

***VOID (WHERE PROHIBITED)***

-- a meditation on existence

**CHARACTERS:**

6 Assorted types, males and females

**SETTING:**

At rise there is a tempest. The characters scream as they swirl back and forth as if in a force of nature. After a while they come to rest near each other on a bare stage.

ONE: (waking up) Oh, my god, what was that?

FIVE: I don't know. (to THREE) Do you know?

THREE: (not answering)

FIVE: Can't you hear me?

THREE: (not answering)

FIVE: What's wrong? Are you hurt?

THREE: I can hear you. I just don't know.

ONE: (fearful) Where are we? . . . Who *are* you people?

FIVE: I think we were all on the tour together. Weren't we?

THREE: Some were.

(The Others agree that they were.)

ONE: I don't remember any of you.

FIVE: And then what happened?

TWO: That's what we're trying to find out. Nobody seems to have any answers. Any real answers.

FOUR: I know what it was.

TWO: Yes?

FOUR: It was an act of God.

TWO: I know, but which one? That doesn't explain much.

FOUR: Don't ask if you don't want the answer.

TWO: No, don't answer if you don't have the answer!

FOUR: I have the answer! It's an act of God, I tell you. Let's all pray.

TWO: Yeah, maybe God will get His act together.

FOUR: I hope you aren't going to be like one of those characters in a play  
who's just there to make fun of religious people!

TWO: I'm not a character in a play. I'm a person in the real world.

FIVE: Maybe the real world is a play? It has the elements: the curtain goes  
up, there's conflict --

ONE: And then the curtain comes down, and it's all over.

THREE: And God either applauds or doesn't.

TWO: More likely He gives thumbs up or thumbs down. I sort of like that. It  
raises the stakes.

FOUR: I think God is here with us right now. Listen!

(They listen.)

ONE: You do?

SIX: (calling from offstage) Hello! Is anybody there?

FOUR: See!

SIX: Help! Help!

TWO: God is calling for help?

SIX: (entering) Thank God! Somebody's here!

ONE: Are you one of us?

SIX: What?

TWO: Are there any other survivors?

SIX: I didn't see anybody. I think I was disoriented over there. But I'm so glad to see you all! Hell is definitely not other people.

(They are cool to SIX.)

ONE: Have you got any food?

SIX: No. Don't you have?

ONE: I don't see any. Does anybody?

(All look for food, don't find any)

FIVE: How about water?

ONE: I don't see any. Doesn't anybody have anything to drink? Oh, no, what next!

FIVE: Don't start making us panic now. We're not thirsty!

ONE: I'm just trying to assess our resources. Didn't you see that movie?

SIX: I did. I'm not eating human flesh, that's all there is to it!

FIVE: Who asked you to?

TWO: I'll eat it. Anybody volunteering?

FIVE: Jesus, at least wait until we're starving!

THREE: I'll tell you one thing--I'm not drinking anybody's piss, my own included.

ONE: How do you know it will come to that?

THREE: I just know.

TWO: You might even like it? Have you ever tried piss?

THREE: I most certainly have not.

ONE: Oh, my God!

TWO: What now?

ONE: I think we're surrounded by a void.

TWO: No kidding.

FIVE: I found some food!

(Others look over expectantly)

TWO: Well, what is it?

FIVE: Some Extra gum.

ONE: What?

SIX: You know, Extra brand. It lasts and lasts. But there are only two sticks left in the pack.

TWO: Oh, Christ!

FIVE: I'm going to have one of the sticks of gum now. After all, they are mine. (Takes out a stick, opens it, begins to chew)

ONE: How is it?

TWO: Does it taste like human flesh?

FIVE: I don't know. I've never tasted human flesh.

TWO: Something tells me we'll all know before this trip is over.

SIX: Oh, now don't be negative! I'm sure we can work something out.

TWO: Like what?

SIX: We can share the gum.

FIVE: Yes. After I chew it.

OTHERS: Yuck! No thanks! etc.

TWO: I'm a survivor, but I refuse to share gum--with anybody.

FIVE: Good, that means more for the rest of us.

TWO: I don't want to be a spoilsport in this love feast but something tells me two sticks of gum do not a survival kit make.

TWO: By the way, what flavor is the gum?

FIVE: (checking) Pink bubblegum.

TWO: Oh, great! We're going starve to death blowing bubbles, pink bubbles at that!

FIVE: I thought you said you didn't want any.

TWO: I don't want any! I'm just making a joke. That's my method of surviving in the world!

FOUR: Well, I hope you're not the kind of person who's always cracking jokes in serious moments. You trivialize our lives.

TWO: Would you like to hear a non sequitur?

FOUR: No.

TWO: Yes you would. However much he may be a girlie man, in your heart of hearts you know you don't want to have a fistfight with a drag queen.

FOUR: Why, I never!

TWO: Oh, god.

ONE: Oh God? What?

FIVE: What now?

ONE: The void that we were surrounded by . . .

THREE and FOUR: Yes?

ONE: It's gotten voider.

SIX: Is that a word?

ONE: (irritated) I don't know! Who cares about the damn word! Look at what's happening!

THREE: I don't see anything.

FIVE: We'd better move closer together.

TWO: I don't want to move closer to you people.

FOUR: Come now, you may need us.

FIVE: Does anybody else have anything we can survive on? Come on, people, look through your stuff--your clothes, your purses, your underwear--forget the underwear. But look! Look!

SIX: Who appointed you dictator?

TWO: Exerting his/her natural leadership qualities. He/she took a workshop once. And got a certificate.

THREE: I think I should be the leader.

FOUR: No, I should. You're too quiet.

THREE: Well, if you'd shut up I wouldn't be so quiet.

TWO: I don't think any of this is within our control. Personality will out.

ONE: Oh, my God!

OTHERS: What now?

ONE: That void that was getting voider . . . Now it's much worse. It's about to surround us.

FOUR: Oh, I don't believe that.

ONE: Check it out. But be careful.

(TWO, FOUR and FIVE check the perimeter of the area)

TWO: You know what? Maybe we ought to move closer together after all.

(They move somewhat closer.)

FOUR: Maybe we should give thanks.

TWO: Give thanks? For what?

FOUR: Because we've found this safe haven.

TWO: Why aren't we screaming at whoever or whatever it is that's forcing us to seek a safe haven in the first place? Why do people like you

always want to give thanks, and for nothing?

FOUR: Because nobody likes a complainer.

TWO: Well, maybe some well-directed complaining and looking at the problem as it is might get some results that thanking the goddamn universe is never going to accomplish in a million years.

FOUR: You're tempting fate.

TWO: I hate you already. I hope I don't have to spend a lot of time with you.

FOUR: Believe me, you won't--if I can find my way out of here. . . . The way out is probably right over here. (Moves hesitantly) Isn't it? I can't seem to get past this area.

TWO: Like a fourth wall?

(There is an invisible barricade that cannot be penetrated.)

FOUR: Yes.

TWO: Then sit down.

FOUR: I will not.

FIVE: Will you two please try to get along. It's hard enough without us at each other's throats.

TWO and FOUR: Shut up!

SIX: Please, all of you.

TWO, FOUR, and FIVE: Fuck you!

THREE: You're giving me a headache!

ONE: I'm cold.

FOUR: So am I.

ONE: And tired.

TWO: I think I'm hungry. (to FIVE) How's that gum?

FIVE: Not bad.

ONE: Aren't you finished with it yet?

FIVE: Not quite.

THREE: Is there any taste left?

FIVE: A little. (chews hard)

SIX: Well, don't use it all up!

FIVE: It's my gum!

TWO: Where's that other piece you had?

FIVE: I'm keeping it for an emergency.

TWO: I think we're *in* an emergency.

SIX: Yeah, maybe we should divide up that stick of gum.

FIVE: No way.

TWO: You're going to hoard it all for yourself?

FIVE: Jesus, it's only one stick of gum. If I divided it up, each of us would get almost nothing.

TWO: Yeah, but maybe that one little piece might give us the strength to last until we're rescued. I feel the need for another non sequitur. I want my epitaph to read: Onward to Oblivion.

ONE: How do we know we're going to be rescued? Maybe no one knows we're even here? Will we be rescued or not?

THREE: Maybe no one cares.

FIVE: They're probably searching for us right this minute.

THREE: Do you hear that?

(All listen)

FIVE: It's . . . a plane.

TWO: I don't hear anything.



FIVE: Don't you all hear it? I tell you it's a plane!

SIX: Could it be a bird?

TWO: It's Superman!

THREE: No, it is a bird. See it. (Points up) It's a vulture.

ONE: My god, I think you're right.

FOUR: This doesn't look promising.

TWO: Not losing hope, I hope.

SIX: Let's chase it away. (Goes after the unseen vulture) Shoo! Shoo!

FIVE: It'll just come back.

ONE: And eat us?

FIVE: Or we it.

SIX: I think it's an optical illusion. There's no vulture there.

FIVE: But I can see it! It's got a bone in its mouth.

SIX: Then maybe it'll leave us alone.

TWO: Until we're dead.

FOUR: We're not going to die!

ONE: We're going to starve to death, very slowly. And then that vulture is going to eat us, very rapidly.

FOUR: You're a very negative person.

TWO: (to FOUR) And you're stupid.

THREE: Maybe we should offer the remaining stick of gum to the vulture.

FIVE: Why?

THREE: To placate it.

FIVE: That's not going to do much good.

SIX: You never know. Why not try?

FIVE: I'm not throwing away my last piece of gum!

TWO: I've got an idea. Why don't you throw your used gum to the vulture,  
as a test?

OTHERS: Yeah. Why not? What have we got to lose? Go ahead! etc.

FIVE: I'm still chewing it.

OTHERS: Throw that gum! etc., etc.

FIVE: All right. Don't get aggressive. I'll throw it. (takes the gum from  
his/her mouth, pretends to throw it into the air) There!

ONE: Did the vulture catch it?

TWO: Where'd it go?

FIVE: The vulture gobbled it up.

TWO: I don't think you even threw it. You palmed that gum.

FIVE: No, I didn't.

TWO: You did too. I saw you. Show us your hands.

FIVE: I will not!

TWO: (to the others) I'm telling you he/she didn't throw the gum.

FOUR: Did you throw the gum?

FIVE: It's my gum. I can throw it or not if I want to.

FOUR: Yeah, but you can't lie about it.

FIVE: Yes, I can.

TWO: So you admit you didn't throw the gum.

FIVE: I admit nothing.

SIX: Let's look for the gum, okay? . . . Am I going to get any help?

ONE: All right, I'll help you.

FOUR: So will I.

FIVE: I threw the gum to the vulture!

FOUR: Then why is it still hovering there?

FIVE: Maybe it doesn't like pink bubblegum. Maybe it wants more?

TWO: (seizing FIVE by the hand) Look, everybody! Here's the gum in his/her hand! Someone take it!

(FIVE resists)

FOUR: I've got it!

FIVE: This is anarchy! That's my bubblegum! Give it back.

FOUR: I'm throwing it to the vulture.

FIVE: Don't you dare!

FOUR: (to vulture) You who! You who! Want some gum? (makes lip noise, as with a cat) You want this? Here it comes! (throws the gum)

SIX: Did it catch it?

THREE: I think so.

SIX: It's eating it! . . . Is it satisfied? . . . Is it flying away now?

FOUR: Did it take the gum?

FIVE: Now we don't even have *that*!

ONE: Something tells me we're doomed anyway.

FIVE: Not if we work together and use what we have.

SIX: You know, I have a sudden feeling that only one of us will survive this.

TWO: For god's sake, this isn't a TV show. There won't be any prizes afterwards.

FOUR: I'd vote you off. That's for sure.

TWO: And I have a challenge round for you. Suck my butt, and you'll win a lovely necklace made of puka shells.

FIVE: Let's build a fire. What do you say?

SIX: Good idea. Who has matches?

(All look)

SIX: Nobody smokes?

(All say no)

TWO: The road to Hell is paved with New Year's resolutions.

SIX: What about the TV crew? They probably have matches.

ONE: I don't think there is a TV crew.

SIX: Surely there's at least a TV crew somewhere around here.

TWO: Or the audience? They'll save us.

FIVE: There's no audience there. (Checks, sees nobody) See!

ONE: It's there. It's just small. It's off-Broadway!

FIVE: I say there is no audience there. It's shrinking at least.

TWO: I blame television. People simply want to sit and vegetate. They don't want to think! People used to like to *think*!

SIX: No, they didn't! People have never liked to think. Maybe two or three did.

TWO: I like to think.

SIX: You like to think you like to think. So start thinking and get us out of here.

TWO: When I do come up with a clever plan, I'm not taking you with me.

FIVE: Anybody horny?

OTHERS: No!

FOUR: How can you say such a thing at such a time? It's inappropriate.

FIVE: I'm horny. I just took a Viagra before . . . whatever happened to us. I hate to waste it.

ONE: Men have more sperm than they know what to do with.

FIVE: I know what to do with mine!

ONE: Yuck. Not interested. . . . Not interesting!

FIVE: Sex is always interesting, especially when you're not getting any.

SIX: Try the vulture.

(The others laugh.)

FIVE: I already did. He or she said no. . . . That's why I asked you.

ONE: You asked us after you asked the vulture?!

TWO: I think we need a suicide pack.

THREE: Did you say suicide *pack*?

TWO: Yes.

THREE: It's *pact*!

TWO: Sorry!

THREE: You should be! The English language is going to Hell!

TWO: All right, I will kill myself. (Puts hands around own neck) (Pause) It's not easy!

SIX: Let us do it.

TWO: You can't do suicide for someone else.

FIVE: I went to the dentist for a special person once.

ONE: What?!

FIVE: I was in love.

SIX: But the loved one still had rotten teeth.

FIVE: I know. I had to drop the person because of the bad oral hygiene.

FOUR: Are our fifteen minutes of fame up yet?

ONE: Are we famous?

FOUR: We will be. I mean, here we are!

ONE: I don't think so. I suspect that no one will remember us fifteen minutes after they leave here.

THREE: That's fifteen minutes of fame.

FOUR: We'll last a lot longer than that. Future generations will venerate our names.

SIX: What's your name again?

FOUR: Four!

SIX: Sorry, forgot, if I ever knew. I thought you were Three.

THREE: I'm Three!

ONE: And I'm One.

TWO: Two.

THREE: As I said!

FOUR: Me too!

FIVE: I guess I'm Five.

SIX: I could be Six, I suppose.

FOUR: We'll all be famous!

TWO: As numbers?

SIX: It's something. They conducted a poll not long ago and asked the general public to name the most famous people who ever lived.

OTHERS: And?

SIX: Hitler won.

FOUR: I'm sure Jesus won!

SIX: *Who?*

TWO: God, I so wanted to be famous!

LIGHTS OUT