

BUT HOW MANY YEARS ARE THERE IN A LIFETIME?

By  
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28 Plays Later 2019

Day 28

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ACT I

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP - THE SEA

THE SOUNDS OF THE SEA CAN BE HEARD FAINTLY. WAVES, GULLS, EVERYTHING NATURAL. BUT NO SOUNDS OF HUMANITY. THE BACKDROP IS THE CLOUDLESS BLUE SKY WITH AN UNINTERRUPTED HORIZON LINE ON IT STRETCHING FROM STAGE LEFT TO STAGE RIGHT.

SPLASHING CAN BE HEARD, AND A GROUP OF DANCERS MIMICKING DOLPHINS DANCE ACROSS THE STAGE IN A POD. A SILHOUETTE OF A WHALE BREACHING IS PROJECTED ON THE BACKDROP. IT MOVES IN DISCRETE STEPS AND SPLASHES AWAY BENEATH THE SURFACE.

ANOTHER GROUP OF DANCERS EMERGE, ALL DRESSED IN BROWN. THEY MOVE AS A UNIT. A BOAT. AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR GROUP ARE TWO HUMANS. THE DANCERS (AND HUMANS) STOP STAGE CENTER. THEY CONTINUE TO MOVE GENTLY, SIMULATING THE BOBBING OF THE BOAT IN THE WATER.

HUMAN 1:           Nothing. As far as the eye can see.

THE BOAT DANCERS MAINTAIN THEIR POSITIONS, BUT TURN TO LOOK OUTWARDS, SHIELDING THEIR EYES FROM THE SUN ABOVE WITH ONE HAND. WHEN THEY HAVE LOOKED, THEY SNAP BACK INTO POSITION.

HUMAN 2:           That's what you wanted, isn't it.

HUMAN 1:           Yes. At first.

HUMAN 2:           And now?

HUMAN 1 SHRUGS. THE BOAT DANCERS FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY WITH A SIMILAR SHRUG.

HUMAN 1: I have seen all there is to see. I have done all there is to do. I have tasted all there is to taste.

HUMAN 2: (again) And NOW?

HUMAN 1: And now, I stop rowing.

THE DOLPHIN DANCERS PASS BACK THROUGH. BOTH HUMANS WATCH THEM IN SILENCE UNTIL THEY ARE OFF STAGE.

HUMAN 2: The current makes no promises.

HUMAN 1: Of course not, nor do I ask it to.

HUMAN 2: But where will it take you?

HUMAN 1: Who knows? I will float across the seas at the currents whim. I will see what it wants me to see.

HUMAN 2: But what if it only wants you to see your death?

HUMAN 1: Then so be it. If the boat crashes upon the shoals

THE BOAT DANCERS SHOOT THEIR ARMS OUTWARDS AS IF BREAKING APART, AND THEN RETRACT JUST AS QUICKLY.

HUMAN 1: (continued) and my body is picked by gulls, I have still lived a full life. There is no regret.

HUMAN 2: But are you complete?

HUMAN 1: None of us is complete until we leave this life behind us. The longer we live, the more we grow and change. The more we become.

HUMAN 2: You start dying the moment you're born?

HUMAN 1: Yes. Every step along the path takes you one step closer to completion.

HUMAN 2: To death.

HUMAN 1: Tomato. Tomahto.

HUMAN 2: So you do not fear it?

HUMAN 1: Why would I?

HUMAN 2: Because it is the end.

HUMAN 1: Do you fear the end of a long drive? Do you fear the end of a movie? Do you fear the end of a novel, or poem?

HUMAN 2: No.

HUMAN 1: Then why fear the end of this?

HUMAN 2: Why embrace it?

HUMAN 1: Why not? Why not stand tall and shout into the breeze "Take me where you will. Show me what must be seen. And when I know what must be known shout 'Land Ho!' and dash me upon the crags so my journey comes to an end."

HUMAN 2: But how do you KNOW?

HUMAN 1: Know what?

HUMAN 2: That this journey is the last.

HUMAN 1 PAUSES IN THOUGHT.

HUMAN 2: Every day is a small journey. Even if it's only from your bed to the couch. What determines when a journey is the last? And don't those small journeys all make up a bigger, continuous journey? Like pages in a triptych. Each day has a beginning and an end. Put seven together and it's a week. Put 52 of those together and it's a year. But how many years are there in a lifetime?

HUMAN 1: All right, then. Raise the sail. Set a course. Take us onward.

THE BOAT DANCERS LEAD THE TWO OFF STAGE.  
THE DOLPHIN DANCERS FOLLOW QUICKLY BEHIND.  
THE SOUNDS OF THE SEA CAN BE HEARD AGAIN AS  
THE STAGE FADES TO BLACK.