

I'M YOUR MAN

A 10-minute play

By David Hlavsa

© 2009 by David Hlavsa
7106 36th Avenue SW
Seattle, WA 98126
dhlavsa@stmartin.edu

206-932-2939

Characters:

Dan, in his forties

Adam, teens

Setting: A small clearing on a forested hill. April, late afternoon, getting towards evening. Some large rocks and fallen trees provide places to sit. Cool, cloudy, a bit misty.

DAN enters, wearing a daypack, kerchief on his head, carrying a map and compass. He stops, puts down the map and compass, takes a drink of water, brushes a bug off his arm, uses his kerchief to wipe the sweat off his face.

ADAM enters, also with daypack. HE sits heavily, swats a bug, digs through his pack for a water bottle and polishes off the rest of his water.

THEY look around.

...So, we're back. ADAM

...I guess so. DAN

I recognize that dead tree. ADAM

Yeah, me too. It looks like the Venus de Milo. DAN

(ADAM looks at him.)

Well, minus the head.

Damn. ADAM

You don't see the resemblance? DAN

We've been here before. ADAM

Yes. DAN

ADAM

Twice.

DAN

... Yes.

ADAM

We're lost.

DAN

We're not lost.

ADAM

I knew it. I just knew it.

DAN

Directionally challenged. Topographically bemused.

ADAM

Lost.

DAN

Yes. It would seem so. Yes.

(Back to the map.)

I'm not trusting this compass. It seems to me when we were here last time I was getting a different reading.

ADAM

Christ, these fucking bugs –

DAN

How about we try the GPS again?

ADAM

It's not powering up.

DAN

C'mon. Let's give it a shot anyway.

(ADAM takes a handheld GPS from his pack, holds it out.)

ADAM

Here. Knock yourself out.

DAN

Have you still got the coordinates of our campsite?

ADAM

No. It dumped the memory when you dropped it.

DAN

Yeah... Okay, I'm getting something. Four satellites—

ADAM

Let me see.

(ADAM grabs the GPS and looks at the screen. DAN looks over his shoulder. Silence as they variously look at the map, the compass, the screen the surroundings. Then ADAM whaps the GPS screen a couple of times with his palm. HE stares at the screen.)

Where *is* this?

DAN

(Looking at the GPS screen)

It doesn't look like here, does it?

ADAM

This thing keeps saying we're in Venezuela.

DAN

Well, that's okay. We're not on the GPS and we're not on the map. We're here.

(ADAM looks at DAN a moment, points to the ground.)

ADAM

... You mean "here."

DAN

Yes.

ADAM

What is that, some kind of Hindu karma bullshit?

DAN

No, I—

ADAM

What'd you learn that, in the *ashram*?

DAN

Adam—

ADAM

What the hell are you *saying*, Dad?

DAN

What I'm saying is you have to pay attention to your actual surroundings. Even an experienced guide can have a GPS, a good map, and still be way off course. The big problem is not being off course, per se. It's not *knowing* you're off course. We know we're off course, and we know where we are: we're here – so that's where we have to start from.

ADAM

Jesus.

DAN

Adam. (Softly:) ...Just be cool, okay?

(ADAM Looks at the GPS, tosses it back to DAN.)

ADAM

Piece of shit's powered off again.

DAN

(Back to the map.)

I think we need to double back again. This doesn't look familiar, and we should have hit this stream a while ago.

ADAM

What about that stream we crossed before?

DAN

I think that was only this stream here.

ADAM

You *think*?

DAN

If this way is north, we might be pretty close to this road over here. But that's only if we're in this general area here. (Pointing to a notation on the map:) I'm just not sure about this declination. But then, we used it hiking in, and we got to the lake okay...

ADAM

All right then, Davy Crockett, what now?

DAN

Well, we've got to get oriented somehow. Be easier if we could see the sun. We might have better

luck tomorrow morning if it clears. Or we could look at the moss...

ADAM

...The moss.

DAN

...On the trees. Generally, the moss grows on the north side of the trees. You didn't know that...?

(Pause. ADAM gets up and walks off stage.)

ADAM

(From off.)

...Come over here a second.

(DAN follows him off. Pause.)

ADAM

Okay: Dad. Now, see this tree here? Look at this tree. There's moss all around it. ...So by your reckoning, it's North in every direction. So, since every way we look is north, are we at the frickin' South Pole? Do these trees look like penguins? What do you think, Dad?

DAN

You have to find a bigger open space so the sun's had a chance to shine on the tree trunk.

ADAM

If we found an open space, then we'd be out of the woods, wouldn't we? We'd go to a Chevron and buy a fucking roadmap.

(DAN re-enters, goes back to his map.)

DAN

I'm sorry, son. Stuff like this happens sometimes.

(ADAM re-enters.)

ADAM

Sometimes?

DAN

Yes.

ADAM

All the time. All. The. Time. ...Dad, what are we going to do?

DAN

We could re-trace our steps—

ADAM

Isn't that what we've been doing?

DAN

We haven't exactly been re-tracing—

ADAM

Why would we re-trace our steps? So we can go back to the lake and start over?

DAN

There's fish at the lake—

ADAM

Theoretically.

DAN

Right. Not like we've seen any fish. But if we did catch one, we could eat it.

ADAM

I don't want to go back to the lake. I want to get out of here.

DAN

If re-tracing your steps doesn't work, you're supposed to stay put.

ADAM

Why?

DAN

So they can find you.

ADAM

So *who* can find you?

DAN

You wait to be rescued.

ADAM

But nobody knows where we are.

DAN

Right.

ADAM

Least of all you.

(Pause.)

DAN

If we went back to the lake, we'd have a starting point, though. We'd know where we are on the map. That is, if it's the lake we think it is. (Pointing to places on the map:) Here, look. If we weren't getting accurate compass readings to begin with, we could have ended up here, at this pond, or even this one here.

(Pause.)

ADAM

We went to the wrong *lake*?

DAN

It looked familiar to me.

ADAM

Ohmygod.

DAN

I guess I'm not totally sure though—

ADAM

Ohmygod.

DAN

The point is—

ADAM

Yes, tell me what the point is—

DAN

The point is, if you're moving around, it takes them longer to find you. It's like if you can't find your car keys, you do a systematic search. You retrace your steps carefully. And you only look once in each place. If your car keys were walking around, you'd have to keep checking your desk and the pants you wore yesterday and —

ADAM

You can't find your keys because you're stoned all the time.

DAN

Not any more—

ADAM

You can't find your ass with both hands—

DAN

That's enough.

ADAM

I can't believe I let you take me into the woods, through an area where there's no *trail*. To a stinking hole with no fish. What are you staring at the map for? If we don't know where we are, then what good is the map? Christ.

(ADAM grabs the map, crumples it and throws it to the ground.)

It's getting fucking dark. I want to get out of here.

DAN

Whatever we do, I'm afraid we're going to have to do it in the morning.

ADAM

No!

DAN

There's no way we're going to make it back to the lake before dark, and it looks like we're not going find our way back to the campsite either. ...No big deal. We'll just camp here, get a night under the stars, in nature, free of charge. And then in the morning we'll get going again.

ADAM

No, come on. Let's try down there, okay? The railroad tracks could be just down that slope. If we find them, we could walk out of here tonight, even if it gets dark. Hell, we might even be out of here before dark.

DAN

I don't think so. I mean, you might be right, but you might not. It's going to take us a while to gather wood for a fire and get it lit. If we don't have that taken care of by dark, it's going to be a very uncomfortable night.

ADAM

I can't stay here.

DAN

We need enough wood to last the whole night. Otherwise we'll end up stumbling around in the dark looking for more.

ADAM

No. I can't--

(ADAM makes as if to walk down the hill. DAN stops him.)

DAN

We get out there in the dark, we'll get separated. Adam, we've got to stay.

(ADAM is trembling. DAN leads him back to the logs.)

Here. See the way these logs are? We'll build a fire right in the middle, we'll store the wood right here, and we'll just sit close and feed the fire. We'll be fine.

ADAM

I'm getting cold.

DAN

Me too. Let's get some wood.

ADAM

Everything's wet.

DAN

Get a lot of small and medium-size stuff. Come on, we'll work together. I'll load you up—

ADAM

Fuck.

DAN

I'll load you up.

(ADAM starts to cry, sits down abruptly. DAN sits, puts his arm around him.)

Hey, hey, hey now.

(Pause. ADAM holds onto his father.)

...Remember when you were ... well, you must have been about five, and it was right after your mother died, and you were afraid of the dark, and ... Do you remember what I always used to say to you?

(Pause.)

You remember?

ADAM

Yeah. I remember.

(Pause.)

Why is it always a crisis with you?

DAN

I don't know. But, in a crisis, I'm your man...

(THEY stay still, holding each other as the lights fade.)