

# *No One Asks*

A short play

Written by

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## Cast of Characters

Clare  
Woman in her 20s. Clare is almost totally non verbal. She sits in a chair, legs pulled up, sucks her thumb, and rocks back-and-forth. She wears a hospital gown.

Anderson  
A woman in her late 20s. She is a savant and recites Shakespeare and multiplies and divides large numbers. She wears a hospital gown.

Zane  
A man in his late 20s. There are times when Zane appears normal, but he can quickly fall into his psychosis. He wears a hospital gown.

Setting:  
A day room in a psychiatric hospital. The room contains only a few chairs.

Time:  
Present, day.

At Rise:  
Clare sits in her chair, rocking back-and-forth. Anderson enters singing the *Alphabet* song but the letters are in no particular order. She walks around the room and eventually moves very close to Clare. The closer she gets the louder her singing becomes. Anderson stops in front of Clair and stares at her as she continues to sing.

CLARE

Fuck.

(Anderson stops singing.)

ANDERSON

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my head, as is a winged messenger of heaven unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes of mortals that fall back to gaze on him when he best rides the lazy-pacing clouds and sails upon the bosom of the air.

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

986574 divided by point 2574 equals 383271 point 17.

(Zane enters and paces around the room looking at Clare and Anderson.)

3465768 multiplied by 213 equals 738208584.

ZANE

Well, I've finally found you two. I've been looking everywhere. I asked Nurse Hale and she thought you were out in the garden. I went out there to find you but you weren't there. I looked everywhere: in the bushes, under trees, on the grass, behind the wall, in front of the wall, around the building, on the roof, in the pool, and... (pause) I thought maybe you were trying to hide from me but all along you were here. I really didn't know you would be here. It was by luck that I happened to walk in and find you two. I was really on my way to the bathroom to pee when I just popped in and found you. (Pause) I still have to pee.

(Zane runs off.)

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

10556...

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

(angrily)

20887777777 plus 17290666666 equals 381784444443.

(Clare starts screaming and  
rocking back-and-forth very  
quickly.)

ANDERSON

Either to die the death, or to abjure for ever the society  
of men. Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires, know  
of your youth, examine well your blood, whether, if you  
yield not to your father's choice, you can endure the livery  
of a nun, for aye to be in shady cloister mew'd, to live a  
barren sister all your life, chanting faint hymns to the  
cold fruitless moon.

(Zane enters with the front of  
his gown all wet. Clare  
stops screaming.)

ZANE

I peed and it all went in. None went on the floor so today  
I was a good boy.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, dear Clare. Is that all you can say? It's no wonder that you have to be locked up in this place with loonies like Anderson. That is a very, very, very, very, very, very, very, (pause) bad word and people who use it exclusively wind up living in a place like this. Take my advice, look for new words, good words at that and put them together for good use, then maybe you'll have a chance to roam free in the outside world, like me.

ANDERSON

721334056 divided by 444333256 point 2 equals 1 point 623407759682.

(Anderson sits on the floor,  
takes her shoe off, and  
starts examining her foot.)

ZANE

Now take Anderson here as an example. She can make up numbers on her own, but they are useless. Numbers are only good for solving numerical problems that relate to some definite task in the real world, like in physics or architecture or accounting or chemistry or aviation or... (pause) The words she uses are also useless because they are not her own and again do not relate to anything useful in the outside world. Clare, listen to me carefully: Anderson will never get out of here, but we have a chance. Together, we can change. I know it.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. (Pause) Clare, try this. Hello, my name is Clare. What is yours?

CLARE

Fuck.

ANDERSON

More strange than true. I never may believe these antique fables nor these fairy toys. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies, that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends. The lunatic, the lover, and the poet, are of imagination all compact. One sees more devils than vast hell can hold: that is the madman.

ZANE

I'll give you that one Anderson, only because it did have some semblance of relevance to the situation at hand.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, I'm trying to help you here. You must try and cooperate, for I can't help you if you don't try and help yourself. Now come on, try. My name is Clare. What is yours?

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Clare, I don't want to be here forever, do you? Insanity is too hard, it hurts too much. I can change, you can change, but we must do it together.

CLARE

Fuck.

ZANE

Maybe I'll try and get someone else to join me. Then we'll see how you feel, Clare.

ANDERSON

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back, wherein he puts  
 alms for oblivion, a great-sized monster of ingratitude,  
 those scraps are good deeds past, which are devoured as fast  
 as they are made, forgot as soon as done. Perseverance,  
 dear my lord, keeps honor bright.

ZANE

Yes, persevere, persevere. Clare, listen...  
 (Zane stops himself and thinks  
 for a moment.)

No, no, Anderson. You promised not to use those words  
 around me. I don't like them; they make me think too much,  
 you must stop.

ANDERSON

ZANE

Why, look you now, how  
 unworthy a thing you make of  
 me! You would play upon me;  
 you would seem to know my  
 stops; you would pluck out  
 the heart of my mystery...

Don't, Anderson. I know  
 where you're going with  
 this. If you want me to  
 stay in this room, just  
 don't start.

(Clare starts screaming  
 again.)

ZANE

Now see what you've done, Anderson. Clare, Clare, Clare,  
 Clare, Anderson says she's sorry and that she'll never,  
 never, never, ever, speak that way again.

(Clare continues to scream,  
 but less so.)

Anderson promises and crosses her heart and hopes to die.

(Zane puts his hand on Clare's  
 shoulder and her screaming  
 becomes more intense. Zane  
 jumps away from Clare and  
 sits on a chair.)

ZANE

Oh, no, oh, no, oh, no. I forgot, Clare, I forgot. Please, please, please, Clare stop screaming. Please. It was a mistake. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

(Clare continues to scream and Anderson gets up and begins to cross to Zane.)

ANDERSON

(threateningly)

Had it pleased heaven to try me with affliction, had they rained all kinds of sores and shames on my bare head...

ZANE

I don't want to hear it.

(Anderson moves closer to Zane who puts his hands over his ears. Clare continues to scream.)

ANDERSON

Steeped me in poverty to the very lips, given to captivity me and my utmost hopes...

ZANE

Stop.

ANDERSON

I should have found in some place of my soul a drop of patience. But, alas, to make me the fixed figure for the time of scorn to point his slow and moving finger at...

(Zane runs to the door and starts pounding on it. Anderson comes after him, yelling her lines. Clare continues to scream.)

ZANE

Nurse Hale, Nurse Hale, Nurse Hale.

ANDERSON

Yet could I bear that too, well, very well, but there where  
I have garnered up my heart...

(Zane crosses to the center of  
the room and falls to the  
floor. Clare continues to  
scream.)

ZANE

No.

ANDERSON

Where either I must live or bear no life, the fountain from  
the which my current runs or else dries up--to be discarded  
thence...

(Zane puts his fingers in his  
ears, starts making nonsense  
noises to try and block out  
Anderson. Clare continues to  
scream.)

Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads to knot and gender  
in--turn thy complexion there...

(Clare stops screaming, and  
slowly begins to cross to  
Zane. Zane continues to try  
and block out Anderson's  
words.)

Patience, thou young and rose-lipped cherubin! I here look  
grim as hell!

(Anderson stops, looks at Zane  
for a moment, crosses to a  
chair, sits, and stares at  
the floor. Zane continues to  
block out Anderson, but  
slowly realizes that Anderson  
has stopped. Zane looks  
around and then at his wet  
gown. Clair is now very  
close to Zane.)

ZANE  
(very quietly)

Nurse Hale?

(Zane drops his hands,  
crumbles to the floor and  
begins to sob as Clare  
reaches out to him.)

ANDERSON  
(very slowly)

Two plus two equals...

(Clair touches Zane and  
quickly draws her hand back.)

CLARE  
(sadly, to Zane)

Fuck.

(Anderson sings the Alphabet  
song, but this time the  
letters are in the correct  
order. The lights slowly  
fade to blackout.)

**The end.**