

A lava lamp with a purple glow and a white object at the bottom. The lamp is filled with a purple liquid and contains several large, rounded, purple-colored blobs. At the bottom of the lamp, there is a white, elongated object that looks like a pen or a pencil, with a small white cap on top. The lamp is set against a dark background.

THE LUNCH ROOM

(A one act play)

by Bailey O'Hehir

Cast of characters

RONNIE
BECK

Author's notes

1. Casting: As the cast list would suggest, you only really need two people to perform this play. That being said if you so desired, monologues and such could be split to allow for more people. Though I have written Ronnie as a man and Beck as a woman the two characters could be played by someone of any gender.

Terminology

When directing I often get asked what certain things mean. The common terms included in this play are:

(BEAT): Beat. Written in italics as stage directions. When you see this it simply means that I'm suggesting there should be a pause in either the dialogue, movement, or both.

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(A lava lamp sits on the stage, illuminating as much as it can. RONNIE wanders near the edge of it's light, staring directly at it. He stops still staring at it.)

RONNIE. Humans are funny things don't you think?
we see something, no matter the danger
and instantly want to bottle it up
why?

why would we want something so deadly
in our homes; by our bed
is it to light our way?
is it to feel supreme?

I cannot say, for I do not know
but I can be sure this behaviour
is what makes us human
why?

why else would we hang stars on our ceilings
in our cars; on our clothes
it's to make us feel big
it's to make us feel important

and so we bottle it up
and keep it beside us
only a remnant of its full power
sitting; waiting

but one day it will wait no longer
what then? How will we respond?
How should we respond? With fear?
Why?

Why should we, the masters of the universe
Bend; be beaten by what we have caged
Because it's been bubbling
Because it's been saving itself

Just for us
Just for this moment

It knew, us humans couldn't resist
Time and time again it has been written
We are our own undoing
Why?

Why when we already knew
What would happen; what has happened

We are full of unearned hubris
We are marching towards our destruction

But do we care? Why should we?
we are only human, whatever forces may be
they will just have to forgive
why?

(He picks up the lava lamp.)

Why, if they didn't, I fear they'd end up like this
Caged in plain sight; a bearer of a man-made burden
Right where we want them
Right where they're meant to be

For we are humans
And that means royalty
For we humans
Breathe supremacy

Why?

(Lights up. An office lunch room. Everything is grey and dull, except for a water bottle that sits on the counter. It is bright yellow. RONNIE adjusts the name badge on his chest; it says 'Manager'.)

Look around you. Why wouldn't we?
You say I stand amongst a mistake
But where would we be without mistakes?
Not stepping back doesn't mean you're stepping forward
If anything it means you are still
And anything that stands stagnant for too long becomes restless

(RONNIE stands on the table and hangs the lava lamp above it. It is still softly illuminating light. He surveys the room)

I will keep moving forward
I will keep progressing

Why?

(He circles the table, looking up at the lamp)

I fear if we don't, the things we have caged
They may get one over us
Crawl out of their deep recesses
And eat us alive

And we'd deserve it

BECK. *(Off stage)* Why?

(RONNIE snaps to look at BECK as she enters, lunch in hand.)

RONNIE. Why what?

BECK. Why'd you change the light fixture?

RONNIE. You don't like it?

BECK. Of course I like it. It just doesn't seem like something you'd do.

RONNIE. People can be surprising.

BECK. I was thinking unpredictable, but I suppose surprise plays a part in predictability.

(BECK walks to the counter, and takes a sip from the bottle. BEAT.)

Did you make lunch today?

RONNIE. Yes.

BECK. Did you remember lunch today?

RONNIE. ...No. There's currently a chicken salad sandwich sitting in tupperware on my kitchen counter.

BECK. You could buy something from the canteen.

RONNIE. Nah, who knows what they put in that stuff.

BECK. If you're so insistent on making food yourself, how do you keep forgetting to bring it?

RONNIE. It just slips your mind, things like that.

BECK. Like what?

RONNIE. Lunch, when you're already focused on the rest of the day it just doesn't seem as important.

BECK. It's not healthy to skip meals.

RONNIE. I know. I eat dinner... sometimes.

BECK. When you remember?

RONNIE. When I have time.

BECK. I wish I had more time.

RONNIE. What would you do with it if you had it?

BECK. I dunno, stuff that isn't work I suppose. I just think it'd be nice to have the chance to be so bored that you miss plugging numbers into an ever lagging excel spreadsheet. Shit like that can only happen when you have time.

RONNIE. Which is unlikely.

BECK. I don't think I'll work forever Ronnie.

RONNIE. No I know I mean... Having time. It's not really something you can have.

BECK. You don't think people can have time?

RONNIE. Fill it maybe, use it to dictate when and how long they do something, but have it? No.

BECK. Fine, then I'd like to fill time with things that aren't work. The constant churn of my computer fan being over used and abused is really starting to be a mind numbing motif for my life.

RONNIE. Motif?

BECK. A motif is any recurring element that has symbolic significance in a story. Through its repetition, a motif can help produce other narrative aspects such as theme or mood. Have you really never heard of a motif?

RONNIE. Can't say I have. And if I used to know it, I must have forgotten.

BECK. Can't blame you, it's not as if you'd have a use for it.

RONNIE. Do you have one?

BECK. In my job, no. But when I get free time... or time to fill that doesn't need to be allocated to work, sometimes I use it then.

RONNIE. In what?

BECK. Slam poetry.

RONNIE. I had no idea you liked that kind of stuff.

BECK. Of course not, it's not like I talk about it here. That would be informal and probably frowned upon. I wish I could though, it's not like I get to talk about it at home either. I don't think I've written anything for months.

RONNIE. Why not? Couldn't you set aside some time each night to just sit down and write?

BECK. I've tried that, I just don't have the mental motivation anymore. I try to write something and there's nothing. Nothing in my brain, nothing that I can get from my head to my hand to the paper. At first I just wrote it off as a one time thing, but it kept happening. After a while I got disheartened I guess, I haven't even thought about writing, it's just like your sandwich I suppose.

RONNIE. Oh?

BECK. When you're already focused on the rest of the day it just doesn't seem as important.

RONNIE. Well I think you should do it.

BECK. Do what?

RONNIE. Write. Tonight. Tomorrow you bring in a poem and I'll bring in my lunch.

BECK. Do you think you'll remember.

RONNIE. Will you?

BECK. Of course. Doesn't mean I'll be able to write something. I'm not sure what to write.

RONNIE. Write about Motifs.

BECK. A slam poem about the language technique of a motif?

RONNIE. Why not? If anyone can do it, I'd put my money on you.

BECK. I'll keep that in mind if we ever go gambling together.

RONNIE. I thought you didn't have time for things like that.

BECK. Just like I thought you'd never remember your lunch.

RONNIE. I haven't yet.

BECK. Tomorrow.

RONNIE. Tomorrow. There's always tomorrow.

END OF TEASER