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<https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/564/a-bench-at-the-edge>

A BENCH AT THE EDGE

By: Luigi Jannuzzi

(In order of appearance)

MAN ONE

MAN TWO

BULLETS

TIME: *The Present*

PLACE: *A bench at the edge of an abyss*

THE EDGE

“It doesn’t have to be what it is when you first go there,
though it is what it is when you’re forced there, it is however,
the children’s knowledge of the place that forms the tears.”

L.J.

In memory of my grandmother:
Mrs. Josephine Curcio

A Bench at the Edge

(SET: A bench at the edge of an abyss. The edge of the abyss is represented by the front edge of the stage and offstage right. All characters enter from off left.)

(Lights rise on a bare stage with black background.

We see MAN ONE sitting on bench downstage *right* holding head in hands. MAN ONE has a long extension cord attached to him running from offstage left.)

(MAN ONE sits up hearing something, looks towards upstage left, stands, walks to center stage Man ONE peers into offstage wings. Surprised, MAN ONE then goes back to bench, and sits down slouching so as not to be seen by who is coming.)

(MAN TWO enters from stage left, talking to himself).

MAN TWO

And I knew it. I knew it. I knew he was up there too. Why did I go up there? I knew he was going to be there with her. Ah. Who cares. (*On edge, talking to abyss.*) I should. I should, that would show them. (*Laughs.*) That would show them.

MAN ONE

Hey fella?

MAN TWO

(Two looks over.)

MAN ONE

Hi. (*Waving.*) Hello? (*Pause.*) Well, you could at least say hello, wave back or something. Come on, say hello. (*Waves again.*) Hello? Hi?

MAN TWO

(*Waves.*) Hello.

MAN ONE

Hey what's the matter with you? You're not surprised to see me or what? Huh?

MAN TWO

Surprised to see you?

MAN ONE

Yea, aren't you surprised to see me? No?

MAN TWO

(*Takes out, puts on glasses.*) Do . . . do I know you?

MAN ONE

Come here. Geez, . . . the least you can do is come over here for a minute and say hello. Come here, you can't even see me from there. Come over here.

MAN TWO

Where do I know you from?

MAN ONE

Geez, you'd think I had a gun or something. Come over here, come closer, come on get the full surprise.

MAN TWO

(*Walks over.*) I'm sorry but. . . you don't look familiar. Where do I know you from?

MAN ONE

Surprised huh? You're surprised aren't you? Huh? Life is full of surprises you know.

MAN TWO

But where have we met? I don't remember ever meeting you?

MAN ONE

Nowhere. You don't know me. You never met me.

MAN TWO

Then where do you know me from? How . . . how do you know me?

MAN ONE

I don't know you. What makes you think I know you?

MAN TWO

But you said I'd be surprised to see you here. I thought you said you knew me.

MAN ONE

I never said that. No, I never met you before in my life.

MAN TWO

Oh I thought you recognized me. You said I should be surprised to see you.

MAN ONE

Yea, I thought you'd be surprised to see anybody here. I mean, no one ever thinks he'll ever meet anybody here when they come here. I mean, did you?

MAN TWO

No. I never even thought about that.

MAN ONE

And who does? And the people here are so ashamed to be here, nobody even talks to anybody. But don't worry about it. I'll never tell anybody you were here, even if I do find out who you are. I never saw you here. I just wanted to talk to somebody and there you were.

MAN TWO

Well, that's friendly.

MAN ONE

I think so.

MAN TWO

Hello then.

MAN ONE

Hi.

MAN TWO

Well, it seems you've picked the right person. I'll talk to anybody. I mean, that doesn't bother me. I don't care who finds out I was here.

MAN ONE

Yea, sure. Who are you kidding? You don't care who finds out you were here.

MAN TWO

I don't. I don't care.

MAN ONE

Yea right. Come on, I saw what you're doing. I know what you're up to. You're looking at the abyss.

MAN TWO

Yes, yes I was. So what, I was looking at the abyss?

MAN ONE

(To abyss.) Giant, isn't it?

MAN TWO

Yes, it is. What do you mean you know what I'm up to?

MAN ONE

Frightening, isn't it?

MAN TWO

A bit. Huh? You don't know anything about me.

MAN ONE

Such a big nothing. Huge, so endless, just there, right there. It's something.

MAN TWO

Yes it is something. Are you going to answer my question or not?

MAN ONE

(To Two.) All right, I'll answer your question. Look, I know what you're here for, and I know what you're doing.

MAN TWO

Oh yea.. . what am I doing?

MAN ONE

I know.

MAN TWO

I'm just looking . . . walking. Just looking and walking.

MAN ONE

Yea. Sure, right. Listen buddy, you can't fool me. You might be able to fool other people, but not me. I know. I know why you're here, and what you're doing. *(Smiles.)* Suppose your neighbors found out about this, or your boss, or your insurance company? Huh? What do you think they'd do?

MAN TWO

I'm just looking.

MAN ONE

What do you take me for, a fool? I've been around here a long time.

MAN TWO

Then what am I doing? Why don't *you* tell me?

MAN ONE

You're thinking. Thinking. That's what you're doing.

MAN TWO

All right, I might be thinking, but I'm walking and looking. That's why I'm here.

MAN ONE

Wrong. You're thinking. That's the important thing here. That's what brings people here.

MAN TWO

All right, so maybe it does.

MAN ONE

You're contemplating. That's what you're doing.

MAN TWO

All right, so maybe I am. So what?

MAN ONE

Admit it. At least admit you're contemplating.

MAN TWO

All right, so I'm contemplating. So what?

MAN ONE

I know. You can't fool me, I know. You walk here often?

MAN TWO

No. No, this is my first time here.

MAN ONE

You sure of that?

MAN TWO

I should know shouldn't I, if it's my first time, if I ever walked here before? Why do you care *anyway*?

MAN ONE

(Laughs.)

MAN TWO

What are you laughing about?

MAN ONE

That's funny.

MAN TWO

What's funny?

MAN ONE

You. *(Laughs.)* You're trying so hard to prove you're not ashamed of being here. And I know you are.

MAN TWO

I'm not.

MAN ONE

(Laughs.) Yea.

MAN TWO

And what if I am? What business is it of yours even if I was?

MAN ONE

It's none of my business. But you're ashamed. I can see it. It's written all over your clenched teeth.

MAN TWO

I'm not ashamed of being here, of looking, watching, thinking, of anything.

MAN ONE

What a liar.

MAN TWO

Why should I be? I wanted to come here and I'm here.

MAN ONE

Liar.

MAN TWO

Look, I don't know who you are, or what you're doing here, but to set this straight I came here, I wanted to come here—and you can tell anybody you please where I am, or what I'm going to do.

MAN ONE

You planned this out to be here?

MAN TWO

Yea, well, kind of.

MAN ONE

Liar.

MAN TWO

Well, no, I didn't plan this out. It . . . it just happened; circumstances brought me here, and I'm here.

MAN ONE

Suppose I told you a year ago you were going to be here? What would you have said? If I said you were going to be here next year? Huh?

MAN TWO

Oh. . . (*Snickers.*) well. . . no, I. . . I wouldn't have believed you.

MAN ONE

Why not?

MAN TWO

Because. . . well.

MAN ONE

Why not?

MAN TWO

Well, I just . . . I just never thought I'd ever do something like this, I'd ever think about doing something like this; I'd ever . . . be here.

MAN ONE

That's why I thought you'd be ashamed. MAN TWO. (*Pause.*) Okay. So maybe this isn't the most heroic thing to do. But it's my decision.

MAN ONE

I didn't say it wasn't. But you must be surprised to be here.

MAN TWO

(*Snickers.*) Oh you bet I'm surprised I'm here.

MAN ONE

Disappointed? Go on, be honest. I don't know you, you don't know me.

MAN TWO

(*Nods yes.*) Sure. Yea, I'm disappointed I'm here. Aren't you disappointed you're here?

MAN ONE

Thought you were more of a man? Huh?

MAN TWO

No, maybe not more of a man.

MAN ONE

More confident?

(Nods yes.) Yea, maybe. MAN TWO

Stronger? MAN ONE

Maybe that too. What about you? MAN TWO

More intelligent? MAN ONE

I guess. (Pause.) Who are you anyway? What do you care? MAN TWO

I don't. I don't care. I just wondered. MAN ONE

But who are you? MAN TWO

Nobody. I'm not telling you my name; I'm not asking yours. I just wanted to talk to somebody, and you walked by. You said you weren't ashamed to be here, and I figure if we're going to talk, we should at least be honest. MAN ONE

That's true. MAN Two

Honesty's a good policy. M ONE

That's right. How about you? Are you ashamed of being here? MAN TWO

Oh now, wait a second. I don't have to answer that. MAN ONE

Why not? I answered yours. MAN TWO

Ut uh. MAN ONE

Why not, Why don't you have to answer that? MAN TWO

MAN ONE

I just don't.

MAN TWO

You ask me personal questions: Why I'm here, What I'm going to do, Am I ashamed to be here. I answered you. Now I ask you one question and you don't have to answer it?

MAN ONE

That's right.

MAN TWO

Well I know. I know just like you do *now*. You're ashamed of being here too. I mean, that's common sense, anybody who comes here has to be ashamed. Who was I fooling saying I wasn't. This is it, you know, this is it. This is the edge.

MAN ONE

You're wrong. I'm not ashamed to be here.

MAN TWO

Oh, come on.

MAN ONE

Nope. I'm not ashamed to be here.

MAN TWO

Don't play games with me. Everybody's ashamed that comes here and you know it. I mean . . . that's normal isn't it?

MAN ONE

There's exceptions. There are.

MAN TWO

Who in their right mind could ever picture themselves here?

MAN ONE

I'm not ashamed and I live here.

MAN TWO

You live here?

MAN ONE

Yup.

MAN TWO

How can you live here? That's impossible, there's no place to live.

MAN ONE

(Smiles and stands.) I do. This is my bench, my personal bench. I paint it once a year, with my paint. And that's my favorite view of the whole abyss. And I've been all around the abyss. And it's big you know, about as big as the earth is round. And I've seen it all. Well, not all, not the abyss, just the edge. I know where the edge is. I've seen it in all conditions, different changes, conflicts, and it is my opinion—a personal opinion—but I believe this is the best view of the edge of the abyss. And that's why I live here.
(Sits.)

MAN TWO

And you live here?

MAN ONE

Uh huh.

MAN TWO

On this bench?

MAN ONE

My bench.

MAN TWO

Your bench.

MAN ONE

Right.

MAN TWO

Watching the abyss.

MAN ONE

And the edge. Usually I just try to stare down into it, to get a sense of it, of blankness. It makes time nothing, just like it itself. It stops time, time doesn't exist down there.

MAN TWO

(Pointing upstage left.) How about going back there? Ever go back there?

MAN ONE

No, No, I don't even face that way.

MAN TWO

Never?

MAN ONE

Nope.

MAN TWO

When was the last time you tried it?

MAN ONE

I've tried it, believe me. That's why I face this way. No, I've got nothing over there. I used to, I used to turn the bench around. One month this way, one month that way, then two months this way, one month that, then three this, one that. Then I tried at least one month a year to face that way. None of them worked. I hate it over there. I don't belong over there. I even tried to turn around occasionally, but. . . no. (*Looks around to upstage left.*) I can't look that way. It's too depressing. I don't fit in. There's nothing over there.

MAN TWO

(*To abyss.*) What's over there?

MAN ONE

(*Proudly.*) Nothing.

MAN TWO

(*Pointing upstage left.*) Then, well, at least there's something that way. There's something back there.

MAN ONE

No, but there isn't. That's not real. That's worst than nothing. There's something there that I can only pretend to be a part of. (*To abyss.*) This is honest, real. I can be like that someday, the way it is. Sometimes I sit, clear my mind, and I can feel the welcome, the warmth of it.

MAN TWO

You have nothing back there?

MAN ONE

No.

MAN TWO

Nothing?

MAN ONE

Nope.

MAN TWO

That's hard to believe. Everyone has something: a home, a car.

MAN ONE

I don't.

MAN TWO

Relatives?

MAN ONE

Nope. A hospital bed, a personal nurse, a few machines, some electrical wires, that's about it.

You're in a hospital?

MAN TWO

Yea.

MAN ONE

Oh. I'm sorry.

MAN TWO

Where are you?

MAN ONE

I'm in my car, in the garage. The door's closed. I don't know whether to start my car.

MAN TWO

You're questioning. That's why you're here. I've seen enough people like you come here.

MAN ONE

Yea, well I am.

MAN TWO

You're wondering, right?

MAN ONE

Yea. . . That's what I'm doing.

MAN TWO

That's healthy. It is.

MAN ONE

I guess.

MAN TWO

It is, it's very healthy.

MAN ONE

Maybe it is, but . . . I . . . I feel guilty about it, about being here.

MAN TWO

Oh, the hell with that guilt stuff. Life is a short walk. (*Snickers.*) I don't mean that as a pun, but, it is. It's a short walk. Seventy years or so as an average and that's it. Boom, the final gun, it's over. And some people stop once in a while and try to figure out if it's worth it. It's good to think the way you're thinking.

MAN ONE

MAN TWO

I guess.

MAN ONE

It is.

MAN TWO

And this is worth it to you? To be here, to sit here like this?

MAN ONE

To be honest, I have no choice. Does that answer your question?

MAN TWO

Oh. I'm sorry.

MAN ONE

But the edge is honest. It's easy. It makes it very easy

MAN TWO

Oh, that's why you don't feel guilty.

MAN ONE

Of course. I have no guilt at all. There's no reason I should feel guilty being here. I live here. I'm here constantly.

MAN TWO

I see.

MAN ONE

And that's why I'm not ashamed.

MAN TWO

That's right. There would be no reason to be

MAN ONE

None.

MAN TWO.

I see.

MAN ONE

It's simple. Isn't it.

MAN TWO

(Nods yes.) But not for me it's not. If somebody were to find out I was here-I don't know. That's why I was . . . I was so surprised when you said hello. I thought you recognized me, you knew me. I would never . . . I couldn't ever tell anyone, not even my wife. (*Laughs.*) She'd probably just use it in court

against me.

MAN ONE

I've been here twenty-five years.

MAN TWO

Twenty-five years?

MAN ONE

Yup.

MAN TWO

No—how long have you been here?

MAN ONE

Twenty-five years. Why would I lie? I have no reason to lie. I have no reason to do anything.

MAN TWO

And you just sit here?

MAN ONE

Twenty-five years.

MAN TWO

And look, and stare?

MAN ONE

Yea. I look. Like I explained to you. look into the abyss.

MAN TWO

For twenty-five years?

MAN ONE

I used to think. Thank God that's over. Whoops. *(Smiles.)* Sorry. I try not to say that. Reminds me of back there too much. *(Suddenly stands and wide eyed, eyes darting toward upstage left, listening.)*

MAN TWO

What's the matter?

MAN ONE

Shh...

MAN TWO

By the way, what's the cord for?

MAN ONE

Shh. Listen.

MAN TWO

What's that cord attached to you for?

MAN ONE

Shh. . . Get behind me.

MAN TWO

What?

MAN ONE

Just get behind me. I'll explain it later.

MAN TWO

What's going on?

MAN ONE

Someone's coming.

MAN TWO

Who's coming? And what's the cord for?

MAN ONE

Sometimes they don't know what they're doing. Get behind me. (MAN TWO *gets behind* MAN ONE.)
Now if you listen to me you won't get hurt.

MAN TWO

Who doesn't know what they're doing?

MAN ONE

You'll see. Shh

MAN TWO

What's going on? What're you listening for?

MAN ONE

Listen. (*They listen.*) You hear that?

MAN TWO

What?

MAN ONE

Listen. (*They listen.*) Over there.

I don't hear anything. MAN TWO

You don't hear that? MAN ONE

What? What am I listening for? MAN TWO

Footsteps. MAN ONE

And you hear them? MAN TWO

Running. Listen. *(They listen.)* Hear them? MAN ONE

No. MAN TWO

Running this way. At us. Well not "at us." MAN ONE

I don't . . . *(Eyes widen, he hears it.)* Oh yea. I hear it. MAN TWO

(Audience hears it too, a scream of anger.)

It's one of them. MAN ONE

Who? MAN TWO

We have to be ready for this. Get ready for this. Get behind me. MAN ONE

Is this guy after you? MAN TWO

No. MAN ONE

But you know who it is? MAN TWO

MAN ONE

How am I supposed to know who it is? Now listen to me: They don't know what they're doing, you understand?

MAN TWO

Uh huh. Who's they?

MAN ONE

I don't know; whoever it is. They don't mean anything, but—they just—they don't know what they're doing.

MAN TWO

But who is they? What is going on?

MAN ONE

The bench'll protect us. You ready? Just stand behind me and shut up. Here he comes.

(A person enters from offstage left, runs across stage, and leaps into the offstage right wing which is the abyss also. We hear a long yell echoing like someone falling. MAN ONE and MAN TWO watch.)

MAN TWO

(MAN TWO over to offstage right looking over into abyss.)

Oh my God.

MAN ONE

Don't say that. Hey fella? Fella? MAN TWO. What?

MAN ONE

I don't want to hear that. You understand?

MAN TWO

Hear what?

MAN ONE

God. Don't say God. I don't want to hear that. You understand me?

MAN TWO

Why not?

MAN ONE

I just don't want to talk about it all right. You want to be friends, okay, but that's a condition. You understand?

MAN TWO

All right, all right. If it bothers you. I . . . I won't say it.

MAN ONE

Thank you.

(MAN ONE turns bench around, sits.)

MAN TWO

(MAN TWO at abyss.)

He . . . uh . . . just right in?

MAN ONE

What?

MAN TWO

I said, he just went . . . ran right, jumped.

MAN ONE

A lot of them like that.

MAN TWO

There are?

MAN ONE

Oh yea.

MAN TWO

You see a lot of them?

MAN ONE

Stick around.

MAN TWO

Just right . . . *(Motions down to abyss.)*

MAN ONE

Right off. What do you expect, it's the edge. That's what happens.

MAN TWO

Uh huh.

MAN ONE

Oh you'd be surprised. Some of the least likely people you'd ever suspect. People that seemed . . . seemed never to ever even give it a glance. Soon . . . *(Whistles down a scale while giving hand motion down.)*

MAN TWO

(Slow nod yes.) I had a friend who. *(Does whistle and motion. Over to downstage right.)*

MAN ONE

Good friend?

MAN TWO

Kind of. . . yea. Kind of a good friend. I knew him a long time. I used to work with him. Shocked everybody.

MAN ONE

I used to be surprised. I'm used to it.

MAN TWO

Good father, good job—insurance company. Nice wife: A little demanding but comforting. Three children: all in high school. Fine house, two cars, vacations—seemed like he was enjoying it all. One day . . . *(Does whistle and motion.)*

MAN ONE

(Nods yes.)

MAN TWO

And there's a lot like that? Like the fellow just now?

MAN ONE

(Nods yes.) Bullets.

MAN TWO

What?

MAN ONE

That's what I call 'em: Bullets. They're like bullets—fast, quick. Here, there, gone.

MAN TWO

Bullets.

MAN ONE

(Nods yes.)

That's what I call them. You have to watch out for them though, they hurt a lot of people.

MAN TWO

I guess they could.

MAN ONE

Hell, I've seen them carry children with them right off. Children yelling. *(Does whistle and motion.)*
Right off.

MAN TWO

(Looks over edge, shakes head.)

MAN ONE

I saw one guy—he had a girl about nine on his back, two small children in his arm, and he was dragging his wife with his right hand. Dragging her. Fighting all the way. All the way to the edge. And he got them all over. All four of them. That’s the most I’ve ever seen anyone take at once: four. But that’s a bullet. Quick, one track mind, decision, right over. But there’s no courage in that. That’s quick impulse, no challenge. I like to see a challenge.

MAN TWO

You mean a fight, on the edge?

MAN ONE

Well, not a fight between two people. A fight with one person, between him and himself. A challenge, conflict. A “should I, shouldn’t I, yes, no”. Like in plays, movies. You know what I mean, that nobleness of The well thought out decision—the Heroic Dive!

MAN TWO

(Looking at abyss.)

A heroic dive.

MAN ONE

Yea, a calm, noble, heroic dive into the abyss. And I’ve seen it.

MAN TWO

You have?

MAN ONE

Sure, I’ve seen it. There was a priest here last week. For three months he was preening, preparing, debating. It’s dramatic to watch.

MAN TWO

And you watched him?

MAN ONE

I wouldn’t miss something like that for the world. It was one of the best preparations I’ve ever seen, too. He didn’t believe in his, what did he call it, “a magic show,” that’s what he called it. He would always come drunk, staggering around, crawling to the edge, yelling obscenities into the abyss. He did. And he loved it. He used to lay there on his stomach, hanging over the edge, screaming, laughing. He used to get some sort of deep satisfaction out of it too.

MAN TWO

Did you talk to him at all?

MAN ONE

No, I just watched. He used to come real drunk, sober up, and he'd go back, come real drunk, sober up, and go back. Then he started coming sober, lecturing to himself on walking the abyss. He even has a book of poetry he wrote here. It's published. It's called, Walking The Abyss.

MAN TWO

And he finally. . . (*Does whistle and motion.*)

MAN ONE

Yup.

MAN TWO

A priest?

MAN ONE

Yup. Why does that surprise you?

MAN TWO

Yea, a priest. Well, I always thought—I mean — a priest.

MAN ONE

The day before Christmas he went.

MAN TWO

No.

MAN ONE

Don't believe me?

MAN TWO

Oh, I believe you. I just—I mean—a priest.

MAN ONE

There's a lot of bullets around Christmas time. It's the holidays; brings out the loneliness.

MAN TWO

(Looking into abyss.)

The edge of the abyss.

MAN ONE

Well, actually, the priest didn't jump. He was going to jump; he was preening. I know he was going to jump.

MAN TWO

The edge.

MAN ONE

But strangely enough he. . . he started trying to stop a lot of others. And he did. He stopped quite a few bullets. Some would sneak back at night when he wasn't around and *(Does whistle and motion.)* But he stopped quite a few of them. I remember one guy he stopped twice.

MAN TWO

Nothing. To be nothing.

MAN ONE

He wasn't that strong either. He was big, but fat. He was pretty fat. Broke my bench twice he did. *(Laughs.)* Not sitting on it, no. You know what he used to do? Fella? Hey fella?

MAN TWO

What?

MAN ONE

You know what he used to do?

MAN TWO

Who?

MAN ONE

The priest. The fat priest.

MAN TWO

No. *(Looks back to abyss.)* What did he do?

MAN ONE

(Laughs.) He used to throw my bench in front of them. He would stand up, listen to where they're coming from, pick up the bench, wait till he could see them coming, and then he'd run out, *(Laughs.)* and he used to throw my bench in front of them. Broke a lot of legs he did, a lot of 'em. He broke my bench twice. Then one day one bullet took him with him. Dragged him right over. He would've jumped anyway. I mean, eventually he would have. It's hard to hang out here without jumping.

MAN TWO.

(On stomach yelling in abyss.)

Hello. *(Echoes.)* Hello. *(Echoes.)*

MAN ONE

One guy came every week or two and he used to throw a young girl in and leave. It looked like he thought about jumping in, but he never did. And every week or two he'd come, throw a girl in, and leave. And the next week, another one and another one. Always young girls too.

MAN TWO

Hello. *(Echoes.)*

MAN ONE

I was going to report him but. . . but I figured . . . you know it was. . . it was none of my business. I don't want to get involved with anything back there. You know what I mean? Hey fella? Hey fella?

MAN TWO

(Turns.)

What?

MAN ONE

You know what I mean? I don't want to get involved.

MAN TWO

Yea. Yea, I know what you mean. *(Back to abyss.)*

MAN ONE

Well, anyway, some people came one day, and they threw him over. He must have thrown ten, eleven, women over before they threw him over. Hanging around here you see a lot of strangeness. It's sacred here, it's more intense. *(Points to head.)* More activity up here.

MAN TWO

(Yelling into abyss.)

I can't take it. *I Can't Take It!*

MAN ONE

Something about this place that tends to draw the dramatic. That's why it's easy to sit here, there's always something. *(Opens small bag at his feet, takes out newspaper.)* Let's see what's in the news today.

MAN TWO

(Yelling into abyss.)

Life Sucks!

MAN ONE

That's not new. People thought of that hundreds of thousands of years ago.

MAN TWO

(Into abyss.)

You're not getting no Goddamn divorce money from me.

MAN ONE

"The Dow Jones industrial average closed up a point" — whatever that means.

MAN TWO

(Into abyss.)

You hear me?

MAN ONE

Here's one: "Taxi collides with train killing three instantly." That looks interesting. Page Nine.

MAN TWO

(Into abyss.)

No alimony for you.

MAN ONE

(Turning pages.)

Six, seven . . . here it is.

MAN TWO

(Into abyss.)

You ain't getting *nothing* from me, Mary!

MAN ONE

"They were racing to get across the rail tracks when they saw the lights blinking." Wow. Listen to this.

MAN TWO

You hear me, Mary!

MAN ONE

"The taxi was dragged a quarter of a mile before the train could be stopped." Dragged. Imagine that—dragged a quarter of a mile.

MAN TWO

(Into abyss.)

You hear me! Nothing! You ain't getting nothing.

MAN ONE

What a drag. *(Laughs.)* Get it fella? What a drag? *(Laughs.)*

MAN TWO

(Into the abyss.)

I hate computers.

MAN ONE

No sense of humor. That's one thing around here, there's no sense of humor.

MAN TWO

Goddamn computers. Goddamn data processing crap!

MAN ONE

Let's see what else is new. *newspaper.*) Oh here's one: "Terrorists gun down three in skyjacking." Page eighteen. (*Turning pages,*) Sixteen, seventeen — what the hell — there's no page eighteen.

MAN TWO

Life Sucks!

MAN ONE

They forgot page eighteen. I can see the comics, but .

MAN TWO

Life Sucks!

MAN ONE
(*To MAN TWO.*)

Having fun? Fella? Hey Fella?

MAN TWO
(*Sits up from hanging over abyss.*)

Yea? Did you want me?

MAN ONE

Having fun?

MAN TWO
(*Smiles and shrugs.*)

It has a nice echo, doesn't it?

MAN ONE

Yea.

MAN TWO

It rings and rings.

MAN ONE

It does.

MAN TWO
(*Snickers.*)

Nice sound, isn't it?

MAN ONE

Yea, I guess.

MAN TWO

MAN ONE
Clear, very clear sound. That's one of the nicest sounds to yell, too.

MAN TWO

What is?

MAN ONE

Life sucks. The “Sucks” with the hard “K”? It’s clear. It bounces well. (*Imitates the echo.*) Sucks! Doesn’t it? Doesn’t it tend to ring well?

MAN TWO

I guess.

MAN ONE

I like that sound. That’s a popular one too. “Life sucks.” Real popular. The real popular ones are: “Life sucks”; it used to be “Life stinks”, but now the “sucks” took over. And, uh . . . let’s see, “Life sucks.” “I can’t take it,” and “I can’t take it anymore.” The same one, I guess, depending on whether you like to have “anymore” on the end or not. What else do I hear?

MAN TWO

It almost seems to talk back.

MAN ONE

What?

MAN TWO

I said: It almost seems to talk back; the echoes.

MAN ONE

Yes, it does, doesn’t it.

MAN TWO

Yea.

MAN ONE

Yea, that’s why I like it. It’s honest. Whatever you say, it agrees with you.

MAN TWO
(*Into abyss.*)

Hello!

MAN ONE

It’s honest. What you give it, it gives you.

MAN TWO
(*Into abyss.*)

Hello!

MAN ONE

Not like life.

*(Over to abyss, hanging over with him, but just barely.
The cord won't let him get that close.)*

You're honest aren't you? Aren't you?

MAN TWO

I should.

MAN ONE

You're frightening you're so honest.

MAN TWO

Who cares?

MAN ONE

No games.

MAN TWO

Who cares?

MAN ONE

Just a pure nothing devouring.

*(MAN TWO stands, walks up to MAN ONE. MAN ONE stands
and draws back. MAN TWO extends hand for handshake.)*

MAN TWO

Uh . . . Thank you for saying hello. It was nice talking to you. Nice meeting you.

MAN ONE

Well, it was nice meeting you. *(They shake.)* What was your name?

MAN TWO

Uh. . . well, I'd rather not say. MAN ONE. Then don't. . . don't. I'll call you. Number Two. That's what I'll call you—Number Two. How's that?

MAN TWO

Okay.

MAN ONE

I'm Number One.

MAN TWO

All right, then, nice meeting you, Number One.

MAN ONE
(They shake again.)

Nice meeting you, Number Two. I get the impression you're leaving.

MAN TWO
(Nods yes.)

Yea, I'm going to *(Does whistle down.)* Now.

(Walks to downstage right.)

MAN ONE

Oh good for you. You've made a decision?

MAN TWO

(Nods yes.)

MAN ONE

It takes courage.

MAN TWO

I guess.

MAN ONE

And you've thought about it?

MAN TWO

Yea.

MAN ONE

You're ready to accept the responsibility for your own actions and all that existential crap?

MAN TWO

Yea. I think so.

MAN ONE

Well, then you're ready for the big whistle.

(Does whistle..)

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

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Thank you!