

*What
the...?*

Juhan Puhm

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A group of people in a room, sitting around a large table, each with a copy of this script.

C ~ Co-ordinator

A and B

SR ~ Stage Reader

The stage reader must NOT read out loud any of the stage directions.

C - "A group of people in a room, sitting around a large table, each with a copy of this script."

I guess I am the **Co-ordinator**.

We need **A** and **B**.

Just be warned these are very dynamic parts, so only if you have some crazy energy to spare!

A - I'll read for **A**.

B - I'm good for **B**.

C - Okay great, get ready!

And we need a **Stage Reader**.

SR - I can do that.

C - It says, "The stage reader must NOT read out loud any of the stage directions."

Just saying.

SR - Ahh, okay. I can do that.

C - Okay! Let's start!

"A group of people in a room, sitting around a large table, each with a copy of this script."

(pause)

SR - "pause"
Oh sorry, right got it! Okay sorry...

(pause)

A - Is it time?

B - It's time.

A - Is everyone gathered around?

B - Looks like it.

A - And everyone has their copy?

B - Yup.

A - Do we start?

B - We start.

A - Is it absolutely necessary?

B - What is?

A - That we have dialogue...

B - hmmm? *(pondering)*

A - ...and that we interact? That all we can use is words.

B - I don't know what else we can use? It is the nature of what we are doing.

A - Yes, but it is so contrived. I say something, you reply, I reply back,
and on and on it goes.

B - And on and on it goes.

A - And on and on it goes.

(silence, lengthy pause)

B - *(quietly)* A?

A - Yes.

B - (whispering) Would you like to try whispering?

A - (*whispering back*) Okay.

(both continue whispering)

B - Do you know who wrote this?

A - Yes, he is sitting right over there.

B - Why are we whispering?

A - Because you wanted us to whisper.

B - Why did I want us to whisper?

A - I don't know.

B - What made me, want us to whisper?

A - hmmm? (*pondering*)

B - He did.

A - Who?

B - The person sitting over there.

A - Why do you think that?

B - Well, why otherwise would I be whispering?

A - Because you wanted us to whisper.

B - Yes, but why did I want us, to want us to whisper?

A - Because you wanted, to want to whisper.

B - Yes, but...

A - It was your idea that we whisper.

B - Was it really, was it really my idea?

A - Should we stop whispering now?

B - I don't know.

A - Everyone is trying really hard to hear us...

B - Shhh!

A - ...and make sense of what we are saying.

B - Shhh!

A - What?

(short pause, listening intently)

B - Did you hear it?

A - What?

B - Everyone... *(short pause)* Everyone turning their pages at the same time.

(thinking pause)

A - I think I heard it.

B - I definitely heard it.

A - Maybe I heard it. I wasn't paying attention.

(short pause, listening intently)

(whispering loudly, rapidly, excitedly, and frantically)

B - There!!

A - I heard it too!!

B - Oh gad, what are we going to do?

A - Can we stop whispering?

B - I don't know if we can stop whispering. Can you stop whispering?

A - I don't know if I can. I will try. *(clenches mouth tight shut)*

B - What the... are you doing?

A - I'm trying not to whisper.

B - By clenching your mouth shut? How's that working for you?

A - *(whispered with lips clenched shut!)* It's working great!
(continues rapid indecipherable whispering with lips clenched shut)

B - Stop, stop, stop!!

A - *(stops)*

(waiting, listening)

(panicked whispering)

A - I heard it again!!!

B - I heard it too!!!

(medium pause, listening)

(soft, slow whispering)

A - We aren't alone.

B - I don't think we are alone.

A - Are you sure?

B - I don't know.

(listening)

A - Its very quiet now.

B - Very quiet.

(listening)

A - Too quiet.

B - Way too quiet.

(listening)

A - I think they are gone.

B- Who's gone?

A - I don't know.

(long pause, completely still)

A - *(suddenly, explosively at the top of one's lungs)* FIVE-----

(A and B continually overlapping)

B - *(loudly)* What the...? FIVE-----

A - FIVE-----

B - FIVE-----

A - Five, five, five, five!!

B - Five, five, five, five, five, five, five, five, five...

A - FOUR----- *(really long)*

B - five!! FOUR----- *(really long)*

(A and B continue loudly, long, short, randomly shouting the words FIVE and FOUR)

(A and B DON'T follow the next stage direction)

(A and B get out of their chairs and start running around the table, randomly shouting FIVE-----, FOUR-----, five, five, five, five, five....four, four, four, four, four...etc etc)

(A and B keep on with interjections of FOUR and FIVE even when the other is speaking)

A - *(loudly shouting)* It says here, "we have to get out of our chairs and run around the table while shouting FIVE and FOUR etc."

B - *(loudly shouting)* What?!

A - It says, "we have to get out of our chairs!"

B - Where does it say that?

(A and B get out of their chairs)

A - Right here. *(pointing to the line)*

B - I'm not getting out of my chair.

A - But it says so right here, “*(A and B get out of their chairs)*”.

B - I’m not doing that!

A - We have to do that. It says we have to do that.

B - Just because it says we have to do that, doesn’t mean we have to do that!!

(A and B most definitely have to get out of their chairs)

A - It says here, “we most definitely have to get out of our chairs.”

B - Why?

A - Because it says so. We have to do what it says.

B - No we don’t.

A - Yes we do, we have to follow what it says.

And you’re not interjecting FOUR and FIVE enough when I talk.
You’re supposed to interject FOUR and FIVE randomly when I talk.
And I’m supposed to do that when you talk.

That’s better.

B - I don’t want to get out of my...

(A and B most definitely have to get out of their chairs or else!)

A - Or else!

B - Or else what!

A - It says, “we have to get out of our chairs or else!”

B - Or else is pretty bad!

A - Or else is really bad.

B - Really, really, really bad.

A - Okay we will do it together.

B - Okay ready.

A - Ready.

B - Are you sure?

A - Yes.

B - Ready.

A - Ready.

(together)

A - (shouts and sings a long) FOUR----- (while rising out of the chair)

B - (shouts and sings a long) FIVE----- (while rising out of the chair)

(**A** and **B** standing, complete stillness, silence, pause)

(Suddenly, explosively **A** and **B** run crazily around the room and table, shouting, singing FOUR! FIVE! etc, etc)

SR - (at your discretion, after a number of seconds, when **A** and **B** are on opposite sides of the room, slap the table as loudly as possible)

(**A** and **B** freeze mid-step at the sound of the slap)

(long pause)

B - (normal voice) We're frozen, aren't we?

(pause)

A - (normal voice) Yes, we're frozen.

(pause)

B - How frozen are we?

A - We are pretty frozen.

B - I think so.

A - But we can't be so frozen that we can't read our part.

B - No, I think we have to be able to flip the page, so we can't be that frozen.

A - So we are frozen, but also imagining we are frozen.

B - No, we are really frozen.

A - But we can flip the page and that's okay?

B - Yes, that's okay.

A - Okay, got it.

(pause)

A - What if I have an itch?

B - Shhh!

(pause)

B - I'm going to pretend I'm a tree.....
and that I am in a beautiful forest.....

A - With a strophic.

B - A strophic? What do you mean?

A - There has to be a strophic.

B - Okay, a strophic.

A - I'll start

(sung) The month of June and all's in bloom
My fair one to my side did come
But her mind turned dark and she broke my heart
And hacked and sprayed till my blood did run

B - Oh, that's nice for sure.

(sung) And sucked my soul till it did run dry
And screamed and yelled and twisted my mind
And drove me mad with her borderline
And twisted and turned with her gaslit insanity

A - Did you write that?

B - No, it's what I have to sing.

A - The last line doesn't scan or rhyme very well.

B - Oh well.

A - And you used the word "twisted" twice.

(sung) But she really is a very nice sweet girl
And she will make you a warm hot bowl of soup
And invite you to spend some quiet time
Enfolded in her arms divine

B - Warm, hot? Enfolded? How about...strangled?

A - There we go, three strophes.

B - A, A, A.

A - Yes?

B - No I mean three verses, which we call A, A, A...

A - That's me!

B - ...and no chorus at all.

A - Do you think if we sang a chorus others would sing along?

B - I doubt it.

(A and B slowly descend and sit on the floor)

A - We're sitting down now.

B - I see that.

(short pause, getting comfortable)

A - Are you comfortable?

B - I'm okay, it's harder to sit on the floor when you are older.

A - Me too.

B - I can't see you anymore.

A - It's okay. I'm here.

B - Hear that?

A - It's like the wind rustling, or the sound of a campfire.

B - Do you like simile?

A - Do you mean like, "as hot as the sun."

B - Yes "like" that.

A - Or "as" that.

B - Yes, like or as

A - What do you mean, like or as?

B - (*short, quick, sharp, quietly*) Five!
I mean, your smile is like a simile.

A - Your eyes are as cool as a noun.

B - A noun is a noun isn't it?
I mean if you had to describe,
I mean explain what a noun is,
you would say it is a noun.

A - A noun is a person, place, or a thing.

B - So a noun is a thing. I guess it's like a thing.

A - So nouns and things are similies?

B - I don't think a noun is like anything but a noun.

A - (*poetically*) Her smile was like a noun.

B - I don't think her smile can be like a noun.

A - It can be like a noun if I want it to be.

B - I'll have noun of it! Ha ha ha!

A - (*poetically*) The nun would have none of the noun,
If it didn't smile its smile sweet
Like a simile

B - Is it possible to smile sweet like a simile?

(pause)

A - It's getting colder.

B - I'm cold too, the sun's gone down.

A - Let's huddle by the fire.

B - Where's the fire?

A - The fire is anywhere we choose.

B - Okay, so let's cuddle up by the fire. Let's meet halfway, there will be our fire.

(A and B crawl on the floor and meet half-way, and cuddle up together to keep warm)

A - So, our fire is here?

B - Yes, our fire is here.

A - And we are imagining that there is a fire here?

B - Yes, we are imagining using our imagination.

A - And everyone else is imagining there is a fire here too?

B - There is no one else here.

A - And so we are imagining there is no one else here too?

B - Yes, we are imagining we are all alone.

A - I'm warmer already!

B - The sound of the fire crackling is lovely.

(long pause, listening to the fire crackle)

A - Praying is asking, hoping and waiting on the universe.
But there is also "willing" the universe, through sheer power of thought and being.

B - I will shape the universe the way I want it to be
I will never die!

A - The universe is a construct of my mind.
I will heal and love and determine the outcome of things.

B - The fabric is mine to weave.
And "good", will be the thread that sews all.

A - Wow, who wrote that? Did you write that?

B - Nope, not me, what about you?

A - Nope, not me either.

(medium pause)

A - Is it morning now? Is the sun coming up?
Are the birds singing? Is it a new beginning?

B - You could sing that, it scans very well.

A - I am looking for a new life, a new love,
a special one to share my life with.

B - Me too!

A - You too as well?

B - Yes me too. I am looking with all my heart.

A - You have a lot to offer.

B - And so do you!

A - Kind of you to say.

B - Do you ever think, that we are one and the same?
That there is no difference between us,
that we are actually both expressing the singular idea of another?

A - Another who?

B - You know, some another.
Do you ever think that the words in our minds, that we speak, aren't our own?

A - No, can't say that I do.

B - Listen!

(pause, listening)

B - No sorry, it's nothing.

A - Well you probably heard something.

Its morning, the birds are singing, the sun is shining,
The breeze is gently blowing, the waters are gently lapping.

B - Its peaceful isn't it?

A - Yes, very peaceful.

B - I'm glad I am here with you.

A - Me too.

(long tranquil pause, breathing in the fresh air)

A - *(shouting)* TORNADO!

B - *(shouting)* TORNADO!

(A and B rise quickly, turn, bounce off of one another, and run!)

A and B - Run, run, hide, hide, Tornado, Tornado!!

(A and B run to their chairs, crouch and take cover behind their chairs)

A and B - Take Cover!! Here she comes!!

*(A and B throw their scripts into the air, but...
immediately scramble to get them back, and find the page they were on)*

A - Well that was dumb, I didn't know what to say!

B - Me neither!

A - I guess we need these.

B - Well if we don't have them then we can't say anything.

A - *(shouting)* Here she comes!!

B - *(shouting)* TAKE COVER!!

A - HOLD ON!!

B - HOLD ON TIGHT!!

A and **B** - AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!

*(The **Writer** lurches out of his chair, makes an awful gasping sound, grabs his chest and throat, and falls to the ground)*

(shocked pause)

A and **B** - What the...? *(looking over to the body)*

(pause)

B - Is he dead?

A - I don't know.

B - Looks dead.

(A and B both tentatively move a step or two closer)

A - Maybe.

(short pause)

B - Is it over then?

A - I don't think so, we are still speaking.

B - Maybe he's not dead then?

A - No, I think he is for sure, pretty dead.

B - But if we are still speaking, then it can't be over, can it?

A - I guess not, but it's pretty close to being over.

B - Well, I think I would like to get a coffee, you coming?

A - We can't go yet.

B - Why?

A - Well, we have to talk about things now.

B - About what kind of things?

A - Well about words and questions.

B - Do you think he will get up for that?

A - Who?

B - The dead guy.

A - Well he's dead, I can't see him rising from the dead.

B - Well maybe he can.

A - What?

B - Rise from the dead.

A - Don't be ridiculous.

B - Maybe he is just playing, playing that he is dead?

A - Why would he do that?

B - I don't know, just a hunch.

A - A hunch? I'm going for coffee.

B - We can't go yet. We have to ask and answer questions, and have a discussion.

A - A discussion with who?

B - Whom.

A - No, I think it's "who" that is right.

B - So, it's really over now.

A - Yup, I think so.

B - And he is really dead, and we are still here speaking...

A - Seems so

B - ...and thinking

A - I guess so.

B - Did we ever need him at all then?

A - Probably not.

B - I don't know, I think...

A - Well it doesn't matter now anymore does it?

B - Poor guy.

A - Okay, can we get this conversation thing over with?
I really need a coffee.

B - Me too.

A - Oh brother.

B - What the four?

A - What the five?

B - Is it over now?

A - Yup it's over.

B - Wow, people!

A - I think you are seeing things.

B - No, there are lots of people here.

A - It's definitely over now.

B - It's kind of over.

A - Well, it's either over or it isn't.

B - I'm done here.

A - Yup me too.

B - What in the world was that?

A - Who's to know?

B - Seriously, I can't believe...

A - Me neither.

A and **B** - What the...? (*shaking their heads*)

A and **B** - (*repeating over and over again*) Coffee, coffee...etc

*(There are four parameters when randomly speaking
the word "Coffee" that must be incorporated -
1 and 2 - the pitches of the first and second syllables
3 and 4 - the lengths of the first and second syllables)*

(A and B exit and the word "Coffee" fades away)

(The group of people sitting around the table applaud)

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Juhan Puhm  
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