

VOID

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By Don Tongue

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VOID
By Don Tongue

**WHERE IS THE HERE OR THERE OR
ANYWHERE - IN THE VOID?**

SYNOPSIS: When a frustrated playwright gives up, what happens to his characters who are trapped in his unfinished play with nothing but a cell phone, a pencil, and the unfinished script.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

MAN ONEMale (74 lines)

MAN TWOMale (69 lines)

WOMANFemale (6 lines)

SETTING:

Void.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS:

The play requires a performance space that has the ability to light three separate distinct areas on the stage and can accommodate blackouts.

PROPS:

- Pencil with eraser
- Cell phone that lights up when activated
- Crumpled piece of paper

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

Void was first performed at the Playwrights' Platform 37th Annual Festival of New Plays at the Boston Playwrights' Theatre, June 18, 2009. It was directed by John Sefel and performed by Toby Paul as MAN ONE, Broderick Lang as MAN TWO, and Meredith Borgioli as WOMAN.

SCENE ONE

Spotlight up center stage.

MAN ONE: *(Stares at spotlight, bewildered.)* Hello? . . . Anybody there? . . . Here?

MAN TWO crosses behind MAN ONE.

MAN ONE: *(Continues. Notices MAN TWO.)* Hello? . . . Hello?

MAN TWO: *(Reenters spot.)* Hello?

MAN ONE: Hi. I'm . . . I'm confused.

MAN TWO: About what?

MAN ONE: This might sound crazy, but I don't know where I am - or even who I am.

MAN TWO: Why, isn't it obvious? You are you and I am me and we are here. Well, to be more precise you are there and I'm here.

MAN ONE: Yes, but where is here? Or there?

MAN TWO: Why, you are the inquisitive one. Next you'll be spouting some nonsense about how you want to know all the mysteries of the universe or the meaning of life and you'll work yourself into some existential . . .

MAN ONE: Universe? What's that?

MAN TWO: *(Blankly.)* What's the universe? You want to know what the universe is?

MAN ONE: Yes.

MAN TWO: *(Laughs.)* Surely you're kidding.

MAN ONE: *(Laughs.)* Yes. . . *(Seriously.)* No. I don't know.

MAN TWO: My dear man . . .

MAN ONE: What did you just call me?

MAN TWO: What?

MAN ONE: You said, "My dear man." Is that what I am? A man?

MAN TWO: *(Starts to back away slowly.)* Yes. Ah. Listen. I think I should just be going and . . .

MAN ONE: *(Grabs MAN TWO.)* NO! You can't go! I'm sorry. I don't know what's happening. All I know is that I don't know who or what I am or where I am or how I even got here and . . . and I need answers. I can't exist like this . . . in this . . .

MAN TWO: This is all well and good my friend. . .

MAN ONE: My what?

MAN TWO: Never mind what. It is clear you are in need of professional help and I can't . . .

MAN ONE: Who are YOU?

MAN TWO: . . . what are you talking about?

MAN ONE: How did YOU get here?

MAN TWO: Don't be silly.

MAN ONE: You don't know do you?

MAN TWO: Of course I do. I'm . . . I'm . . . me and I am . . . here. And . . . I know I walked behind you from there to here, but I have no idea how I got there to walk here.

MAN ONE: There. You see?

MAN TWO: Yes. . . and no. What have you done?

MAN ONE: I don't understand.

MAN TWO: You must have done something, broken something. Maybe you ripped a hole in the fabric of the universe.

MAN ONE: Universe. Is that where we are? Is this the universe?

MAN TWO: How the hell should I know?

MAN ONE: But you keep saying universe. It must mean something.

MAN TWO: No. It just kind of came to me. *(Reflexively rummages in his pocket, takes out a cell phone.)*

MAN ONE: What's that?

MAN TWO: I have no idea.

MAN ONE: What does it do?

MAN TWO: *(Opens cell phone.)* Hmm. It seems to be a tracking device. Maybe it could tell us where we are.

MAN ONE: Well? What does it say?

MAN TWO: It seems to have some bar thingies. Oh, no, now they're gone.

MAN ONE: Does it say anything?

MAN TWO: Let's see. Yes. Yes.

MAN ONE: Yes?

MAN TWO: Yes, I'm getting something. It clearly shows that we are in a state of bewilderment bordering on acute identity crisis.

MAN ONE: What ARE you talking about?

MAN TWO: I have no idea. But you have to admit it sounds pretty good. And, after all, isn't that what really matters?

MAN ONE becomes distracted by a crumpled piece of paper on the floor, picks it up and opens it.

MAN TWO: *(Continues)* Sure, we can get caught up in the senseless details worrying about who we are and why and how we got here, or there, but in the end, where does that really get us? I mean, why bother being knowledgeable when you can simply sound knowledgeable. *(To MAN ONE)* What's that?

MAN ONE: I don't know. I just noticed it. There seems to be some writing on it. *(Reading.)* Void, by Donald Tongue.

MAN TWO chuckles

MAN ONE (cont'd): What's so funny?

MAN TWO: I don't know. Tongue. Just struck me as funny.

MAN ONE: *(Reading.)* Cast: MAN ONE - Inquisitive natural child. *(Pondering.)* Inquisitive . . . inquisitive . . . I wonder what that means?

MAN TWO: *(To self.)* I mean, what kind of name is - Tongue?

MAN ONE: *(Reading.)* MAN TWO - Annoying pompous know-it-all who enjoys the sound of his own voice.

MAN TWO: *(Vocalizing.)* Tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue, tongue.

MAN ONE stares at MAN TWO.

MAN TWO: *(Continues.)* . . . tongue?

MAN ONE: *(Reading.)* Props: MAN TWO has a cell phone and a pencil in his pockets.

MAN TWO: *(Rummages in his other pocket, takes out a pencil.)* Which is which?

MAN ONE: I don't know. *(Reading.)* Scene One: Spotlight up center stage. MAN ONE stares at spotlight, bewildered.

MAN TWO: *(Holds up cell phone, proclaims.)* Pencil

MAN ONE: *(Reading.)* MAN ONE: Hello? Anybody there? Here?

MAN TWO: *(Holds up pencil, proclaims.)* Cell phone.

MAN ONE: *(Reading.)* MAN TWO crosses behind MAN ONE.

MAN TWO: *(Notices MAN ONE has stopped reading)* . . . And?

MAN ONE: That's it. There isn't any more. Oh. Wait. There does seem to be something scribbled in the margin. *(Reading.)* History repeats itself.

Blackout. MAN TWO exits. Spotlight up center stage.

MAN ONE: *(Continues. Holds a piece of paper, stares at spotlight, bewildered, sudden realization, reading.)* Hello? . . . Anybody there? . . . Here?

MAN TWO crosses behind MAN ONE

MAN ONE: *(Continues.)* Hey!

MAN TWO: *(Reenters spot.)* Hey?

MAN ONE: It's me. It's you. And we're . . . here. Well, I'm here, you're there.

MAN TWO: *(Very slowly.)* Yes we are. *(Quickly.)* Do I know you?

MAN ONE: It's me. Look. I think I've figured it out. This piece of paper explains everything. Look. MAN ONE, that's me because I was staring at that thing, which I guess is the spotlight. See, it says stare at spotlight. And you crossed behind me so that makes you MAN TWO.

MAN TWO: *(Patronizing tone.)* Of course it does. Listen, I think I better be going now. Okay? You have a nice . . .

MAN ONE: *(Grabs MAN TWO.)* No. You can't go. Look, if you don't believe me just look in your pockets.

MAN TWO: What?

MAN ONE: Go ahead. You'll find a cell phone and a pencil.

MAN TWO rummages in his pockets, takes out a cell phone and a pencil, holds them out to MAN ONE with a questioning expression.

MAN ONE: *(Continues.)* I don't know. But see? It's all right here on this piece of paper.

MAN TWO: Wow, that is truly amazing. It's like the key to the universe. In fact, one might even go as far as to say - it's our bible.

MAN ONE: Yeah, whatever that is, but it seems like we have been here before.

MAN TWO: How did we do that?

MAN ONE: I don't know. I was reading the paper and . . . oh yeah, I noticed this note in the margin. (*Reading.*) History repeats itself.

Blackout. MAN TWO exits. Spotlight up center stage.

MAN ONE: (*Continues. Holds a piece of paper, stares at spotlight, sudden realization, reading quickly.*) Hello? Anybody there? Here?

MAN TWO enters spot behind MAN ONE.

MAN ONE: (*Continues. Quickly.*) See? It happened again.

MAN TWO: Wow. You are absolutely right. All you did was say . . .

MAN ONE: Don't say it.

MAN TWO: Say what?

MAN ONE: You know.

MAN TWO: History repeats itself?

Blackout. MAN TWO exits. Spotlight up center stage.

MAN ONE: (*Holds a piece of paper, perfunctory tone.*) Hello anybody there here.

MAN TWO crosses behind MAN ONE, exits spot, beat, re-enters spot.

MAN TWO: Do I know you?

MAN ONE holds up piece of paper.

MAN TWO: (*Continues.*) Oh yeah . . . so . . . so what now?

MAN ONE: I don't know.

BOTH sit on floor.

MAN TWO: *(Dejected.)* So that's it? This is it? It's all that . . . that Tongue could come up with?

MAN ONE: You're right. It doesn't seem like much.

MAN TWO: It's as if we have been abandoned by our god and left to fend for ourselves.

MAN ONE: Hmm. . . Oh. Hey, I've got an idea. Give me that uh that . . . that pencil thing in your pocket.

MAN TWO takes the cell phone from his pocket.

MAN ONE: *(Continues.)* No. The other one.

MAN TWO takes the pencil from his pocket.

MAN ONE: *(Continues.)* That's it. *(Takes pencil from MAN TWO, marks paper)* Interesting. I can make marks on our bible with this end of the pencil.

MAN TWO: What about the other end?

MAN ONE: It removes the marks.

MAN TWO: Incredible. It's like an eraser.

MAN ONE: Yeah. So, let's see, if this is center stage, then what would you call that? *(Points stage left.)*

MAN TWO: I don't know. Maybe . . . stage left?

MAN ONE: Okay, so what if I wrote, *(Writing.)* "Light up stage left."

Light up stage left.

MAN TWO: Amazing! *(Crosses to light stage left, taunting.)* Look! I've got my own light. I've got my own light . . . *(Continues to taunt with annoying celebratory dance.)*

MAN ONE erases his new line. Light out stage left.

MAN TWO crosses to MAN ONE, snatches the paper and pencil from MAN ONE, and erases. Blackout.

MAN ONE: What did you do that for?

MAN TWO: If I can't have a light then neither can you.

MAN ONE: But we're completely in the dark!

MAN TWO: What difference does it make? Light. Dark. It's all the same. We're just stuck here in this . . . this . . . void. *(Pause. Takes the cell phone from his pocket, activates the light by opening it, and starts to play with the buttons.)* Ooo! It's got pretty lights and it makes noises, too.

MAN ONE: *(Annoyed, snatches paper and pencil from MAN TWO, uses light from cell phone to rewrite the line.)* "Spotlight up center stage."

Spotlight up center stage.

MAN TWO: *(Dryly.)* And there was light. *(Sigh.)* I think I preferred the dark . . . So, what now, master of the universe? Ooh I know. You could write, "All the world's a stage." Actually, that's not half bad. *(Overly dramatic.)* "All the world's a stage."

MAN ONE: *(Thinking, ignores MAN TWO.)* Hmm, what if I wrote . . .

MAN TWO: I kind of like that. *(Notices MAN ONE writing, looks over his shoulder, reading)* "Light up stage right on whoa-man."

Light up stage right on woman.

MAN ONE: Not whoa-man. It's woman.

MAN TWO: *(Says it faster but still gets it wrong.)* Whoaman.

MAN ONE: Woman.

MAN TWO: Whoaman?

WOMAN: Hello . . . Hi there.

MAN ONE and MAN TWO slowly turn towards WOMAN.

MAN ONE: Hi.

MAN TWO: Hi. *(To MAN ONE.)* What have you done?

MAN ONE: *(To MAN TWO.)* I just added a new character to our bible.

MAN TWO: Can you do that?

WOMAN: So, what's happening? And . . . where are we?

MAN ONE: *(To WOMAN.)* Well, I'm Man One and this is Man Two and you are Woman.

WOMAN: That's it? You're Man and I'm Woman and we are just . . . here?

MAN ONE: Yeah. Well, technically speaking, we are here and you are there. Though, from your perspective it would be the opposite.

WOMAN: Huh . . . I see.

MAN TWO: *(To MAN ONE.)* I've got a bad feeling about this. I don't think we should be messing around with stuff we don't understand.

MAN ONE: *(To MAN TWO.)* Oh, stop being such a kill joy. Besides, I find myself strangely attracted to her.

MAN TWO: But she is so different from us. Her body doesn't look anything like ours. It has a funny shape to it.

MAN ONE: Yeah, I know. That's what I like about it.

MAN TWO: Sorry, I fail to see the attraction. She's nothing but trouble if you ask me.

WOMAN: Hey, do either of you have some fruit? Like maybe an apple or something?

MAN TWO snatches the paper and pencil from MAN ONE and erases the new lines. Light out on woman.

MAN ONE: What? What! What . . . hey, what did you do that for?

MAN TWO: She was becoming TOO needy. Where does she get off asking for fruit of all things.

MAN ONE: OK. THAT IS IT. I cannot take another second being . . . stuck here with you in . . . in GOD knows where.

MAN TWO: Well, you might as well accept your circumstances. There is nothing you can do about it. It's not like you could . . . like . . . totally rewrite our bible. I'm sorry, but it would seem as though we are predestined to be here . . . and there.

MAN ONE: *(Sudden inspiration, coyly.)* Uh, let me see the pencil and the . . . uh . . . bible.

MAN TWO: Why?

MAN ONE: I just want to see them.

MAN TWO: You can see them.

MAN ONE: Just give them to me, okay?

MAN TWO: Why, what are you going to do?

MAN ONE: Oh, nothing. I just wanted to get a better look at them.

MAN TWO: I'm not sure I can trust you given that whole whoa-man incident and all . . .

MAN ONE: It's not WHOA-man. It's woman! Woman! Oh just give me the . . .

BOTH tussle for a moment. MAN ONE eventually wrestles paper and pencil away from MAN TWO, furiously erases and writes on paper.

MAN TWO: Ow! What are you doing? You're not bringing WHOA-MAN back are you? I'm really not in the mood . . .

MAN ONE: *(Quickly.)* History repeats itself.

Blackout. MAN TWO exits. Spotlight up center stage.

MAN ONE: *(Continues. Stares at spotlight.)* Hello? Anybody there? Here?

WOMAN crosses behind MAN ONE.

MAN ONE: *(Notices WOMAN.)* Hello?

WOMAN: *(Reenters spot.)* Hi there.

MAN ONE: *(Towards audience, overjoyed whisper.)* Yes!

Blackout.

THE END