

HAPPY CAMPER

Written by

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EXT. CAMPSITE 1 - DAY

A clearing in the trees on the side of a gravel road. Completely vacant, save a makeshift fire pit.

CLAIRE (34) surveys the site, a duffel bag slung across her shoulder. She's wearing a dress that would look more at home at the beach than the forest.

Next to her stands her husband, GEORGE (37). He's carrying an identical duffel bag along with a CamelBak backpack, a separate backpack, and a tent bag. He's balding and grinning.

GEORGE

So?

CLAIRE

It's different than the picture.

George laughs. Claire looks pained.

GEORGE

Wait 'til I get the tent set up.  
Then it'll be a proper campsite.

He sheds his bags one by one, keeping the tent bag over his shoulder.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Want to go get water while I set up the tent? Our bottles are in the car -- I brought a couple of extras just in case.

CLAIRE

In case of...?

GEORGE

In case ours get a little scratched up. You lose the outer coating, you lose a little bit of the cooling technology.

CLAIRE

Right.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

Claire trudges down the road with two full water bottles tucked under her arm. As she nears the campsite, she notices a MAN (29) in the site diagonally across from hers.

He's tall with long hair, sitting in a lawn chair and absentmindedly picking at a stick with a pocketknife.

He doesn't have a tent -- instead, his sleeping bag lies on the grass. As Claire passes, he looks up and gives her a nod.

She tries to wave, but the water bottles give her limited motion. Chicken arms. She looks down, blushing.

EXT. CAMPSITE 1 - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Claire returns to the site to see that George has finished constructing their tent. It's a bright orange eyesore that looks much too big for two people.

He emerges from behind it.

GEORGE

There you are! Looks great, right?

CLAIRE

It's huge.

GEORGE

Well, it had the best durability out of all the ones I looked up.

She puts the bottles down, throwing a look over her shoulder. She can see the man in his campsite. He raises eyebrows at their tent and shares a convivial glance with Claire.

A SPRAYING sound interrupts the moment. Claire turns back around to a cloud of sunscreen wafting her way.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Want some sunscreen, honey?

CLAIRE

I'm fine.

LATER

The sun is lower in the sky.

Claire sits in a lawn chair facing away from the makeshift fire pit. George walks in and out of the frame, carrying perfectly cut logs and depositing them in the pit.

Claire looks over to the other man. He's balling up a piece of paper, efficiently creating a teepee above it with the sticks he was whittling earlier.

George squats by the edge of the fireplace and starts building a strange structure with the logs.

GEORGE

Honey, can you come hold this?

Claire turns around begrudgingly. She walks to the fire pit and holds up a log so that George can place another one on top of it. It's reminiscent of Lincoln Logs.

CLAIRE

What are you making?

GEORGE

Oh, I read about this online. The Tower Method. Keeps the fire really nice and hot.

Claire glances over at the other man. He absentmindedly throws a match into his fire pit. It bursts to life.

EXT. CAMPSITE 1 - NIGHT

Claire and George sit around their fire. The Tower Method seems to be confining the fire to the interior of the tower.

Claire covertly watches the other man strumming a guitar. We can't hear him over:

GEORGE

*Take me home, country roads, to the place I belong! West Virginia, mountain mama, take me home, country roads.*

Momentary relief.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

*Oh, take me home! To the place I belong! West Virginia! Mountain mama! Take me home, country roads.*

George sighs in contentment.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Alright, give me another campfire song.

CLAIRE

(turning back to their conversation)

Um... sorry, *Country Roads* was all I had.

EXT. CAMPSITE 1 - NIGHT

The fire is on its last legs. George is nowhere to be seen -- presumably in the tent. Claire's still outside.

Her gaze flicks back to the other man. He looks up at her. They make eye contact again.

Gathering her confidence, she waves. He smiles, waves back.

Claire looks back into the tent -- no signs of movement -- then stares at the fire for a moment. It's dead.

She gets up from the chair and goes over to

EXT. CAMPSITE 2 - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The man stands up from his lawn chair, raising his eyebrows.

CLAIRE

Hi.

MAN

Hi...

CLAIRE

Sorry. Our fire's dead. Wondering what technique you used on yours.

The man shrugs, laughs.

MAN (DREW)

I don't know if I have a real technique. I'm Drew, by the way.

CLAIRE

I'm Claire. No tent?

She gestures to his unhoused sleeping bag.

DREW

Yeah... I like sleeping under the stars, you know? More connected with the space.

CLAIRE

So you come up here a lot, then?

DREW

(nodding)

I've been coming since I was a kid. How about you?

CLAIRE  
This is my first time.

He glances at their tent.

DREW  
... And your huge tent?

CLAIRE  
My husband picked that out. It's durable. Apparently.

They share a laugh at George's expense.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)  
This whole trip was his idea, actually. He did all the research.

DREW  
Possibly too much research?

Claire pauses, unsure why she's struck with the sudden urge to defend George.

CLAIRE  
Yeah.

There's a bit of silence.

DREW  
How long have you two been together?

CLAIRE  
Coming up on three years.

Drew exhales as if he's just heard an unbelievable statistic.

DREW  
Wow. That's great.

CLAIRE  
Yeah. How about you, are you...?

DREW  
Oh, no. Well, I was. Married for just over a year.

CLAIRE  
Oh, I'm sorry.

DREW  
Nothing to be sorry about. It wasn't meant to be.

(MORE)

DREW (CONT'D)

I need a little bit of independence, you know? A little time to myself. I still see her around sometimes, and she's great. It just didn't work out.

CLAIRE

Yeah. I see.

DREW

Marriage is work. They don't tell you that.

CLAIRE

No, they definitely don't.

Claire looks back at her campsite. Smoke from the dead fire drifts up into the sky.

DREW

But you came over here to learn my fire-starting method, not to chat. Let me see what I can do...

Claire turns back.

CLAIRE

Oh, don't worry about that. It's fine. Our fire was fine.

DREW

You sure?

He peers over into their site.

DREW (CONT'D)

It's looking pretty small.

CLAIRE

We're leaving tomorrow night anyways, so we'll be fine. Thanks, though.

DREW

Sure.

INT. CAMPSITE 1 - TENT - NIGHT

Claire climbs into the tent. It's nice. George is reading by lamplight.

GEORGE

Hey, honey. Fire finally die?

CLAIRE

Yep.

GEORGE

That was a good one. Lasted a while.

CLAIRE

It did. How's your book?

GEORGE

Oh, it's great. About this guy who basically decides to row across the Atlantic Ocean with pretty much no experience. He gives himself two months to prepare. I'm feeling really connected to nature right now. I feel like I could do something like that, if I really put my mind to it.

He glances over at Claire.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm losing you.

CLAIRE

No, you're fine. I think you could, too.

He smiles at her then goes back to reading. She smiles back at him despite the fact that he can't see it.

GEORGE

What do you think? You like this place?

Claire lies down on her sleeping bag, looking up at the bright orange ceiling of the tent.

CLAIRE

(genuinely)  
Yeah. It's great.

GEORGE

Mind if I keep this lamp on?

CLAIRE

Not at all.

FADE OUT.