

## Cast of Characters

ONE:                   The first being. Wise.  
TWO:                   The second being. Curious.  
HUMAN:                Human. Written as a man, can be played by anyone.  
COMPANION:          Love. Written as a woman, can be played by anyone.

## Place

Unknown.

## Time

None.



ONE

Our job is to take note. Watch the experiment run its course. You know this.

TWO

Yes, but. That's it?

ONE

Yes.

TWO

Why?

ONE

We need to see when it ends. And how.

TWO

When he dies, you mean. When they die.

ONE

They are dying all the time. We need to see when they stop dying, and why.

TWO

What do you think will happen?

ONE

I don't make predictions.

TWO

Then how do we know what to look for? We are waiting for something. Right?

ONE

Yes. We are waiting for him to think and feel, then eventually to stop thinking and feeling. He doesn't know how to do much else.

TWO

(Moving to stand by ONE.)

Fascinating.

ONE

Unique. Yes. I suppose it's unique. Now please do your work.

TWO

But I recorded all the activity for the past eight waves.

ONE

Wonderful. Then it is time to move forward.

(TWO waits expectantly.)

Well?

TWO

Oh! Right.

(TWO hastily approaches the grandfather clock, turns a dial on the wall beside it, and watches the hands spin. The HUMAN bolts up and looks around frightfully. He spins around as if searching for something, then crouches and covers his ears. The clock stops.)

ONE

Beautiful.

(Inspired, ONE begins taking notes. TWO watches. After a moment, TWO glances from the human back to the clock, confused.)

TWO

The clock is moving again. Right?

ONE

Yes.

TWO

But he is frozen.

ONE

He is waiting.

TWO

Waiting? What for?

ONE

Enlightenment.

TWO

(amused.)

I wonder why he'd want to do something like that...

ONE

His incredible stubborn curiosity. That is precisely why this experiment has been so difficult to complete.

(HUMAN looks up, adjusting to his new environment.)

TWO

But... the experiment will be completed, eventually. He will have to stop searching then.

ONE

Eventually, yes.

TWO

He must be aware of that. The ending.

ONE

Maybe, in a way. But the more he searches, the more he needs to know.

(HUMAN pulls a bible from the night table. He hugs it tightly to his chest and murmurs to himself - a prayer that becomes increasingly loud and tense.)

Since answers don't come easily, it makes more sense to fabricate one's own knowledge.

TWO

Knowledge can't be fabricated.

ONE

That's all knowledge is. Something the human has created. He likes to tell stories. The stories are his knowledge. But it haunts him, see?

(HUMAN drops the bible as if it's scalding hot and grabs a knife from his nightstand. He drops the knife, afraid of himself. He reopens the bible, holds it at arm's length and reads. He hums a gospel with increasing volume and speed. The lights onstage gradually glow red during the following lines, like the threat of a distant fire.)

There is a thing called despair. It lurks behind him while he lives, when he sleeps, waiting. It's interwoven into his reality. And if it finds him... he must avoid it at all costs. Or it drives him mad.

(HUMAN continues to read and hum, reaching for his free hand to grab the knife lying on the floor. He holds it to his throat, fighting himself. He does not stop humming. ONE moves toward the right wall.)

Here. Let's stop this.

(ONE grabs a remote and aims it at the HUMAN, who freezes.)

TWO

Why?

ONE

He fears that there is nothing beyond the stories.

TWO

There is something though! There is something.

ONE

But it is not what he is searching for.

(TWO contemplates the human.)

He has been gazing up at the stars for a long time, and hoping that whatever lies up there has what he needs.

TWO

He needs something else looking back. Doesn't he, something to notice him.

ONE

No, he needs something to be *like* him And he won't find it.

(ONE sets down the remote and adjusts a dial. The light dims to a tranquil violet blue. The HUMAN puts back the bible and the knife, in a trance. He grabs a doll out of the drawer and plays with it absently)

TWO

That's so sad.

ONE

To him, it is sad. To us it just *is*.

TWO

But to me, it's sad.

ONE

Sorrow isn't real. Do not become vulnerable to such constructs, especially emotions. You'll start to believe that you feel them.

TWO

Okay, so it's a shame. It is a shame that he is afraid. Can I say that?

ONE

I caution you.

TWO

Why? Tell me why. Why must I always be so cautious-

ONE

The point is to watch him pass. He is a step along the way. That's it!

(HUMAN puts the doll away and lays on his back, gazing at the ceiling.)

TWO

A step? But that can't be it.

ONE

Yes, just like every other experiment before and after.

TWO

A step. Okay. So every experiment is just a step. Fine. Where do the steps lead?

(ONE looks away.)

You said "a step along the way." That means it's going somewhere right? There's a destination.

ONE

He is ignorant and foolish-

TWO

That's not what-

ONE

-you have to understand that! He cannot see the whole picture.

TWO

What does the whole- what does that even look like?

ONE

I don't know. It is not our job to know. If we try to understand, we'll end up just like them.

TWO

What is wrong with being like them?

ONE

It is tireless, the way he thinks and thinks and thinks. He wastes his time explaining and fabricating when he's not predicting. And most of the time, he is perfectly comfortable telling himself that every change is supposed to happen. Everything happens for a reason, that's what he says.

(COMPANION ENTERS by stumbling through the upstage arch. She wears a plain, light dress that hangs to her knees. Dazed, she approaches HUMAN, entering his sphere. Lights turn to white.)

It is fake, it is all just happenstance!

(COMPANION kneels next to HUMAN, blowing on his face.)

TWO

Who is that?

ONE

A companion.

TWO

What does a companion do?

ONE

It keeps the other company.

TWO

Company...

ONE  
(irritated.)

Yes. Companions do things together. Next to each other.

TWO

Hey, that's like us!

ONE

I suppose.

(COMPANION walks her fingers up his chest and lightly touches his nose. He wakes up, grinning. He playfully grabs her and pulls her down to him, tickling her until he is on top of her. They both stop moving and stare at each other. Love. TWO grabs the remote and pauses them there.)

What are you doing?

(TWO moves closer, longing.)

TWO

What is...

ONE

They call it love.

TWO

It seems special.

(ONE swipes the remote from TWO.)

ONE

It's not. They name everything that word, love. It is everything that distracts them from their fear. Anything that keeps them from moving forward, that's love.

(ONE pulls out a beautiful painting from the cupboard.)

Like this.



(ONE presents the painting to TWO.)

A human. A human made this with what he might call love. It didn't exist before him, but it existed because he felt love and used that love to make it just the way he wanted it. Then he loved it even more. Because it makes sense to pick and choose how something becomes, how things change. But love, once created, is impossible to control. So it can just as easily be lost. There is no worse feeling for a human.

TWO

Worse than fear?

ONE

Fear no longer matters when there is no hope. Watch.

(ONE hands the remote to TWO, who tentatively aims it at the humans and unfreezes them. HUMAN stands, extending his arm to COMPANION. He awkwardly indicates that he wants to dance, then places her hand on his shoulder, followed by his on her waist. They start to sway, silly at first. Music plays softly. COMPANION's head rests on HUMAN's chest.)

(Then, COMPANION looks up at HUMAN with wide eyes. Abruptly, the music stops. She goes limp and he catches her. He lays her body down gently. Her breathing is labored. He sobs into her chest. ONE watches apathetically. TWO is mortified. The sound of labored breathing drones on. Eventually, COMPANION takes one last sharp inhale and her pain subsides. HUMAN wraps his arms around her, unable to do anything more.)

ONE

Worse than fear.

TWO

That's it? There's nothing else?

(Looks to ONE, who does not meet their gaze. Reality sinks in.)

But they- They looked so happy. And- That has to be worth it in the end. The happiness?

ONE

Not our job to say.

TWO

But that's so...

ONE

It is hard for humans to lose their companions.

TWO

Companions... like how we are companions. Do I love you?

ONE

Perhaps this assignment was not well suited to you.

(ONE rises.)

TWO

I'm just trying to make sense of it. And this (picking up the painting). What it means to love. If love is to feel fondly for something, and to feel fondly for each other, then-

ONE

Stop. You cannot think like that.

(TWO recoils, startled.)

Do you understand? They have created these things. Love. Meaning. Truth. You accept the illusion if you decide to listen- if you even think about listening to them.

(TWO nods.)

Now put that back.

(TWO obeys and returns the painting to its case. COMPANION rises, now neutral. During the following dialogue, she kisses HUMAN on the head and silently says goodbye.)

I need you to take notes while I send out our report. And please, stay focused.

(ONE hands the notepad to TWO, then EXITS through the archway. The COMPANION EXITS. TWO watches her go. They approach the human, contemplative.)

TWO

What does it feel like to love? I never had something to love, human. What might it feel like to love you, someone who can love back? I suppose I can't because I'm not a someone. But I want to know what it's like. It must be breathtaking. I like that word. You use beautiful words when you write.

(TWO lays down beside the sphere and falls asleep. The lights change to gold. HUMAN sits up cross-legged, eyes closed and breathing deeply. ONE ENTERS through the archway, examines the scene, and moves to stand behind the sphere. The HUMAN opens his eyes and turns to face ONE, smiling. ONE is frozen, possibly by fear. TWO's eyes open, and they rise. TWO places a hand on ONE's shoulder.)

TWO

Who's to say he's not imagining us? That we're not just a part of his reality, so he can make sense of it?

ONE

Who says this makes any sense.

TWO

It's better than nothing.

ONE

Something isn't necessarily better than nothing. You're thinking like a human. Don't waste your time.

TWO

You must admit he is beautiful, though.

ONE

Sure, but the universe hasn't been allotted time to care.

TWO

No, he hasn't been allotted enough time.

ONE

For what?

TWO

To be noticed.

ONE

He is noticed by himself. Let it stay that way.

(ONE shrugs away from TWO and EXITS. TWO lingers and shuts off all screens in the room, until all remaining light hums from the HUMAN's circle. TWO approaches the circle once more.)

(The HUMAN pulls a paper and pen from his nightstand. He writes something while TWO watches. HUMAN finishes, almost abruptly, then holds up his piece of paper and reads...)

HUMAN

Welcome. Welcome to my illusion. Who's to say I'm not just imagining us? That you and I are not just a part of my reality, so I can make sense of all this?

TWO

Who says this makes any sense.

HUMAN

Well, either way, it's better than nothing. Don't you think?

TWO

Something isn't necessarily better than nothing. You are thinking like a human. Don't think-

HUMAN

Can I call you my friend?

(TWO watches curiously. HUMAN puts down his paper and looks up to the sky to say...)

I'd rather not feel alone out here. I feel so alone. The more and more, I think, I realize how small we are and how.... I mean, we are the only ones who can care about us. Yeah? And the universe just keeps running away. It runs away from us. But it's not running, like you or I would run. It's just moving. Away, you know. So. I need to care about someone. That's- that's you. And if you're my friend, you'll care about me. Yeah? Only we can care like this. That's not a bad thing. It's beautiful. We are beautiful. You and I... We are so beautiful! I believe that. Welcome to my illusion. Welcome to life. I don't believe that life loves us, but it doesn't need to because I love life. I love us.

(As he speaks, TWO goes to the upstage wall. They pick up the remote, point it at the HUMAN, and hit a button. He pauses in the middle of his speech, gazing lovingly at the sky. TWO addresses the audience.)

TWO (regretfully)

As the light expands, life or not, we are drawn on.

(TWO EXITS. HUMAN remains frozen. The light onstage grows bright, like a sunrise, until it is brilliant. Then, like a flip of a switch...)

BLACKOUT