

ACT WITHOUT WORDS
By Samuel Beckett

Desert. Dazzling light. - The man is flung backwards on stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself off, turns aside, reflects. - Whistle from right wing. - He reflects, goes out right. - Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself off, turns aside, reflects. - Whistle from left wing. - He reflects, goes out left. - Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself off, turns asides, reflects. - Whistle from left wing. - He reflects, goes towards left wing, hesitates, thinks better of it, halts, turns aside, reflects. - A little tree descends from flies, lands. - It has a single bough some three yards from ground and at its summit a meager tuft of palms - casting at its foot a circle of shadow. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He turns, sees tree, reflects, goes to it, sits down in its shadow, looks at his hands. - A pair of tailor's scissors descends from flies, comes to rest before tree, a yard from ground. - He continues to look at his hands. - Whistle from above. - He looks up, sees scissors, takes them and starts to trim his nails. - The palms close like a parasol, the shadow disappears. - He drops scissors, reflects. - A tiny carafe, to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from flies to some three yards from ground where it remains dangling. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He looks up, sees carafe, reflects, gets up, goes and stands under it, tries in vain to reach it, renounces, turns aside, reflects. - A big cube descends from flies, lands. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He turns, sees cube, looks at it, at carafe, reflects, goes to cube, takes it up, carries it over and sets it down under carafe, tests its stability, gets up on it, tries in vain to reach carafe, renounces, gets down, carries cube back to its place, turns aside, reflects. - A second smaller cube descends from flies, lands. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He turns, sees second cube, looks at it, at carafe, goes to second cube, takes it up, carries it over and sets it down under carafe, tests its stability, gets up on it, tries in vain to reach carafe, renounces, gets down, takes up second cube to carry it back to its place, hesitates, thinks better of it, sets it down, goes to big cube, takes it up, carries it over and puts it on small one, tests their stability, gets up on them, the cubes collapse, he falls, gets up immediately, brushes himself off, reflects. - He takes up small cube, puts it on big one, tests their stability, gets up on them and is about to reach carafe when it is pulled up a little way and comes to rest beyond his reach. - He gets down, reflects, carries cubes back to their place, one by one, turns aside, reflects. - A third still smaller cube descends from flies, lands. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He turns, sees third cube, looks at it, reflects, turns aside, reflects. - The third cube is pulled up and disappears in flies. - Beside carafe a rope descends from flies, with knots to facilitate ascent. - He continues to reflect. - Whistle from above. - He turns, sees rope, reflects, goes to it, climbs up it and is about to reach carafe when rope is let out and deposits him back on the ground. - He reflects, looks around for scissors, sees them, goes and picks them up, returns to rope and starts to cut it with scissors. - The rope is pulled up, lifts him off ground, he hangs on, succeeds in cutting rope, falls back on ground, drops scissors, falls, gets up again immediately, brushes himself off, reflects. - The rope is pulled up quickly and disappears in flies. - With length of rope in his possession he makes a lasso with which he tries to lasso carafe. - The carafe is pulled up quickly and disappears in flies. - He turns aside, reflects. - He goes with lasso in his hand to tree, looks at bough, turns and looks at cubes, looks again at bough, drops lasso, goes to cubes, takes up small one, carries it over and sets it down under bough, goes back for big one, takes it up and carries it over under bough, makes to put it on small one, hesitates, thinks better of it, sets it down, takes up small one and puts it on big one, tests their stability, turns aside and stoops to pick up lasso. - The bough folds down against trunk. - He straightens up with lasso in his hands, turns and sees what has happened. - He drops lasso, turns aside, reflects. - He carries back cubes to their place, one by one, goes back for lasso, carries it over to cubes and lays it in a neat coil on small one. - He turns aside, reflects. - Whistle from right wing. - He reflects, goes out right. - Immediately flung back on stage he falls, gets up immediately, brushes himself off, turns aside, reflects. - Whistle from left wing. - He does not move. - He looks at his hands, looks around for scissors, sees them, goes and picks them up, starts to trim his nails, stops, reflects, runs his finger along blade of scissors, goes and lays them on small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and fingers it. - The small cube is pulled up and disappears in flies, carrying away rope and scissors. - He turns to take scissors, sees what has happened. - He turns aside, reflects. - He goes and sits down on big cube. - The big cube is pulled from under him. He falls. The big cube is pulled up and disappears in flies. - He remains lying on his side, - his face toward auditorium, staring before him. - The carafe descends from flies and comes to rest a few feet from his body. - He does not move. - Whistle from above. - He does not move. - The carafe descends further, dangles and plays about his face. - He does not move. - The carafe is pulled up and disappears in flies. - The bough returns to horizontal, the palms open, the shadow returns. - Whistle from above. - He does not move. - The tree is pulled up and disappears in flies. - He looks at his hands.

Curtain

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