

A LONELY IMPULSE OF DELIGHT

Night time. Two guys, Jim and Walter, are crouched at the edge of a lake. Light from the water makes patterns on their faces.

JIM. What are we doing out here, Walter?

WALTER. Shh. Just keep your eyes open, all right?

JIM. All right, Walter. But what are we doing out here?

WALTER. Come on now, don't get boring, Jim. You came, and I thank you that you came. Now relax. And keep your eyes open.

JIM. But what am I looking for?

WALTER. Never mind and just trust me and look!

JIM. I'm not into blind faith. It doesn't appeal to me.

WALTER. You're my best friend in the world, Jim. If there's anybody who understands me it's you. If there's anybody I trust it's you. That's why you're here. Because you're my best friend in the world.

JIM. I'm sitting at a nice silly party. I'm about to get somewhere with a nice silly woman. And my friend Walter takes me by the arm, and leads me to Central Park Lake.

WALTER. It's pretty. Enjoy it.

JIM. It's two o'clock in the morning.

WALTER. Two-ten. Listen. How quiet. "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

JIM. Look at that duck. It's asleep. It's mouth's hanging open.

WALTER. Did you ever have a dream? Something in your head. A feeling. Something you wanted but you knew you could never have?

JIM. Probably. But nothing comes to mind.

WALTER. Something's happened to me, Jim. Something that could never happen has happened to me. And it's the most wonderful thing. And the saddest. And nobody knows.

JIM. All right, I'll bite. What?

WALTER. I'm in love.

JIM. Aw, give me a break!
WALTER. I am!
JIM. I believe you. All right? But so what? Did you really have to ruin my shoes and break up my night to tell me that? So you're in love. I'm sure it seems very important to you, Walter, but really, get serious.
WALTER. You don't understand.
JIM. No doubt I don't.
WALTER. She's a mermaid.
JIM. What?
WALTER. She's a mermaid. The woman I'm in love with. She's a mermaid. And she lives in Central Park Lake.
JIM. In the lake.
WALTER. Yes.
JIM. Well, that makes sense. If she's a mermaid. That she would live in a lake. A fresh-water mermaid, huh?
WALTER. Don't make fun.
JIM. But it's so easy. What are we doing here?
WALTER. I want you to see her.
JIM. Why didn't you invite your parents so she could meet the family?
WALTER. I've seen her twice now. Always between two and two-thirty. (*Walter takes out a little plastic pumpkin.*)
JIM. What's that?
WALTER. A small plastic pumpkin.
JIM. Ask a silly question. (*Walter turns it on. It lights up.*) Oh, and it lights up! Very nice.
WALTER. It's our signal. I turn this on, and I call her name.
JIM. And how did you hit on this sophisticated system?
WALTER. It came to me in a dream, Jim.
JIM. A dream.
WALTER. Yeah. It's amazing how quickly you accept all these things once you've seen her.
JIM. I'll bet.
WALTER. Sally. Sally.
JIM. What are you saying?
WALTER. I'm calling her name.
JIM. Sally?
WALTER. That's right.
JIM. Sally the mermaid?
WALTER. That's right. Sally? Sally?

JIM. I'm leaving.

WALTER. No. Don't go. She should show up any minute. I want you to see her. I'm desperate for you to see her really. You see, I've always had a terrible longing in me. A color. A feeling. And I didn't know what it was. Now I do. I'm a man who loves a mermaid. And she loves me. And it's wonderful. But it's sad, too. It's really sad for a man to love a mermaid. You can see that? And it's even worse if it's a dream. To love somebody you can't have is bad enough. But to love somebody you can't have, and she's a dream, too . . . That's too sad. Do you know what I'm talking about, Jimmy? You're my best friend in the world. If you don't know what I'm talking about then there's nobody.

JIM. I don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

WALTER. Just wait a minute. Just one more minute. Sally? Sally? Please?

JIM. There's no one out there, Walter.

WALTER. She's out there. Sally?

JIM. No. There's nothing out there. Why don't you come with me? You should go home and get some sleep.

WALTER. No. No.

JIM. All right.

WALTER. 'Member back in the days when we saw everything the same way? And nothing was impossible? And we loved each other?

JIM. I'm worried about you, Walter.

WALTER. I'm okay.

JIM. No, you're not. You're not. (*Exit Jim.*)

WALTER. Sally, why didn't you come? He was my best friend. He was my friend. Sally? O God. Lonely. (*A ghostly woman's voice is heard. Light comes from the source of it, illuminating Walter's face.*)

SALLY. Walter! Walter!

WALTER. You've come!

SALLY. I love you!

WALTER. And I you. My solitary, unprovable, deepest only love.

FADEOUT

PROPERTY LIST

Small plastic pumpkin which lights up (Walter)