

POLAR BEAR SWIM

A Ten-Minute Play
By

Marisa Smith

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POLAR BEAR SWIM

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BROTHER Auto mechanic, 50's, a townie, born and raised in a small NH village, tough, strong, no pretenses.

TROY Also a townie, 20's, innocent, a good-looking, good ol' boy.

HARRY From Boston, 50's, down on his luck and at the end of his rope.

SETTING: Brother's Auto Shop. Winter in northern New Hampshire, near the Canadian border, the real boonies.

TIME: The present. Saturday afternoon.

BROTHER is standing behind the counter next to the cash register doing some paperwork, wearing a t-shirt despite the weather. TROY blows in, wearing a t-shirt and a vest. BROTHER looks up from his paperwork, takes his reading glasses off.

BROTHER

Look what the cat drug in.

TROY

Brother. Hey.

BROTHER

How ya doin?

TROY

Not too bad.

BROTHER

Tiny said he saw ya truck over ta *The Shady Lane*, yestiddy. Oughta park in the back if she's married ya know. Hope Melissa don't find out--

TROY

That *was* me and Melissa!

BROTHER

Don't wanna end up fulla buckshot just when ya at the height of ya powas... some angry husband raging on ya!

TROY

She wanted to go to the *The Shady Lane*. Wanted to do sumpin' diff'rnt. Wanted to pretend we were *tourists*.

BROTHER

Oh, I'm just pulling your chain. I know you and Melissa are real sweet.

(HARRY enters, unkempt, unshaven, looking like a wreck.)

HARRY *(nervous)*

Excuse me, but I'm looking for the Polar Bear swim? Do you know where it is?

TROY *(to BROTHER)*

Polar Bear Swim? That today Brother?

BROTHER

Up ta Wink's Pond.

TROY *(to HARRY)*

Okay, then, you take Beaver Meadow--

BROTHER

Beava Medda is closed. Had all those blow-downs.

(off HARRY'S quizzical look)

Trees come down cuz a the storm.

TROY

Oh, yeah, forgot about them blow-downs.

BROTHER

You planning on doin' it? The Polar Bear Swim?

HARRY

Definitely, I'm definitely gonna do it, I drove all the way up here from Boston!

BROTHER

Well, there's nothin' official but usually just people do it who are from around he-ah.

TROY

Yeah, town doesn't want ta get sued, you know, in case somebody dies.

HARRY

Oh, that's okay, that's fine in fact, that's just *fine*.

TROY

What's fine?

HARRY

If I die. I mean, I'm planning to, that's the whole idea! I hope the shock of the cold water will give me a heart attack and I'll die instantly. Boom, out like a light! Couldn't sue you then could I?

TROY

You really lookin' to kill yourself?

HARRY

Quick and painless, *perfect* way to go. I read some guy in Canada died last winter doing it.

BROTHER

Well, Canadians, ya know.

TROY

Yeah, Canadians.

HARRY

Have you ever done it?

TROY

Yeah, I done it.

HARRY

(*to BROTHER*)

Have you?

BROTHER

Years ago. I didn't die but sumpin' worse happened. Much worse than dyin.'

TROY

What? What happened Brother?

HARRY

Yeah, what happened?

BROTHER

Jumped in, colder than a witch's tit, couldn't move, couldn't catch my breath. And then—

TROY

And then, and then what?

(*BROTHER is shaking his head*)

HARRY

What?

TROY

Tell us Brother!

BROTHER

Well... well, turns out my, my, *balls*, they just done disappeared right up me, wouldn't come out for 'owas.

TROY

Your balls? You couldn't find 'em?

HARRY

Your, your testicles, went, went... back in?

BROTHER

Yup. Had to go see Doc Emerson. He said they'd come back down and by Jesus they did. Took 'em bout a day but they came back.

TROY

You never told me that!

HARRY

God, that must have been terrible. Your testicles really....*retracted?*

BROTHER

Don't think you wanna do the polar bear swim.

HARRY

I never thought *that* could happen. But, if I'm dead I wouldn't know!

TROY

You don't wanna live no more?

HARRY

Son, I've got a shitload of problems and I am tired.

BROTHER

That Porsche nine eleven out there don't look like too much of a problem ta me.
(*TROY goes to the window to look and whistles*)

TROY

She's a beauty. (*to BROTHER*) Mass. plates.

BROTHER (*to TROY*)

Well, we won't hold that against 'im.

TROY

You in trouble?

HARRY

Nope. Just broke. My business went belly up. Well, the IRS caught up with me.

TROY

Sorry.

HARRY

Yeah, friends deserted me, my wife left me, it's a mess.

BROTHER

Well, people are mostly rotten, that ain't no surprise.

TROY

I dunno 'bout that Brother.

HARRY

They love you when you're up and kick you when you're down.

BROTHER

Yup, Soona or late-a just about everybody'll disappoint ya.

TROY

Not *everybody*--

HARRY

My wife moved back in with her mother in *New Jersey*.

BROTHER

When the gravy train stops the women disappe-ar. Them are practical creatures.

HARRY

Right on, you're only as good as your bank account.

TROY

C'mon Brother, not all women want fancy stuff, I mean Melissa and me are happy with a movie and a big bowl of popcorn

BROTHER

An city folk 'specially don't have no real friends. Everybody just usin' everybody else to get what they want.

HARRY

You said it, everybody just hustling everybody else.

BROTHER

Not that people don't use people he-ah. They do.

TROY

You don't use no one Brother! And I don't! That ain't true!

HARRY

I mean people are really the same no matter where they live.

BROTHER

Yup. Don't matter.

HARRY

Disloyal, deceitful, mean---

BROTHER

---lyin', cheatin', stealin'...can't count on no body.

TROY

People up here aren't like that and you know it Brother!

HARRY

And the whole damn thing goes so fast.

BROTHER

One day you realize mosta your hair is gone, your teeth are crumblin' in your mouth like old plaster, and it takes longer and longer for your damn pee to come out.

HARRY (*knowingly*)

And worse things.

BROTHER (*knowingly*)

And worse things.

TROY

What worse things?

BROTHER

Nothin' you have ta worry about Troy.

HARRY

No, son, you're not there yet!

TROY

What are you talkin' about?

BROTHER

Yup, like I said, you at the height of your powas, you enjoy it now.

HARRY *(to BROTHER)*

Remember when we were that young.

BROTHER

Sure din't appreciate it did we?

HARRY

No, we didn't.

TROY

You're talkin' like you're dead! You're not dead yet!

BROTHER

That's right, we ain't, are we?

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HARRY

Almost!

BROTHER

Yup, almost!

HARRY

And, we are all ultimately alone.

BROTHER

Alone when we come inta this world and alone when we go outa it.

HARRY

Yup. Amen.

BROTHER

Yup.

(BROTHER and HARRY shake their heads in agreement)

(BROTHER and HARRY share a good laugh)

TROY

You can still drive that Porsche out there! Je-sus!

HARRY

That's right! Here, take it for a spin.
(throws TROY the keys)

TROY

You mean it? Really?

HARRY

Knock yourself out.

TROY

Thanks! Won't be too long! Just to get a feel!

(TROY runs out)

HARRY

Good kid.

BROTHER

Don't make 'em better.

HARRY

Yeah, every now and then there's a winner. But like you said, most people are rotten.

BROTHER

To the core.

HARRY

I'll say!

(BROTHER and HARRY shake their heads in agreement)

HARRY

Boy, it's been just great talking to you.

(Looks at sign)

Brother, right?

BROTHER

Yes sir.

HARRY

(puts out his hand to shake BROTHER'S hand)

I'm Harry. I feel so much better!

(TROY comes running into the shop)

TROY

Brother, Brother, you won't believe it, you won't believe how *smooth* it is---

BROTHER

I know, she purrs like a kitten.

HARRY

Well, gentlemen, I think I'm gonna get back on the highway.

TROY

You don't wanna do the swim no more?

HARRY

No, I changed my mind. Gonna drive to New Jersey now.

BROTHER

Bring flowers. And bring 'em for her mother too.

HARRY

Don't know if I can go *that* far!

(BROTHER and HARRY laugh)

(TROY throws HARRY his keys)

TROY

Well, take care of her. The car I mean.

HARRY

You bet.

(to BROTHER)

Thanks, Brother.

(to TROY and BROTHER)

Good luck to you both. And no swimming with the polar bears!

(HARRY exits)

BROTHER

(grabs his cap and vest)

C'mon now, were gonna be late! Gonna beat my record for stayin' unda the watta this year.

TROY

Hey! That never happened with your balls, did it?

BROTHER

It did too happen one year, it did. That's why now I grease em' up with engine oil, keeps em' nice and warm.

TROY

You are so full of it Brother, just full of it.

BROTHER

Like hell I am.

TROY

And you don't think that people are rotten and all that stuff.

BROTHER

Like hell I do.

(BROTHER puts his arm around TROY'S shoulders, and they head for the door)

TROY

Hey, what's that worse thing you were talking about?

BROTHER

Oh, nuthin. Jus' talkin'. C'mon, let's go waya Beava Medda, mebbe it's open. I wanna see those blow-downs.

END OF PLAY