

THE ANNIVERSARY OF WHERE I AM

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Rubens, Fall of Icarus (image from [Wikimedia](#))

**Anything worth doing is worth doing badly.
– Jack Gilbert, from *Failing and Flying*, 2005.**

THE ANNIVERSARY OF WHERE I AM

TIME AND PLACE

The present. A scrim on one side of the stage; a desk (with gold telephone) on the other.

CHARACTERS

VINCENT, early 30's, in a car in Scene 1 and in a wheelchair in Scene 2.

Vincent's Offstage Voice is dressed in black and masked.

LIL, 20's.

VOICE (offstage) of Vincent's physical or spiritual father.

FRED, Vincent's uncle.

ISAAC, friend of FRED.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

SCENE 1

VINCENT is driving a car.

VOICE (offstage)

Get off the road, Vincent!!

VINCENT swerves the car immediately before the sound of screeching tires, a truck horn blowing, a blinding flash of headlights, and a crash.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

VINCENT is center stage in a wheelchair, his head lolling to one side.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

If I were in space, well beyond a return to Earth,
a shelf life of say four months at the most, which, in a way, is where I am, doctors say.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

Actually, four months and a day longer than they gave me a year ago when it happened.
But if I were, and absolutely alone ... would my father be with me?

Out there?

Like he was when he saved my life, to live in this shit-mobile.

What I saw ... not what they tell me I saw ... was not a runaway truck with headlights.

Not at all.

It was a dragon with white-fire-blazing, hateful eyes.

One of those massive reptiles of a dragon.

Ugly.

Repulsive.

That swallow people whole.

Like me.

Green, turning to yellow, and then to black.

Black as finally death becomes, burnt at the stake.

Or eaten into the sightless stomach of a dragon.

With six legs and a tongue of blood red fire,

rising up from the river I was driving along.

LIL enters behind the scrim and lights dim as Vincent's Offstage Voice enters behind the scrim to dance with her.

As the dancing stops he hands her a folded letter pulled from his pocket and exits.

LIL

[reads] Lil. My precious Lil.

In every way and in every life, life will be frustrated.

All we can do is wait patiently for the end when it crosses our path.

LIL exits, and lights return to normal.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

Life is messy.

Love is messy.

Sex is messy.

Cigarettes are not allowed in here.

Not even in corners.

There's no end to this Hellhole.

Like, Father, why did you do this to me? The guilt of not moving.

Why was I ever even born, so blatantly to serve no purpose in life?

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

To be or not to be, craving for a fag.
My lungs aching for one.
Smoking is in my blood, the yearning for it.
In my dreams. All the time.
The thought of cigarettes with me like the shadow of a dog I once had.
Like the immaculate conception.
Because smoking is as pure to me as love is to love.
It has a radiance ... a heavenly radiance.
Father, O Father, let me die now. Join you in heaven, and have a smoke.

Vincent's Offstage Voice enters with a lit cigarette and a dollar bill. He puts the cigarette in Vincent's mouth and then intently "reads" the bill. After VINCENT has smoked a while his Offstage Voice removes the remainder of the cigarette from Vincent's mouth and exits with it.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

Thank you, Father.
But even so, won't you agree? Life is just a trap when you're addicted to it.
Naught but a feast of snakes.
I know that. We all know that.
All that matters is to be sold on the dream.
To buy into the dream.
To love the dream, or to pretend to.
It's a glorified loitering.
You knew that, didn't you?
How you went to the villa in Greece,
pleased it was atop a mountain blistered in the fire of the Mediterranean sun.
Tall windows and stone walls in ruin.
Clouds drifting by in a vast sky with no meaning.
You knew you were dying, didn't you? But I didn't.
All I knew was that to live near the sea would weary me.
Hearing its melancholy sound every day of my life.

LIL enters behind the scrim carrying a baby in her arms.

Vincent's Offstage Voice enters and goes to them.

LIL hands the baby to Vincent's Offstage Voice, who holds it against his chest and walks around with it behind the scrim.

He returns the baby to LIL, and then takes from his pocket a bracelet with a good-sized bell on it and fastens it around the baby's wrist.

The bell rings as Vincent's Offstage Voice exits.

LIL exits with the baby.

A television set is wheeled in and placed in front of Vincent's wheelchair. Lights and shadows from it reflect in whites and grays on Vincent's face.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

If only men were storks.

You never see a stork die.

Or ride around in a shit-mobile.

[*beat*] The one thing I used to like better than smoking, and drinking beer, was eating wild strawberries and cream.

What's happened to me?

Vincent's Offstage Voice enters with a mug of beer in hand, which he brings to VINCENT to drink through a straw in front of the TV.

When VINCENT finishes, his Offstage Voice exits with the mug.

After a while the audience can hear the sound of a toilet flushing.

ISAAC enters, dressed as a Catholic priest. He goes over to VINCENT, looks into his face for a moment, and then –

ISAAC

My son, you are forgiven of all your sins.

Past, present and future.

ISAAC spits into his hand, and gently pats VINCENT on the head.

FRED enters.

FRED

What are you doing, Isaac?

ISAAC

I figured, as long as I was dressed up in this outfit, I might as well do something with it. I've forgiven him of all his last rites.

Isn't that it?

Isn't that what a priest should do for a creature like him?

Isn't it, Fred? You would know.

FRED

How the Hell would I know?

ISAAC

I don't know, Fred.

Figured you'd know about everything there is to know about dying, and things.

FRED

Figured wrong, my Friend.

ISAAC

Sorry.

FRED

No problem.

He doesn't know shit from Shinola anyway.

ISAAC

Why do you have him in here?

FRED

He's my nephew.

And it's good for the image.

Shows my love and compassion for the disabled.

You know what I mean.

The ability-challenged people,

who, some think, have a say-so in this country.

ISAAC

If you say so.

FRED

Don't mind him.
He doesn't know a thing.
Or hear a thing.
He's a cucumber.

ISAAC

A cucumber?

FRED

A vegetable.

ISAAC

Oh....
Is he awake? Or asleep?

FRED

Who knows?
Who cares?
He's just a living monument to my generosity.

ISAAC

Okay....
Now ... about today.

FRED

You're straight, aren't you?
About it?

ISAAC

Of course.
Of course I am.
Just wanted to make sure of the details.
The call.

FRED

The Roman candle goes off if and only if I say so.
Not before. Understand?
And not ever, if I don't give the okay.
Okay?

ISAAC

Okay.
Of course okay.

FRED

Then what's the problem?

ISAAC

Am I supposed to call you on the phone, when all's ready?

FRED

How many times do we have to talk about this?

ISAAC

What phone?
The gold one?

FRED

What else?

ISAAC

Okay. Just checking.

FRED

He's my greatest enemy.
I've been briefed.
And this may be my only real chance to take him out, before he takes me out.

ISAAC

Who?
Who clued you in to that?

FRED

It's none of your damn business.
Call them three witches, if you want.
Secret agents I have. Guardian angels of a sort. My spies in the sky.
What does it matter?
The point is: He's my greatest enemy.
What do you not understand about: My. Greatest. Enemy?

ISAAC

But others are on the plane, too.

FRED

Collateral damage.

ISAAC

One's going to be a young mother, I believe.
With her baby. In her arms. And a bell for a bracelet.

FRED

What do I care?
Fair is foul, and foul is fair, and only him, or a heart attack, will ever kill me.
That's what I've been told.
And my ticker's as hale as an albatross, hovering through fog and filthy air.
I leave the details to you.
Isn't that what you get paid for?

ISAAC

Yes. Just thought you'd like to know.
I never know what you like to know.

FRED

Everything, and nothing.
Now stop with the questions, and get out there.
I have a call I'm waiting for.

ISAAC

Yes, Sir.

ISAAC exits.

FRED sits down at his desk, reading over some papers.

VINCENT (in an offstage voice)

Sometimes I wonder what I've gained by being alive.
Everything's so mucked up.
The colors of life's lies make a motley joke for crumbs of humanity like me.
My body belonging to me now in this absurd way.
I've longed to create something.
Something with my mark on it that will survive me, and change the world.
At least a part of it.
A moment in my life when I can claim: "*This is it.*"
And stop worrying what will happen to me. What will happen to any of us after we go
back home the last time and have our final heart attack.
The only power I have left in me is my willpower, and my shit.
And my will can do scary shit.

**VINCENT stands (unnoticed by FRED).
He reaches into a pocket for a pair of
thin rubber gloves which he puts on.**

Then he pulls a gun out of his other pocket and walks over to FRED.

FRED looks up –

FRED

What the ffff...?

VINCENT shoots FRED in the heart.

FRED falls forward onto the desk.

The gold phone rings ... and rings ... and then stops.

VINCENT places the gun on the desk next to the phone, takes the gloves off, and throws them into the audience.

The gun vanishes.

The gold phone rings again as VINCENT returns to his chair, listening to it.

The ringing of the phone becomes the ringing of a bell on a baby's wrist

END