

This Grass Kills People

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

EMERSON: Early 30s. Any ethnicity. Female.

OREN: 40s. Any ethnicity. Any gender.

GUY: 30s-50s. Any ethnicity. Male.

LADY: 30-50s. Any ethnicity. Female.

SETTING:

By the grass.

TIME:

Now.

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

On one side of the space, the grass.

On the other, the concrete.

Or asphalt.

Or sand.

Whatever it is, it's not grass.

The grass is the grass.

On the not grass, EMERSON sits cross-legged, still and silent, eyes closed.

Perhaps she's meditating.

Silence.

EMERSON breathes.

EMERSON
(To herself)

Chin up, fucker.

You're gonna save people today.

You have to.

EMERSON breathes.

OREN enters, walking their cat on a leash.

NOTE: The cat may be live or stuffed, whichever is easier for the producing company.

OREN walks towards the grass.

Hey! Hey, wait!

You're too close.

Excuse me?

The grass.

What about it?

EMERSON

OREN

EMERSON

OREN

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 2.

...
EMERSON

You serious? It's not safe.

Why?
OREN

What do you mean, "why?"
EMERSON

Uh, the--general meaning?
OREN

Why is the grass not safe?

...
EMERSON

Do you really not know?

No?
OREN

It's dangerous.
EMERSON

Why is it dangerous?
OREN

Because it kills people.
EMERSON

Beat.

OREN stifles a laugh.

Don't laugh.
EMERSON

I'm not.
OREN

Beat.

You're not messing with me?
EMERSON

No. Are you messing with me?
OREN

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 3.

EMERSON

No.

What, have you been under a rock for the past 3 years?

OREN

No.

EMERSON

Then you must not be from around here. Are you from around here?

OREN

I just moved. To the area. If you must know.

EMERSON

Okay. Thank God. That explains it.

OREN

...

EMERSON

Yeah. You can't walk on this grass. It'll kill you.

OREN

...

I'm sorry. What?

EMERSON

What?

OREN

...

Wh--...what is this?

EMERSON

What do you mean?

OREN

What do *you* mean?!

EMERSON

The general meaning? This grass kills people. Thank God I was here. You're welcome. You would've just walked your cute little kitty right onto a heaping plate of death.

OREN

No. Is this some kind of joke to you?

EMERSON

...

Listen...

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 4.

What's your name?

OREN

Oren.

EMERSON

I'm Emerson.

OREN

Emerson?

EMERSON

Yeah. I know. It's unusual, listen...you're not from around here, right?

OREN

No.

EMERSON

Right. So you probably didn't hear. But it was a pretty big deal. To the people who are.

This grass started killing people.

OREN

...

EMERSON

A lot of people think it's stopped.

But it hasn't.

OREN

Right.

Beat.

EMERSON

I feel like you don't believe me.

OREN

I don't. Particularly.

That's ridiculous.

EMERSON

You know, yeah. It is. But that's what's happening.

OREN

...

If that's what's happening, why aren't there any bodies out there?

EMERSON

Because I'm here. And I'm stopping people from walking on it.

OREN

...

Right.

EMERSON

What?

OREN

Nothing.

EMERSON

You had a look.

OREN

What?

EMERSON

Subtext. You're thinking something you're not saying. You can say it.

OREN

Look...

EMERSON

Say it.

OREN

...

I mean, no offense, but you're just a...

EMERSON

Just a what?

OREN

A citizen. You don't seem to be affiliated with the government or city ordinance in any way. Are you?

EMERSON

I am not.

OREN

So why are you the one...out here?

EMERSON

...

Well, that's the million dollar question, ain't it?

Short answer, because no one else is.

Long answer...

Well, no one else is.

Beat.

You still don't believe me.

EMERSON

I didn't say that.

OREN

Yeah, you did.

EMERSON

...

OREN

But, hey. Don't take my word for it. Go ahead. Send your cat out there. See for yourself.

EMERSON

...

OREN

What's its name?

EMERSON

Damocles.

OREN

...

EMERSON

What are you, some fucking history nerd?

OREN

Yes.

EMERSON

Cool.

That's the sword one, right?

OREN

Right.

EMERSON

Kinda prophetic, then, huh?

OREN

The allusion is actually a little more complex than people realize.

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EMERSON

I don't really care. Just as long as you don't walk on the grass.

OREN

...

Before OREN moves or makes a verbal response, GUY and LADY enter.

LADY carries a blanket and picnic basket.

GUY

Oh my god.

LADY

Look at it! It's so pretty today.

EMERSON

Woah.

GUY

Morning, friends.

LADY

Oh, what a handsome cat that is! He's beautiful.

OREN

Thank you.

EMERSON

Hold up. Where are you two going with all that stuff?

GUY

Haha. What does it look like?

LADY

You never have a picnic before?

EMERSON

I have. But if you're planning on picnicking in this grass I have to kindly inform you that you can't.

Beat.

LADY

Excuse me?

EMERSON

You can't picnic on this grass.

GUY

Says who?

LADY
Yeah, says who?
We've been looking forward to this for some time.

EMERSON
Well, sorry. You can't do it here.

GUY
...

Are you serious?

OREN
She's serious.

LADY
Why?

EMERSON
You should know why! I've seen you two. You're from around here!

GUY
I don't see what any business that is of yours.

LADY
Wait.
Oh, my god. You don't think it's still killing people, do you?!

GUY
What?!

EMERSON
It is!

LADY
Oh my god!

GUY
Hahahahaha.

EMERSON
Quit fucking laughing.

LADY
Oh my god!

GUY
Okay. That was funny.
You had us going for a second there.

EMERSON

I should have you going for more than a second. Seriously. It hasn't stopped.

GUY

Oh, don't be a fucking idiot. Of course it has.

LADY

That was such a long time ago, sweetie.

EMERSON

What?

LADY

It's not killing people anymore. It stopped a long time ago.

EMERSON

No. You're wrong.

GUY

Okay, I can see where this is going. This has been cute. All right? But we'd really like to get back to our picnic.

EMERSON

You take one step out there you're going to die.

Beat.

GUY

(To OREN)

She been feeding you this bullshit, too?

OREN

Well--

EMERSON

Oren believes me.

OREN looks to EMERSON.

EMERSON doesn't look at OREN.

LADY

Well, that's great for Oren. That's what's great about this country, actually. Everyone has the freedom to believe whatever they want.

EMERSON

Sure.

Except somebody is always wrong.

LADY

...

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Please just...

EMERSON

Don't go out there.

I beg you. Please.

You beg us?

GUY

I don't want you to die.

EMERSON

Beat.

Honey, will you hand me the blanket?

GUY

LADY hands GUY the blanket.

GUY walks over onto the grass.

He stops.

Turns back around to face the others.

Perfectly fine.

Gestures as if to say, "Would you look at that? I'm perfectly fine."

He turns back around.

This looks like a divine spot.

GUY
(Selecting a spot for the
blanket)

GUY lays out the blanket.

He lays down on it.

So soft.

GUY

LADY looks to EMERSON.

EMERSON looks to LADY.

It seems all right to me.

LADY

EMERSON

...

You know it's not immediate.

LADY

Isn't it possible you might be overreacting?

GUY

Baby! Bring that basket over here! I'm starving!

EMERSON

I'm not overreacting.

LADY

I'm sorry, sweetie, but...everything'll be fine. Okay? Have some faith.

LADY crosses to GUY on the picnic blanket.

She sets down the basket and the two begin to remove food, plateware, drink, and flute glasses from it for a picnic.

As they talk, EMERSON watches them, forlorn and defeated.

Eventually, she sits and slumps, still staring at the two of them as they eat, drink, and banter.

GUY

Such a lovely day for a picnic.

LADY

It is.

GUY

Truly, I don't think we could have picked a better place for it.

LADY

I've missed coming out here. I really have.
(Pulling out a bottle of champagne)

Mimosa?

GUY

I would LOVE a mimosa!

LADY

Pop this, then, would you?

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With pleasure.

GUY

LADY hands GUY the bottle of champagne and he begins to open it.

LADY fills flute glasses with orange juice.

Oren? Was it?

GUY

Yes.

OREN

Would you care for a mimosa?

GUY

I'm fine. Thank you.

OREN

There's room out here for more.

GUY

Should either of you wish to join us.

LADY

Honey.

GUY

What? I'm being cordial. I'm just extending an invitation.

LADY

I think the point's been made.

GUY

What point?

That that girl right there's a fucking baby?

LADY

Honey.

GUY

...

Fine.

LADY

Can we drop the grass and just enjoy the day?

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 13.

GUY
(Sort of towards OREN and
EMERSON)

I don't know, can we?

LADY

Honey.

GUY

Sorry.

(Sort of towards OREN and
EMERSON)

Sorry.

LADY

...

You going to pop that or what?

GUY

I am.

I, uh...

I can't get the...

I can get the thing.

LADY

Give it here.

*GUY hands the bottle of champagne back
to LADY.*

*GUY busies himself with more food and
plateware.*

OREN sits next to EMERSON.

Beat.

LADY

What did you do to this thing?

GUY

I don't know. It was like that.

Beat.

OREN
(To EMERSON)

Hey.

Maybe it'll all be fine?

They both seem fine.

What the fuck do you know? Huh?
EMERSON

OREN
...

Okay. Right.

Look, this has been...

Well, it hasn't been fun. I hope I don't see you around.

*OREN stands and walks towards GUY
and LADY.*

EMERSON
Wait!
(Grabbing after OREN,
getting their leg or perhaps
the cat leash)

I didn't mean that! I'm sorry!

OREN
(Escaping EMERSON'S grip)
Get off me!

Beat.

OREN walks onto the grass.

EMERSON
No.

OREN
(To LADY, reaching the
blanket)
You need any help with that?

LADY
Oh. Please. Thank you.

LADY hands OREN the bottle.

GUY
That is a really cute cat.

OREN
Thanks. You can hold him if you'd like.

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Oh. I would. GUY

OREN hands GUY the cat leash.

Hey, there little pussy. How are you? GUY

Meow.

Rao.

Maoooooooooooo.

Aw, he's purring! LADY

SO CUTE. GUY

Why did we have kids? We should've just gotten a cat.

Two cats. LADY

I think I've got it. OREN

Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaas. GUY/LADY

OREN holds out the bottle and pops the cork offstage (grass side).

Ho! OREN

The cat takes off running after the cork.

Oh, snap! Oh my god. GUY

Oh no. OREN

I'm so sorry. GUY

It's fine. It's not the first time it's happened. Won't be the last. OREN

I'll go get him.

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GUY
Please. Let me. It was my fault.

OREN
You sure?

GUY
Yeah. I'm pretty quick. I ran track.

LADY
He did. Normally, I wouldn't believe somebody when they say it, but he is fast.

GUY
Be back in a minute.

LADY
We'll have a mimosa waiting for you.

GUY
Oh, I like the sound of that.

GUY exits after the cat.

Beat.

LADY pours a mimosa for OREN.

OREN
Thank you.

LADY
You are most welcome.

LADY pours herself a mimosa.

LADY raises a toast.

LADY
(Genuinely)
To health, wealth, and good fortune.

OREN
...

Cheers.

OREN and LADY clink glasses.

They drink.

Beat.

Silence.

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 17.

LADY
(Yelling to GUY, off)

How's it going, baby?!

GUY (O.S.)

This fucker is fast!

OREN and LADY chuckle.

Silence.

LADY makes a decision.

She pours another mimosa.

She stands and crosses to EMERSON and offers it to her.

Beat.

EMERSON takes it.

LADY crosses back to the picnic blanket and sits.

Silence.

EMERSON

You don't think I want to be out there, too?

That I don't want to eat foie gras bullshit and feel the sun on my face? My shoulders?

I want nothing more than to picnic out there like a fucking asshole and drink champagne and run around barefoot and feel the blades of grass go in-between my toes.

But I can't.

Because it's not safe.

And I'm the only goddamn person left who seems to give a shit that it's not.

I'm sorry if talking about reality is making you uncomfortable.

But that really shouldn't fucking matter if I'm saving your insipid lives, should it?

LADY

SHUT THE FUCK UP.

EMERSON

...

LADY

Who do you think you are?

If you want play martyr, that's fine. You're welcome to do that. But I'm not going to hold my tongue any longer. You have no right to say the things that you've said to me. To all of us. If you mean well, it does matter. You have been rude, emotionally abusive, and cruel. Fuck you. You need professional help. And I would appreciate it if you left us alone.

Yes, this grass killed people. It was terrible. But you have no right to stand there and remind us of that by saying it still is. Because it's not.

You should save your own life, sweetie, before you go after someone else's.

Silence.

From off, a bloodcurling scream from GUY.

Everyone looks off.

LADY

Honey?

OREN

Oh my god.

LADY

BABY?!

OREN

Oh my god!

LADY runs off, towards the scream.

Silence.

Then, a bloodcurling scream from LADY.

OREN stares off, in disbelief and utter terror.

EMERSON stands and downs whatever's left of her mimosa.

EMERSON

I tried to fucking tell you people.

OREN

What the fuck?

EMERSON

I told you.

OREN

What the fuck is this?

EMERSON

It's EXACTLY WHAT I FUCKING SAID, OREN!

OREN looks to EMERSON.

Beat.

EMERSON

Yeah, I'm guessing you're fine right now because you're on that blanket.

That's interesting. That's something I've never really considered.

OREN

Help me, please.

EMERSON

...

Yeah, no.

I tried. You didn't listen.

OREN

What the fuck is wrong with you?

EMERSON

What the fuck is wrong with you? I mean, you could just listen to people. You could've believed me.

Everyone could've just believed me.

OREN

...

OREN slowly laughs.

They laugh harder, and it becomes one of those laughs that's definitely also crying.

Then:

OREN

No.

No, you could have tried harder.

EMERSON

...

This Grass Kills People, Daniel Prillaman, 20.

OREN

There's a special place in hell for you.

EMERSON

...

Well.

I'll see you there.

Silence.

OREN sits.

And then begins to enjoy the picnic.

EMERSON stares at OREN.

OREN stares back.

Silence.

From off, the meow of a cat.

END OF PLAY.