

LINGER
by

Characters:

OLD FAYE; our trusted commentator. 30s-40s, a bit jaded but prefers the term “realist.” She is highly reflective, critical, and reminiscent.

FAYE; 18-20. A younger version of OLD FAYE. She views herself as misunderstood and is extremely anxious about change.

DIONNE; 18-20. Fun-loving, but very smart. Loves intensely and speaks enthusiastically.

DAVID; 18-20. Thoughtful and openminded. Ready for new experiences, but unfortunately a bit of an introvert.

NICK; 18-20. Very kind and handsome, with fashionable sweaters. An unlikely friend for FAYE, DIONNE, and DAVID who seems full of surprises.

NOAH; 18-20. FAYE’s best friend, seen only when communicating via phone. A little distracted. Loving.

OLD NICK; 30s-40s. An older version of NICK. The same as he ever has been, except he wears a suit now.

Note: Change something small about Faye with each new scene to indicate the passing of time. Recommend t-shirts, hairstyles, or something else quick and simple.

SCENE ONE

Stage left is a city street, dimly lit. A street sign. Stage right is a campground. There are a few Adirondack chairs. At the edge of stage right is a wooden chair. The scene opens on OLD FAYE, stage left, where she is walking slowly, looking about observantly. OLD NICK walks past her in the opposite direction, then wheels around, doing a double take.

OLD NICK
(waving erratically)

Faye? Hey, Faye!

OLD FAYE
(with no recognition in her eyes, but then realizing)
Sorry, I uh – wait, holy shit. Nick Brenner?

OLD NICK
Nick Brenner!

OLD FAYE
(shocked, positively. She throws her hands up, astounded)
Oh my god! Oh my god? It's been so long.

OLD NICK
Makes you feel old, doesn't it? Boy. Hey, how are you?

OLD FAYE
Oh, you know. Working, being a grown up. Same shit, different day, yada yada yada. Good. What about you? You got your Masters', right? Big man!

OLD NICK
Shitttt. Somethin' like that. Yeah, you know headed to a *business lunch* right now. Crazy corporate bastard.

OLD FAYE
(checking her watch)
Oh!

OLD NICK
Time flies, man.

OLD FAYE
You better not let me hold you up then, Mr. Bastard.

OLD NICK

You? Never.

OLD FAYE

You should call – if you’re gonna be around. If you want.

OLD NICK

I’ll be around. I’ll call. Hey, I’m sorry I have to split. It really was a great surprise to see you, Faye.

OLD FAYE

You too, Nick.

Old Nick gives Old Faye a quick hug, then makes a hand gesture as if talking on the phone with her as a sort of promise. He exits stage left.

OLD FAYE

Damn. Time *does* fly.

Old Faye begins speaking to the audience as FAYE enters stage right with a duffle bag.

OLD FAYE cont’d.

Nick was always the cool one. The pretty boy. It’s like they say, right? You either want to be him or be with him? That was Nick. The summer I knew him he was just...so perfect. The kind of person who gives you hope about the world. Or makes you just feel really shitty about what an average person you are. Either way, he made everyone look at things a little differently.

A beat.

You know, I bet he’s a good fucking businessman. Selling happiness isn’t easy – especially when you’re, what, twenty? But damn was he good at it. And I was a terrible customer.

Yelling offstage to where Old Nick might be.

I’m sorry, Nick! I’m sorry I sucked!

Lighting shifts to focus on stage right. Dim on stage left but continue to hold a focus point on Old Faye.

FAYE

(on the phone with NOAH)

I’m here, I guess. I should probably go...I guess.

NOAH enters stage right, sitting in the chair at the front of the stage. He appears nonchalant, leaning back in the chair. He holds a phone to his ear.

NOAH

(excited, but perhaps a little passive-aggressive)

Probably!

FAYE

Okay.

NOAH

It'll be fun, Faye. It'll be good for you.

FAYE

Hm.

NOAH

At the worst it's like three months of your life.

FAYE

Three long months.

NOAH

Go, Faye. I'm going to hang up.

FAYE

Wait...!

NOAH

What?

FAYE

Okay. Okay. Yeah.

A beat.

I'll talk to you later.

NOAH

Mm-hm. Bye.

Faye freezes. Old Faye turns to the audience again.

OLD FAYE

My best friend Noah. He loves me, sure, but god, was he sick of me in that moment.

A beat.

When you go camping as a kid, it's awesome. This independence: your parents let you run around and adventure and make friends with the kids at the campsite next door so there's no chance to be bored.... And then you grow up, and you think, "hey, let's do grounds-crew grunt work; I loved camping!" And there's that same independence, except this time you can't run home to the comfort of your campsite with your parents; you're stuck with the neighbor kids. And you're antisocial and living in this bunkhouse with people you've never met, and you think "what the fuck did I get myself into?!" ... or something like that. Maybe it's just me....

DAVID enters stage right and approaches Faye timidly, but with purpose.

DAVID

Hi, uh. You moving in too?

FAYE

(holding up bags, with sarcasm)

Yeah, obv-

Thinking better of her choice to be sarcastic and using a kinder tone.

I'm Faye.

DAVID

(unnoticing)

I'm David. You have any idea how this whole thing works? I've never done this before.

FAYE

Neither have I. Actually,

FAYE and DAVID

(in unison)

I'm a little nervous.

OLD FAYE

I don't really know what made me say that. But, if there was one person to, you know, be a little vulnerable with? David was the right guy.

FAYE and DAVID

I'm so glad you said that. Jinx!

Old Faye smiles and shakes her head, remembering fondly. Faye and David are smiling, if still a bit nervously, now.

DAVID

I guess I'm kind of an introvert with new people. Have you seen the bunkhouse?

FAYE

No.

DAVID

Close quarters.

FAYE

I've never really had a roommate.

DAVID

Well, now you have nine!

OLD FAYE

(pointing)

Did you see the panic on my face when he said that?

FAYE

That's...cool.

OLD FAYE

I didn't care about the people – it could have been one or twenty. But change? No matter how I assured myself it was only temporary, it was change.

DAVID

Big change.

OLD FAYE

(intervening)

I fucking hated change.

FAYE

Totally.

OLD FAYE

So, okay. Here we are. Day one; I met David. There are eight other mystery roommates, and this is my life for the foreseeable future. When I read the job description four months ago, it checked the boxes; working outside, free housing, a vacation to Maine? I mean, even the name, Serenity Cove.

A beat.

Serenity Cove. How bad can raking and customer service and fee collection be in a place called fucking Serenity Cove?

Faye stands with her phone to her ear at the edge of stage right, isolating herself. Noah does the same from his chair.

Day one.

FAYE

There you go!

NOAH

I still don't know.

FAYE

Faye, it's been...what, eight hours? If that.

NOAH
(laughing, exasperated)

Okay?

FAYE
(indignant)

Give it a fighting chance. Did you meet anyone cool?

NOAH

Cooler than you, asshole.

FAYE
(teasing slyly)

There you are. But for real?

NOAH
(with a bit of a sigh of relief)

Yeah, I guess I kind of made a friend. Or whatever, I don't know.

FAYE
(nonchalantly)

Faye looks upstage to David, who stands behind her. He waves and beckons for her to come over. She smiles but holds up a finger, indicating for him to wait.

So, when do you come visit?

Faye walks offstage, phone to her ear. David follows after a beat.

SCENE TWO

Stage right becomes the inside of the bunkhouse. DIONNE sits on a couch and becomes excited as David and Faye enter.

DIONNE

You two!

David smiles shyly.

FAYE

Hi. How's your day off?

DIONNE

Oh *god*. Horrendously boring, I've just been sitting here waiting for nothing. It almost makes me wish I was working. Almost. Don't tell anyone I said that.

DAVID

We could switch....

DIONNE

Hell no. I said almost. Besides, now you're on break and can entertain me.

Dionne leans towards David and Faye, teasing and batting her eyes.

FAYE

Wouldn't you rather go with the others? They're on break now too....

DIONNE

(shaking her head vigorously)

Please. I know what they're about, I've heard their stories. You two. You two are mysteries. David, I know you have some fascinating life story to tell. Faye. Yeah. I want to solve the mystery. I want to know you.

DAVID

(hesitant, but then speaking up)

I don't know my story. I don't really know anything about much...I just try stuff. I like theater and the beach, and I play guitar. I was homeschooled, so I never really learned to make friends. I guess that's kind of a story. Or part.

Part of a story, yeah!

DIONNE

David and Dionne look at Faye.

DIONNE

Faye?

OLD FAYE

Uh oh.

FAYE

Yeah?

DAVID

What's your story?

DIONNE
(gesturing at David)

What he said.

FAYE
(Quickly. Dismissive.)

No clue.

DAVID

Come on –

FAYE

I don't know.

DIONNE
(standing up and waving her hands wildly)

Wait. Sh. Hold on.

FAYE
(overlapping with David)

What?

DAVID

Huh?

DIONNE

I fucking love this song!! *This is my story.*

David and Faye strain to listen as Dionne begins to dance. She turns the volume up and we hear “Linger” by The Cranberries. She starts yelling the lyrics and pointing at the others to join.

DIONNE
(lyrics, sung)

I swore, I swore I would be true, and honey so did you.... come on!

Dionne yanks David off of the couch and takes Faye’s reluctant hand. She makes them dance, jumping around in a circle, and they smile.

Were you lying all the time? Was it just a game to you?

DIONNA, DAVID, and FAYE
(screaming)

But I’m innnn so deep!! You know I’m such a fool for you!

The trio collapses onto the couch in a pile and freezes. Old Faye turns to the wing as she wipes a tear from her eye.

OLD FAYE

What are you looking at? I’m not crying.

A beat. She sniffles a tiny bit.

Okay, maybe I am. Just a little bit. Can you blame me? Look at them!

Faye moves to get up.

DIONNE
Don’t leave, Faye. We still haven’t heard your story.

DAVID
Don’t leavveeeee.

FAYE
I’m not going to be gone forever.

DAVID
(whining)
Faye.

FAYE

David.

OLD FAYE

Faye.

FAYE

I promise I'll be right back. I just have to make a call.

OLD FAYE

(pointing her thumb at her past self)

Can't stand this bitch. Why couldn't I just live in the moment? C'est la vie. Fuck.

DIONNE

I better hear a damn good story when you come back!

FAYE

(Walking away from Dionne and David while putting phone to her ear. A beat.)

Hi.

NOAH

(picking up his own phone)

Hey! I was beginning to worry.

FAYE

What?

NOAH

It's been, like, two weeks. I figured you'd be freaking out. Are you freaking out?

FAYE

I don't know.

Rethinking.

No.

NOAH

(surprised)

Oh. Good.

FAYE

I'm think starting to get used to it. I miss you though.

A beat.

What about you?

NOAH

What *about* me?

FAYE

Are you freaking out?

NOAH

Nothing to freak out about. Everything's good.

FAYE

(repeating herself, looking for a response)

I miss you.

NOAH

I miss you too.

OLD FAYE

I started feeling like I was leading a double life. Torn between the joy I felt in new experiences and a strange loyalty I had to being guarded. I guess...I didn't want to get too close to anyone. That's when you get hurt.

FAYE

(trying to keep the conversation up)

It's weird, being apart for so long. You know what I mean?

NOAH

Sure. But it's not like you're all alone up there. You're making friends, right?

FAYE

I guess.

NOAH

Yes?

FAYE

Yeah. But it's not like I'm going to talk to any of them when this is over. In five, ten years I won't even remember their names.

OLD FAYE

David Reece. Dionne Gordon. Nick Brenner. Callie Thornton, Sammy Lewis, Jason Finch, Landon Scofield, Robby Wallace and uhhh...

An awkward pause.

Well, maybe I was partially right. There was another girl, and I can totally picture her...whatever. You get the point.

NOAH

Don't say that.

FAYE
(shaking head)

Fine.

NOAH

I'm sorry, Faye. It really will be okay. You'll be home so soon.

A beat.

FAYE

I know. Bye, Noah.

OLD FAYE
(mocking Noah's voice)

"It's not like you're all alone up there. "

A beat.

When I hung up that phone, torn between this life and that one? Felt like I was.

SCENE THREE

Faye enters with a rake in her hand. She rakes the ground a couple times before NICK enters with his own rake.

NICK

(expression contradicting words; a cheeky smile)

Fucking hate raking. Where do these leaves even come from? It's July.

FAYE

Yeah, I know. Hey, I've got this area. You don't have to -

NICK

I know. But it's nice to do the shitty stuff with a friend, right? Figured you could use some company.

FAYE

Oh. Thanks.

Faye and Nick rake in silence for a few moments.

NICK
(pausing)

Can I ask you something?

FAYE
(also pausing)

Um, sure.

NICK
You're always sneaking away. Y'know, I see you running off on the phone.

FAYE
Yeah, I guess that's true.

NICK
Who are you talking to? I mean, it's been almost two months now and I feel like I don't even know you. And I'd like to.

FAYE
What?

NICK
You're totally the funniest person here. When you're around. Do you like...not like us? You can tell me.

FAYE
Shit, is that how it comes across?

Nick shrugs and nods.

I do. Like you guys. Really! I think everyone is so great. I'm just terrible at being, I don't know....

OLD FAYE
Normal?

FAYE
Social? I phone my best friend, Noah. I get kind of lonely. It's a little hard to explain.

OLD FAYE
Not really, though. Here's the rundown; you're scared of change and newness and the loss that goes with it, so you revel in the temporariness. You're making sure no one has the chance to know you, so you won't care when it's time to leave. Meanwhile, you're missing out on all the fun.

FAYE

It's just that...Noah has known me forever. He knows my story. And then here I'm just kind of...no one.

NICK

Oh. I think I understand. The loneliness, being a nobody. Camp is kind of my escape.

FAYE

What do you mean?

NICK

This is my chance to be someone. I don't have a Noah. I mean, obviously I *know* people. And I have friends. And they like me and all, but I feel like a fraud. There's no clique for me, I just float by, and everyone says, "hey Nick!" but I don't have anyone to call. Here, I want to be a part of it all. Take it while I can.

A beat.

So, I guess we're kind of in reverse.

Nick goes back to raking. Faye looks at him for a minute, then Nick looks up.

NICK

What?

FAYE

I – don't know. I guess I didn't expect that. You're so...cool. You wear cool sweaters, and know the cool things to say, and listen to cool music.

Nick smiles shyly, and looks away, a little flustered.

You really think I'm funny?

Nick and Faye look at each other and freeze.

OLD FAYE

(grinning)

Let's cut that off before it gets too embarrassing. You know, standing there, raking with Nick turned out to be the reality check I needed. A little humbling. I started talking and hanging out and being funny. And, crazy thing, I started feeling a lot better. Even if loss was on the other side.

SCENE FOUR

Dionne, Nick, David, and Faye enter stage, laughing.

DIONNE

...And did you see how Faye switched up on him? Oh my god, I could have died! He comes up, ranting;

Mocking, in a deep, exaggerated voice.

“Have you seen that damn campsite? Fucking bumps everywhere, shit’s supposed to be flat! How the fuck am I supposed to pitch a tent here, all soft handed fucks nowadays, rah rah rah!”

In her normal voice, grabbing Faye’s hand.

First of all, have you seen Faye’s hands? Blisters and calluses everywhere. David’s the one with soft hands....

FAYE and DAVID

Hey!

NICK

(nudging Dave)

Maybe you should do some raking next time, Dave. Make you a man.

DAVID

(ignoring Nick)

Yeah, Faye, you and your blisters customer serviced the hell out of him.

David poses cutely and bats his eyes.

“I’m so sorry, sir. We can move you to another site?”

FAYE

(sarcastically)

Please, no applause.

DIONNE

You’re a pro! I don’t know how you don’t lose your mind.

FAYE

All I have to say is-

DAVID

Thank god we only have a week left.

NICK

Holy shit.

FAYE

Holy shit.

DIONNE

A week. Then what?

Faye's phone begins to ring, audibly. Noah has his phone to his ear. Dionne, Nick and David freeze; Faye pulls the phone from her pocket, hesitates momentarily, and decides not to pick up. The others unfreeze. Nick and Faye look at each other and nod. Noah looks around but not at the group behind him.

NOAH

(a little confused, leaving a voicemail)

Hey – I thought you went on break at one, but maybe I was wrong or, I don't know...anyway, I just wanted to check in. And say I'm really sorry I haven't been up to visit. It's just been super busy with...stuff.

And.... Yeah. Excuses. Working at the grocery store, vacation with Mom and Dad, oh, and that summer class. But you're home in a week! You'll be all done, and we can celebrate. Go to that ice cream place on Fisher Street that you like? You can order the same thing you do every time, and I won't even make fun of you. But I hope everything is okay until then. Hey, you can call me back. If you feel like it. I miss you.

Noah pauses and exits the stage.

NICK

We go back to real life?

FAYE

This is real life... *(surer)* Yeah, this is real life. I mean, it's not like it just disappears when we leave. I was here, and you were with me. And we raked, and customer serviced, and laughed and lived.

OLD FAYE

Extremely insightful, I know. But I'm not even mad at that stupid-ass statement because it's true. There are ends in life, but they don't have to be all-consuming.

DIONNE

Right. We're all going to be awesome pen pals.

NICK

We are?

DIONNE
(*defiant*)

Um, yes. Obviously. Don't worry, I already have your addresses.

DAVID

Creep.

DIONNE

Just prepared. Because I loooooove you.

Dionne gathers her three friends into a hug.

NICK

Shut up. You don't want to see me cry.

DIONNE

I love you, Nicky.

NICK

Yeah. I love you too, Dionne.

DIONNE

I love you, David. And I love you most, Faye.

OLD FAYE

A week left.

SCENE FIVE

Faye stuffs assorted clothing, etc. into her duffle bag.
David walks in and sits down next to her.

DAVID

Packing up?

FAYE

I guess so.

DAVID

Do you *have* to leave early?

FAYE

I guess if I want to stay in school, yeah. The thought of sitting in lecture makes me a little sick though.

DAVID

Worth a shot.

A moment of silence.

Damn. I can't believe it's been a whole summer.

FAYE

Has it really been three months?

DAVID

Feels longer?

FAYE

Feels like it's never going to end. Frozen in time in Serenity Cove.

DAVID

Good or bad?

FAYE

(pausing)

Good, that it felt long. Like I've known you forever.

DAVID

Awwww....

FAYE

Bad that it's going to end. Weirdly enough.

DAVID

Yeah?

FAYE

The first day I was praying for it to be over already. Counting the hours, practically. And now....

DAVID

Like that Joni Mitchell song.

FAYE

Huh?

DAVID

You know...

Singing, quickly.

“You don’t know what you got till it’s gone.”

DIONNE

(entering)

Hey! I better not hear singing in here without me.

OLD FAYE

Never underestimate Dionne’s ability to make an entrance. Well timed, too, because I was starting to tear up. Again. Seems a recurring theme.

DIONNE

(sadly joking, disapprovingly)

Now, what do you think you’re doing with that bag?

FAYE

You know....

DIONNE

(losing the joking edge)

Why do you have to be the first one to leave?

DAVID

Because life is cruel.

FAYE and OLD FAYE

Because irony is a son of a bitch.

DIONNE

You’ll write me back, right?

FAYE

(with a shocked stare)

Of course!

DIONNE

Good.

FAYE

I can’t believe I wish there was more time. I’m sorry I –

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DAVID

Don't be sorry. There's plenty of time. It's not the end.

DIONNE

Jesus, we're not dying yet. Don't get so sappy on us.

FAYE

(laughing shortly)

Oops. Yeah.

NICK

(yelling, offstage)

Who's going for a swim on break? I'm sweating buckets and covered in paint; I need a dip-

Nick enters with a towel. He looks at the other three.

NICK

This looks like the saddest damn party I've ever seen!

A beat, realization as Dionne gestures to Faye's bag.

Oh shit. I forgot.

Faye, Dionne and David nod.

Can I join?

Faye nods and pats a spot for him to sit.

FAYE

Be my guest.

A moment of quiet.

NICK

Now what?

DIONNE

Hey, that's my line.

Nick and Faye look to the others for answers.

FAYE

Don't look at me!

DAVID

Should I get the Magic 8 ball?

DIONNE

No, stupid, that only answers yes or no questions. We need, like, a fancy hippie lady with a crystal orb.

DAVID

Hey, maybe I'll do that when we leave. Where do you think I could buy an orb?

DIONNE

Ooh, are we talking about our amazing post-summer futures? In that case, maybe I'll record an album. Then you guys can say you knew me before I was rich and famous. I'd even give you a feature.

FAYE

(like she is talking to an interviewer)

Oh yeah, my pen pal is Dionne Gordon. Yes, *that* Dionne Gordon.

All break into laughter.

FAYE

What about you, Nick?

NICK

What about me?

DIONNE

What's your absurdly amazing future that is definitely going to happen as soon as you go home?

NICK

Oh...I don't really know.

DAVID

I think...he's going to start writing the fortunes that go inside of cookies.

NICK

(laughing)

She gets to be famous, and I just have to type existential phrases all day?

David shrugs and grins.

DAVID

You're a poetic master, man. Deep thoughts in that brain.

NICK

I'll let it slide.

NICK, DAVID and DIONNE

Faye?

FAYE

Hm?

DAVID

What about you?

FAYE

Maybe I'll go home and write all of this down. Not so I can be famous, or rich, I mean, that would be nice...I'll cash out from the feature on Dionne's album. But just so I can remember.

A long beat.

DIONNE

(half-hearted sarcasm)

Cheeeeeesyyyyyyy.

Nick runs from the room abruptly.

FAYE

Come on, it wasn't that bad, was it?

Faye looks nervously back and forth between David and Dionne.

NICK

(yelling, offstage)

One sec!

Nick comes running back in, with a sweater in his hands. He stands in front of Faye and forces it into her hands quickly.

NICK

Here. For you.

FAYE

What?

NICK

You said my sweaters were cool. Maybe it'll help you remember me, and us, and this. And the person you've become.

FAYE

Thank you.

To David and Dionne.

Thank you.

David, Dionne and Nick all rise and walk forwards. They speak to the audience, and exit stage after their respective lines.

DAVID

Going home means being unsure of what comes next.

DIONNE

Going home means studying my ass off, and rent's due, and forgetting to have fun.

NICK

Going home means feeling a little lonelier but being... *cool* about it.

Faye stands up and walks forwards as well. She speaks to the audience.

FAYE

Going home means growing up.

Faye crosses the stage and hands Old Faye the sweater. They lock eyes for a beat, then Old Faye puts the sweater on. Faye exits the stage.

OLD FAYE

And that was the summer. I guess there's a moral to the story in there somewhere, but it's not a story; that's just life. I'll always remember.

Old Nick enters stage left, barely breaking out of the wings. He leans in just far enough to call back to Old Faye.

OLD NICK

Faye!

Old Faye turns on her heels to face him.

OLD FAYE

Yeah?

OLD NICK

That's a cool sweater.

Old Nick ducks offstage again. Old Faye grins. After a moment, Old Faye begins to sing "Linger" again, but after a line or two opts to whistle as she slowly crosses and exits the stage. Lights down.

Fin.