CHARACTERS

Albert Barlow - A proper, New England caterpillar collector.

Mindy Barlow - His daughter, just 15. On a quest for true love.

Darlene Hansen - Loves birds more than people.

Kip Hansen - Her son, 15. Lost in thought.

TIME

Daytime - The Present

PLACE

The dark jungles of South Dakota.

SETTING

A rope is staked into the ground, dividing the stage between the Barlow's and the Hansen's. A backpack is on the Barlow side.

1 Field Work

AT RISE: MINDY is writing in her journal.

MINDY

Dear journal. We are still in South Dakota and dad is doing his best to make it dull. He says he doesn't have enough to write his article yet, but I think, "It's about caterpillars, so who cares?" If Kip wasn't here, I would be totally bored. We're soooo lucky that our parents chose the same campsite. I haven't sorted out my feelings yet but...

KIP enters. They see each other and move close, but are mindful of the rope that separates them.

MINDY (CONT'D)

I thought you were going to be with your mom all day.

KIP

Oh, ma forgot something so she sent me back. Mindy, I'm writing a poem. It's about you. It's about how I feel about you. It's about you and how you make me feel.

MINDY

Say it for me.

KIP

It isn't finished.

MINDY

Say what you have. I'll love it.

KIP

"Your hair is like beams of sunshine and your lips shine like you just put on lip balm." That's all so far.

MINDY

You think I'm like sunshine?

KIP

Your hair.

The trance of love is broken as ALBERT enters. He cradles a large, dead caterpillar in his hands.

2 Field Work

KIP

I should go.

KIP exits.

ALBERT

I requested that you not interact with them, honey.

MINDY

Is that another dead one?

ALBERT

I do not understand. Another highly poisonous caterpillar missing part of its head as though it simply exploded. I'm an enthusiast, not a scientist, damn it.

DARLENE (O.S.)

Kip!

ALBERT

No wonder I can't concentrate!

DARLENE enters. The adults square off like territorial dogs separated by the rope.

DARLENE

Busy ruining my work, Barlow?

ALBERT

Work? Is that what you call getting day drunk?

DARLENE

My swallows have developed a far more complex societal hierarchy than your stupid worms ever will. And if I trip over this rope once more, there'll be hell to pay, Barlow.

ALBERT

I was forced to cordon off certain zones. I did not expect vacationers to arrive and despoil this site.

DARLENE

"Vacationers" is it?

ALBERT

Perhaps you prefer 'amateur travel writer?' Still unpublished, last I heard.

3 Field Work

DARLENE

You're a son-of-a-bitch, Barlow. One more son-of-a-bitch pissing on my work. Kip!

KIP enters with a beebee gun.

KIP

I found the beebee gun, ma.

DARLENE

Give it to me.

ALBERT

What is that for?

DARLENE and KIP start to leave.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

That rifle, Mrs. Hansen. Darlene!

DARLENE

Protection, Barlow. You never know what you'll find in South Dakota.

KIP and MINDY are staring at each other. DARLENE whacks KIP.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Stop looking at her. She's the enemy.

KIP and DARLENE exit.

ALBERT

It's her. That walleye has been shooting my caterpillars. Oh, I will have words with her. Darlene! Darlene!

ALBERT crosses the rope boundary, running after DARLENE. MINDY reopens her journal and resumes writing.

MINDY

We are star-crossed lovers, separated by our warring families. And it's not fair. Why should our love be doomed just because our parents don't get along? Oh, Kip. Kip. Wherefore art thou my Kip?

4 Field Work

ALBERT enters at a quick pace carrying the beebie gun.

ALBERT

I've gone on the offensive, honey. Hold this.

ALBERT drops the gun in MINDY'S hands and rummages through the backpack.

ALBERT (Cont.)

It was exhilarating. That mealybug took aim at me, but I was too quick. I wrestled it away and gave her a good crack on the temple. More of an accident, really, but by God it was exhilarating.

ALBERT finds a basket.

MINDY

You hit Mrs. Hansen with the gun?

ALBERT

And she went down just like her Northern Swallow.

MINDY

Where are you going?

ALBERT

To take prisoners.

MINDY

Was Kip safe? Daddy?

ALBERT exits.

MINDY (CONT'D)

It's not fair. What about our love?

KIP supports DARLENE as they enter. DARLENE crosses the rope.

DARLENE

Albert Barlow! Get out here you coward! Barlow!

KIP

Ma, it was an accident. Calm down.

5 Field Work

DARLENE

What if an aneurysm goes off in my brain? If I get a blood clot it's that Yankee's fault.

KIP

It was an accident.

DARLENE

Barlow!

DARLENE staggers off stage.

MINDY

Oh Kip. Our lives have been ruined.

KIP

Totally. I mean like, we're in South Dakota all summer.

MINDY

Sometimes I feel like I'm a traitor to my family and other times it's like we're being persecuted for our love.

KIP

Our love is stronger than being persecuted.

MINDY

Is my hair really sunshine?

KIP

And your lips are like Chap Stick.

MINDY (Seductive)

You look dry. Do you need some Chap Stick?

Before they kiss, ALBERT returns with the basket.

ALBERT

This should leave an impression on that buffalo. Ha ha!

ALBERT sees MINDY and KIP standing too close together. He lunges at them.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Egg of the devil, step back from my baby girl.

6 Field Work

MINDY

Daddy, stop persecuting us.

ALBERT

Take a message to your mother, evil one. Tell her I've taken hostages.

KIP

If I'm a hostage, how can I take her a message?

ALBERT

Not you, twit. I've taken her precious swallow eggs prisoner. Tell her that, you stooge.

KIP runs off.

MINDY

Daddy, don't call Kip names.

ALBERT

Until that skink accedes my demands, we're going into the bush.

MINDY

What bush?

ALBERT

We're at war now, honey. We can't trust them.

MINDY

I'm not at war.

ALBERT

Into the bush. Ha ha!

With the basket, ALBERT grabs MINDY and pulls her off. KIP and DARLENE enter a moment later.

DARLENE

What? He has what?

KIP

Eggs. I don't think he'd eat them. Maybe if you tell him you won't attack?

7 Field Work

DARLENE

That fathead is holding Northern Whooping Swallow eggs hostage? What kind of maniac are we dealing with? The Northern Whoop is an endangered species!

DARLENE trips on the rope.

KIP

Can I help?

MINDY enters with the basket.
Seeing the commotion, she hides.

DARLENE

Don't touch me, boy! That pretentious blue blood has had it in for me since day one. I'm going to show him what for.

KIP

I think he's just scared.

DARLENE

He better be. Because I'm going to kill him. Kill him before he kills me.

DARLENE exits. MINDY comes out of hiding. KIP sees her. They run to each other.

MINDY

Oh, truest love.

KIP

I thought you were gone forever. What are we going to do?

MINDY holds up the basket.

MINDY

I took this when daddy stopped to do number two. It's up to us to forge the peace. Kip; take the eggs to your mom. Tell her we want to forge the peace.

KIP

Okay. I'll tell her we want forged peace. Stay here. I think she went towards the caterpillars.

MINDY

Okay. I love you too.

8 Field Work

KIP runs off with the basket.
MINDY sits down and journals.

MINDY (CONT'D)

I love him. I love Kip Hansen. Mrs. Mindy Hansen. Mrs. Kip Hansen? Mrs. Mindy-Kip Hansen-Barlow. Barlow-Hansen?

O.S. KIP begins screaming. He enters frantically brushing off caterpillars. He collapses.

KIP

Caterpillars! Caterpillars! They got me. Poisonous. Stung. Bit. Dying.

MINDY

Kip. No. I love you. I want to marry you. I want to be Mr. and Mrs. Kip and Mindy Hansen and Barlow.

KIP spasms. MINDY screams and, from the backpack, pulls out a bottle of pills and a jar of liquid.

MINDY (CONT'D)

I can't live if you die. I'm coming with you.

MINDY swallows as many pills as she can, washing them down with the liquid in the jar.

Locked in combat, ALBERT and DARLENE enter. They battle across the campground until noticing their children.

ALBERT

Stop. Stop. (To MINDY) What happened?

MINDY

Kip is dead. The caterpillars ate him to death!

KIP

I'm poisoned.

9 Field Work

MINDY

And I love him. I can't live without him. So I took your heart pills and chugged turpentine. You doomed our love.

DARLENE picks up the bottles.

DARLENE

What you "chugged" was vitamin C and whiskey.

ALBERT (To KIP)

The caterpillars are only poisonous to birds, you numbskull.

MINDY

Oh, thank God. My love!

DARLENE

Your damn worms attacked my son.

ALBERT

Your devil son almost drove my daughter to suicide.

DARLENE

Your hussy daughter made my son an idiot. This isn't over, Barlow. Don't think I won't write a letter about you to the Duluth Conservation Society.

ALBERT

I have now dedicated my life to ruining your reputation. You and everyone like you. Pack your things, Mindy. We're leaving.

Before MINDY and KIP can kiss,
they are pulled apart and dragged
off by their parents.

MINDY

Call me.

KIP

I don't have a phone!

THE END