

IF I DIE BEFORE I WAKE
Sample Packet
By Maggie Smith

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SYNOPSIS: When her family's bull is found decapitated in the middle of a farm field, Edie Hruska makes it her mission to find the culprit. While on her search, she comes across a group of young girls claiming to communicate with gods, begging Edie to become their newest acolyte. While acclimating to their lifestyle, Edie finds herself face-to-face with the girls' true intentions, and they are much more sinister than just a dead bull.

CHARACTERS

EDIE — Any Race, sixteen, girl; Sincere, makes the lonely feel seen, filled with courage that can only come from someone who's never seen violence

MARTY — Any Race, seventeen, girl; Charismatic, means every word she says, believes in a better world, no matter what you see

AMALIA — Any Race, twenty-two, woman; Edie's sister and guardian; incredibly protective out of fear, not your friend, not your mother

BERTHA — Any Race, seventeen, girl; Marty's right-hand; sarcastic, tired, and smarter than you

DONNA — Any Race, sixteen, girl; Dragged along into this, looking for a home, doesn't know what she believes

RUTH — Any Race, seventeen, girl; A peacekeeper, on-edge, desperately wants to do good

KATHLEEN — Any Race, fourteen, girl; All talk, desperately wanting to seem tougher than she is

SETTING

Nebraska; 1937

ACT ONE
SCENE FOUR

DO WE ALL AGREE THAT GOING INTO THE WOODS ALONE IS DANGEROUS?

[EDIE enters, somewhere in the middle of the woods. There's a can of soup on the ground.]

EDIE

Donna! Donna, come back! Donna!

[EDIE gasps for air, winded from running. She spies the soup. Hesitant, EDIE picks up the soup and shakes it a bit. As she tries to find a way to open it, KATHLEEN runs from the trees, wearing a goat skull on her head. She jumps onto EDIE'S back, screaming. EDIE starts to scream back, turning around in circles to get KATHLEEN off of her.]

EDIE

Get off, get off, get off, get off, get off—

KATHLEEN

That's my soup!

EDIE

Get off, get off, get off, get off, get off—

KATHLEEN

Let go!

[KATHLEEN pulls EDIE'S hair, and EDIE eventually drops to her knees.]

KATHLEEN

Drop the soup!

EDIE

[Sarcastic, almost mocking] Oh, do you own the soup?

[KATHLEEN growls. EDIE drops the can.]

EDIE

Okay! Okay! I dropped it! Now get off of me!

[KATHLEEN hops off of EDIE'S back, unbothered. She pulls out her dagger from a scabbard against her hip and stabs a hole into the can. She drinks the soup.]

KATHLEEN

Did you... Want some?

EDIE

Not anymore.

KATHLEEN

Good. I don't know why I offered, I do not like sharing.

[EDIE watches KATHLEEN drink the soup.]

KATHLEEN

Will you stop looking at me like that? You weren't in any real danger. Well, a lot of danger. Well, a lot of permanent danger. Well—

EDIE

You shouldn't have a knife. What are you, twelve?

KATHLEEN

For your information, I'm fourteen, so...

EDIE

You look twelve.

KATHLEEN

I do not!

[A beat.]

KATHLEEN

I'm small for my age!

EDIE

Twelve was generous.

KATHLEEN

I can still kill you, you know. Doesn't matter how old I look.

EDIE

You wouldn't, though... Would you?

KATHLEEN

I have before.

EDIE

You've killed a person before?

KATHLEEN

No. No people. Just animals. Not for fun, though. I don't kill for fun. I'm not messed up like that.

EDIE

What animals?

KATHLEEN

You know. Just animals. A fox, once. A pig. Oh, and this guy—

[KATHLEEN knocks on the goat skull that she's wearing as a hat.]

KATHLEEN

It's a goat. We killed that one a few weeks ago. And then last night, I killed a bull. Took him down all by myself.

EDIE

A bull?

KATHLEEN

Mmm hmm. Just him and me in some farm field. Ripped his skull clean off his head.

EDIE

You killed the bull?

KATHLEEN

With my own two hands. Nervous? You should be.

EDIE

My family's bull?

KATHLEEN

Wait—

EDIE

Come here!

[EDIE picks up a rock and chases KATHLEEN around the clearing, KATHLEEN trying to placate EDIE.]

KATHLEEN

Now, wait a second!

EDIE

You killed the bull!

KATHLEEN

Maybe I exaggerated when I said it was just me! And that it was my own two hands, there were knives involved!

EDIE

That was my family's bull! You killed him!

KATHLEEN

Stop chasing and let me explain!

[EDIE stops running.]

EDIE

I had a wife picked out for him!

KATHLEEN

Well, they don't mate for life, she can find a new fiancé.

[EDIE, more angered, chases KATHLEEN again.]

KATHLEEN

I'm sensing that was the wrong thing to say!

EDIE

I'm gonna kill you!

KATHLEEN

Wait, wait, wait! I can fix this, I can fix this, please! What if I brought you to Marty?

[This gets EDIE'S attention. She lowers the rock.]

EDIE

Who's Marty?

KATHLEEN

She's the one behind the whole thing. The animals. She can explain it to you.

EDIE

How could you possibly explain something like that?

KATHLEEN

She needed the bull.

EDIE

For what, a hat?

KATHLEEN

It's more than a hat. It's a crown.

[A beat. EDIE thinks over what KATHLEEN just told her.]

EDIE

Maybe I don't need answers, actually.

KATHLEEN

What? Why?

EDIE

I don't need to be a part of whatever this is.

KATHLEEN

Just let her explain! I can take you back to her, she's got answers!

[EDIE starts to pack up her items.]

EDIE

Alright, well, thanks for almost killing me, I hope I never see you again.

KATHLEEN

Wait! Wait! I swear. I swear to you. She has answers. Maybe she can even help. She's special. She can talk to Gods.

EDIE

Do you think that makes your story more believable?

KATHLEEN

I'm being honest. And I'm never honest.

EDIE

That's supposed to make me trust you? Telling me you've got lying problems?

KATHLEEN

Well, I don't want you to try to kill me. Again. Besides, I feel bad about the bull. A little. Ish. Maybe she can help you with it.

[EDIE hesitates. She's genuinely considering this, as insane as it all sounds.]

KATHLEEN

Well? Are you coming or not?

EDIE

I need to be home by nightfall.

KATHLEEN

Then we'd better move fast.

[KATHLEEN extends her hand out. EDIE grabs it. The two exit. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE FIVE
CAVES ARE A GOOD PLACE FOR RITUALS

[A cave. DONNA sits and watches as RUTH frantically rubs two sticks together.]

DONNA

Will you stop that?

RUTH

No.

DONNA

It's loud.

RUTH

Cover your ears, then.

DONNA

What are you doing?

RUTH

Trying to start a fire.

DONNA

What? Why? It's not even noon.

RUTH

I'm prepping. If Marty comes back and she finds out we visited that farm, she'll be mad. But she'll be less mad if she comes back and there's a fire ready. Which there will be, once I figure out how to start a fire.

DONNA

I thought you weren't allowed to start fires. Bertha said you get too panicky.

RUTH

I'm not! It's just that no one will teach me!

DONNA

Okay. First step? You don't build fires inside of caves.

[RUTH throws the sticks down.]

RUTH

Marty's gonna be so mad.

DONNA

She won't be mad. Just disappointed.

RUTH

Bertha's gonna be mad!

DONNA

She's all bark. Besides, we'll just make sure they don't find out.

RUTH

It doesn't matter if they don't find out, the Gods already know! We're liars!

DONNA

Ruth! Ruth! Look at me! No one's gonna find out. You're not telling Marty, right?

RUTH

I feel sick.

DONNA

Are you telling her?

RUTH

No.

DONNA

Neither am I. And we're the only two who could possibly tell her. So we'll be fine.

RUTH

[Nodding] The only two. The only two who could possibly tell her.

[KATHLEEN enters the cave, dragging EDIE by her wrist. On seeing EDIE, DONNA hides her face.]

KATHLEEN

Hey! Look at this!

RUTH

[Seeing EDIE] We're dead.

KATHLEEN

I found her in the woods. She's... Oh, I don't know your name, do I?

EDIE

Edie.

KATHLEEN

Oh. Well, then. This is Edie.

RUTH

Put her back outside where she belongs!

KATHLEEN

But we're friends now!

RUTH

I don't care! Get rid of her!

KATHLEEN

You haven't even met her yet!

EDIE

Yes, she did. Out at the farm today.

KATHLEEN

You were out on the farm?

EDIE

She was.

KATHLEEN

[Laughing] Oh, you're going to be in so much trouble.

RUTH

Donna, you said it would be fine!

[EDIE spies DONNA, hiding.]

EDIE

There you are! I was chasing you!

[DONNA doesn't speak, frozen.]

EDIE

Donna? Come on, you know me. It's Edie. I can't look that different, right? It's only been a year. Less, even!

RUTH

And she knows your name, too! We're dead! We're so dead! We're beyond dead.

DONNA

Ruth. Be quiet.

RUTH

Don't tell her my name! Now she knows who both of us are!

EDIE

What's going on?

DONNA

Edie, you should go.

EDIE

Go? Come on, I just got here.

DONNA

You need to get out. Now.

EDIE

Donna. What's going on?

[END OF EXCERPT]

For the Full Script, Please Contact: maggiesmithwrites@gmail.com]