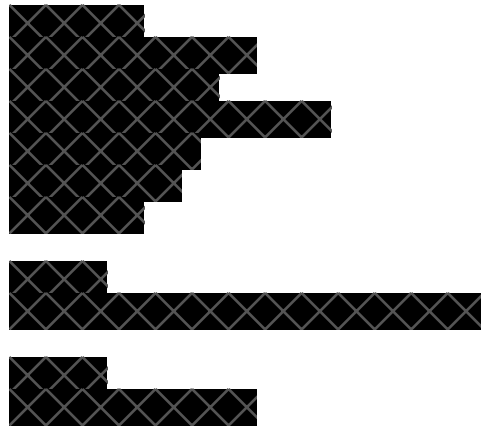


DIVE

A short play
By John Currivan



CAST OF CHARACTERS

WOMAN/BARBARA

MAN

ENGINEER

SETTING

A Dirty Room. Only one window or skylight which is darkened and dirty blocking the light. There is a bed, a tattered armchair a cupboard, clothes are scattered around the room. The walls are filthy and dark, dripping with slime and mould. There is a guitar/(instrument) there, strings missing and out of tune. A sink/wash basin in the room is filled with plates of rotting food and dirt, which can also be scattered around the room.

PRODUCTION NOTES

/: INDICATES WHERE THE NEXT CHARACTER CUTS IN WHILE PREVIOUS CHARACTER CONTINUES TALKING.

THE OBJECTS IN THE ROOM ARE THERE TO BE USED IN PERFORMANCE, ALTHOUGH NOT DIRECTLY REFERRED TO IN THE DIALOGUE THEY ARE OPEN TO DIFFERENT USES IN DIFFERENT PRODUCTIONS

BARBARA IS REFERED TO AS WOMAN IN THE FIRST HALF BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT SHE BELIEVES HERSELF TO BE AND WHAT SHE SHOULD APPEAR TO BE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Laura, Philip K. Dick, and the members of the Fishamble Playwrighting mentorship group who read through it for the first time all feedback, inspiration and suggestions were greatly appreciated. Thanks to Fergal, Eli and Áine who will be th first to perform it and Eoghan Doyle, my old Youth Theatre facilitartor who is now my Colleague. Cheers guys!

"THE MOST HUMAN AMONG US IS A BEAR"

CLEVELAND BROWN

DIVE

Woman in Room. Man enters.

WOMAN

Welcome home darling.

MAN

What the fuck is this? This is place is a fucking mess!

WOMAN

I'm sorry darling. I try.

SMACK

MAN

Try harder you stupid piece of shit. (*SMACK, SMACK*)

WOMAN

I'm sorry darling, (*SMACK*) I just want to make you happy.

MAN

Happy? Is that it? Then go on, moan like a bitch, cos that's all you are, slut.

*(SMACK, man hits and beats her
around the room)*

*(Woman is on the ground. Man
spreads her legs and lies on top of
her. She doesn't defend herself, or
at least not with any conviction)*

*Man loosens shirt and lowers fly,
moves to lie on top of her.*

WOMAN

No please don't!

MAN

I'm taking what I want.

Man is about to rape her.

WOMAN

No please. You're too strong and big. Too powerful! Oh god I love you. Stop!

Woman grips onto mans arm.

WOMAN

I don't want this Nicholas.

MAN

Nicholas? You'll shut up and take it

*As she speaks Woman squeezes,
harder and harder, like a vice.9*

WOMAN

Taking without giving is usually seen to be selfish and ungrateful. It takes two to tango, two to tango and when somebody takes from another without offering the partner anything the tango doesn't work./ Someone always needs to lead the dance and another needs to follow.

*(Woman continues talking not
listening to man)*

MAN

Ow. Stop! Stop it AHHHHHOOOOHHHHH *(his hand is being crushed)* NNNGGGGG.... you're breaking....SSSSSTOOOPPPPP!!!

WOMAN

Most people think that the leader is the most important as they set the moves.

(she releases his hand)

WOMAN

I've often wondered how great Alexander would've been had he not had his armies / to follow him....

MAN

Stop it.

WOMAN

...a mad man wandering the earth, declaring himself king wherever he went, or just wouldn't have made it past / his first battle...

MAN

I demand you stop it now. Engineer! Engineer I need help.

WOMAN

.....but the armies were willing, were willing to follow him and that's why, that's why he was called the Great!

Engineer enters.

ENGINEER

What happened?

MAN

Nothing. She just went weird, freaked out at me.

ENGINEER

Stay by the wall.

WOMAN

He was the brain and they were the body, but every brain needs a body, and every body needs a brain, every brain needs a body, every body needs a brain, body and brain. Some will say that you are here to follow but.....

ENGINEER

Barbara.

WOMAN

Every body needs a brain and you are a brain, every brain needs a body and you are a body.

ENGINEER

Barbara. Look at me Barbara.

She stops and looks.

ENGINEER

I think it's time for bed darling. Sweet dreams.

WOMAN

You too my love.

ENGINEER

Goodnight.

Barbara, the woman goes to sleep.

MAN

What was that?

ENGINEER

Code. Sequence of phrases to make her sleep. There is another to wake her up.

MAN

Shut her down?

ENGINEER

Standby.

(Engineer turns Barbara over and opens up a hatch in the back of her head and upper neck. During the scene he is looking through the wires cogs and connections)

ENGINEER

I apologize for this sir. Fortunately these incidents don't happen often.

MAN

This happened before?

ENGINEER

Yes. There have been four similar incidents. The other workers responded well to the adjustments made and have caused no problems since.

MAN

But this one.... It's still broken! And you put me in a fucking room with it?

ENGINEER

We believed that Barbara was fully repaired, responsive and cognitive. We were wrong.

MAN

Are you fucking joking?

ENGINEER

Barbara is an old model. Over 70 years. Built without the same regulators and inhibitors that the more modern models have. And I whole-heartedly apologize on behalf of the entire Art-House Organization.

MAN

I see it now. I see it. You're one of them aren't you?

ENGINEER

I beg pardon sir.

MAN

You. A tin in skin. Like that thing there.

ENGINEER

Yes. I am as you say a tin in skin.

MAN

This is going to sound stupid, but... I thought you'd be, less human. I don't know more robotic.

ENGINEER

I am programmed to care for and repair our workers because nobody else does.

MAN

Programmed to care is that really caring?

ENGINEER

Replaced the word programmed with trained or educated and the result is much the same.

MAN

But it's not the same is it.

ENGINEER

Did she seem robotic to you?

MAN

She?

ENGINEER

Barbara.

MAN

It.

ENGINEER

I am programmed to refer to our workers as he or she.

MAN

What? No, it wasn't robotic at all.

ENGINEER

Arties, well built arties respond emotionally to sensual stimuli as well as internal programming. She believes herself to be completely human. Did you hear any of what she said?

MAN

I don't know. Something like every brain needs a body and dancing the tango, What does that mean?

ENGINEER

Barbara's previous owner purchased her brand new. He was young, the victim of a car crash, disfigured. She was his official partner.

Any customer who walks in is instantly recognized as a husband or a lover, but she should have no memory of any specific partner, or of ever being anybody's wife.

MAN

Wife? She just did what she was told.

ENGINEER

She was built to follow directions yes but she was also made to believe that she had free will. Of course she never did. Her partner, Nicholas, often read, recited to her, poems, stories and essays, taught her to dance, and taught her some songs, even helped her to compose her own musical melodies.

MAN

What's that have to do with anything?

ENGINEER

The problem is her Memory drive. It jars and jumps. Repeats. It has been wiped already. Three times.

MAN

I don't believe this. You're lucky I don't take this higher and report it.

ENGINEER

And to whom would you report it?

MAN

Well, I don't know but....

ENGINEER

I don't think that your wife or employers will enjoy hearing of your activities here.

MAN

You don't scare me!

ENGINEER

I do not wish to scare you. I am just the engineer.

MAN

A threat like that.

ENGINEER

The Dive is a very specific programme, for a client with very specific urges. Most people would find it distasteful to know that you achieve sexual release through violent oppression of another. Even if they are a tin in skin.

MAN

I need this. My therapist says that I need this, to de-stress. Who are you to take the moral high ground?

ENGINEER

I have no morals sir. This is not a threat, I am merely stating what I calculate will happen if you choose to take the action beyond the Art-house organization. You can leave now sir, I have your testimony in my report.

(Man leaves)

ENGINEER

Barbara. Time to wake up my love.

(Barbara Wakes)

BARBARA

Good morning darling. What would you like for breakfast?

ENGINEER

There is no breakfast Barbara

BARBARA

If the fridge is empty I can run to the shop and get some more.

ENGINEER

Barbara, I need you to listen.

BARBARA

Coffee After? Two sugars and a drop of milk.

ENGINEER

No breakfast Barbara. Where are you?

BARBARA

Don't be silly I'm with you darling. In our house.

ENGINEER

No you're not.

BARBARA

Where is the sun?

ENGINEER

You are in the Dive Barbara. There is no sun here.

BARBARA

A song?

ENGINEER

No Barbara.

BARBARA

(Sings)

Open up your arms,
Mine are open too,
There is no harm
in my arms,
it is safe and warm for you.

Breathe upon my lips
And I will touch yours too,
A single kiss,
From my lips
Is warm and safe for you.

ENGINEER

That was lovely. Thank you.

BARBARA

I like singing. At least I think I do.

ENGINEER

You do not think. You just are.

BARBARA

So how about that breakfast, my love?

ENGINEER

No. Barbara stop this.

BARBARA

Is something the matter love?

ENGINEER

I am not your love.

BARBARA.

No I'll get it, stay where you are.

ENGINEER

What is the time and date?

BARBARA

I'm perfectly fine dear.

ENGINEER

What is the time and date?

BARBARA

8 o'clock, Saturday 17th April.

ENGINEER

It is November.

BARBARA

Like you said before. April the awkward month, like puberty, not sure if it's summer or spring. April an awkward adolescence, an absolute uncertainty.

ENGINEER

It is not April Barbara.

BARBARA

I miss the sun. Where is Mr. Sun gone?

ENGINEER

Who am I?

BARBARA

That kind of question really has no answer. People regard and define themselves differently, both subject-... and object-ively. But you can never really see yourself properly, the best you'll ever get is a reflection.

ENGINEER

Who do you think I am?

BARBARA

It's what's inside that counts, actions speak louder and a rose by any other name name name name, it's what you do that make you who you are. Beauty is only skin deep, there is a lot more to it but the skin is all I see. Books have covers so we can judge them, even though we shouldn't judge that way. I know that you feel ugly sometimes, scarred and burnt, *(she touches his face)* You said before that you felt like a hideous monster, you're not. I love you. I only have eyes for you. I know that you are beautiful, no matter what cover your book is in. Because who you are is up to you. Don't I get a say in who I am?

ENGINEER

What is my name?

BARBARA

Nicholas, darling you are agitated, why are you agitated?

ENGINEER

My name is not Nicholas. I am the engineer.

BARBARA

Engineers are artists just like you Nicholas. Like you told me they're both the same thing, the sciences and the arts, both have technique and both have expression, like a dance,

ENGINEER

Nicholas is dead Barbara.

BARBARA

... Life is a dance, love is a dance, and there's always a pattern or a routine, an order and a structure that holds together no matter what...

ENGINEER

Nicholas is dead.

BARBARA

.....even the most primitive of cavemen had a structure of some sort. People need routine and order. It helps us to know who we are, our place in the universe and in the..... Who are you?

ENGINEER

I am the engineer.

BARBARA

Where's Nicholas?

ENGINEER

Nicholas died a long time ago.

BARBARA

Died.

ENGINEER

He was a very old man.

BARBARA

Me?

ENGINEER

You're the same as you always were.

BARBARA

I'm not. I'm not the same... Nothing ever stays the same. This is a very old planet and we won't be here forever, none of us. Everything grows and eventually dies.

ENGINEER

You don't.

BARBARA

I want to.

ENGINEER

You have no choice.

BARBARA

It takes two two two two to to tango and when somebody takes from another without offering the partner anything the tango doesn't work. Someone always needs to lead the dance and another needs to follow, you need to be willing, Some will say that you are here to follow and you can if you want, if you want, if you want if you want if you want I want want want I want I want I want I want want want want I I I....

(Engineer shuts her down

*(He wipes her memory and then
presses a button)*

(Barbara wakes. Blank expression)

ENGINEER

Barbara. Your name is Barbara

BARBARA

Barbara.

ENGINEER

How do you feel Barbara?

BARBARA

Feel?

ENGINEER

Better?

BARBARA

Yes. I feel good.

ENGINEER

Lie on the bed

(she does)

Lift both arms

(she does)

Dance with me.

(she does)

Look at me and tell me you love me.

(She does)

BARBARA

I love you. *(Smack)* I love you. *(Smack)* I love you. *(Smack)*

ENGINEER

What the fuck do you call this?!

(SMACK)

BARBARA

I didn't mean it!

ENGINEER

This place is a fucking mess! Didn't you clean it?

BARBARA

I tried.

ENGINEER

(Smack) You can't do anything right. You're a worthless cunt and a wasted fucking whore *(Smack)*

BARBARA

Can you not love me?

ENGINEER

You don't deserve it. *(Smack)*

BARBARA

I don't deserve it.

ENGINEER

What don't you deserve bitch?

BARBARA

Love.

ENGINEER

Why?

BARBARA

Because I'm worthless.

ENGINEER

What are you?

BARBARA

A whore! A messed up and cracked, broken bitch.

ENGINEER

Subject Barbara, seems responsive to re-insertion of Dive programme. Will monitor her for the future. Should another incident like this occur I would recommend that Barbara be terminated, scrapped and possibly recycled.

(Engineer packs up and goes)

ENGINEER

Goodbye Barbara. Have a nice day.

BARBARA

Thank you.

(Exit Engineer)

BARBARA

Hello ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Art-House.
Where no worthless whore needs a rose by any other name other
name which serves no purpose with a primitive routine under
one roof taking breakfast breakfast stop, don't please it's
entertainment, violence, sex, sex, sex, violence or maybe
just awkward april uncertainty HA HA HA HA waiting to lead
the accident and ugly ugly ugly ugly ugly burnt and scarred
slut, a monster Alexander confused inside skin deep what it
is that makes you man, woman, beast, child, who am I?
Nicholas, who am I? Don't hesitate, Who am I Nicholas? Who I
Nicholas? Nicholas? Nicholas.....

Open up your arms

Mine are open too

There is no harm

In my arms

It is safe safe saaaaaaaaafffffffe and warm for you

Breathe upon my brain,

And I will judge yours too,

Reflection kiss,
From my lips,
Is hurt but safe for you.

END