

Characters

Judith (M/F) - a business person in a business suit.

Hank (M/F) - another business person.

Scene 1 – High Rise Office

(A high rise office. A large window can be implied in each direction. There should be some minimal office furniture such as a desk and some chairs. The desk and the floor should have various papers and files strewn about. The desk holds a large briefcase. Additional papers and documents should be available either in the desk drawers or under the desk in stacks. A door is implied offstage. At rise, Judith is behind her desk. She is shuffling through stacks of papers and inspecting each one. Some of them she stuffs into a large briefcase. In some cases she changes her mind and removes papers again or tears up other documents. After several minutes of this there is a knock at the door. Hank enters quickly.)

Hank: (frightened) Have you heard?

Judith: Of course I've heard. What do you think I am doing?

Hank: So, you think it might be for real?

Judith: I'm not taking any chances.

Hank: (looks out the window) C'mon. It's just a hoax, right? An idle threat, a scare tactic.

Judith: You believe what you like but the one thing I know for certain is that they don't make idle talk.

Hank: They never made threats before either.

Judith: Until now.

Hank: Yeah, until now.

Judith: (a beat to stop and listen) It's too quiet.

Hank: Like a morgue.

Judith: I thought there'd be some noise, some commotion.

Hank: Some resistance.

Judith: Instead, there's nothing. (starts moving papers again)

Hank: Nothing. Nothing at all. (starts pacing) This can't be happening. It's not happening. Maybe they never made threats before but now they are, which means this could be the first time they are being tactical rather than just brutally honest. Who thought honesty could be so annoying? I mean they could have thrown in some humor or a little light-hearted sarcasm maybe, right?

Judith: (stops moving papers) What are you babbling on about?

Hank: (still pacing) It's just that... Well, it just doesn't make any sense.

Judith: (walks to the window and looks out) It's so quiet.

Hank: They just haven't arrived here yet. That's all.

Judith: It's like waiting for a tornado.

Hank: Maybe you're just being a little too paranoid.

Judith: (turns back to Hank) Paranoid? Really? You know perfectly well what they are capable of. If you don't think they're deadly serious then you haven't been paying attention.
(looks out the window again)

Hank: That's just it. I *have* been paying attention. From the very start I've been paying attention.
(sits in a chair) Remember that first day?

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Judith: (still looking out the window) Who could forget it?

Hank: We thought everything was in chaos - then they just suddenly appeared and took over.

Judith: (moves to chair) There was nothing we could do.

Hank: Naturally we thought they were just here to eliminate us.

Judith: A hostile takeover.

Hank: Only it wasn't, was it?

Judith: Wasn't what?

Hank: Hostile. I mean there we were all kissing everyone and everything we knew goodbye then suddenly we were cheering and crying tears of joy.

Judith: They came not to take over but to observe, they said.

Hank: Just to observe. (pause) But why?

Judith: No one dared ask the question.

Hank: Why come all this way just to observe?

Judith: (staring into the distance) No one asked because no one wanted to know the answer.

Hank: But they told us anyway.

Judith: And they solved one of our greatest problems.

Hank: One of our greatest mysteries.

Judith: The mystery of how we got here in the first place.

Hank: **(gets up and starts to pace again)** It still doesn't make sense, though, this turn of events. They were doing what they said they would do. They observed. They left us alone. They even lended us help now and then. We became hopeful, comfortable.

Judith: We did what we always do. We became lazy. We stopped trying. We waited for someone else to do it. We started bickering for control. We started fighting.

Hank: We started killing each other again.

Judith: **(returns to the desk and shuffles papers into the briefcase again)** Ever have an ant farm?

Hank: **(incredulous)** An ant farm?

Judith: Yeah, you know. Two plates of glass with sand in between and a whole bunch of little ants running around.

Hank: I know what an ant farm is. I just don't know why you want to talk about a kids toy when we need to think about survival here.

Judith: **(ignoring Hank)** When I was young I had a friend who owned an ant farm. I came over to see it one day and I was enthralled.

Hank: **(meanders back to the window then speaks sarcastically)** Fascinating!

Judith: It was fascinating! Just imagine it - all these tiny little ants scurrying about all with their own jobs to do. They shared their responsibilities. They did what needed to be done without complaining or crying about their disadvantages or their entitlements. They just did the work.

Hank: So we should all be ants?

Judith: You're missing my point completely.

Hank: My mistake. Please go on, then. I need the distraction.

(Hank continues to look through the window but starts to look like something subtle may be happening outside. Judith takes notice but ignores it.)

Judith: Those little creatures built endless lines of tunnels. They had a place for their dead and they had food storage chambers. They even had emergency escape tunnels. But, what was truly fascinating was that not a single one of them was a leader. There was no dictator calling out orders or generals marching about making sure those orders were carried out. They simply knew what had to be done and they did it.

Hank: So you had a real life view of the Borg.

Judith: **(ignoring the sarcasm)** I was so captured by that ant farm that I decided that I was going to have one for myself. The only problem was I did it without taking the time to learn about how to make one.

Hank: **(distracted by the scene at the window)** Now it comes.

Judith: I thought all you had to do was go out in the woods, collect a bunch of ants, throw a bunch of sand between a glass enclosure, throw in the little critters, and then let them have at it.

Hank: And did they... have at it?

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Judith: **(stops shuffling to look in the distance and recollect)** What I didn't know was that I had managed to scoop up a queen ant when I dug for some unwilling participants for my entomological experiment.

Hank: Let me guess. You neglected to build her a palace?

Judith: The queen has only one function in her short but regal career which is to produce as many new ants as possible. The function of the ants around her is to serve her toward that end.

Hank: Ant porn?

Judith: Hardly. In short order the queen produced too many ants for that small space. The farm quickly became overrun. The ants lost their collective purpose and had to focus their attention on either serving their queen or saving the colony. It turned into an all-out war within what was essentially their own family. It was as horrific to watch as any contemporary war movie.

Hank: Besides setting the scene for an Oliver Stone movie I am still not getting the point here. Are you saying we are the ants?

Judith: You don't give yourself enough credit. **(rises to sit on the edge of the desk)** Millions of years ago *they* came here and seeded this world with what would become us humans. Then they left again.

Hank: Can we sue them for abandonment?

Judith: And now they've returned just to see how their little science project has got on.

Hank: Ok, Ok. I get it now. (**waves hands in air to paint images**) They come flying back from Star 39 of the Who-Knows-Where Galaxy. As they break through the atmosphere to see how their long lost pets have been doing, they get a glimpse of cities and towns and farms.

Judith: Only they don't engage.

Hank: They just observe. They sit inside their little flying pill boxes and watch us through all their sensors and their equipment.

Judith: We never even see who or what they are.

Hank: Their magic telescopes and periscopes and spy scopes scan the globe.

Judith: At first they see great wonders. The Taj Mahal, the Great Pyramids, The Forbidden City.

Hank: Lucy the Elephant! (**notices Judith's stare**) It's a New Jersey thing.

Judith: Some time for jokes!

Hank: If I don't laugh I'm going to break down in screams of terror.

Judith: I'm talking about works of great human achievement and you are laughing.

Hank: Finding humor in the midst of annihilation is also a great human achievement.

Judith: Stay on topic. What happens next?

Hank: Well, they get all excited. Look at what our little ant people have done while we were away, they say. They pat themselves on their backs or their dorsal fins or whatever they have to pat. Maybe they shout and do high fives or threes or something - you know like when the space agency gets a rocket off the ground. Then they come in closer and see jets flying and cars racing around.

Judith: Roads, highways, train tracks, shipping lanes.

Hank: Lines that criss-cross the land.

Judith: (**under her breath**) Just like tunnels in an ant farm.

Hank: And they say 'look at what our little darlings have done. We are so proud'.

Judith: But then they look a little closer.

Hank: They make great promises about new and wonderful technology that can improve all our lives but then they start to see the dirt below the glitter. They learn how we have nearly destroyed this toy planet of theirs, how we are happy to go on killing each other with abandon, how we have dominated over all the other creatures of this world, how we insist on believing that everything was just given to us for our own personal use.

Judith: But they could have helped us. They taught us how wrong we were. They could have taught us how to fix it. They could have given us the means to do better.

Hank: You're the one that brought up the ant farm analogy.

Judith: Yeah, so?

Hank: So, let's play it out. Your ant farm failed. The inhabitants were intent on destroying each other and their own home. You looked in on your little village in the sand and saw... what? Hope? Possibility? Redemption?

(Judith realises where the conversation is going and looks down.)

Hank: So what did you do? **(no response)** Did you rescue them? Did you help them out? Did you nurse them back to health and promise them a better future? **(still no response)** What did you do?

Judith: **(still looking down)** You made your point.

Hank: So what makes you think those interstellar freaks or whatever they are will be any different? Their science fair project blew up. Time to dump it and move on.

(Sounds of chaos and confusion can be heard. They are distant and muffled at first. Hank moves back to the window. Judith finishes stuffing the large briefcase.)

Hank: **(at the window)** Something's happening.

Judith: What do you see?

Hank: Confusion.

Judith: It's beginning. Can you tell which direction it's coming from?

Hank: Um, Southeast I think. What do we do?

Judith: Collect what you can. We have to get out of here right away.

Hank: **(pulls out a cellphone)** What about my family?

Judith: I thought you said you lived just south of here.

Hank: Yeah, so? **(hits cellphone buttons and holds to ear)**

Judith: So... they're gone.

Hank: What?

Judith: Everything beyond them now is gone. The eradication of their failed experiment will be absolute.

Hank: Damn! Straight to voicemail. **(looks at the phone in panic)** No, no, no, no.

Judith: You have to focus on what you can do right now. Gather what you can and join me downstairs. **(closes up the briefcase and sets it on the desk)**

Hank: No! I have to go save them. I have to get them out of there. Before it's too late. I, uh...

Judith: **(grabs Hank by the shoulders)** They're gone. They're gone! All you can do now is save yourself. Now hurry!

Hank: Save ourselves? You've got to be a fool if you think you can get away from them. It's all over now, can't you see?

Judith: Well I'm not going to just roll over and give up. This isn't some kind of enclosed terrarium. It's a big world out there. There must be plenty of places to hide and ways to fight.

Hank: I don't know. I just don't know.

Judith: What I do know is that if we stay here we are done for. If we want to have any chance at all we have to go - right now! The only chance we have is to get as far away as we can. The longer we stay around here debating the less chance we have to try and stay alive.

Hank: Yeah, I suppose you're right.

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Judith: You and I... we can do this... together.

Hank: Yeah, you and I. If we stick together we might just have a chance.

Judith: That's right. The time for talking and thinking and guessing is over. It's time to run for our lives. You with me?

Hank: Yeah, yeah, I'm with you.

Judith: OK, let's go.

(Judith grabs the briefcase. Hank and Judith head toward the door but before they can get out all the stage lights go out and the sound of their bodies slumping to the floor is heard. Sounds of confusion are heard for a moment then suddenly stop.)

CURTAIN