

No One Asks

A short play

Written by

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Cast of Characters

Clare
Woman in her 20s. Clare is almost totally non verbal. She sits in a chair, legs pulled up, sucks her thumb, and rocks back-and-forth. She wears a hospital gown.

Anderson
A woman in her late 20s. She is a savant and recites Shakespeare and multiplies and divides large numbers. She wears a hospital gown.

Zane
A man in his late 20s. There are times when Zane appears normal, but he can quickly fall into his psychosis. He wears a hospital gown.

Setting:
A day room in a psychiatric hospital. The room contains only a few chairs.

Time:
Present, day.

At Rise:
Clare sits in her chair, rocking back-and-forth. Anderson enters singing the *Alphabet* song but the letters are in no particular order. She walks around the room and eventually moves very close to Clare. The closer she gets the louder her singing becomes. Anderson stops in front of Clair and stares at her as she continues to sing.

CLARE

Fuck.

(Anderson stops singing.)

ANDERSON

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my head, as is a winged messenger of heaven unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes of mortals that fall back to gaze on him when he best rides the lazy-pacing clouds and sails upon the bosom of the air. (From Romeo and Juliet)

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

986574 divided by point 2574 equals 383271 point 17.
(Zane enters and paces around the room looking at Clare and Anderson.)

3465768 multiplied by 213 equals 738208584.

ZANE

Well, I've finally found you two. I've been looking everywhere. I asked Nurse Hale and she thought you were out in the garden. I went out there to find you but you weren't there. I looked everywhere: in the bushes, under trees, on the grass, behind the wall, in front of the wall, around the building, on the roof, in the pool, and... (pause) I thought maybe you were trying to hide from me but all along you were here. I really didn't know you would be here. It was by luck that I happened to walk in and find you two. I was really on my way to the bathroom to pee when I just popped in and found you. (Pause) I still have to pee.

(Zane runs off.)

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

(angrily)

208877777777 plus 172906666666 equals 381784444443.

(Clare starts screaming and
rocking back-and-forth very
quickly.)

ANDERSON

Either to die the death, or to abjure for ever the society
of men. Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires, know
of your youth, examine well your blood, whether, if you
yield not to your father's choice, you can endure the livery
of a nun, for aye to be in shady cloister mew'd, to live a
barren sister all your life, chanting faint hymns to the
cold fruitless moon. (A Midsummer Night's Dream)

(Zane enters with the front of
his gown all wet. Clare
stops screaming.)

ZANE

I peed and it all went in. None went on the floor so today I was a good boy.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, dear Clare. Is that all you can say? It's no wonder that you have to be locked up in this place with loonies like Anderson. That is a very, very, very, very, very, very, very, (pause) bad word and people who use it exclusively wind up living in a place like this. Take my advice, look for new words, good words at that and put them together for good use, then maybe you'll have a chance to roam free in the outside world, like me.

ANDERSON

721334056 divided by 444333256 point 2 equals 1 point 623407759682.

(Anderson sits on the floor,
takes her shoe off, and
starts examining her foot.)

ZANE

Now take Anderson here as an example. She can make up numbers on her own, but they are useless. Numbers are only good for solving numerical problems that relate to some definite task in the real world, like in physics or architecture or accounting or chemistry or aviation or... (pause) The words she uses are also useless because they are not her own and again do not relate to anything useful in the outside world. Clare, listen to me carefully: Anderson will never get out of here, but we have a chance. Together, we can change. I know it.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. (Pause) Clare, try this.
Hello, my name is Clare. What is yours?

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

More strange than true. I never may believe these antique
fables nor these fairy toys. Lovers and madmen have such
seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more
than cool reason ever comprehends. The lunatic, the lover,
and the poet, are of imagination all compact. One sees more
devils than vast hell can hold: that is the madman. (A
Midsummer Night's Dream)

ZANE

I'll give you that one Anderson, only because it did have
some semblance of relevance to the situation at hand.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, I'm trying to help you here. You must try and
cooperate, for I can't help you if you don't try and help
yourself. Now come on, try. My name is Clare. What is
yours?

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, I don't want to be here forever, do you? Insanity is
too hard, it hurts too much. I can change, you can change,
but we must do it together.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Maybe I'll try and get someone else to join me. Then we'll see how you feel, Clare.

ANDERSON

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back, wherein he puts alms for oblivion, a great-sized monster of ingratitude, those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured as fast as they are made, forgot as soon as done. Perseverance, dear my lord, keeps honor bright. (Troilus and Cressida)

ZANE

Yes, persevere, persevere. Clare, listen...
(Zane stops himself and thinks for a moment.)

No, no, Anderson. You promised not to use those words around me. I don't like them; they make me think too much, you must stop.

ANDERSON

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery...

(Clare starts screaming again.)

ZANE

Don't, Anderson. I know where you're going with this. If you want me to stay in this room, just don't start.

ZANE

Now see what you've done, Anderson. Clare, Clare, Clare, Clare, Anderson says she's sorry and that she'll never, never, never, ever, speak that way again.

(Clare continues to scream, but less so.)

Anderson promises and crosses her heart and hopes to die.

(Zane puts his hand on Clare's shoulder and her screaming becomes more intense. Zane jumps away from Clare and sits on a chair.)

ZANE

Oh, no, oh, no, oh, no. I forgot, Clare, I forgot. Please, please, please, Clare stop screaming. Please. It was a mistake. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

(Clare continues to scream and Anderson gets up and begins to cross to Zane.)

ANDERSON

(threateningly)

Had it pleased heaven to try me with affliction, had they rained all kinds of sores and shames on my bare head...

ZANE

I don't want to hear it.

(Anderson moves closer to Zane who puts his hands over his ears. Clare continues to scream.)

ANDERSON

Steeped me in poverty to the very lips, given to captivity me and my utmost hopes...

ZANE

Stop.

ANDERSON

I should have found in some place of my soul a drop of patience. But, alas, to make me the fixed figure for the time of scorn to point his slow and moving finger at...

(Zane runs to the door and starts pounding on it. Anderson comes after him, yelling her lines. Clare continues to scream.)

ZANE

Nurse Hale, Nurse Hale, Nurse Hale.

ANDERSON

Yet could I bear that too, well, very well, but there where I have garnered up my heart...

(Zane crosses to the center of the room and falls to the floor. Clare continues to scream.)

ZANE

No.

ANDERSON

Where either I must live or bear no life, the fountain from the which my current runs or else dries up--to be discarded thence...

(Zane puts his fingers in his ears, starts making nonsense noises to try and block out Anderson. Clare continues to scream.)

Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender in--turn thy complexion there...

(Clare stops screaming, and slowly begins to cross to Zane. Zane continues to try and block out Anderson's words.)

Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin! I here look grim as hell! (Othello)

(Anderson stops, looks at Zane for a moment, crosses to a chair, sits, and stares at the floor. Zane continues to block out Anderson, but slowly realizes that Anderson has stopped. Zane looks around and then at his wet gown. Clair is now very close to Zane.)

ZANE

(very quietly)

Nurse Hale?

(Zane drops his hands, crumbles to the floor and begins to sob as Clare reaches out to him.)

ANDERSON

(very slowly)

Two plus two equals...

(Clair touches Zane and quickly draws her hand back.)

CLARE

(sadly, to Zane)

Fuck.

(Anderson sings the Alphabet song, but this time the letters are in the correct order. The lights slowly fade to blackout.)

The end.