

dialogue for two



a short drama

written for the stage by **Keith Kusterer**

Technical Notes: (Dialogue for Two):

Duration: *approximately 20 minutes.*

Two male characters (A)(B), approximate ages: late 20s to early 40s.
on a serious retreat, sharing a plan.

The setting is a simple room of sorts. Quiet environment. There are two beds flanking a nightstand upon which a lamp, two water glasses (breakaway glass), a wristwatch and digital alarm clock rest. A half empty bottle of bourbon should be placed next to the bedside of (A). A half empty plastic bottle of water should be placed an arms length away from the bedside of (B). There should be a small empty wastebasket in between the nightstand and the bed of (B). The outfits worn by both performers (A)(B) should be a plain sweatshirt and 'long john' thermal pants/sweat pants (both gray). Slippers/shoes should be placed at the foot of both beds.

There must be access to turning power off regarding the lamp and digital alarm clock, both simultaneously and separately depending upon section of play. This must be engineered by someone offstage (cues involve exact timing with onstage action) and must also be paired with complementary house lighting/design directions (by the same, or different technician). If available, condenser stage microphones should be used in order to amplify quiet, unforced speech. They must be placed in a manner that keeps clear of audible rubbing noise with the fabric of the sheets and pillows and also hides visibility. If possible, the signals of performers (A)(B) should be split in stereo fashion regarding the house speaker system and audience perspective (i.e performer (A) panned L, (B) panned R).

In the play there is an indication for one of the water glasses (breakaway) to be purposefully dropped and shattered (during blackout). Surface of stage must be prepared to ensure safety as well as allowing for breakaway glass breaking sound to be audible in best manner possible. If available, a microphone should be placed (not visible) under one of the twin beds, facing the center floor in front of nightstand. This would allow for an off stage technician to cue the microphone directly before the glass shattering occurs thus having sound amplified through house speaker system. A well- designed pre-recorded sound cue of glass breaking (at natural volume and proper stereo placement regarding stage action) is acceptable but not preferred.

Performer (B) must be acquainted with the settings on the staged digital alarm clock in order to reset the clock's time and to set an alarm during the scene itself. Each performer (A)(B) must be familiar with the staged lamp as well, in order to follow the cues of switching light on and off. Regarding the glass shattering scene, performer (A) should drop glass with extra effort to ensure a centralized shattering. This may demand practice sessions before performance.

Unless specifically indicated, both performers (A)(B) remain tucked into their prospective beds on stage during dialogue.

PERFORMANCE NOTES: (Dialogue for Two)

The style and pace of the dialogue should reflect the nature of slumber.
Expression cues are sometimes indicated, but an overall timbre of soft, guttural yet unforced execution of speech should be embraced.

a [Pause] approximately indicates: silence for no more than 5 seconds

a [Long Pause] approximately indicates: silence for no less than 10 seconds

DIALOGUE FOR TWO

a short drama written for the stage by Keith Kusterer

LIGHTS OFF (*remaining in blackout*)

A. You awake?

B. Yes.

A. (*restless*) These beds...

B. What about them?

[*Pause*]

A. So quiet here.

B. I know.

[*Pause*]

A. Strange.

B. What?

A. This being the last night...before

B. (*interrupts*) Hm.

[*Long Pause*]

A. You awake?

B. (*no response*)

[*Pause*]

A. (*insistent*) Are you?

B. (*waking*) Huh? (*grumble*) Yes.

A. Can I turn on the light?

B. It's late.

A. I know, but...

B. (*intensely*). My migraines. The light.

[*Pause*]

A. (*restless*) Alright, close your eyes.

B. They *are* closed.

A. I mean keep them closed while I turn on the light

B. (*insistent*) No, I'll have headaches all day tomorrow, just...

A. (*interrupts*) One.

B. (*intense sigh*)

A. Two.

B. (*grumble*) Why are you doing this?

A. Three. (*A turns on lamp switch*)

LIGHTS ON (*A looking left towards B*)

B eyes tightly closed, face squinted)

B. (*eyes tightly closed, face squinted*)

Goddamn it, I can feel it starting....yep, there it is.

A little flicker in the back of my head. No stopping it now. (*growing irritable*)

Goddamn it! I told you...

A. (*interrupts*) Okay, Okay, just open your eyes slowly.

[*Pause*]

B. (*still has eyes closed*)

A. one... two...three.

[*Pause*]

B. (*slowly relaxes face and slowly, hesitantly opens eyes stares, gazing with face forward*)

[*Pause*]

(*snapping out of gaze, turns to A*)

So...

[*Pause*]

A. What?

B. What did you want to tell me? Out of the darkness?!

A. (*soft laughter*)

B. What?

A. Sounds like a great movie title...'OUT OF THE DARKNESS'
(*gesturing*) in theaters soon.

B. (*dumbfounded*) Jesus.

A. No, really. That title... and turning this light on.

There is meaning.

It's what we are both doing here:

turning ON the lights and moving ahead. (*questioning*) Even if...

(*back to point*) Tomorrow morning, the sun comes up for us

and we leave behind...we...(struggling) we leave it all behind.

B. (*pissed sarcasm*) Perfect! Fresh start with a splitting, fucking headache.

A. (*discouraged sigh*)

[*Pause*]

B. (*restless*) Alright, that's it! Would you turn off the lights already and let me sleep a bit...at least?

A. (*discouraged*) You really don't take to motivation, do you?

B. I'm tired...and now I'm in pain.

A. And scared...so am I.

(*shifting to humor*) Wait... don't tell me. Are you giving in to the Dark Side?

B. (*sigh*)

A. (*laughing...then in the voice of Darth Vader*) 'Luke, I am your father'

B. (*amused sigh*) give it up (*slight grin*)

A. (*Vader voice*) 'I find your lack of faith disturbing'

B. (*slowly starts light laughter*)

Oww. I have a headache...and now you're making me laugh.

(*holding head in pain*) Will you just turn off the damn lights!

A. (*normal voice*) This bickering is pointless.

B. (*desperate*) Please!

A. (*normal voice*) Okay. Okay.

B. (*sigh*)

A. (*turns off lamp switch*)

(**LIGHTS OFF**) (*Remaining in blackout*)

A. (*in Vader voice*) 'You have failed me for the last time, Admiral'

(*light residual laughter, fading to quiet*)

[*Long Pause*]

A. What is the worst thing you have ever said to someone?

B. (*no response*)

A. Hm?

B. (*no response*)

A. (*in an even voice*) I once told my mother to suck my dick.

[Pause]

I was twelve years old, grounded for the summer already,
one of my Saturday chores was to detail her car. (*voice grows tired*)
I can't remember why I was being punished, but I do remember
in that keen, pre-teen mind, I saw this task
as an opportune moment to get back in good graces.
It took me a few hours, I worked hard.
I was proud. Felt responsible.
Like a good son.
Later that afternoon, I waited in the kitchen.
My mother came home in a foul mood, rushed inside shouting
"There's still dirt all over the floorboards, you were supposed to *clean* the car!!!"

(gradually falling asleep)

I was shocked and defended myself, insisting that I had rightly done my job.
My voice grew stronger against hers
She continued to fire back
And then (*sigh*)
I said it.

Even before the first sssssss left my mouth
I knew something terrible was happening.
Something to regret.
I lost control. I said it.

(slowly) sssssssssssssssuck.my.dick.
(falls asleep)

[Long Pause]

B. (*finally responds*) What did she say?

A. (*no response*)

[Pause]

B. Are you awake?

A. (*slowly wakes*) Hm... what?

B. You've got to be kidding me.

A. What?

B. Really?

A. Really, what??

B. What did she say?

A. Who?

B. (*emphatic*) Your dick sucking mother!!
(simultaneously turns lamp switch on.)

(LIGHTS ON)

A. (*squints eyes at light in confusion*) Huh?!! (coming to) Oh...(smirking)...
Ha...I....I forgot that I started to tell...
Why did I even bring that up?

B. You asked me about the worst thing I'd ever said to someone.

A. You told your mother to suck your dick, too?

B. No!

A. (*laughing, then quickly stops in realization*) Hey...

B. (*unaware*) What?

A. (*inquisitively pointing*) The lights...Your migraine... I thought...

B. (*interrupts, stalling, then assuredly*)
I already have the headache, now. It doesn't matter.

A. (*doubting*) Hm.

B. (*avoiding the inquiry*) I can't believe you said that to your mother.

A. Yeah, I know.

B. Not something you can forget.

A. Right.

B. or take back.

A. (*sigh*)

[*Long Pause*]

B. Is there anymore bourbon?

A. (*surprisingly*) Actually there is.

(*reaches next to bed and grabs bottle*)...thought you were all set on sleep?

B. This will help...

the headache...

help me to sleep.

A. Sorry, I know I've kept you up.

B. Don't worry about it.

A. With tomorrow being what it is...

B. (*interrupts*) really.

A. But...(*grabs two water glasses on nightstand and pours shots*)

I'm glad we can make a last toast, before...

[*Pause*] (*abruptly switches emotion toward a stately manner*)

Here's to!...(*interrupted by power voltage, LIGHTS OFF, alarm clock off*)

(*remaining in blackout*)

B. Shit...I spilled it all over the sheets. Bad luck, bad luck...

A. (*urgently*) Well, here! ... Finish the toast...(*takes first sip*)
take the rest of my glass (*then hands it across to B*)
A. (*drops = sound of glass breaking*)

A./B. (*both*) Shit!

B. Fuck... I think some glass got in my bed....I can't see a thing

A. Careful!

B. (*restless movement*) There's definitely glass in my hair...

[*Pause*]

A. Did you get it?

B. A little fleck, there may be more. But I can't see.

A. Stay still! Brush your hand around slowly...

[*Pause*] find any loose pieces?

B. (*frustrated*) Jesus, I'm completely soaked

A. (*urging caution*) Don't cut yourself

[*Pause*]

B. I don't feel anything. Maybe that was it.

A. Well, don't move around, stay still until the lights come back on

B. *If* they come back on.

A. (*soft belch*) Ergh. I don't think that shot settled well...(*another soft belch, and sigh*)

B. You okay?

A. Give me a sec, I just need to be calm.

[*Long Pause*]

B. You okay?

A. (*no response*)

B. You awake?

A. (*weak*) Yes.

B. You okay?

A. I'm spinning.

B. Close your eyes.

A. They *are* closed.

B. I suppose open... closed... all the same, right now.

A. (*weak sigh*) Ergh. I'm nauseous. Now, *I've* got a headache.
I need water.

B. Hold on, I think I have a bottled water by the door
(*motion to upright*)

A. Careful! The glass.

B. I know (*stretching from the bed*) I think I can reach it.
Ah... (*reaches out to A with bottled water*) ...here.

A. Where?

B. I'm holding it out to you.

interruptions of **LIGHT FLICKERINGS (*followed by continued blackout*)

A. Got it!

Thank you (*drinks*).

B. Maybe the power is coming back.

A. (*relief from water, then...*) Tastes like chocolate.

B. Hm... I think I opened that bottle to wash down my Snickers.

A. Ugh. Your backwash.

B. (*amused*) History in a bottle.

A. Ugh.

B. (*recollects*) That reminds me of...

A. (*interrupts*) Hold on, give me a sec.

B. That bad?

A. Just trying to let it pass.

[*Long Pause*]

(*relieved*) I think I'm better. Although, that water...

(*semi-audible mouth gestures of aversion*) ...ugh.

[*Pause*]

You awake?

B. (*no response*)

[*Pause*]

A. You awake?

B. (*comes to*) Yeah, sorry. I was just thinking.

A. (*slightly resentful*) History in a bottle of water?

B. Actually, (*chuckles*) yeah.

This made me think about *my* mother.

A. (*sarcastic disbelief*) Don't tell me...

B. (*in disgust*) No.

[*Pause*]

My grandmother had just died. I was a teenager living at home.

Sometimes I would get bored and just snoop through random closets in our house, looking for old photo albums, games, old vinyl records to play. A lot of

new items had appeared after the emptying out of my grandmother's home. One evening I happened upon an old sealed, small leather hat box...

I brought it in the living room where my mother was and showed it to her. "I think that is one of the boxes I used to store my vinyl 45s," she said. I opened the box immediately and a waft of perfume hit me in the face. The box did in fact contain a dozen or so small vinyl records, but the powerful scent had me bewildered. "What is that smell?" I asked. My mother took an inquisitive breath... she confirmed with amazement... "Oh my gosh... that's...that's 'Arpège' from Lanvin-Paris, the perfume I used to wear when I was your age.

"We both couldn't believe it. The fragrance was so strong that it seemed to have been spritzed that day. To think, back then, while she was listening to those records, playing dress up with her friends...my mother had no concept of me. Let alone, that forty years later her son, of the same age, would smell the same fragrance. It was a time capsule. Strange. Surreal.

We had a working turn-table right there in the living room, so I picked out the top record from the box and dropped the needle...the song played...

(softly, lovingly sings selected verses from 'Vaya Con Dios'
1953 Mary Ford/Les Paul version)

Now the hacienda's dark
The town is sleeping
Now the time has come to part
The time for weeping
Vaya con dios, my darling
Vaya con dios, my love

Wherever you may be, I'll be beside you
Although you're.....

(pause)

I'll never forget that.
That scent is there, with me
every time I hear that song.

[Long Pause]

A. Do you really think we should...[Pause]
...tomorrow?

B. We've already...we're here now.

- A. it's not a long drive back home...
- B. (*growing irritable*) Over and over we've gone back and forth...
- A. (*interrupts*) I know, I know. It's just...
- B. (*interrupts*) It's the only *responsible* thing left to do, now.
- A. I know, but...[*Pause*]
...Did you ever end up telling her?
- B. (*sigh*) No. You?
- A. (*sigh*) No. [*Pause*]
...You don't think we should...
- B. (*interrupts*) No...The hope of motherhood is...
- A. only for a while...
- B. a woman's dream.
- A. only for a while. [*Pause*]
The question of birth seems to...
- B. (*interrupts*) You've said this before.
- A. seems to be a...
- B. (*firmly interrupts*) Birth is a death sentence! ***LIGHTS FLICKER***
...There need not be a *dialogue for two...*
- **immediately LIGHT FLICKERS settle to LIGHTS ON**
- (A,B fall silent in the light, slowly turn gazes to shattered glass at floor center)
- [*Pause*]
- B. (*unsettled sigh*) let's clean this up.
- (B is first to cautiously get out of bed, A follows shortly after
they begin to search and pick up pieces of broken glass)

A. I always imagined I'd... [Pause]
...I always thought I'd be a...

B. (*calmly interrupts*) You would have.

A. a good one?

B. Sure. [Pause]
We find our ways...

A. Hm?

B. our ways...to behave like fathers.

A. and mothers?

B. They find their ways too...
All in good time.

(A,B continue to collect pieces of glass)

A. (*disheartened*) broken glass...a broken family.

B. better than broke.

[Pause]

A. (*meditating upon glass, handing pieces over to B*) having been...having been.

B. to have been...a has been.

A. To have had.

B. To take back.

A. Some things cannot be.

B. Some can. (*tosses glass in the wastebasket*)

A. Reversible... Irreversible.
The way we're going about it...all the same.

B. It will go away (*grabs bourbon*)...that secret pain (*aggressively swigs from bottle*)

A. Theirs or ours?

B. Theirs *and* ours.

A. with a lap full of ice?

[*Pause*]

B. (*moves towards alarm clock*) what time is it?

A. (*looks at wrist watch on nightstand*) Four-forty six.

B. (*puts down bottle, resets time, then alarm setting to 7:00am*)

(*sighs, then calmly*)

We are in this together, you know.

A. (*sigh*) I know.

B. No one else would understand.

A. I know.

B. *They* would never understand.

A. (*sigh*)

(*both A,B slowly return to their beds*)

B. There's no value in having been...if...

[*Pause*]

A. If?

B. Or having to tell...when...[*Pause*]
(*clearly*)... better to be in the dark.

A. us?

B. (*insistent*) them...
(reaches out to lamp switch) [Pause]

(softly) and us. (turns off lamp switch)

(LIGHTS OFF)

[Pause]

B. 'night.

[Pause]

A. 'night.

[Long Pause] (*remaining in blackout*)

(END)

-KRK 11/25/14 Boston, MA

