

KIRSTEN. It's not Amanda? I won't ask. When I talk to myself I sound interesting but when I say things out loud I don't.

DAVIS. I'm interested.

KIRSTEN. And that's a real problem because what you say out loud is important, it's like a bridge, and if you don't have it you're all alone. So whatever you've got to say, Davis, whoever you've got to say it to, you better say it. I would like to go to the girls' room now.

(She starts off and turns back.)

Let me take these, they're undrinkable.

(KIRSTEN takes DAVIS's Dixie cup and her own and leaves. Maybe DAVIS puts his head in his arms.)

AT THE BOTTOM OF LAKE MISSOULA

by Ed Monk

Characters

PAM

JIM

Scene

Pam and Jim have been made lab partners in a biology class at college. Pam has been distracted and aloof because six months earlier her entire family was killed by a tornado. Jim has just found out about the tragedy and visits Pam in her dorm room.

(PAM is sitting on bed; her head in her hands, there is a knock at the door made by a drumstick on the stage floor. It repeats the knock on the door at the dorm.)

PAM. Come in.

(Enter JIM carrying the binder she dropped.)

JIM. Hey.

PAM. *(PAM looks at him for a beat and then turns away.)* Please leave me alone.

JIM. I just wanted to um...I mean...I...

PAM. What?

JIM. I don't know what to say to you. I tried to think of something to say, but nothing...I mean, nothing really bad has ever even happened to me. I can't even begin to imagine what you...I mean you read about things like that or it's on the news but you never...I don't know what to tell you. I just...you just seem so sad and I...want to help.

PAM. You can't.

(Pause. JIM sets the binder on the bed and begins to exit but stops. He turns back, looks at her for a second, makes a decision and begins to speak quickly.)

JIM. We had this dog once, his name was Patches, and he was the dumbest dog in the universe. So one time we had some mice in the house, behind the drywall in the living room, and Patches could hear them. So he would run all along the wall chasing them and then after he got really worked up, he would run full force and smash his head into the wall and then he would stagger all around and fall down.

(There is a pause while PAM stands and stares at him in disbelief.)

PAM. What in the hell are you talking about!? Are you stupid!?

JIM. No, the dog was stupid. There was another time, my little brother had this bottle rocket and he was up on the deck and he was going to shoot it at Patches, who was down in the yard, only he had it backwards, so when he lit it, it shot into the kitchen and went off and scared the piss out of my Mom. So she comes flying out the door and slips on the...

PAM. Why are you telling me this!?

JIM. I don't know. *(Pause.)* These are all my good stories. There's another one about the upstairs toilet overflowing. But that was my older brother and he was drunk at the time...

PAM. So your whole family is stupid?

JIM. Yeah, pretty much. Except for me, I'm the smart one. You can't tell by looking at me, but I get pretty good grades. Well, except for last semester. I got a D in Chemistry. But it was an 8:00 class, so I really didn't actually go that much...

PAM. You got a D?

JIM. Well, technically, yeah.

PAM. I never got a D in my life. My Dad would have killed me.

(There is a pause as they look at each other.)

JIM. Yeah, well my Mom was not pleased at all. *(Seeing and then pointing at the picture on the bed.)* Is that your family?

PAM. *(Pause.)* Yes.

(She picks up the picture.)

JIM. They look nice.

PAM. They were.

(PAM sits on the bed.)

JIM. I've got two brothers like I said, and then an older sister and my Mom and Dad. *(Very carefully, JIM sits on the bed.)* What did your dad do?

PAM. He was a farmer,

JIM. I got an uncle up in Kalispell who's a farmer, he grows...uh... soybeans.

PAM. We grew wheat... My dad...my dad was a *really* good farmer. And my mom, she could grow anything... She would always have this huge garden and it was just...amazing. She loved to go out there.

JIM. One time my mom spent \$80.00 on tomato plants. But by the end of summer, she had only gotten three little tomatoes. So each tomato had cost like 25 bucks.

(PAM looks at him and smiles a little.)

JIM. Told you I was the smart one. *(Short pause.)* Funny thing is, nobody in my house likes tomatoes.

PAM. Do you believe in heaven?

(She stares at him, she really needs to know.)

JIM. Yeah, I do.

PAM. Why?

(JIM thinks for a moment, trying to think of what to say. He stands to say the next lines.)

JIM. I don't know... If you...if you go out by the Flathead River...on a clear night, and...it's so clear that you can see the satellites in the sky...and all of the stars...there's so many of them...it's...it's...so big... I guess... I guess, it should make you feel small...but it doesn't...it makes you feel... I don't know...it makes you believe...that...there's something more...

(JIM sits and there is a pause.)

PAM. *(Looks at picture.)* My mom... *(Laughs)* ...just before I went off to college, she got all worried about us needing to spend more time together, so she started family game night. And we all had to play these games together. And my mom loved charades, so we'd play girls against the boys. And my dad and brother were so bad.

JIM. I was thinking about getting a cup of coffee or maybe some hot chocolate. Would you like to go?

PAM. No. *(At first, she is too startled to think about what she is saying.)* No thank you, I'm a little tired.

JIM. OK, sure, I understand.

PAM. But...maybe later. Maybe, we could go later?

JIM. OK, that's good. I'll give you a call?

PAM. OK.

JIM. All right, I'll talk to you later.

(JIM exits.)