

SECRET LIFEGUARDS

By

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28 Plays Later

Day 3

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ACT I

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP - A THERAPIST'S OFFICE.

We find ourselves in a stereotypical therapist's office. Small, neutral tones, a couch and matching chair, a bookshelf, and a small desk.

RICHARD sits in the chair with a notepad, and JIM lies on the couch, heads towards RICHARD.

There is silence for several uncomfortable moments.

JIM: I'm not sure what else to say.

RICHARD: You don't have to say anything.

JIM: Then what am I doing here?

RICHARD: I don't know, what ARE you doing here?

JIM sighs.

JIM: I'm not sure. Maybe I just want to believe someone is listening to listen to me. I need to feel heard.

RICHARD: If the whole world was listening, Jim, what would you say?

There is a long pause while Jim ponders.

JIM: I can be in a room full of people I care for a whole lot, and still feel completely alone.

RICHARD: So you're lacking connection? You're with people you care about, but...

JIM: I feel lonely.

RICHARD: I see.

JIM: Is it me?

RICHARD: Is what you?

JIM: Is it my fault that I feel so isolated?

RICHARD: Intimacy can be frightening.

JIM: No! I'm not looking to hook up! I just want to feel close to my friends, not 10,000 miles away.

RICHARD: Intimacy is about so much more than sex, Jim.

JIM: I guess...

RICHARD: Every relationship has some level of intimacy. Siblings. Co-workers. Poker buddies. The intimacy is the connection. How much of you you allow them to see-- to experience. Sure, at certain depths intimacy can lead to sex, but it doesn't have to. You're standing near the shallow end of the pool, Jim. All of your friends are swimming in intimacy with each other. Some in the deep, deep end. Some just splashing playfully in the shallows. The water-- the intimacy is what connects them.

JIM: And I'm not even getting my feet wet.

RICHARD: I'm afraid you're not.

JIM: When I was a child, I had to walk at least one lap around any pool I was going to get in before I could swim.

RICHARD: Why's that?

JIM: To make absolutely sure there were no sharks.

RICHARD nods.

RICHARD: And were there ever sharks?

JIM: No.

RICHARD: But you're still walking laps around this pool, Jim. How many laps have you taken?

JIM: It's so crowded, I can't see beneath the surface in some places. How can I be absolutely sure.

RICHARD: You can't. That's the secret to intimacy. You have to trust that everyone who is in there has done their lap, too, and between everyone else in the pool, no one spotted a shark.

JIM: But what if they're the shark?

RICHARD: What do you mean?

JIM: What if I get in the water. What if I find a comfortable depth, and there's someone there, and we swim, but they turn out to be a shark and pull me under to devour me.

RICHARD: What makes you so special?

JIM: What?

RICHARD: Why are you the one they're waiting for? Why have they not eaten anyone else?

JIM: I-- maybe they have. How would I know?

RICHARD: Blood. In the water. You're surrounded by friends. If one of them sees blood they might now mention it, but if two, or three, or more of them do, they'll tell each other. They'll identify the source, and if they notice you swimming too close to it, they'll WARN you. They may even toss it out of the pool before you even get there, because eventually people get tired of finding what the shark leaves behind, and they get on a boat and hunt it.

JIM: Oh...

RICHARD: It's your metaphor. I just ran with it.

JIM: I know.

RICHARD: You understand that just by coming here every week, you're dipping a toe in my pool, right?

JIM: What?

RICHARD: We are building a modicum of intimacy here. It's not sexual. It's not friendship. But it IS intimacy. You tell me things you don't tell anyone else. There's a sense of TRUST here. Or do you think I could turn out to be a shark, too?

JIM: I pay you not to kill me.

RICHARD: (chuckling) Fair enough. But we also pay to go to the waterslides.

JIM: True.

RICHARD looks at the clock on the wall.

RICHARD: Our time is up for today.

JIM sits up and looks at RICHARD for the first time.

JIM: Thanks for hearing me.

RICHARD: Thanks for dipping your toe in the pool.

JIM: Maybe I'll manage a whole foot someday.

RICHARD: You just might. And then you'll start to realize that the water isn't really all that scary.

JIM sighs and stands.

JIM: Have a good week.

RICHARD:            You, too. And remember... Some of the people swimming  
                         are also secretly lifeguards.

JIM leaves. RICHARD makes notes on his  
notepad as the lights FADE TO BLACK.

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This almost turned into a musical:

JIM:                *I can sit in a room full of people  
                         Crowded and noisy and more  
                         With elbows on elbows they push and they shove  
                         Till no one can fit in the door.*

*I can be at a party or game night  
                         Surrounded by people I love  
                         They laugh and they're glad and they're so far from  
                         sad  
                         But I am none of the above.*

*Can you hear me?  
                         I say no.  
                         'Cause I find myself  
                         Amongst everyone else  
                         But also completely alone.*

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**Brief 3 - Due by 4 Feb at 10:00am UK time**

It's Groundhog Day!!!

Yes, it certainly is. And if yesterday we were stuck in the past, today we're stuck in the present!

So, whether you want to write a play that loops the sa... hold on... this is eerie...

OK, seeing as we're stuck on the same day, we may as well get a play out of it, because if you're groundhogging the day, it means you still haven't written the play, and besides, you're not actually repeating the exact same day - because for at least one person it's very different.

So, for our play today, set up your play from yesterday in exactly the same way - first few lines don't change, but then your characters choose to behave completely differently throughout. But beware, the play must go into a totally new direction, not just be a different perspective of the same story.

For bonus points don't simply change the plot but also the style - turn a frown upside down, turn a song into a pause, a farce into melodrama, or whatever...