

THE RE-SET ROOM

Action of the play: A re-set session.

Characters

MAN: the facilitator

WOMAN: the returnee

Setting

A room with two chairs and a table.

Time

Limbo.

Note: Various announcements come over a loudspeaker through out the play. They often break up in static and end with a crackle without being completed.

THE RE-SET ROOM

(Setting: a small bare room with two chairs and a table.)

LIGHTS UP

(WOMAN waits for someone. MAN enters.)

MAN

Have you completed reading the document?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

Do you understand the process?

WOMAN

Yes, one from column A which is time, one from column B which is place, and one from Column C which is enhanced talent or defining feature.

MAN

Are you ready to make your selections?

WOMAN

Not quite. But close.

MAN

Do you have any questions?

WOMAN

Just to clarify. Since this will be my third "re-set" I do have the option of forgoing it and taking my permanent place as a facilitator?

MAN

That is correct.

WOMAN

Did you take all three re-sets before you became a facilitator?

MAN

Yes.

WOMAN

How did your third reset work out?

MAN

It was rather banal actually. Do you have any other questions?

WOMAN

Do many people choose to give up their third return and go straight to becoming a facilitator?

MAN

Very few. We discourage it.

WOMAN

Why?

MAN

It gums up the works. Throws off the count.

WOMAN

The last time I was here I heard about the “Grand Slam” multiverse option. I was too inexperienced then—wasn’t really interested.

MAN

It is basically a split universe option. You return to the same life you had but a parallel life begins when certain choices are made. It’s quite complex and is recommended only for those who were serious gamers or astrophysicists in that current life.

WOMAN

Okay, back to enhanced talent or defining feature. For example, I always want to choose between physical beauty or talented painter. I never understood why I can’t I have both guaranteed?

MAN

We never promise any more than one feature. The rest are pot luck.

WOMAN

Why not give us a whole bunch of enhanced defining traits?

MAN

That would take all the fun out of it. Take away the human need to differentiate.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Will all facilitators who are on their lunch break please report to building three immediately.

WOMAN

So, if I happen to get more enhanced features than the one I selected it's because of the random selection of the combining process? The luck of the draw?

MAN

Correct.

WOMAN

How exactly does the combining process work anyway?

MAN

Above my pay grade.

WOMAN

Boy, you got the early 21st Century American lingo down perfectly.

MAN

Thank you.

WOMAN

Isn't it hard to be proficient in all languages in all times?

MAN

I'm better at some than others.

WOMAN

You been assigned to any really famous people?

MAN

You know I can't tell you that. You'll have to sign a non-disclosure agreement when you return from your third re-set and become a facilitator.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Facilitators please expedite the cases you are on. We have several emergencies emerging...

WOMAN

I'm wondering what about all those Indian religions that believe in reincarnation.

MAN

Lucky guess.

WOMAN

Did one of you guys let something slip when you shouldn't have?

MAN

Nope. Besides they can't prove anything anyway.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Volcano event. Volcano event. Mount Tambora. Need facilitators to report to the Pacific Island floor of the Asian Building. Indonesia 1815 is off the board for now...

WOMAN

What about the hypnosis stuff—regressing to previous lives?

MAN

You know how it works. You can only remember your previous lives when you are here in the re-set room. Plus, here you get to remember general knowledge stuff—like who won the 30 years war or who directed "Clockwork Orange." Once you are born into your new life you don't remember a thing.

WOMAN

Hard to make good choices if I don't have my memories?

MAN

"A man is defined by his actions, not his memories."

WOMAN

Can't recall who said that.

MAN

"Total Recall," the film.

WOMAN

Right.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

All free facilitators report in immediately—large boat hits ice berg—way too popular a choice...

WOMAN

I must add a man is defined by his actions and his choices.

MAN

We have no time to debate free will here. You ready to make some selections?

WOMAN

I'm not too crazy about the set up. You're born, you flail about a bit, you die and while you're flailing you see your species is involved in killing each other, burning down castles, raping and pillaging. Killing animals for sport. You heard the one about how man went to the moon; there was nothing there to kill, so he came back.

MAN

Humans have done some remarkable things.

WOMAN

Yeah, like inventing tooth paste and scotch tape. But lots of bad inventions like bows and arrows, swords and guns, nuclear bombs...

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Black Plague ... Black Plague... calling all facilitators not currently engaged in a re-set to report to Building Four.

MAN

Life happens—blurred, instant, at once. It's random and arbitrary. You just have to go with it.

WOMAN

The world, at least the human part of it, has turned out to be pretty disappointing.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Potato famine, potato famine – alert -- discourage visiting Ireland in...

WOMAN

I know when I consider either of my two lives, it is absurd to think everything can be explained as a simple linear process of cause and effect.

MAN

Correct. Once we gave up the construct of cause and effect things got a lot easier to understand. Once we accepted that reality is multi-dimensional and non-linear everything fell into place.

VOICE ON SPEAKER

Volcano, Volcano, another volcano... Krakatoa... 1883... please note Krakatoa is west of Java, not east as in the movie title...

MAN

Okay, back to the task at hand. Time to make some choices.

WOMAN

(she speaks in a thick German accent)

I was thinking about becoming a world-famous ophthalmologist. A seeing-eye doctor; a doctor who sees eyes seeing.

MAN

Symbols and accents are not appreciated.

WOMAN

Wow, you're no fun.

MAN

Back to business. As the poet said: "Sign posts don't walk in the way they point. It is us humans who must choose which way to go. The sign post is not responsible for our decision."

WOMAN

Who is the poet?

MAN

I have no idea.

WOMAN

I thought you had total recall.

MAN

(sarcastically) Cute... Time now to make your first big choice—the past or the future?

WOMAN

Last time I picked Florence, Italy--1452 – the year Leonardo Da Vinci was born. Enhanced painting skills...

MAN

(he repeats in unison along with her as he nods his head up and down))

...the year Leonardo Da Vinci was born. Enhanced painting skills...

We get those choices a lot. Very popular. A lot of people are into major fame. To get that request you have to slip it in at just the right moment.

WOMAN

Didn't work out so well for me. I was born a woman. By the way, is there any way you can fix that for this next re-set?

MAN

Nope, Sorry. Gender is a crap shoot.

WOMAN

I never got to paint. I ended up the mistress of an ugly, old, grumpy Count.

MAN

Sorry. That's life. Now please move on to your new selection.

WOMAN

What about something exotic? A very talented potter during the Ming dynasty?

MAN

You've already selected the Western Civilization Building. You'll have to re-register and get yourself a new facilitator if you want to move to another civilization. I hear there are lots of openings in the Mayan building.

WOMAN

Humph... that's interesting... I've always said can't have too much gold and glitter... But decapitation... not so much...

MAN

I've noticed a lack of interest in times and places where it might be possible for you to be in a position to help others. Ever considered India....

WOMAN

What? Do I look like Mother Teresa?

MAN

I'm just suggesting there are choices where it might be possible for you to help humankind... For enhanced feature have you ever considered a great mind for science? It might lead to a contribution to the effort to stop global warming? Or a doctor stopping a pandemic...

WOMAN

Not for me. I choose singing and dancing. Metaphorically, speaking. Singing and dancing that's all there is, folks...

MAN

But... but... You might pay the consequences.

WOMAN

Oh, please...

MAN

Just saying, if more people made better choices the world might not...

WOMAN

(rudely interrupts)

Okay, I'm thinking Paris... Roaring Twenties... Long shapely legs. Sure you can't fudge and make sure I'm female?

MAN

Nope. Sorry. So you'll have to be born in 1900 to be 25 at the height of the roaring 20s.

(He takes out a tablet and starts punching in data.)

You do know what was coming up?

WOMAN

Yeah, Great Depression, German Occupation of Paris, the 1950s. Ugg...the 1950s... On second thought I think I'll pass.

MAN

Events generally take you in a direction you do not wish to go.

WOMAN

Well, I think I'll go with my newest idea. 2050 Cleveland.

MAN

Why Cleveland?

WOMAN

I think by then New York and Los Angeles will certainly have had it. I'm banking that by 2050 Cleveland will be the place to be—self-driving cars that fly, robots to do all the boring work, lots of fun and parties but without all that dystopic lifestyle stuff there'll be in New York and LA... Did you see "Escape from New York?"

MAN

Nope, but I loved "Road Warrior." Anyway, back to business-- and for your defining feature or enhanced talent?

WOMAN

I think a great body that looks fabulous in a bikini?

MAN

Excellent choice for extremely hot weather. (He winks.) Hint, hint...

WOMAN

Giving your opinion is kind of breaking the rules, isn't it?

MAN

Sorry.

WOMAN

But what if I'm male?

MAN

Trust me, it really won't matter.

WOMAN

Okay, Let's do this!

(She walks gingerly to the door, with great anticipation she opens it, and looks in.)

WOMAN

Oh, Shit! It's a brick wall.

LIGHTS OUT