

One Foot in the Grave

by

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Cast of Characters

FRATZ :

40's

HARRIET :

40's

Place
Yard

Time
Day

2.

Setting: The play takes place in the backyard of neighbors Fratz and Harriet. They share this common space with a see through fence which divides each of their yards to their own property. The pair talk at the fence, each standing in their own respective yard.

At Rise: The play opens with Fratz having a drink and Harriet smoking a cigarette facing one another engaged in conversation.

FRATZ: I work't fifteen hours a day for twenty years, no days off and now I'm retired. Can't do shit. Can't move. On the couch all day. My body stopped working. My mind goes but my body lays lump. What am I to do?

HARRIET: You gotta get those legs movin' Fratz.

FRATZ: Movin' where and for what? Who cares? My wife is dead, my daughter is dead, my dog is dead...I might as well be dead too, ya know?

HARRIET: You're being lazy is all.

FRATZ: Me? I never been lazy my whole life.

HARRIET: You ever hear the phrase burnt out?

FRATZ: Yeah.

HARRIET: Ya burnt out after a twenty-year bid. Some people get burnt out after a hard week or a month, maybe even a year, but you, you never stopped, you went twenty years straight and retired and now you are burnt out. Your body has finally realized it don't have to work no more! So it can't budge cause' you treated it like minced meat for too long.

FRATZ: How long this condition gonna last me?

HARRIET: How long has it been so far?

FRATZ: Two months straight.

HARRIET: That all?

FRATZ: Yeah.

HARRIET: Jeez...

FRATZ: What?

HARRIET: It's only the beginning. I mean, twenty years is a long time. You could be a dead beat for at least a minimum of one full year.

FRATZ: A full year?

HARRIET: Oh yeah. Easy. My grandmother made ramen soup day and night. That's all she did. She was a little off in the head but that's all she did to keep her calm and busy. It occupied her mind. It made her happy. But she lived in the kitchen for fifty-years, ramen soup, different variations, day and night...

FRATZ: And what happened?

HARRIET: She died.

FRATZ: Yeah, but what—how does that relate to what we're talkin' about?

HARRIET: Actually, I don't know...OH YEAH, it's just that she work't really hard at somethin'.

FRATZ: Did she ever experience burn out?

HARRIET: What, my grandmother? No. That woman was a bull. Cranking out ramen like the apocalypse was comin'. I think she even cooked while she slept. I used to see her standin' up in the kitchen with her eyes closing just stirring the pot and snoring.

FRATZ: Yeah?

HARRIET: You don't find them kinds of women these days, spending those kind of hours in the kitchen.

FRATZ: Yeah...

HARRIET: But you have to respect that, don't you? Undeniable will power. That's what she had.

FRATZ: So, you're saying I'm gonna be an immovable object for at least a year?

HARRIET: Maybe longer, who the hell knows?

FRATZ: Some days it feels good to order take out, watch TV and sleep. I think the hardest part of my day is deciding what to eat. I can't even stare out the window I get so bored. Don't have the energy to deal with it.

HARRIET: With what?

FRATZ: The birds and the squirrels and everything. Nature!

HARRIET: Yeah.

FRATZ: It's exhaustin'.

HARRIET: Life keeps goin' Fratz.

FRATZ: I can't. I'm immobile. Maybe I should see a doctor. Get some meds or something. I feel like I need a jumpstart.

HARRIET: Try workin' out?

FRATZ: Weights?

HARRIET: Anything.

FRATZ: I just finished tellin' you I can't move. I have nothin' left in me.

HARRIET: Hmm.

FRATZ: What you thinkin'?

HARRIET: Nothin'.

FRATZ: You're the only person I even mentioned this to.

HARRIET: You drink coffee?

FRATZ: What does coffee -

HARRIET: Coffee gives you a good kick -

FRATZ: I drink coffee everyday, it does nothin'.

HARRIET: Maybe you need to detox.

FRATZ: What's detox?

HARRIET: Go on a juice fast or something.

FRATZ: Never heard of such a thing.

HARRIET: Oh, yeah. Juicing.

FRATZ: What's -

HARRIET: It's when you cut out food and coffee and shit and just drink juice.

FRATZ: Only juice?

HARRIET: Just juice.

FRATZ: For how long?

HARRIET: In your case, maybe three weeks.

FRATZ: Just juice?

HARRIET: Yep.

FRATZ: I never -

HARRIET: I tried it once and I felt like I could run a marathon. The color of my eyes even changed. I was a whole new me.

HARRIET (cont'd): That included the cigarettes. I stopped smoking cold turkey, I even stopped the drink. All I did was drink cucumber juice and things like that for a month. Lost forty-five pounds.

FRATZ: You shittin' me?

HARRIET: Fratz, I'm not shittin' you. I had bursts of energy that I never had in all my life.

FRATZ: Nooo -

HARRIET: I was a whole new me.

FRATZ: What happened after you stopped the juice?

HARRIET: I went back to the old me.

FRATZ: Aww -

HARRIET: Not right away but...about a week later. I got back into my old routine, my old habits...smoking, drinking, eatin' my favorite chips an' all...eh, what can ya do?

FRATZ: How's that gonna help me?

HARRIET: I'm thinkin' if you juice it can reboot your system and put you back into high gear.

FRATZ: But what will happen to me when I stop this juice thing?

HARRIET: For you it won't matter cause you will most likely reboot your engine.

FRATZ: You think?

HARRIET: I've heard stories. It works. I'm livin' proof. It might be the trick you're lookin' for Fratz.

FRATZ: Mmm.

HARRIET: It does take discipline.

FRATZ: I've never gone a day without eatin', even when I been deathly ill, I eat.

HARRIET: Give it a try. Got nothin' to lose.

FRATZ: I don't. I mean, what the hell else do I got to do with myself, right? Bored stiff; loafin' 'round all day. Everybody I know is dead. Not you, but you know what I mean. My family. I'm physically tired Harriet, there's nothin' left for me to do.

FRAZT (cont'd): I've no reason to get up in the mornin'. No interests to keep me goin'. D'you know...I never realized what a boring person I was till I had all this extra time on my hands. I never done no sports, I never took an interest in those art things, can't stand politics...what else is there? Science? Maybe science but even that gets on my nerves...everything feels so limiting...isn't that horrible? ...I know it's me, there's something wrong with me. Can't seem to connect with anything or anyone..I try, but it's empty, everything's empty because I'm empty.

I never took a moment to participate in life. I just drowned myself in work and now that I can see and hear and breathe life all in, I am full of regret...I let them go, the most important things and I can't ever have them back again. Why? Why does life do that to us? Why do we realize these things when it's all too late? Why didn't I notice that they needed me?

Why should I deserve to live now? What makes my life worth keeping on? After all the things I didn't do...what right do I even have to be any better? I shouldn't talk this way but I can't help but wonder why I should be worth it. I think I'm in mourning...for the life I didn't have.

HARRIET: Shit, I thought I was depressed.

FRATZ: Well...

HARRIET: You're screwed.

FRATZ: I know.

HARRIET (chuckles): You're so screwed.

FRATZ: I figured.

HARRIET: You want me to call the funeral parlor and make your arrangements?

FRATZ: Stop.

HARRIET: One foot already in the grave.

FRATZ: I'm not kiddin'.

HARRIET: You just broke all records for the most miserable bastard on Earth.

FRATZ (laughs): Did I?

HARRIET: It's good that you vent, but I know you aren't buying your own bullshit. Can't be.

FRATZ: It's true..I wouldn't say it if it weren't true.

HARRIET: I know you a long time Fratz. I'm not sayin' you don't think what you're sayin' isn't true but I also know that you would have killed yourself by now if you were all in on what you said.

FRATZ: Yeah?

HARRIET: You'd be dust.

FRATZ: Right.

HARRIET: Find a passion.

FRATZ: Hmm.

HARRIET: Find something that will get you up in the mornin'.

FRATZ: I don't wanna get up in the mornin'.

HARRIET: I know you don't but think about something you like, anything at all...what do you like?

FRATZ: Like? ...I like bugs.

HARRIET: BUGS?

FRATZ: I like—I've always been fascinated by bugs.

HARRIET: What the hell is wrong with you?

FRAZT: YOU ASKED ME?!

HARRIET: Alright, alright. Bugs.

FRAZT: Yeah, BUGS. I'm into bugs.

HARRIET: There you go.

FRATZ: What?

HARRIET: Dedicate yourself to bugs.

FRATZ: How?

HARRIET: Watch them. Read about them.

FRATZ: I don't know.

HARRIET: It will occupy your time.

FRATZ: And then what?

HARRIET: Something else will come along or maybe it will stick. Maybe you will wanna make a bug museum here in the garden. Who knows?

FRATZ: I never thought about that.

HARRIET: Why not?

FRATZ: I don't know the first thing.

HARRIET: So what? LEARN! Throw yourself into it. You have the time.

FRATZ: I think we're getting ahead of ourselves.

HARRIET: You have to break this funk and make a life for yourself again.

FRATZ: Right.

HARRIET: Do it for one week. Go all in on bugs and let me know how it goes.

FRATZ: Bugs

HARRIET: Yes!

FRATZ: Bugs...there's so many options.

HARRIET: That's a good thing. There is no shortage of bugs, that's for sure.

FRATZ: That's true, ya know.

HARRIET: Maybe spiders. You like spiders?

FRATZ: I was thinking worms.

HARRIET: Worms?

FRATZ: Uh-huh.

HARRIET: Our backyard alone must have thousands of them.

FRATZ: I know...I do watch em often.

HARRIET: Sounds to me like you found your wake up call.

FRATZ: I had this giant bug book when I was a kid. I was obsessed.

HARRIET: Well, get started. I have to go make lunch. Let me know how everything goes, 'Fratz the bug explorer!

FRATZ: Yeh, who knows...

HARRIET: Say, let me know what you discover, I'm curious.

FRATZ: You got it.

Harriet exits stage right.

Fratz looks down at the ground and kneels.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY