

SLOWLY GROWING

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INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bright pink walls, polka-dot bed spread, 90's band posters on the walls, and a collection of stuffed animals sit on a shelf.

A woman, ASHLYN (30), sits the bed head in a laptop. She could not be more opposite to her surroundings, wears all black, thin glasses, skinny, pale.

An older, graying woman, CAROL (mid 60's) lightly knocks and enters.

CAROL
Ashlyn... How was work today,
sweetie?

Ashlyn barely looks up.

ASHLYN
Good, mom, good.

CAROL
Honey, remember what we said about
speaking up?

Ashlyn finally looks up at her mother.

ASHLYN
(annoyed)
Okay mom. Today I had to plug in
the right HDMI cord, and I spoke to
a student.

CAROL
Oh!! That's great honey!! And did
they say anything about the
promotion? Technical Manager?

ASHLYN
Yeah, maybe next year.

CAROL
Okay, honey. I did something, I
think it might be good for you to
get out, and talk to people! Your
own age - not just me and the
elementary schooler's.

Ashlyn's face pale's. Even more than her usual color.

ASHLYN
Mom, mom, I don't think - I really
don't think-

CAROL

It's an adult camping trip. Well actually it's more of a retreat- It'll be good for you. It's only two nights, and it's this weekend.

CUT TO:

INT. MINI COOPER - DAY

Ashlyn sits in the passengers seat, looking ill, clutching one of her stuffed animals for dear life. A duffel bag is seen in the back seat.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAY

The mini cooper is parked near a cabin. Ashlyn stands awkwardly in front of the car with her duffel bag, waiting. Carol slams the trunk shut making Ashlyn jump.

CAROL

Have fun sweetie! And try and make some friends!!

A tall, large woman with a mass of black hair, NIA (40), enters having seen the interaction. She towers over Ashlyn.

NIA

(overly enthusiastic)

You're a little scared-y one aren'tcha? Nice to meet you. Me and the rest of the group just got off the bus! I'm Nia.

ASHLYN

Hi. Ashlyn.

A man comes out of the cabin. He is tall and buff, wearing a too-tight t-shirt and shorts, ROB (35).

ROB

Whoa whose this? You didn't tell me we had any newbies this year, Nia!

NIA

You wouldn't have heard me if I did. Ashlyn, this is Rob.

Rob grips Ashlyn's hand and shakes it vigorously.

ROB

Weak. We'll work on that.

NIA
 Alright, newbie. Put your stuff
 down in the cabin, and get your
 hiking shoes on, we're about to
 leave.

Ashlyn looks at her black flats.

ASHLYN
 (sounding small)
 Hiking shoes?!

NIA
 The sun isn't on your time. And she
 says *let's go!*

Ashlyn awkwardly nods and trudges over to the cabin.

EXT. SMALL MOUNTAINSIDE/TRAIL - SUNSET

Ashlyn, Nia, Rob, and three others make their way through a
 beautiful path, heading up the side of a mountain. Ashlyn
 looks out of place, fiercely looking in all directions,
 scared of sticks and bugs.

NIA
 Ashlyn! This is Gretchen, Alex, and
 Marianne.

ALEX (35) a tall, skinny man with glasses shakes Ashlyn's
 hand. GRETCHEN (45), curly pixie cut and a black tracksuit,
 scans Ashlyn.

GRETCHEN
 You look like you haven't seen the
 light of day in a while.

A heavily pregnant woman, MARIANNE (35), hikes difficultly
 next to Ashlyn.

MARIANNE
 So what do you do for a living,
 Ashlyn?

ASHLYN
 (nervous)
 I'm a Technical Manager at an
 elementary school... basically just
 an IT worker.

MARIANNE
 Ohh! So you don't get to experience
 much of this that often, huh?

The path opens at a beautiful height in the mountain, revealing a gorgeous sunset view. Ashlyn takes in the nature around her.

ASHLYN
Yeah, I guess not.

Beat.

MARIANNE
I'm sure you're probably wondering why I still came on the trip!

She rubs her giant, swelled, pregnant stomach.

ASHLYN
Well, not reall-

MARIANNE
I NEVER miss the annual retreat!
And this is nothing - last year Rob showed up right after getting a vasectomy.

ROB
Well yeah. I just got the permeant surgery to stop having kids. I wasn't about to spend a week on bed rest with the ones I already have.

A high-pitched twittering sound consumes the air. Alex jumps in front of the group.

ALEX
SHUSHHHHH! SHUSHHHH!

He quiets the group, and everyone - except Ashlyn who doesn't know what's happening - bends down and looks in the air, smiling widely.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(whispers)
It's an American Woodcock.

He stands a little taller and cups his mouth with his hands.

ALEX (CONT'D)
TWEET TWEET TWEET TWEET!

They wait in silence. Then - the bird responds. The group bursts into claps and cheers, patting Alex on the back and continuing up the trail. Ashlyn lingers in the back looking in the sky.

ASHLYN
 (mouths)
 What??

EXT. DOOR OF CABIN - SUNSET

Ashlyn, hair wet from a shower, fixes herself and steps outside. She stops and sees:

ASHLYN'S POV: The rest of the group are standing and sitting around a BBQ grill. Rob is cooking hot dogs, everyone is chatting and laughing.

Ashlyn watches, nervous. She decides for a second.. then turns around and heads back into the cabin.

NIA (O.S.)
 Hey! Ashlyn!! We're all over here!

Ashlyn peeks back out of the cabin. She smiles politely and heads over.

EXT. FIREPIT - NIGHT

The group is circled around a small fire, sitting on logs and roasting marshmallows.

ALEX
 I cannot believe we caught that Woodcock today. Did you know when Woodcock males mate, they perform a spectacular aerial display, getting extremely high in a spiral-

Gretchen pulls a couple of joints out of her bag.

GRETCHEN
 I'm about to get extremely high.

The group laughs. Gretchen passes the joints around - minus Marianne. Ashlyn innocently puts hers in backwards. Nia reaches over and fixes it.

NIA
 You've never smoked weed, my friend?

ASHLYN
 (defensive)
 Well, I've.. I have-

A beat.

ASHLYN (CONT'D)
Yeah, I've never.

Nia smiles and lights up Ashlyn's joint. Ashlyn inhales and then has a coughing attack. Everyone laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIREPIT - HALF HOUR LATER.

Everyone is HYSTERICALLY LAUGHING and singing. Even Ashlyn, who seems to have the hang of the joint now.

ALEX
And THEN the WOODCOCK -- WHY IS IT
CALLED A WOODCOCK?? Is its cock
ALWAYS HARD??

Everyone doubles over.

ROB
Alex, Alex, do the call.

Alex takes in a huge breath.

ALEX
TWEEEEETTTTTTTTTT!

NIA
Shushhhh!! You will scare them all
away!

ASHLYN
(completely stoned)
Guys. Seriously.. what are we doing
here?

MARIANNE
(the only sober one)
You're at the camping retreat,
silly.

ASHLYN
Yeah, no, but like why. Isn't it
weird - a bunch of grown ass
adults.. doing a summer camp??

ALEX
Yeahhhh, I guess it is kinda
funny. Ha, ha.

Nia, still really high, takes this personally.

GRETCHEN

Hey. Whatchu tryin' to say, girl?
You think you're *too cool* to be
here with us?

ASHLYN

(ashamed)
I don't feel like a grown ass
adult.

A beat.

ALEX

Me neither. That's why I like it
here.

ASHLYN

(slurring words)
I still.. live with my mother.

ROB

I come here to escape my wife and
kids.

MARIANNE

Ha, I don't know if I really even
want this baby.

The harsh truth takes everyone aback.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

Can't really do anything about it
now.

She refers to her pregnant stomach, and starts chuckling.
Everybody else slowly joins in, and soon they're all belly
laughing again.

GRETCHEN

We're all pathetic. And that's why
we make a perfect, grown ass adult,
pathetic group. And I say cheers to
that!

Gretchen stands up and shoves her joint in the middle. Ashlyn
clinks hers with it, and the others use their sticks of
marshmallows and hands and whatever they have to contribute.

EVERYONE

Cheers!!

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAY

Ashlyn stands outside of the cabin with her duffel bag. She takes out her phone and starts forming a text to her mom.

TEXT: "Hey I'm ready to be picked up"

She looks at it. Then... deletes it. Nia exits the cabin.

NIA
Hey, you're leaving?

ASHLYN
Actually, I was wondering if I could go back with you guys. On the bus?

NIA
Oh yeah, I'd love that! It comes in like an hour.

ASHLYN
Awesome. Would you wanna go on one last hike before we leave?

NIA
Whoa, newbie. I'm surprised! You must've turned over a new leaf!

They laugh, Nia puts her arm around Ashlyn, Ashlyn puts her arm around Nia, and they walk down the dirt path.

THE END.