

LIMBO

by

Paul Dilly

INT. CLASSROOM -- NIGHT

A small, messy classroom is filled with a circle of chairs. Cliche phrases of encouragement line the walls. Yellow ribbons—each with a name written on it—are taped to a whiteboard. Two high-school seniors, one boy and one girl, remain in the circle. They are alone.

KAZE (18) is lanky and hides behind his long hair. He wears a sweatshirt and ripped jeans.

KAMI (18) has an athletic build and avoids makeup. She's also wearing jeans. "Grit." is inked into her collarbone.

Both avoid looking at the other, instead staring at the empty chairs across from them.

KAZE  
Guess it's just us now.

KAMI  
Thank God.

Kaze looks over. They make eye contact.

KAZE  
Huh?

KAMI  
Thank God you don't have a death wish AND blindness. That's one punch too much.

KAZE  
(abrupt)  
I don't want to die.

KAMI  
Then why are you here?

KAZE  
I don't want to live anymore.

KAMI  
Is there a difference?

Kaze looks down at his worn sneakers. He can see his socks through the holes.

KAZE  
Yeah. One's worse.

Kami waits for him to elaborate.

KAZE (CONT'D)  
Rejecting life is more hopeless  
than embracing death.

KAMI  
Sounds poetic... Do you write  
poems?

Kaze snorts.

KAZE  
Hell no.

KAMI  
Good.

KAZE  
What's that supposed to mean?

KAMI  
If you were a poet I'd have to kill  
myself.

Now Kami's laughing.

KAZE  
Fuck you.

KAMI  
I get that a lot.

KAZE  
Good.

KAMI  
That's my line.

KAZE  
Oops.

KAMI  
Fuck you.

KAZE  
That's my line.

KAMI  
Oops.

They stare at each other, almost smiling. Kami sizes him up.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
Long table near the bathrooms.  
Smells like farts. No one sits  
there. Third-period lunch.

Kami gets up and leaves. She doesn't look back. Kaze watches her go.

KAZE  
(quiet)  
Fuck you, too.

INT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

Kaze carries a tray of food that looks less appetizing than SPAM through a school cafeteria. A metal eagle—the school mascot—hangs from the ceiling. No food fights, but it's easy to tell who would start one: All the cliques sit together.

Kami rests on one of the table's stools facing the window. She looks out at the courtyard as she eats. She brought her own lunch. Kaze plops down beside her.

KAMI  
(cheerful)  
I didn't think you'd actually come.

KAZE  
My other friends were busy.

Kami sags.

KAZE (CONT'D)  
So this is what it's like to sit  
with someone at lunch.

KAMI  
What about your friends?

KAZE  
That was a joke. I don't have  
friends.

KAMI  
You shouldn't write jokes, either.

KAZE  
What can I do?

KAMI  
Well, you're good at being a bitch.

KAZE  
At least I'm not a dick.

KAMI/KAZE  
Fuck you!

This time, they can't help but smile at one another. Kami looks down at her sandwich, then takes a bite.

KAMI  
So, why don't you have any friends?

KAZE  
Because people suck.

KAMI  
Real.

KAZE  
They take one look at me and label me as Emo Kid or Basket Case. Hell, maybe even Most Likely to Carry a Bomb in His Backpack.

KAMI  
I don't think that.

KAZE  
Sure, I look depressed. I AM depressed. But that's not all of me. I get As. I can solve a Rubix cube in ten seconds. I cook the best scrambled eggs.

KAMI  
I love scrambled eggs.

KAZE  
The secret ingredient is crème fraîche.

Kami pretends to scribble on her hand.

KAMI  
Mental note filed.

KAZE  
There's more to me than my appearance. I wish people would take the time to learn that. That's all.

Kami waits a second.

KAMI  
Are you off your soapbox now?

KAZE  
Fu—

Kaze looks up to see Kami smiling at him again. He smiles back.

KAMI  
You need to get some new material.

KAZE  
Where would I be without the F-  
bomb?

Kami widens her eyes in mock surprise.

KAMI  
Holy shit! You do bring bombs to  
school.

Kaze lets out a little laugh, surprising himself. Kami notices.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
What, are you allergic to laughing?

KAZE  
I haven't laughed in a while. Not  
much reason to, I guess.

KAMI  
WOW. You are depressed.

KAZE  
It's hard not to be when your  
alcoholic dad beats your mom and  
your mom does drugs to cope.

KAMI  
Oh, shit. I'm sorry.

KAZE  
It's fine. I'm not at the house  
much. They never really notice me  
anyway.

KAMI  
You could come to my house when  
it's bad.

KAZE  
Your parents wouldn't want someone  
like me around.

KAMI  
They wouldn't care.

Kami points at herself.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
Look at me.

KAZE  
Thanks. Maybe I'll take you up on  
that sometime.

Kaze gets up and grabs his backpack.

KAMI  
Wait.

Kaze stops and faces her.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
Can you hang after school Thursday?

Kaze pulls back his sleeve and looks at his bare wrist.

KAZE  
Ah, looks like I'll be too busy  
imagining what it's like to have a  
normal family then.

KAMI  
Thursday it is. Meet me—

KAZE  
Tennis courts at four.

Kami salutes.

KAMI  
Roger.

KAZE  
(walking away)  
Dork.

KAMI  
Nerd!

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

Kami leaves the school building and crosses a parking lot. Kaze, who's leaning against the chain-link fence surrounding the tennis courts, sees her immediately and walks over. He's ditched his signature sweatshirt.

KAMI  
Hey.

KAZE  
Hey.

KAMI  
It just occurred to me that we  
never said what we were going to  
do.

KAZE  
I don't think that far ahead.

KAMI  
Good to know.

KAZE  
So...

KAMI  
How about a walk? I happen to know  
a nice route.

KAZE  
Walking sucks. But the sun misses  
me.

Kami scoffs.

KAMI  
Clearly.

Kami starts walking up the hill that leads away from the school.

KAZE  
I told you too much the other day.  
Now I have to kill you.

KAMI  
Bummer.

KAZE  
Unless you tell me about you.



KAMI  
What could you possibly want to  
know about me?

KAZE  
Everything. I need to know why I  
hate you less than I hate the rest  
of the world.

KAMI  
Aw, how sweet.

KAZE  
But I guess we could start with  
your tattoo.

Kami rubs her collarbone.

KAMI  
Grit's my favorite word. It's why  
I'm still here.

KAZE  
Have you tried?

KAMI  
Yeah. In the bathroom. I filled the  
tub and held myself under.

KAZE  
(quiet)  
Damn. What did it feel like?

KAMI  
It was hell. My head was bursting,  
but somehow I could still feel my  
limbs going numb. I was under for  
two minutes or so before I decided  
I wanted to keep living. Keep  
fighting.

Kami shakes her head.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
Thank God I had the sense to lift  
my head up.

Kaze says nothing. There are no words.

KAMI (CONT'D)

After was the worst part. It was all I could do to sit in the tub and shake. Adrenaline and exhaustion, sure, but mostly pure terror. I was so scared of what I could do to myself.

Kaze remains silent. Kami exhales, then looks over at Kaze. She reads the empathy on his face.

KAMI (CONT'D)

Have you?

KAZE

No. I'm too scared to try. Too much of a coward. I think about it a lot, though.

KAMI

You're not a coward. You're courageous. It takes something special to not give up when you're in so much pain.

KAZE

Grit.

KAMI

Damn right. Someone special, too.

Kaze stares at the ground to hide his blush. Silence ensues.

They cross a street and enter a neighborhood. Kaze kicks a pine cone out of his way. Kami is looking up at the trees.

KAZE

What's your name? In case I get tired of calling you cuss words.

KAMI

Kami. You?

KAZE

I'm Kaze. Looks like we're the new yin and yang.

KAMI

More like Life and Death.

KAZE

Who's who?

KAMI  
I don't know.

More silence.

Kami and Kaze are walking in front of a modest yet well-kept house. Kami stops when she reaches the driveway.

KAMI  
We're here.

Kaze looks around, confused.

KAZE  
Where?

KAMI  
My house, egghead. Right there.

Kami points behind her. Kaze takes it in.

KAMI  
Now you know where I live. Just in case.

Kami turns around, then takes the mail out of the mailbox and flicks through it.

KAZE  
You sneaky piece of shit.

KAMI  
You're welcome.

Kami turns back to Kaze.

KAMI (CONT'D)  
See you at lunch tomorrow?

KAZE  
Roger.

KAMI  
That's my line.

KAZE  
Oops.

KAMI  
(playful)  
Here we go again. How many times are we gonna do this?

Kaze looks her in the eyes.

KAZE

As long as you'll let me.

With that, Kaze sets off for anywhere but his house.

His home is somewhere—someone—else.

END.