

PHANTOM HAT
a play

by
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DRAFT 1.0

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAX
JESS
STEPH
DAN
MEL

SCENE 1: DARKNESS

(Apart from some small blue, green, and red indicator lights as from electronic equipment, the stage is dark.)

JESS

If you get soup, you eat soup. That's what you do man, keep eating the fucking soup.

MAX

A disorder called what?

STEPH

Phantom hat.

JESS

He's a bit like that chair, broken and dangerous.

DAN

C'mon hon, let's get in the sun, you're making me stand in the shadow.

MAX

Isn't there something we can—

STEPH

Just keep your own shit together, if possible. And try not to say anything provocative.

DAN

Yeah, keep it together man. Maybe later we can go for ice cream.
hahahahaaaaaha!
I SCREEEEEEEEEEAMMMMM!

JESS

Hey Buddy?

MEL

Dan.

JESS

Alright, Dan! Hey Dan! Listen —

DAN

YOU SCREEEAM
WE AAALL SCREEEAM
FOR IIIII SCREEEAM!

(Dan screams and sobs. Almost imperceptibly slowly, stars start to appear all around, as in a planetarium.)

MAX

How many are we? Awake I mean?

JESS

No idea.

MAX

What about how long, you know, since we uh...

JESS

Also —

MAX

Or where! Do we at least know where? Maybe if we put on some lights we can—

STEPH

Don't start. Please. Try to think of something else. Anything. Like, uh, howbout anyone remember roller rinks or are you all too young?

JESS

Roller skating you mean?

Oh yeah absolutely I remember that! We went to a rink for some kind of party with my whole grade and I—

MEL

Not rinks but I had roller skates! I begged for them and finally got em for my 9th birthday. What a thrill that was rolling over the little wooden bridge in the park near my house. Then later, after the fall, I picked that scab to let the wounded knee bleed over and over.

JESS

eeew

MAX

You're talking about roller skates?!
Shouldn't we do something instead of just
lie around TALKING????!?!?

MEL

You never did that? I liked to watch the
blood make a bubble where I peeled up the
crust. I liked the taste of it. I kept
that wound open for months, maybe longer.
I still have a thick white scar on my
knee.

JESS

Sure! Let's do something. What a great
idea. What do you -?

EEEEYA EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA
EEEEYA EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA

KERTHUMPITY THUMPITY
BUMP

(Everyone screams.)

SCENE 2: MORE DARKNESS

(The light is a little brighter now and in addition the
the stars, it is possible to make out a number of figures
who appear to be lying on cots.)

STEPH

Is everyone okay?

DAN

Excellent. Truly.

MAX

Maybe this means we're getting somewhere!
I'm getting up.

(One of the figures slowly sits up and gets up from the
cot but immediately crumples to the ground.)

MAX

OWWW fuck!

JESS

Use it or lose I guess.

MAX

I don't think I can get up. What am I
going—

STEPH

Well for one thing don't panic. Try wiggling your toes maybe. Can you feel anything?

MEL

Maybe if you massage your legs?

MAX

I'm scared.

STEPH

We're all scared man.

DAN

I'm not scared. I just don't want to miss the last bus... I promised I'd be home before—

MEL

Which home? And before what Dan? Are you missing the small fact that—

STEPH

Don't provoke him Mel.

MAX

Don't provoke him? Are you kidding me? I'm lying here on the floor barely able to move and we don't even know where or when the fuck we are and you're worried about PROVOKING HIM?? Don't you think maybe we should be trying to find something out about our situation?

STEPH

Our situation is that we are now free agents and it feels like we banged down somewhere so if anyone ever feels able, maybe we can get out of this can and see if it's hospitable. And hopefully it's a good place to plant our flag because I don't think this bus is made for multiple flights.

MEL

Our flag? Please tell me you are not fucking serious. After what happened to our... our... I mean, really??!!

you think about flags??? Haven't you thought - even a little bit- that it might be a good plan to try and do things differently from before?! You would actually consider sticking your FLAG in some new place again?? Don't you get it? Flags are poison man! Poison. Just one of

the millions of ways we've destroyed ourselves. Christ al-

JESS

What's your problem with a flag? Aren't you even a little bit proud at the human ingenuity that got us here? Don't you-

MEL

My problem with flags??! My problem with flags is that those oh so beloved fucking symbols of PROUD nations are but one of the many many many ways our species has always organized ourselves into US and THEM! And I for one have had enough. When we left there were almost 200 independent countries or states... you know what that means??? Anyone? Anyone even care??

(A long silence)

DAN

I care. So, uh...anyone want to go bowling later?

(Mel sighs loudly.)

MEL

It *means* almost 200 spaces or territories with boundaries. Boundaries and divisions distinguishing all the people who are like us from those who aren't

MAX

Actually, I think you're being a bit extreme.

JESS

Yeah, chill out. It is the normal thing to do when you reach new territory after all and this is-

STEPH

No. Mel's right. I meant it figuratively, about the flag. Even if we have flags, and chances are good they packed at least one on board, I don't think we should use it, except maybe as material for something else.

DAN

The largest living organism on the planet is a fungus. *Armillaria melea*. I bet you didn't know that. It travels from tree to

-

JESS

You want to CUT UP THE FLAG???! Are you kidd-

DAN

-tree through the underground root sy-

MEL

Yes! Let's shred the damn things. All of them! What a brilliant idea.

DAN

-stems. Some of them get to be as big as 20 football fields in area.

JESS

You can't-!

MAX

What are you talking about?

MEL

Yes. And it is about fucking time. Get rid of it all. The flags, the anthems and all the other symbols of national and religious identity that are such a big part of humanity's tendency to blight ourselves with us and them ideologies.

JESS

Where is your patriotism? I can't believe you would turn your back on-

MEL

on what exactly? Do you really think there is anything left to wave a flag for? The way I see it Mel is that patriots defend flags and borders with guns and mortars. They rape the women and children, shoot the men, burn the towns-

STEPH

-unh huh, and all that to keep the us in and the them out.

MEL

-and political convulsions and so-called revolutions have only brought us again and again to to xenophobic, nationalist solutions - so yes, I say, burn the flags and dismantle the bor-

STEPH

Too bad it is so late.

EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA
EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA EEEYA

SCENE 3: BRIGHT

(There is some banging and voices offstage and then the sound of a door being thrown open and suddenly the lights are up and bright. Several disheveled people are on beds and one lies on the floor. The stage is set as for a spaceship/shuttle.)

(Everyone is squinting and blinking. A group of people enter speaking an unintelligible language and each wearing a uniform with a flag or symbol on it. The uniforms put the travellers onto gurneys and carry them off.)

(Blackout. End.)