

THE RANDOMNESS OF BEES

A short dramedy by
Lina Patel

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

RYDER, she/her/hers, mixed-race.

CHARLOTTE, she/her/hers, any color/ethnicity.

The actors play characters who age from 9 to 15.

NOTE

Please update the *Minecraft* reference with a current popular game as needed.

DEDICATION

For Frances.

*Not flesh of my flesh
Nor bone of my bone
But nevertheless, still my own
Never forget for a single minute
You weren't born under my heart
But in it.*

— Anonymous

SCENE 1

(Swim practice. Starting whistle. CHARLOTTE [9] watches another group practice. She's in swim gear, backpack. RYDER [9], in swim gear and backpack, rushes on.)

RYDER: Ahhh!

CHARLOTTE: Uh –

RYDER: Bee! Bee!

(Runs, ducking and swatting.)

CHARLOTTE: It won't sting you if you stay still –

RYDER: ARRGGGHHH!!!!

(Runs offstage. A moment.)

CHARLOTTE: It's uh. It's gone. Helloo? It's gone? No bee.

RYDER: *(Cautiously re-entering:)* Are you sure?

CHARLOTTE: *(Looking offstage:)* Is that your mom? She's walking over here because you're freaking out –

RYDER: That's not my mom.

(Waves her not-mom away.)

CHARLOTTE: *(Pointing:)* Uh, well, that's *my* mom. Who your – person – is sitting by.

RYDER: I'm scared of bees.

CHARLOTTE: Noted. *(Then:)* I'm Charlotte.

RYDER: Hi. I'm Ryder.

(Whistle.)

CHARLOTTE: *(Looks toward pool:)* They're the Junior Beginners. They have another fifteen minutes. If you're here for Junior Intermediate, you're early. I'm always early to swim practice.

RYDER: I like to be early, too.

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(*They smile. Whistle.*)

CHARLOTTE: That's Coach Bryan? When he's in a bad mood, we do backstroke.

RYDER: Ugh. I can't swim backstroke straight.

CHARLOTTE: Which swim team were you on before?

RYDER: It was—we just moved here. (*Then:*) Ch-ch-ch-changes.

CHARLOTTE: Uh, random.

RYDER: Bowie.

CHARLOTTE: My mom makes me do swim.

RYDER: Same. I'm not competitive.

CHARLOTTE: Same! My mom says I need to move more. I play too much *Minecraft*.

RYDER: I love *Minecraft*!

CHARLOTTE: Oh my gosh. Are you going to go to Woodland Elementary?

RYDER: Yeah.

CHARLOTTE: That's where I go!

RYDER: No way. I'm going to be in fourth grade.

CHARLOTTE: No way! Me, too.

RYDER: Oh my gosh.

CHARLOTTE: Can you believe school starts in a week? Summer's over?! I've been at Woodland since kindergarten. You'll love it. They don't believe in grades—or homework.

RYDER: What.

CHARLOTTE: And fourth, fifth and sixth grades are mixed—same room and same teacher all three years. As fourth graders,

we get a sixth-grade buddy. Do you know what room you're in?

RYDER: Yeah, my mom heard a lot of good things about Room 4? So I—

CHARLOTTE: Oh my gosh! Miss Buchanan! That's my room!

RYDER: Oh my gosh!

(They smile. Ryder stops smiling.)

RYDER: Um. I'm sorry...

CHARLOTTE: Uh, for what?

RYDER: I don't know why I said that...my mom wasn't my mom.

CHARLOTTE: Oh. So that *is* your mom?

RYDER: I mean, I *do* know why—so, at the park last week this nosy lady thought Mom, who was on her cell, was my nanny. And then this friend of my mom's good friend, the *one* person we know here, was like, "I sorta see the Indian in you?" And Mom was like, "Oh, hahaha, Ryder's not South Asian!" And he was all— *(Eyes wide, mimicking a mortified adult:)* "uuhh-ohh-sorry," but he didn't have to be all: "uuhh-ohh-sorry."

(Charlotte is clueless. Ryder explains:)

I'm. Um. I'm adopted.

CHARLOTTE: Oh my gosh, I wish I was adopted!

RYDER: *(Laughs, relieved:)* What? Why?

CHARLOTTE: I have three sisters—one, I share a room with and she never leaves me alone. Tonee is 12 and starting at El Roble next week—the junior high—and she's like suddenly into body sprays that make me— *(Mimes gagging, then looks offstage, toward her mother:)* And that's the baby—who your mom is now holding—yes, adorable, but her farts?

(Gags again.)

RYDER: She *is* super cute. She looks just like your mom.

CHARLOTTE: Yeah, they both have big heads. Siblings?

(Ryder shakes her head, "no.")

Bliss! Do you know your— biological mom? Or dad?

RYDER: I've seen pictures. My birth mom writes us letters. Mom writes her back.

(Beat.)

CHARLOTTE: Maybe your mom can adopt me. Take me away from the madness!!

RYDER: Maybe you can spend the night! We have a den where I keep my favorite stuffies— Bubbles, a sloth, and Gramps, a cat. We can make a pillow fort and sleep in sleeping bags.

CHARLOTTE: Oh my gosh. I'll bring Slothy the First and Slothy Junior. I love sloths.

RYDER: Oh my gosh.

(They smile. Whistle. Lights.)

SCENE 2

(Three years later. Starting whistle. Swim practice. Ryder and Charlotte, now 12, enter, suited.)

CHARLOTTE: Your mom gets all weepy EVERY TIME SHE PLAYS IT—

RYDER: She's so weird. But it *is* a kinda sad song—

CHARLOTTE & RYDER: Bowie is the best.

(Whistle. Ryder stretches out. Charlotte stares toward the pool.)

RYDER: One week 'til El Roble. Six periods. Six teachers. I don't want to leave Woodland. Or Miss Buchanan. At least we can bike over together.

CHARLOTTE: Carpool. We'll get all sweaty before school if we bike.

(Whistle.)

RYDER: Oh my gosh, Charlie.

CHARLOTTE: What?

RYDER: Is it because of — *boys*?

CHARLOTTE: NO.

RYDER: Remember fourth and fifth grades? We'd all hang out — girls and boys? This year Izzy got boobs and Hannah's like six feet tall and ALL the boys got super ANNOYING. Jax and Preston do not shut up! *(Beat.)* I know you have a total crush on Preston.

CHARLOTTE: WHAT? TAKE IT BACK. WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT.

RYDER: Smoochidy-smoochidy!

(Whistle. They help each other with sunblock. Beat.)

CHARLOTTE: Ryder? Do you think Coach Bryan is hot?

RYDER: Seriously?!

(Charlie is.)

Oh. Okay. Um... I don't know? Sometimes I think I'm asexual. I'm fluid, but sometimes I think I'm demiromantic.

CHARLOTTE: What.

RYDER: Demiromantics are attracted to people only when they're emotionally connected to them. *(Pause.)* I am NOT saying I'm attracted to you. *(Pause.)* I was for a minute at the

beginning of this year, but it passed. *(Pause.)* Mom's been bugging me to write to Marianne again— happens every year at this time. August 25th is when my adoption was finalized, so Mom is always like— write Marianne! She'd love to hear from *you* instead of me and Dad! I'm always like, oh, yeah. Marianne.

CHARLOTTE: ... Uh, you're so intense.

RYDER: What does that mean?

CHARLOTTE: Like, you think about a lot of stuff all the time—

RYDER: So?!

CHARLOTTE: I'm just saying!

RYDER: Forget it.

CHARLOTTE: I didn't know August 25th was your "gotcha day."

RYDER: ... How do you know what a "gotcha day" is?

CHARLOTTE: My bestie is adopted. I read about it.

RYDER: ... Some people prefer Finalization Day.

CHARLOTTE: Noted.

RYDER: Thanks. For reading about adoption.

(They smile. Whistle. Lights.)

SCENE 3

(Three years later. Sound of birds. Ryder and Charlotte are 15. From their backpacks they put on shorts, shirts. Spread a blanket on the grass. A park.)

RYDER: I wish you guys hadn't moved. I miss you.

CHARLOTTE: I miss you, too. We're supposed to be in high school together. It totally sucks.

RYDER: You're not *that* far. With traffic an hour, but usually less.

CHARLOTTE: Yeah. I guess...I don't think I want to keep coming down. *(Pause.)* I grew up in this park. Our house is right *there*.

RYDER: I can come up more often?

(Pause.)

CHARLOTTE: I don't know, Ry. I might need...a break. Every time we see each other, I get depressed after.

(A moment. Charlotte pulls out gummy bears. Shares.)

So... How's school?

RYDER: Fine.

CHARLOTTE: How's Modern World History?

RYDER: Doing a deep dive into indigenous nations.

CHARLOTTE: Did you tell them you're part Hispanic and Native American?

(Ryder shrug-nods.)

Ry. Are you mad? About what I said about a break?

RYDER: No, no – it's our first year of high school and I just –

CHARLOTTE: At least you know people. I had to totally start over –

RYDER: Izzy went to the Catholic school, Hannah has all these basketball friends. It's huge – lots of new kids. I just don't want to explain stuff, over and over –

CHARLOTTE: Oh, like adoption stuff? Don't! Let them think whatever.

RYDER: I don't want to *lie*, but I don't want to always explain.

CHARLOTTE: Hey. Have you thought any more about meeting Marianne?

RYDER: What? Why? Is there a law that says I have to?

CHARLOTTE: Uh, no, but — we were going to meet her before I moved —

RYDER: Yeah, and then you left. Why are you bugging me about this?

CHARLOTTE: Okay, wow — you clearly feel *something* about it, so —

RYDER: Only because Mom made me see that counselor for awhile. I was depressed, but it was because you were leaving! I don't have a "primal wound" — I swear that counselor had some issues.

CHARLOTTE: Okay but, would it be so bad to meet? She's stayed in touch —

RYDER: Off and on.

CHARLOTTE: Maybe you don't want to think you're anything like her.

RYDER: No! I mean — yeah. Wait. What?

CHARLOTTE: Aren't you a little curious to see what the woman who gave birth to you is like?

RYDER: Here's a thought: you go meet her and report back!

CHARLOTTE: Ry. Just. Seeing someone who looks like you. Who you might have things in common with —

RYDER: Because she gave birth to me.

CHARLOTTE: You know you always say people make a big deal of biology, but you're making a *bigger* deal of it by pretending it doesn't matter *at all* —

RYDER: BEE.

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