

16,000 PSI

An excerpt of a full-length play

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SCENE 1

The scenes are divided between Mary and Salem on the roof, and the cocktail party in the house downstairs. The act starts with Mary and Salem on the roof.

SALEM

People talk about love as if it's this tangible thing, as if it's a reachable goal, you know: "Salem one day you'll find love and it'll be stupendously marvelous" but like, where? I just keep getting hung up on that logistical nightmare. Like will I have to hike to the bottom of the Mariana trench or—

MARY

You can't, you'd be crushed by the pressure—and if it was tangible it'd be dead.

SALEM

What?

MARY

The bottom of the Mariana trench is 16,000 PSI you'd be crushed.

SALEM

What's PSI—

MARY

Pounds per square inch.

SALEM

And the other thing? What'd you mean by that?

MARY

Love isn't tangible you can't touch it—

SALEM

Yeah but people always knew when it hit them, like mom was saying downstairs—

MARY

Did it leave a mark when it hit? Did it bruise? No it didn't, therefore it isn't tangible. Besides, no one can ever seem to realize when it's gone.

SALEM

(without malice.)

Okay it isn't tangible, just don't say tangible again.

(Salem laughs, Mary joins in albeit more
sedately, and a long silence ensues.)

Why would it be dead though?

MARY

Well it was never real so how could it be alive? Besides it's an ideal, ideals are always temporary.

SALEM

I think most poets would disagree.

MARY

Yes but poets reflect on ideals they don't live them.

SALEM

That's kind of a bullshit point though—

MARY

When people take the creatures from the Mariana trench, the ones that naturally live down there—not the carcasses that sunk to the bottom— the ones who live at that pressure and they drag them up here; they essentially dissolve, they just turn into goo, unable to sustain their form which was made at 16,000 PSI. To be fair you'd turn into goo as well if you were put at that pressure; you'd just be a rancid little pile of flesh for all the creatures who are meant to live down there to nibble on.

SALEM

Do you kinda see how this has nothing to do with anything I'm talking about.

MARY

Not true, you brought up the Mariana trench. That's real and love isn't so I don't see why we're wasting our time talking about something fake.

SALEM

People talk about Star Wars, that's fake too and it —what did you say— could be considered an ideal, Keith in seventh period basically lives it.

MARY

If that becomes an ideal then there's no hope for humanity and let's be clear there's no hope for Keith. Who am I kidding,

(deep breath)

there never was.

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