

A woman has come to this point. Her name is whatever the actress is named. She is any age at all. She could be 18 or 88. Doesn't matter. She crosses the stage. Maybe a few times. She has come to this place but she suddenly and completely forgets why. She stares out. Confused. Actor enters and watches.

ACTRESS

Here I am! This is where I'm supposed to be. This is exactly where I'm supposed to be! I came here because I picked a flower when I was three years old and gave it to a boy who gave it to another girl who teased me about it until I lost my mind and had to change schools and I fell in love with my third grade math teacher thus pursuing a life of mathematics and isolation. Never giving my heart to anyone else. But that means I'm right where I have to be- right now- right here. But where am I?

Blackout.

Lights come back up immediately. No change on stage.

ACTOR

Could you please slow down?

ACTRESS

I was talking with him one minute, and the next-

ACTOR

I like the color of your hair. It's my favorite. I think. Exactly where are we?

ACTRESS

In medias res. I think. Or the inciting incident must have already happened. The lights were very bright, and I just couldn't see. I made a cake. It's from scratch.

ACTOR

I thought there was an interim. No, that's not the word. I'm forgetting things like why words are what they are.

ACTRESS

I'm forgetting nothing. "From scratch" originated from the eighteenth century, and was a sporting term to determine where a starting line began. It was demarcated with a "scratch" in the ground. Starting from scratch.

ACTOR

I think something terrible has happened. What if we're living on the lamb now. That's a funny expression isn't it?

ACTRESS

You don't have to eat the cake, but I will ask that you return the plate when the cake has been either consumed or discarded. Manners.

On the lamb. You know if you look it up, you can't find its origin. Just some nonsense about it maybe being an offshoot of the word lambaste. How is that helpful?

Do you ever think of your own death? I find it comforting that some expressions actually do have explanations.

I know that's a bit of a shift in tone, but I've been, as of late, reflecting on my own mortality. Maybe it's because I can't remember where I came from. Or why I'm here. Do I just exist for the people watching?

To butter someone up came about because back in the olden days, people would throw butter balls at statues of saints to ask for things.

ACTOR

In the end, isn't that all just useless knowledge? I looked it up and it is. I also looked up the following symptoms: headache, existential dread, inability to laugh at anything Adam Sandler has ever done, flickering of lights in the periphery of one's vision, and finding joy in disappointment.

ACTRESS

Rub the wrong way was how a servant could scrub a hardwood floor if he or she wasn't doing it right. Against the grain- which is also an expression that came about due to a war between the sugar and corn lobby. Team sugar it seems won with the slogan, "It's sweet to be against the grain."

ACTOR

It's called Pessimysmia. Side effects include dour mood, upset stomach and sudden understanding of Gertrude Stein's poetry.

ACTRESS

Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater isn't anything clever, there was a tub, a whole family bathed only once a year in descending order of age, in the same bathwater. By the time you got to an infant, the water must have been the color of a leather boot, and mothers had to worry that their young'uns

didn't get tossed out a window with the foul water.

ACTOR

Do you ever just think about being dead? What nothingness is?

ACTRESS

Of course, another way to solve that would have been for the mothers to, you know, count their children before allowing anyone to start tossing them in big buckets out of bathroom windows.

ACTOR

It's like nothing at all. But like literally. It's literally nothing, which is just illogical inference.

ACTRESS

Can you imagine the absent-mindedness of a man who could actually scoop a baby up into a bucket and then cross a room with it, and then toss it out a window without noticing? I mean!

ACTOR

Literal. Nothing.

ACTRESS

I'm diverging.

ACTOR

I'm digressing.
What's the difference between conscious and unconscious?
And how can perception of the world be so constant one minute and then done forever the next? Seems almost cruel. Of course, we won't know that we've stopped perceiving, will we?

ACTRESS

I was driving along route 5, you know the one that goes through the valley near that town where all those pilgrims ate each other back in the day—Or maybe I read that in a story.

ACTOR

No, we won't. We'll be eating a fucking Kale salad one minute and the next, we'll never experience anything ever again. Just lights out. Done.

ACTRESS

It wasn't like a jarring crash. It didn't seem that big of a deal at all really. Just a bump. I could feel the tires lift

over something, and my head hit the ceiling inside the car. But it wasn't like I smashed into something and had to stop driving, so I kept going. Or maybe I read that somewhere. Maybe it happened to someone else.

ACTOR

I thought he was a nice guy. I mean, he seemed friendly enough. And so when he offered to buy me a drink I said...sure. Or was that in a movie?

ACTRESS

You don't anticipate the horror. Kurtz. Wait. I'm para-gliding. That's not the word. Hang-phrasing. It's happening now.

ACTOR

You never see it coming, do you?

ACTRESS

I'm a painter.

ACTOR

Was.

ACTRESS

Am.

ACTOR

Sure.

ACTRESS

Every year I rent a little cabin where I go to paint and smoke weed.

ACTOR

Meth.

ACTRESS

Pot.

ACTOR

Whatever.

ACTRESS

And then I hike through the valley toward this vendor. A little Asian lady that sells red dragonfruit.

ACTOR

White.

ACTRESS

No, she's Asian.

ACTOR

The dragonfruit is white! You're telling someone else's story. Or maybe?! Maybe someone else is telling your story. I usually think about the cosmos as I wander down the deserted highway, listening to Jim Morrison on my CD Walkman. Which is dead technology. So this must have been a while ago. Wait. No. That's not my story. Is that your story? How did we get here? Exactly?

ACTRESS

Do you ever wonder why, in any language, the word for elevator is always a word that describes going up. Elevator, lift...I guess I can't think of any others, but one would have to assume that an elevator goes down just as often as it goes up. So it should not be named after something it only does half the time. With this logic, one could call a toaster, I don't know, a room temper? But what is the opposite of a lift?

ACTOR

The road was cobbled. Uneven. Bumpy. At a slight decline, I was coming down from the small village on the hillside. And up ahead, I could see a bend. The roads there wound up the hill like loosely rolled yarn. Spaghetti noodles on a fork.

ACTRESS

A downer, I guess.

ACTOR

Wait, you went for a walk in a dark canyon, and I went home with a stranger. That's our story. But do we know each other?

ACTRESS

You're not very compelling.

ACTOR

He asks if he could buy me a drink? Old school. Right?

Beat. Actress looks around.

ACTRESS

There's nowhere to get a drink.

ACTOR

No, not here! I don't know exactly where we are. Or why exactly where we are is here. Or...I mean it's a stage, right? So that means--

He mimes pouring two drinks and hands her one.

ACTOR

Here.

ACTRESS

Thanks?

ACTOR

How long have we known each other?

ACTRESS

Um. Five minutes? I mean, you're a stranger and I don't know you, which is redundant I know, I heard it as soon as I said it. Sometimes I repeat myself. I like to say things over and over again. It's a quirk I have to assert my type A personality in new situations. As a woman I have to appear confident and strong or people, not just men, but all people will shit all over me. Figuratively speaking.

ACTOR

There must be a story, right?

ACTRESS

I started crying. The Minnesota song was playing into my ears, at a volume that most would describe as intolerable, but which caused a flood of adrenaline to surge through me at reasonably charged intervals. I don't know why I was crying. Thinking about some mythical future version of myself, I guess. But that might be something I read.

ACTOR

Yes, I know. I'm having the same symptom. *(He sips his imaginary drink)* We've been speaking this whole time. I'm aware. It's just that the world is somehow shaped differently now. Like I see you as a woman, but also a child. Like all the yesterdays you've had are fanning out all around you. Like an aura of different you's and I can't quite tell where you begin and where you end.

ACTRESS

I can see you from every angle at once. Which must mean this must be the entirety of you. Like you can't expand beyond or before this moment. Or...I dropped all of that acid I got in Nepal.

ACTOR

I've been to Nepal.

ACTRESS

I don't think I have.

ACTOR

I'll take you.

ACTRESS

Do I know you?

ACTOR

Close your eyes.

ACTRESS

Why?

ACTOR

Please. Close your eyes. Let me take you to Nepal.

ACTRESS

I don't trust men that I don't know. It's not smart to close your eyes in front of a man you've never met.

ACTOR

That sounds like faulty logic to me.

ACTRESS

You're not a woman.

ACTOR

Illogical inference. Just because a premise is true doesn't mean the conclusion can be assumed.

ACTRESS

And what is my conclusion?

ACTOR

That because I'm a man you can't trust me.

ACTRESS

Can I?

ACTOR

You tell me. You can see all the parts of me. Old and new. Can you see the future?

ACTRESS

There is no future. It's you-then up to now.

Beat.

A dead body appears before them. They inspect it, they look at each other.

ACTOR 1

He's dead.

ACTRESS 2

It's a he?

ACTOR 1

She's dead.

ACTRESS 2

It's a she?

ACTOR 1

We're the only one's here.

ACTRESS

Does that mean we killed him?

ACTOR

I don't know if he was killed. I just know he's dead.

ACTRESS

I don't remember how I got here.

ACTOR

Why do I know that he's dead?

ACTRESS

Do you think that's why we don't remember? It's too painful?

ACTOR

Why do I know that he's not asleep?

ACTRESS

I feel like these are profound questions, but we're not the right people to answer them.

ACTOR

There must be an answer. There's always an answer.

ACTRESS

But what about spirituality. That doesn't have an answer. Just more and more questions. We can't explain what we can't see.

ACTOR

That's false. We can explain the air. We can explain gravity. Spirituality or religion is a mess of impossibilities. There's no way any of it can be true.

ACTRESS

Then why are we here?

ACTOR

Isn't that the major dramatic question of our lives?

She thinks about this.

ACTRESS

And what is he doing here?

ACTOR

Maybe he's here to remind us.

ACTRESS

Remind us. Of what?

ACTOR

Do you have any idea where we are?

ACTRESS

We're on a stage.

ACTOR

Do you have any idea what we were doing?

ACTRESS

Why don't I remember!? It's like pieces of a dream. Like a jigsaw puzzle that I have to put together without a picture of what it's supposed to look like.

ACTOR

And we're being watched.

ACTRESS

Isn't that just life? Aren't we always being watched? And watching? Being observed? And observing?

ACTOR

Tell that to him!

ACTRESS

So, we could walk away!

ACTOR

How? We don't even know how we got here!

ACTRESS

Easy. We walk off the stage, through the audience, and out the door.

ACTOR

Then we'd be in control.

ACTRESS

Absolutely.

ACTOR

Let's go.

Actress starts to go and picks up a script that's on the floor and starts reading it.

ACTOR

What does it say?

ACTRESS

Here I am! This is where I'm supposed to be. This is exactly where I'm supposed to be! I came here because I picked a flower when I was three years old and gave it to a boy who gave it to another girl who teased me about it until I lost my mind and had to change schools and I fell in love with my third grade math teacher thus pursuing a life of mathematics and isolation. Never giving my heart to anyone else. But that means I'm right where I have to be- right now- right here. But where am I?

Blackout

End of play.