

**BEYOND THE GLASS**  
*A Ten-Minute Play*

By Samuel Perwin © 2012  
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*Lights Up Suddenly*

*The stage is mostly bare. At Downstage right, Upstage right, and Upstage left there are three large plastic plants. The One Upstage right is larger than the other two. Other plants may be scattered at random around the stage. Downstage left there is a large frog meant to be porcelain however it need not be. The set is surrounded by four walls of imaginary glass.*

*The characters are all fish; however this is not immediately obvious to the audience. The actors move, act, dress, and talk like human beings. CHILI, a stout young goldfish dressed entirely in orange(a redhead is preferable but again, not necessary), sits cross-legged downstage center-right looking up. WANDA, a slim, elegant angelfish dressed in a long black cocktail-dress sits by the frog looking coquettish. ARIZONA, a blue gouramis, young, wiry, and noticeably perturbed, is barely visible behind the large plant Upstage right He is dressed in pants, shirt, and a tie - all blue.*

CHILI:

Finally, I'm starved.

WANDA:

Why, Chili, darling, have you been sitting there all night?

CHILI:

What else should I do at night?

WANDA:

I was having a lovely time with Ignatius.

CHILI:

Ignatius?

*WANDA gestures towards the frog*

Oh! Ignatius, that's right - I'd forgotten he was here. He doesn't say much does he?

WANDA:

He's brilliant. He's a silent genius.

CHILI:

I see.

*Flakes fall from above*

WANDA:

Breakfast!

ARIZONA:  
*Emerging from the plant*

Breakfast is here?

WANDA:  
Arizona, my dear, where have you been? Chili and I only see you over there by the Large plant or over by the filter - Why, this is the first time I think I've even seen you eat with us in days. What have you been doing?

ARIZONA:  
I've been busy.

CHILI:  
*As he munches contentedly*  
With what?

ARIZONA:  
None of your business.  
Or yours either. Leave me alone.

*To WANDA*  
*He crosses upstage right to the large plant and disappears behind it*

WANDA:  
Chili, darling, you must go talk to him.

CHILI:  
What can I say to him?

WANDA:  
You're his friend; tell him something.

CHILI:  
You don't think he's thinking of jumping again, do you?

WANDA:  
The thought crossed my mind. Please go talk to him; I'm worried

CHILI:  
No, he'll yell at me. Let him be surly on his own.

WANDA:  
Fine, I'll go talk to him.

*She crosses to the large plant and pulls ARIZONA out from it*  
Arizona! Arizona! I was going to take some breakfast over to Ignatius; we could

have a wonderful time...

ARIZONA:

What's wrong with you?! Ignatius, or whatever you call him, is not alive! None of this is alive! These "plants" are nothing more than plastic nothings. This place is a shit-hole. There's food all over the floor, this water is disgusting, the filter's so loud you can't even sleep!

WANDA:

Darling, we don't sleep.

ARIZONA:

I know that! You think I don't know that? Wanda, wake up and smell the ammonia; we're all gonna die!

WANDA:

Is this about Akasha? Now I know you cared a lot for her, and I know you resent me because I was her replacement but I never knew her so...

ARIZONA:

Akasha!? You think this is about Akasha!?! May you and your cheap porcelain frog live happily ever after. Now stay out of my plant!

*He attempts to turn away, she goes after him*

WANDA:

Stop talking crazy. Now, come have breakfast with us, you'll feel better.

ARIZONA:

THAT STUPID FROG IS NOT ALIVE!! The only things that are alive in this place are you, me, Chili, and him.

*He points out over the audience*

WANDA:

*Looking only in her immediate radius*

Who?

ARIZONA:

The one who gives us food.

WANDA:

Are you talking about God, Arizona?

ARIZONA:

No, I'm talking about that big thing out there that gives us food. The one that's playing God.

WANDA:

Arizona, there's nothing out there.

ARIZONA:

Beyond the glass.

WANDA:

*Turning away from him, suddenly afraid  
and shy*

We're not supposed to look beyond the glass. Others have gone mad trying to cross it, but they just kept bumping and bumping until they died.

ARIZONA:

*Quietly, but with confidence*

I've been beyond the glass.

WANDA:

*Changing the subject*

Yes, and you almost died. Now lets not talk about it. Come eat.

ARIZONA:

*With increasing harshness*

If there's nothing out there, then where does this food come from? Why do the lights come up and down? What's that enormous thing that reaches in here to pull us out when we end up fat and bloated, drifting at the top of the tank!

WANDA:

I don't question those things. Why would you want to? Our lives are short, yes, but we do what we have to do, and everything is provided for us.

ARIZONA:

Leave me alone. You don't understand.

*He returns behind the plant*

WANDA:

Suit yourself. I give up.

Blackout

LATER THAT DAY

*Lights up naturally*

*ARIZONA paces center, deep in thought and visually more exasperated. CHILI sits downstage center-right, cross-legged, looking up again. WANDA wanders behind them slowly and sickly, without direction, barely listening to the conversation but looking up every now and then to see what's developing.*

CHILI:

*Like a child*

Arizona, are you going to go beyond the glass?

ARIZONA:

Chili, my dear, sweet, stupid Chili.

CHILI:

*Rising*

Don't call me stupid. I may not be as neurotic as you, or as sophisticated as Wanda, or as brilliant as Ignatius, but I know what's going on. Are you going to jump again?

ARIZONA:

Why do you care?

CHILI:

*Attempting to be friendly*

Well, you and I have been here a long time and...

ARIZONA:

*Snapping*

*Wildly*

You haven't been here half as long as I have!! I watched them all die. They come, they go, they swim, they die, they all die!! I'm tired of this place - I'm tired of living in a 10 gallon hellhole. I got friends who live in 50 gallon hexagonals!

CHILI:

You don't have any friends - except us.

ARIZONA:

Shut - up! You fat shit!

*He is on the verge of tears*

CHILI:

We are, Arizona; we are your friends.

ARIZONA:

*He covers his ears*

LEAVE ME ALONE!

*CHILI turns and steps away with his head down.*

*A pause*

CHILI:

*Facing front - curious but without awe*

What was it like out there?

Where?

ARIZONA:

Beyond the glass.

CHILI:

ARIZONA:

*Mocking*

I thought we weren't supposed to look beyond the glass

CHILI:

Sometimes I look, and I wonder - who doesn't? But I'm not obsessed like you are. Doesn't it make you crazy? I'm happy here. It's calm, temperate, predictable. The lights come up in the morning, we eat, we swim around, the lights turn off. What more could you want?

ARIZONA:

What about freedom? A life greater than ten gallons and Ignatius? Forget it, you don't understand. At least you're aware of the crushing monotony.

CHILI:

Wanda knows too. We all know. You think you're the only one who's ever wanted more?

ARIZONA:

*Getting defensive*

I'm the only one who's tried to do something about it!

CHILI:

*In his face, trying to top him  
pointing out over the audience*

THERE IS NO LIFE FOR US OUT THERE!!

WANDA:

*Shouting feverishly, but in much pain*

Stop it! Stop it, both of you!

*To ARIZONA*

What is it you're so desperately seeking that you think is outside? When you jumped, I ran to the glass, I looked. And I saw you. Gasping, twitching, with no hope, and only emptiness in your eyes. My very mortality and powerlessness seized me without mercy, and I thought 'My God what does he think this will accomplish?' And you were given a second chance, you! You don't even want it!...and I...

*Suddenly weak and barely audible*

...I don't feel quite well...

*She faints*

Blackout

*Lights up suddenly*

FIVE OR SO DAYS LATER

*CHILI is the same, yet forlorn with the sickness of WANDA. ARIZONA is more frantic. WANDA looks dreadfully pale and is stricken with pain. Her dress is frayed at the ends and sleeves. Her hair is horribly tattered and tangled. Her head is in CHILI'S lap who again sits cross - legged down center-right. ARIZONA paces in small steps beside them.*

I'm dying...

WANDA:

*She looks up at Chili*

CHILI:

*Picking up some flakes from the floor*

Shhh.....Try to eat something.

WANDA:

*Desperately and weakly*

I can't I...do you know this feeling I have? It's almost as if I feel myself getting stiff. I can't move I...

CHILI:

Shhhh....C'mon just a little.

WANDA:

*Teary but with a little force*

No!

*She knocks the food from his hand*

I can't I can't I...

*She rises slowly and manages to stumble over to the large plant. She falls to her knees*

Good-bye Ignatius! Good-bye boys! All my love....

*She coughs weakly, collapses, and dies.*

*Pause*

ARIZONA:

*Incredulous*

Good-bye Ignatius? Good-bye Ignatius!!

*Furious, he runs to the frog.*

You fucking piece of porcelain shit!! You're the only one who'll outlast us. You! YOU!!!



*He kicks it repeatedly then gives up,  
frustrated and disillusioned.*

CHILI:

*Dumbstruck and trying to hold back  
tears. His eyes never leave WANDA*

How long until they come for her?

ARIZONA:

Who knows? Days, weeks, months, years. Who gives a fuck?

CHILI:

*Insistant*

When will they notice? They have to notice!

*Two beats.*

ARIZONA:

*Speaking from experience  
With very slight tenderness*

Don't worry. Soon.

*Blackout*

*Lights to half - it is night.*

*CHILI sits by the dead WANDA who has not  
moved. He shakes her periodically, but  
hopelessly. ARIZONA approaches and stops  
CHILI's arm*

ARIZONA:

*Trying to be empathetic, but very callous*

Stop. She's dead.

CHILI:

*Biting back*

I know.

*He gets up, crosses right, and faces the  
right "wall." He starts to cry.*

ARIZONA:

Don't do this.

*He crosses to him. Angrily*

DON'T DO THIS! You see? Do you see now, you moron?! Do you see why I  
have to get out of here? This is only your first; it never ends. She was nothing;  
they're all nothing!

CHILI:

She was my friend!

ARIZONA:

NOTHING!

CHILI:

Please stop.

ARIZONA:

You want sympathy? Empathy? You want me to tell you it'll be all right? Well, Fuck you, Chili! Fuck you, and fuck this place, and fuck Ignatius, and fuck Wanda!

CHILI:

Take it back.

ARIZONA:

Make me.

*CHILI runs at him and they struggle. ARIZONA manages to pin CHILI. Lights to full suddenly, after a beat, they brighten. The fight ends. ARIZONA looks up, smiles wickedly, looks back at CHILI, and dashes behind the large plant.*

CHILI:

What's wrong with you?

*ARIZONA returns with a hat and blazer, both blue.*

ARIZONA:

*Putting on the clothes  
Maniacally*

I'm getting out while the getting's good!

So long Chili!! It's been a pleasure!

*He leaps offstage - perhaps a splash  
sound effect*

CHILI:

Wait, no!!

*CHILI runs a few steps after him then runs back down center to the proscenium and puts his hands up on "the wall." He looks right then left outside the glass and steps back. He returns to his usual spot, sits down cross legged, looks up, at WANDA, then at Ignatius. He rises and returns the frog to its previous position before the attack, returns to center, looks up, and sits down cross legged. As he sits for the final time, his eyes never leave the ceiling.*

Blackout.