A Pretentious Play about Crossword Puzzles, or why the word “ally” has two meanings 07 17
[A RADIO HOST appears center. They bear a careful resemblance of Alfred Hitchcock and Marlene Dietrich.]

RADIO HOST
A humble, pastel abode; It is the kitchen of an apartment, with a window overlooking city streets. We see two young men: a frustrated man at the table concentrating on a crossword puzzle, and another man struggling to carry several boxes marked “FRAGILE” [As he says this, DAVE drops a box, which shatters], as well as a battered Christmas tree.

[They break their somber attitude to a forced smile] Enter a morning radio host,

This morning’s program of “This Morning” is brought to you by viewers like you. Thank you. However, closed captioning – [muttered] among some other things – is provided by Sandy Ceasar’s Salad Salt: It’s Sodium AND Chloride! Now Iodized. And now, in living Technicolour, I present to you, a series of events too casual for the examined life, too eclectic for the unexamined, and just too nonsensical for anyone.

RON
Technicolour? Closed captioning? I thought this was a radio program?

RADIO HOST
The RADIO HOST leaves to a vignette, nosily watching the scene and commenting on everything as if he has the right to.

RON
And a central character breaks the fourth wall to assert his–

RADIO HOST
Shhhhut up! That’s not your role! DAVE is preoccupied with the tree, so RON [glares at RON, annoyed] returns to his puzzle.

RON
Four-letter word for Christmas decor. Dave, what do you think? I’m going to say... tree.

RADIO HOST
DAVE pokes his head through the branches of the tree he has been attempting to dissemble. He looks like one of those plastic ornaments. What are those called again?

DAVE
Careful, it might be bulb.
Ah. Don’t be fooled, audience anticipating for escape from a daunting exposition establishing the environment. We’re not that cheesy to cheesily place a cheesy character in a cheesy situation involving cheesy wordplay. Trust me: [Immediate sincerity] we’re serious.

[RADIO HOST temporarily leaves set. The show continues.]

DAVE
Do you know where our photo album is?

RON
[Sudden realization, sigh of unease] I hope we didn’t leave it back home.

DAVE
Well, what used to be home.

RON
Oh, you stop that. Maybe it’s in the car. Can you go check?

DAVE
[Really?] Excuse me, but I’ve just hauled all our shit up nine flights of stairs, and you’re just focused on that damn crossword puzzle.

RON
Dave, we live on the second floor.

DAVE
It sure as hell felt like nine!

RON
Fine, I’ll go find it.

[RADIO HOST returning
Immediately as RON exits, DAVE wanders toward the crossword puzzle RON had been working on.

DAVE
Hmm. Five-letter word for macaroni device. [What is that.] Macaroni device? Macaroni device...maca–
RADIO HOST
–and stubs his toe on a certain solid box, and swears. He opens the box to see what the nuisance is.

DAVE
Look at that. Microwave. Funny how things align like that.

RADIO HOST
Enter RON, exasperated and heaving breaths, slamming the door shut.

[RON does not do this, but he does enter, exasperated and heaving breaths, but as the RADIO HOST exits they slam the door for him.]

DAVE
Hey Ron! A “Macaroni device”! I’m thinking microwave or something. [Gives RON puzzle, oblivious.]

RON
Dave-I-went-out-to-the-car-and-you’re-not-gonna-believe-what-I-saw-but-there-was-a-big-flash-and-I-thought-it-was-a-gun-shot-because-it’s-the-city-and-it’s-an-American-city-but-I-looked-over-my-shoulder-and-there-it-was–

[Flash! Crash! Clash! A man in a cosmonaut outfit enters, wielding a stereo in one hand and a laser-phaser gun in another. He shoots them both, rips up the crossword puzzle, and exits through the window.

***IGNORE IF SPOILERS BE UNPLEASANT, but the cosmonaut is later revealed to be the RADIO HOST, but the audience and the characters do not know this yet. IGNORE IF SPOILERS BE UNPLEASANT ***

“Rock Lobster” by the B-52s is probably playing, it really fits the aesthetic.

RADIO HOST
Blackout. When the light returns, we return to the exact situation at the beginning. Two young men, one frustrated on a crossword puzzle, the other struggling to carry boxes marked “FRAGILE”.

This morning’s program of “This Morning” was brought to you by viewers like you. Thank you. However, closed ca–

–Radio is shut off by RON, who is more interested in his crossword puzzle.
RON
Four-letter word for Christmas decor. Look at that it’s probably...wait, it could be *bulb*. I’ll go back to that one. Let’s see, hey Dave, what’s a word for “Macaroni device”?

DAVE
...Microwave?

RON
No, it’s only five letters. One of them is “A”.

DAVE
[Takes a break from lifting boxes.] Hmm. I don’t know. Don’t you ever get bothered by those damn crossword puzzles. You spend all this time on finding these dumb words, some of the clues don’t make any sense, there’s typos everywhere–

RON
—*Radio*! It’s *radio*. They meant “Marconi device”. [Grins] 2-Down: Seven-letter word for the inescapable...[Sappier grin] Romance

DAVE
Don’t they get boring after a while? [Continues unpacking boxes.]

RON
I like them. It gets your mind going. A tired brain is better than a weak one. Fun fact: another word for a lover of crossword puzzles is a *cruciverbalist*. I learned that from last week’s *New York Times*. The crossword puzzle, that is. Say, did you watch that film you were hearing about? The one about WWII or something.

DAVE
*Allies and Axis*. Yeah, it was interesting, as far as war docs go. I remember back home, my brother and I would play battles, he’d be one side and I’d be another, and we threw sand at each other like atom bombs and spaceships, and then we’d give up and just throw sand at...Pop and...Pop would get all mad but he wasn’t really mad and...

RADIO HOST
*He stops his reminiscing, saddened by something he can’t express.*

RON
That’s a dumb word, isn’t it?
Dave:

What is?

Ron:

Allies. In both of the world wars we were the Allies: The US, the UK, and the USSR. But right after the war, literally right after, it was the Cold War, and we weren’t allies with the Soviet Union anymore. You can get into all the crap about strategy and the...the...

Dave:

The Yalta Conference.

Ron:

Yeah, that. I just think it’s weird.

Dave:

I mean, you’re not defending the Soviet Union are you?

Ron:

Oh heck no, I just think it’s weird that the US pretended to be friends with a dictatorship for a bit. Especially when they were doing all that stuff to us.

Dave:

What stuff?

Radio Host:

Ron grips his neck and mimes punching himself.

Dave:

Oh.

Radio Host:

That depressive nostalgia hits in again. Ron doesn’t realize anything. He turns on the radio to distract himself.

We here at “This Morning” would like to make a correction: The historic Christmas Truce between opposing European sides was between Allied and Central Powers, not Allied and Axis Powers, our mistake, and it occurred during WWI, not WWII, also our mistake. This correction was brought to you by Stercorial! Is it new? Yes! Does it work? Yes! Are you sick? Yes! Is it
caused by a heart valve problem? NO! Than Stercorial is right for you. Next on our program: What are words?...What are words?...What are words?...

The RADIO HOST...I...exit on some improvised drawl. Meanwhile, RON continues his crossword puzzle.

[![RADIO HOST fulfills his promise, exiting on some improvised drawl.]

RON

Four-letter word for Christmas decor: well, that’s obviously ally.

DAVE

What?

RON

Four-letter word for Christmas decor: well, that’s obviously tree.

DAVE

Oh. [He thinks about this.] Hey, where’s our photo album?

RON

Crap! I hope we didn’t leave it in the car...wait...nevermind it’s in one of those boxes.

RADIO HOST returning

DAVE opens a box to find a leather photo album. He turns a few pages and finds a small, rocket-shaped bulb. It’s a Christmas ornament, labeled “Pop”.

DAVE

[Glee.] It’s not even Christmas, but what the hell.

RADIO HOST

He puts the bulb on the tree. His glee diminishes. He takes the bulb off and looks at it.

DAVE

Ron, do you ever get a bad memory that doesn’t go away?

RADIO HOST

RON looks over, realizing DAVE’s problem.

RON
Dave, it’s not even Christmas. If I were you, I’d throw it away. You’re just going to keep thinking about why we left and that’s not self-care. You need to accept that your dad isn’t going to accept us.

RADIO HOST exiting
DAVE agrees. He goes to the window and throws the bulb outside. He retires into his chair.

[Suddenly, a man in a cosmonaut outfit climbs through the window with a stereo in one hand and a laser phaser gun in the other and shoots both of them. He rips up the crossword puzzle. “Rock Lobster” by the B-52s is probably playing. It really does fit the aesthetic.]

Blackout. As lights return, we return to the same scene as the beginning. A young couple: one man frustrated on a crossword puzzle, the other struggling to carry boxes marked “FRAGILE”.

This–

[The RADIO HOST is pulled off by a very long cane, Charlie Chaplin style. Suddenly, a cosmonaut wielding a stereo in one hand and a laser phaser gun in another enters from the refrigerator and shoots both of them. He rips up the crossword puzzle, while “Rock Lobster” by the B-52s is playing, an aesthetically appropriate song.]

[Glitching. Everything is glitching.] Blackout. As lights return, we return to the same scene as the beginning. A young couple: one man frustrated—and the other struggling—

—This morning’s program of “This Morning” was brought to you by—

[RON shuts off radio.]

RON
Four-letter word for Christmas decor. I’m going to say tree, what do you think Dave?

DAVE
[Poking from behind tree.] Well…yeah, it’s probably tree. Why’d you shut off the radio?

RADIO HOST

RON
It’s glitching-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-It’s all advertising. And they’re all so absurd. You know that ad for Sandy Caesar’s Salt-whatever.

DAVE
“It’s Sodium AND Chloride!”

RON

“Now Iodized.”

RADIO HOST

They’re adorable. They-y-y-y love to finish each other’s–

RON

That. It’s like they’re trying to be postmodernist but don’t know shit about it.

DAVE

Ronny, I’ve never heard you swear before.

RON

New year’s resolution: swear more. Alleviates all the pressure of life.

DAVE

I thought it was to be a...a...a...a...a...what’s it called?

RON

A cruciverbalist, lover of crossword puzzles. I learned that from last week’s New York Times.

DAVE

What’s it about crossword puzzles anyway? You’re doing them all the time.

RON

I don’t know. It gets your mind going. A tired brain is better than a weak one. There’s something so...postmodernist about random, unrelated, absurd things being connected into a web of normalcy.

[He steps up towards center stage, microphone in hand. Lights dim.]

Intricate. So darn intricate. Where the unexamined life is worth living. A realm in which rubber ducks explain Cleopatra’s death, where garden gnomes are a part of 34-Across: the Australian Open tennis team in 1975. Where a Russian cosmonaut solves everything. Where childhood sandbox wars are fought by 75- and 77 Down: The USA and the USSR. And that helps solve 104-Across: Christmas decor. Ally, Dave. It’s “ally”. In these crossword puzzles, Dave, the two most distant institutions can become temporary allies, two spaceships sailing their way out of Pop’s home, starting from 2-Down: closets.

RADIO HOST
RON returns to his spot and kisses DAVE, hoping for an answer.

RON

Well?

DAVE


RON

Yeah, I love my crossword puzzles.

DAVE

[A little passive-aggressive now.] And meanwhile, I have to haul all of these boxes up nine flights of stairs.

RON

We live on the second floor.

DAVE

It sure as hell felt like nine!

RON

Fine, I’ll go get it.

DAVE

Get what?

RADIO HOST

RON stops in his path to the door, and looks at his hands. What are they? What is this?

RON

I...I don’t know. I thought you said something about a photo album.

DAVE

Photo album? We don’t keep a photo album?

RADIO HOST
Suddenly, the door slams open and it’s...RON [Takes out conveniently placed script, flipping through pages]

RON #2
Dave-I-went-out-to-the-car-and-you’re-not-gonna-believe-what-I-saw-but-there-was-a-big-flash-and-I-thought-it-was-a-gun-shot-because-it’s-the-city-and-it’s-an-American-city-but-I-looked-over-my-shoulder-and-there-it...

RADIO HOST
RON #2 and RON look at each other in utter flabbergast. They touch hands, two souls colliding in sheer incompatibility of existence. To put it plainly, they are shocked. RON #2 backs up in horror and jumps out of the window. RON is frozen. DAVE is surprised, but has seen enough shit to always gear towards the rational.

DAVE
Oh. My. God. So...so you try to cheer me up after the whole Pop incident by hiring a doppelganger of yourself to terrify me into happiness. I love you, Ron!

RADIO HOST exiting
DAVE embraces RON, and RON’s still frozen.

DAVE
Well, now what?

[As he says this, the sound of “Rock Lobster” by the B-52s spectres into the room. A cosmonaut with a stereo in one hand and a laser phaser gun in the other shoots both of them and rips up the crossword. He comes center stage, with dimmed lights, and removes his helmet. It’s the RADIO HOST.]

RADIO HOST
We here at “This Morning” this morning would like to send off our show with a message from our sponsor, Sandy Ceasar’s Salad Salt, asking you to “have a salty day!”
This program has been brought to you by viewers like you. Some contrived, pretentious, meaningless viewers like you. Fuck you. I’ve got mine!

[He storms off, confused, and ultimately, right.]
Nine plus one pages, (too much), of goddamn nonsense!

[FIN, and “Rock Lobster” by the B-52s stops playing.]
Dye-ing Inside
(This can be performed as a monologue. The actress performing it should be vibrant and lively. When they first step onstage, they are wearing a hat or headscarf or something that completely covers their hair. The stage directions and movements are not restricted, and up to each different interpretation of the work)

Have you ever had the sudden impulse to dye your hair? Throw all caution to the wind and become someone else? Usually, this impulse can be attributed to one of the following reasons:

1) You actually want to dye their hair, which is very rarely the case
2) You just got dumped
3) You’re having a nervous breakdown
4) You want to reinvent yourself
5) Any other life changing event or crisis-worthy reason

A few weeks ago, I myself was going to dye my hair because of reason two and reason three. So, at least I was killing two birds with one stone, or bottle.

The box of “Shelly’s Super Vibrant Hair Dye” was staring me straight in the face from the top of my bathroom counter. I could feel it egging me on, daring me to have the courage to open it. But would dying my hair the shade, “Orange Ya Glad to Meet Me?” solve my problems?

Probably not, but I figured it couldn’t hurt to try.

Why did I decide on the shade orange? Because I felt bad for it. Now, before you decide that I’m clinically unstable, let me explain my thought process. At the beauty store, they were nearly out of every color except orange. There were boxes and boxes of it, practically overflowing on the shelves. Every other color had gotten picked by somebody, at least once. But not orange. Poor, poor orange. Unloved, overlooked, ignored. And never had I spiritually connected with an inanimate object more than I did with that bottle of neglected hair dye.

Deciding to become a person with orange hair meant a lot of things. First and foremost, it meant pissing off my mom. Her reaction would be nothing if not cruel.

   (Actress mimes a phone with her hand and alternates between acting as herself and her mother)

   “Orange, really? What are you, a circus tramp?” She loves to call me cute little nicknames like that.
   “Mom, I don’t have to listen to you anymore, ok?”
   “Really, who says so?”
“My therapist”
“She’s paid to tell you crap like that”
“I don’t think it’s crap at all. You’re not the boss of me.”
“What did you just say?”
“Um, I’m losing you, talk later?”
  (Actress mimics hanging up a phone)

Even though I was a (somewhat) functioning adult, she was an even older and much more functional one who was mean enough to make Gordon Ramsay cry. Even after five years of therapy, zoloft, and avoiding her calls, I could barely gather enough strength to make poor life choices. But, if I was going to be a disappointment, at least I was going to do it in style.

And it’s not like I had anyone at all to worry about impressing anymore. Seeing as I am a biological woman, I wonder if he was ever actually impressed by me. It’s funny how you can get used for the approval of someone’s parents for five years and not even realize it. His name was Brian, and I remember it clearly.

“Sweetie, I need to talk to you.”
“What is it, Brian?”
“There’s something I need to tell you.”
“Go ahead…”
“I’m gay.”
“Uh huh, well ok. Congratulations?”
“And I’ve been lying to you about our entire relationship.”
“Oh I don’t think you need to tell me-”
“After our first date I slept with your neighbor, Carl.”
“Really, I don’t need to kno-”
“And we’ve been dating ever since. In fact, I’m proposing to him tonight. Whew! That feels so good to get off my chest oh my god! Let’s still be friends, ok?”

Of course, I’m completely fine with him being gay. I’m not a monster, or an Evangelical. But those were five years of my life he took away. I would’ve loved to pretend to be his girlfriend. That would’ve been fun! You know what’s not fun? Investing five years into a relationship with a man who is fundamentally not attracted to you. At the beginning of that conversation, I was expecting a proposal. Instead, I got a nice helping of emotional baggage.

I was fully aware that dying my hair after a breakup was like exercising my right to be a stereotype. I could just picture the women at work whispering about it as I walked past them. They’d be all,
“Have you guys seen her hair?”
“I know! Poor thing.”
“Bless her heart she must be going through something.”

“Actually Melissa, I am going through something! But at least the biggest problem in my life is having hair the same color as a cheeto, not a husband convicted of tax evasion.”

I was having a stare down with the dye. I had spent a whopping $12.50 on it, so continuing to let it sit there would be a waste of money. But on the other hand, if I was actually going to go through with this bad life choice, was $12.50 enough to invest in the process? The logical answer to this question was “absolutely not!” But my impatient and impulsive answer was, “meh, it should be fine.”

I didn’t let myself slow down as I began to unscrew the bottle. Slowing down would give me time to think about my actions, which I couldn’t afford to do. With a deep breath, I poured the dye into my hair, letting the cool liquid run down my scalp. I felt the bright fiery color igniting me, I was going to become a completely different person! But why wasn’t it working? My hair still looked the same, just wetter than before. It was at this point I realized, maybe, just maybe, if I had read the instructions, I would know.

I grabbed the box and started scanning through the intense five step process. And there it was, the fatal warning: “Only works on blonde or bleached hair.” Brunettes just can’t win, can they?

I mean, looking at it another way, the universe was basically giving me a second chance. At that moment I could’ve just washed out the dye and pretended none of this ever happened. But that would require some level-headed decision making that I wasn’t equipped for.

Since I didn’t feel like making the two mile pilgrimage back to the store, I researched some ways to bleach my hair using household items. The most helpful piece of advice I found was to, “use the sun to naturally lighten your hair!” But I lived in Seattle. And there was no sun. Not then, not ever. Just grey, gloomy skies, cold wind blowing on a constant loop. Depression personified in nature. Loneliness, nobody to keep you warm. Just you alone in your bed with nothing but your own thoughts.

(Long, uncomfortable pause)

Heh, anyways I wasn’t really sure what to do at this point, so I decided to take a shower and think it through.

The minute I stepped into the shower, the tub flooded with orange. It looked like one of the cast members of Jersey Shore had forgotten to wait 24 hours after their spray tan before going in the
jacuzzi. I was literally drowning in the effects of my impulsive decision, and still all I could think about was what my next step was going to be.

It took me half of a shampoo bottle and all of my hot water to get the dye out of my hair. At this point, any logical person would’ve given up and watched a movie. But I wasn’t a quitter, even when not giving up came with the cost of exploiting my emotional instability.

After my shower I came to the conclusion that if I really wanted orange hair, I was going to have to leave my house. I also decided that it would be best to leave the dyeing to a professional, which was the very first rational decision I had made that day. After scrolling through some yelp ratings, I made an appointment at the salon with the least amount of scathing reviews from soccer moms. It was called the “Star Gazing Salon” and it destroyed all my hopes of keeping a $20 budget.

The salon was one of those fancy boutiques downtown where you would find rich housewives complaining to each other like

“Ugh my husband is cheating on me with his secretary!”
“I’ll say! Mine is too. But I don’t really care. I’m on so many pills that nothing feels real anymore.”

And don’t even get me started on the employees. My god they all looked like they were straight out of a Miss America pageant. So imagine their reaction when I walked in.

“You-you want orange hair?”
“... Yep.”
“I’m sorry it’s just that I have no insecurities and couldn’t possibly understand wanting to change anything about my appearance. I definitely would’ve made fun of you in high school!”

I mean… they didn’t really say that to me out loud, but they were definitely thinking it. I could tell by the looks they gave me. But for the first time in my life, I didn’t let other people’s opinions stop me. And it’s funny because it was the one time I definitely should’ve.

After a very meticulous process of putting things in my hair and then washing them out, I had finally achieved my goal. And my god, you should’ve seen it.

My hair was a glowing flame. Bright orange locks cascaded down my head like lava pouring out of a volcano. Everyone’s eyes couldn’t help but be drawn to it. They gazed upon me with
curiosity, fascination, intrigue. It was unique, it was edgy, it was different. But most of all, it was fucking horrible.

By the time I got home, my heart was set on shaving my head. I mean, what the hell was I doing? Why on earth did I think dying my hair orange, fucking orange was smart? It’s okay, I could fix this, right? I’ll just shave my head and buy a wig. Since I lived alone, nobody even had to know. Remembering just how alone I was didn’t make me feel any better. God, I was so alone. I was going to die alone. Not just die alone, but die alone with orange hair. It was at this point that I burst into tears.

Okay, so maybe I was being a little dramatic. I wasn’t going to die, at least not before I had the chance to fix my hair. It was hard to remember that in the moment, though, as it kind of felt like everything was on fire—including my head. But beyond that, my entire world as I knew it was crashing down. Three days ago, I had thought my boyfriend was going to propose to me, PROPOSE. Instead of planning an engagement party I was sitting in my bathroom with orange hair, hysterically sobbing in a fetal position.

After a good five to ten minutes of feeling sorry for myself, I pulled myself up off the floor. I wiped a few tears, glanced at my reflection, and then immediately cried for a few more minutes. But after that, I got up again and silently looked in the mirror. As I observed the orange-haired, puffy, tear-streaked face that stared back at me, I realized a few things:

1) Shaving my head with a venus razor would cause problems, not solve them.
2) Eventually, I would stop crying.
3) I had forgotten to put my trash out for the garbage truck.
4) Just like my orange hair, my heartbreak was temporary.
5) I was going to be okay.

(The actress removes whatever is covering her head to reveal her very neon and very orange hair. She shrugs and walks offstage)
RUNNING

(Open to 2 men and 2 women running in place facing the audience. They are in a row, but they each have individual spotlights. They are in normal casual clothes. They are all struggling to keep running. Man 1 is upset, he wants to stop running but doesn’t. Man 2 is struggling just as much but is smiling. He is an older man. Women 1 seems content while still struggling. Women 2 dislikes being around the people but isn’t doing any better than them.)

MAN 1

This hurts so bad... When is this over?

MAN 2

Don’t know, but I’m enjoying the journey. Look at the scenery over there!

MAN 1

(squints at something on SL)

The trees are nice.. That’s a pretty bird... Oh god, did you see that? That snake just ate the bird.

MAN 2
(laughing) Well, that’s the way it goes. Remember a few miles back when that scorpion stung you?

MAN 1

Yes, it still hurts every step I take! What about this is so funny? I wish I could stop. Will anything good happen on this run?

MAN 2

Maybe, but maybe not.

MAN 1

Then why do we keep doing it? (Pause.)

MAN 2

It gets easier.

MAN 1

What do you mean? We’re going the same pace. You’ve BEEN going the same pace the whole time, how did it get easier? How is this easy for you?

MAN 2

...it just gets
Would you two be quiet? You’re wasting your time with all this gibber gabber. That’s why you’re falling behind.

Falling behind? We’re ALL going the SAME PACE!

Well my running is still much better than yours. I’m trying to accomplish something. We only have so much time, you know. I always feel like I’m running out of time.

How do you know how much time is left? This seems never ending.

I don’t know, I don’t want to think about it anymore. That’s another reason you’re falling behind. You shouldn’t get so caught up on the negative things. Just keep running.

I don’t understand...
WOMAN 2

Clearly. Anyways, your form is all wrong. Your feet look like they hurt.

MAN 1

Everything hurts. Can we stop now?

MAN 2

Not yet.

WOMAN 2

Jesus, stop complaining!

MAN 1

What is it you’re trying to accomplish anyways? Before you... run out of time?

WOMAN 2

Well... (offended, like she didn’t expect to be questioned)

I don’t know, something important!

(Her spotlight begins to dim.)
WOMAN 2

Hey, hey! No, no, wait stop! I haven’t done something yet! Give me more time, more time! Wait! NO!

(WOMAN 2 continues to ad-lib struggling during the next few lines. She is freaking out, like she is clawing at the air for something to grab on to, but to no avail.)

MAN 1

(upset, scared for her) Should we help her? What do we do?!

MAN 2

Nothing we can do. Time’s up.

MAN 1

Does that mean it’s almost our time?

MAN 2

No way to tell.

WOMAN 2

Stop, no, not yet! (Her spotlight goes out as she collapses to the ground.)

(Long pause.)
MAN 1

Did there used to be someone over there?

WOMAN 1

Can’t remember.

MAN 1

You seem to be doing fine.

(She ignores him, focused on her running.)

MAN 2

(shrugs) Who’s to say? ... uh oh. I think I’m feeling something coming on. Well, that’s my cue. Keep running, kid.

(He stops running and stands still smiling as his spotlight goes out.)

MAN 1

What do we get out of running? What do we gain at the end?

(She is still ignoring him.)

MAN 1
Oh c’mon, talk to me, what else is there to do on this run?

WOMAN 1

(giving in) I don’t know. What do we get out of stopping?

(Pause. MAN 1 is thinking hard.)

MAN 1

I still don’t understand. Why do we keep running?

WOMAN 1

I don’t know. We just do. We just keep running until we don’t and that’s it. Nothing to gain, nothing to lose. We just run.

MAN 1

Well... yeah. OK. Yeah, I guess so. I guess that’s it. Is that it?

WOMAN 1

What more do you want?
I don’t know. If it doesn’t mean anything, would you at least run with me till the end?

WOMAN 1

Yeah. I’ll stay.

(They smile at each other.

After a couple seconds of running together, their spotlights dim simultaneously. They do not stop running while it dims.)
(MEGHAN sits on the left of the spaceship in the pilot’s seat. DAVID sits next to her on the right and is dressed up formally despite being in the depths of space. BRIAN sits a
little further back than them, but his seat is in the middle area between them. DAVID and MEGHAN begin to argue loudly as BRIAN stays sheepishly in the back

DAVID

(Accusing) I already know damn well you took my socks because I know I left them in my bag last night!

MEGHAN

Why would I even want to steal your socks? We all have a certain amount with us that are made specially for us.

DAVID

I don’t know if this was an accident, on purpose, or some dumb prank, but all I know is last night I put my socks in my bag and then I wake up and they are nowhere to be found. As far as I know they could still be on the space station.

MEGHAN

Well considering that we have been stuck together the past 2 weeks why would either of us want to steal your socks now? Which, once again, would not benefit us in any way. So I think you should try getting off your ass and actually try to find them rather than making us listen to your complaining.

DAVID

(Angry) Hey! I am your commander and I demand to be treated as such! It would be a real shame if headquarters heard about this kind of attitude on just your second flight, right Meghan?

MEGHAN

(Still angry, but with a tone of fake admiration) Yes it would be. I’m oh so sorry, my dear commander.
BRIAN

(DAVID looks at MEGHAN like he’s about to explode but, BRIAN quickly and quietly juts in to prevent a full blown fight)

Uh, hey David.

DAVID

(Turns around quickly at BRIAN and responding in an angered, rushed tone)

What Brian?! What could you have to say right now?

BRIAN

(Quietly) I just wanted to know if you checked our fuel, air pressure, and thrusters before you went to bed last night.

DAVID

(Annoyed) Oh my Lord, Brian. Isn’t the dumb stuff like that literally the only reason you’re even on this mission in the first place.

BRIAN

(Slightly offended and now talking with more confidence) Actually, I did check all of them and they looked fine, but according to our safety rules you are supposed to check all of those before sleeping. I mean you are the commander.

DAVID

(Now annoyed and a little flustered) Yeah you’re right, I am your commander and I took a look at all that stuff and we are good to go. Maybe if you didn’t take so long on your repairs at the station we wouldn’t have to be checking gages every five seconds.

BRIAN
Well maybe if you and Meghan didn’t hit the station I wouldn’t have needed the extra time

DAVID
That is in no way my fault! She’s our pilot and if NASA says she can fly a damn spaceship, I think it’s fair for me to assume she can do it without nearly destroying the thing we came to fix.

MEGHAN
(Offended and angry) Do NOT try to blame that on me! You were too busy listening to your shitty rock music to give any advice, but when I did ask your instructions had us scraping against a hundred and fifty billion dollar piece of technology. And Brian, maybe if you spent less time studying our rulebooks and tried helping the actual mission you wouldn’t have needed to take your sweet time working on the station.

DAVID
(Trying to avoid the blame) Yeah Brian! How about you try doing your job instead of trying to be so smart all the-

(The phone next to DAVID’s seat begins to ring, cutting his rant short and after a quick deep breath he answers it. DAVID is now talking on the phone)
Hello there. (Pause) Yup the team is all good. (Pause then a look of shock) Oh no. How serious is it? (Pauses again, but then answers very confidently) Alright well we will get right to it then.

MEGHAN
(Nervously) What was that?

DAVID
That was mission control. They said they just got an alert saying that we had low fuel status and to make plans accordingly.

(MEGHAN and BRIAN look shocked hearing this news. MEGHAN quickly begins to look angered by this new while BRIAN quickly turn around and starts looking around behind him)
MEGHAN
What do you mean by low fuel status?

DAVID
They said that the readings were telling them that we have about enough fuel to make it halfway. So we are going to conserve our fuel and try to make it back with what we have left.

MEGHAN
(Angry) Oh wow. That’s just great. Just because Brian can’t do his job quick enough we are going to become alien food.

DAVID
(Stern trying to take control) Hey! Nobody under my command is going to become “alien food”. We can just maintain our speed until we run out and then our momentum and solar power can take care of us from there.

MEGHAN
Are you trying to get us stranded?! Why wouldn’t we just cut our speed and try to ration our fuel so that we can make it as close as possible while still being in control?

DAVID
Because some of us have careers to be concerned about and being late doesn’t exactly move you through the ranks quickly.

MEGHAN
(Angry, but sarcastically) Why do you care? If your daddy wasn’t the administrator you would’ve never even touched one of these ships, I think your “career” is safe. For Christ’s sake you wouldn’t have even known that the Earth was round if daddy hadn’t paid for Stanford’s new library right before you submitted your application.
BRIAN

(Turning back around, not even fully understanding what is occurring behind him)
Hey guys, I think-

DAVID

(Quickly snaps at BRIAN then back to MEGHAN)
Shut up, Brian! When we make it back ON TIME my father is going to hear plenty about how uncooperative this crew is, especially the pilot. If you’re lucky, after this maybe you can be a flight attendant for a couple domestic flights each year. And it really doesn’t matter how I got here because they made me the commander and you the pilot for a reason. I’m the one who makes the decisions here not you, so how about you take orders like you are supposed to!

BRIAN

(Louder than before, but still softly)
Actually if-

MEGHAN

(Snapping at BRIAN then back to DAVID)
Shut up, Brian! The reason we are even in this situation is because you’re too busy listening to Metallica instead of helping me complete the hardest part of the whole mission. Maybe if you could use a sliver of your intelligence to help, instead of accusing us of stealing your socks we would be home by now.

DAVID
I knew you were the one who stole my socks! I have never had to deal with a crew this incompetent.

BRIAN
(Yelling loudly now)
Hey!

MEGHAN and DAVID

(Both turn back to yell)
Shut up, Brian!

BRIAN
No! Both of you need to shut the hell up! It’s like I’m stuck in a car with two toddlers, but they are the ones driving the car. Regardless, while you two have been crying up there I’ve actually done my job. While you guys were so concerned fighting about who’s smarter, who’s more qualified, and who stole the socks, I’ve been concerned with keeping us alive. By the way David, thanks for your thorough assessment last night because you missed a message. We were supposed to switch to our last fuel tank said hours ago. So you can call mission control and tell them how you were too busy fighting your pilot to check our fuel. And Meghan how about we just get your focus back on trying to return to Earth.

(MEGHAN and DAVID sit there speechless and sure enough after a quick check they notice that their fuel levels are back to normal. They now look back at BRIAN embarrassed)

MEGHAN
Um. Thank you Brian, I’ll get back to that.

DAVID
Yeah thanks Brian. I’ll get on the phone and let them know how you helped us out.

(MEGHAN looks back towards her piloting station and DAVID begins to reach for the phone. BRIAN remembers something and reaches down and throws DAVID his missing pair of socks)

BRIAN
Next time check all of the pockets in your bag, commander.
(DAVID looks like he was going to say something, but looks down at the socks in his lap and turns back towards the phone silently.)