

SCENE ONE

Katie, 9 years old, sits alone. Her expression is distant, withdrawn. Perhaps she has been crying.

Her feet hang in a large koi pond that sits center stage. She watches how the koi fish swim as her feet wade through the water. She smiles at the fish.

Katie watches the fish. She attempts a smile. It doesn't feel right. She melts back into her weariness.

Surrounding the pond are a myriad of plants and small trees, different colors and heights, exploding from the ground. It might be overwhelming to others, but to Katie, it is home.

Charlie, 75 years old, enters. He carries a small tray. On it is a box of graham crackers and two glasses of milk.

He slowly, tenderly sits down beside Katie. He moves his legs into the pond and lets his feet wade beside hers. He stares at the fish.

Katie grabs the box of graham crackers. She opens the box and fishes a cracker out. She takes a glass of milk, dips the graham cracker in the milk, and takes a bite.

She softens, ever so slightly.

CHARLIE

Would you like to talk about it?

I get it. I know how you feel.

I think they really like you. The fish. They get excited when you come around.

Have you ever seen one jump?

The memory races across Katie's brain. She nods.

CHARLIE

They won't do that for me. They're my fish and they won't jump for me. They jump for you.

Katie dips her graham cracker into the milk and takes another bite. She breaks off a piece and feeds it to the fish.

CHARLIE

They miss you when you leave.

KATIE

Why won't they jump for you?

CHARLIE

Because I don't feed them graham crackers.

Charlie takes a graham cracker, dips it into his milk, and takes a bite.

Silence.

CHARLIE

Have they gotten worse?

KATIE

(sighs)
Yeah.

CHARLIE

Much worse?

KATIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.
(pause)
You know they love you, right? They absolutely love you?

KATIE

I don't know.

CHARLIE

I do. I have no doubt about it. I bet they love you so much, that it would them cry to even talk about it.

KATIE

They don't love me. They don't love anything. Nothing in the whole wide world!

Silence. Charlie looks to Katie. Then, he laughs.

KATIE

Don't laugh.

He continues, harder.