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SF PERUSALS

WAITING FOR GODOT

A Tragicomedy in Two Acts

by Samuel Beckett

SAMUEL FRENCH

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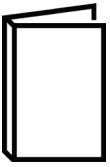
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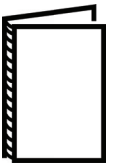
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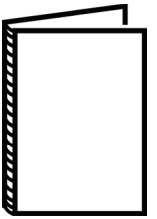
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is widely recognized as one of the greatest dramatists of the twentieth century. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. Mr Beckett is most renowned for his play *Waiting for Godot* which launched his career in theatre. He then went on to write numerous successful full-length plays, including *Endgame* in 1957, *Krapp's Last Tape* in 1958, and *Happy Days* in 1960. Mr Beckett received his first commission for radio from the BBC in 1956 for *All That Fall*. This was followed by a further five plays for radio including *Embers*, *Words and Music*, and *Cascando*. Like no other dramatist before him, Mr Beckett's works capture the pathos and ironies of modern life yet still maintain his faith in man's capacity for compassion and survival no matter how absurd his environment may have become.

WAITING FOR GODOT

The first performance in Great Britain was given at the Arts Theatre, London, on 3rd August 1955 with the following cast:

ESTRAGON	Peter Woodthorpe
VLADIMIR	Paul Daneman
LUCKY	Timothy Bateson
POZZO	Peter Bull
A BOY	Michael Walker

Directed by Peter Hall
Decor by Peter Snow

The play subsequently transferred to the Criterion Theatre, London, on 12th September 1955 when the part of Vladimir was taken by Hugh Burden.

CHARACTERS

ESTRAGON
VLADIMIR
LUCKY
POZZO
A BOY

ACT I

A country road. A tree. Evening.

ESTRAGON, *sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before.*

VLADIMIR *enters.*

ESTRAGON *(giving up again)* Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR *(advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart)* I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, "Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything". And I resumed the struggle. *(He broods, musing on the struggle. He turns to* **ESTRAGON***)* So there you are again.

ESTRAGON Am I?

VLADIMIR I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever.

ESTRAGON Me too.

VLADIMIR Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? *(He reflects)* Get up till I embrace you.

ESTRAGON *(irritably)* Not now, not now.

VLADIMIR *(hurt; coldly)* May one enquire where His Highness spent the night?

ESTRAGON In a ditch.

VLADIMIR *(admiringly)* A ditch! Where?

ESTRAGON *(without gesture)* Over there.

VLADIMIR And they didn't beat you?

ESTRAGON Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

VLADIMIR The same lot as usual?

ESTRAGON The same? I don't know.

VLADIMIR When I think of it...all these years...but for me... where would you be...? *(Decisively)* You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.

ESTRAGON And what of it?

VLADIMIR *(gloomily)* It's too much for one man. *(He pauses. Cheerfully)* On the other hand, what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.

ESTRAGON Ah, stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.

VLADIMIR Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up.

ESTRAGON *tears at his boot.*

What are you doing?

ESTRAGON Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?

VLADIMIR Boots must be taken off every day, I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?

ESTRAGON *(feebly)* Help me!

VLADIMIR It hurts?

ESTRAGON Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

VLADIMIR *(angrily)* No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.

ESTRAGON It hurts?

VLADIMIR Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

ESTRAGON *(pointing)* You might button it all the same.

VLADIMIR *(stooping)* True. *(He buttons his fly)* Never neglect the little things of life.

ESTRAGON What do you expect, you always wait till the last moment.

VLADIMIR *(musingly)* The last moment... *(He meditates)* Hope deferred maketh the something sick, who said that?

ESTRAGON Why don't you help me?

VLADIMIR Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. *(He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again)* How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time... *(He searches for the word)* appalled. *(With emphasis)* AP-PALLED. *(He takes off his hat again, peers inside it)* Funny. *(He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again)* Nothing to be done.

ESTRAGON *with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He looks inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.*

Well?

ESTRAGON Nothing.

VLADIMIR Show.

ESTRAGON There's nothing to show.

VLADIMIR Try and put it on again.

ESTRAGON *(examining his foot)* I'll air it for a bit.

VLADIMIR There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. *(He takes off his hat again, peers inside*

it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again) This is getting alarming.

Silence. **VLADIMIR** *deep in thought,* **ESTRAGON** *pulling at his toes.*

One of the thieves was saved. *(He pauses)* It's a reasonable percentage. *(He pauses)* Gogo.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Suppose we repented.

ESTRAGON Repented what?

VLADIMIR Oh... *(He reflects)* We wouldn't have to go into the details.

ESTRAGON Our being born?

VLADIMIR *breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted.*

VLADIMIR One daren't even laugh any more.

ESTRAGON Dreadful privation.

VLADIMIR Merely smile. *(He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly)* It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done. *(He pauses)* Gogo.

ESTRAGON *(irritably)* What is it?

VLADIMIR Did you ever read the Bible?

ESTRAGON The Bible... *(He reflects)* I must have taken a look at it.

VLADIMIR Do you remember the Gospels?

ESTRAGON I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

VLADIMIR You should have been a poet.

ESTRAGON I was. *(With a gesture towards his rags)* Isn't that obvious.

Silence.

VLADIMIR Where was I... How's your foot?

ESTRAGON Swelling visibly.

VLADIMIR Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

ESTRAGON No.

VLADIMIR Shall I tell it to you?

ESTRAGON No.

VLADIMIR It'll pass the time.

Pause.

Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One—

ESTRAGON Our what?

VLADIMIR Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other... *(He searches for the contrary of saved)* ...damned.

ESTRAGON Saved from what?

VLADIMIR Hell.

ESTRAGON I'm going. *(He does not move)*

VLADIMIR And yet... *(He pauses)* ...how is it – this is not boring you I hope – how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there – or thereabouts – and only one speaks of a thief being saved. *(He pauses)* Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?

ESTRAGON *(with exaggerated enthusiasm)* I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

VLADIMIR One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON What's all this about? Abused who?

VLADIMIR The Saviour.

ESTRAGON Why?

VLADIMIR Because he wouldn't save them.

ESTRAGON From hell?

VLADIMIR Imbecile! From death.

ESTRAGON I thought you said hell.

VLADIMIR From death, from death.

ESTRAGON Well, what of it?

VLADIMIR Then the two of them must have been damned.

ESTRAGON And why not?

VLADIMIR But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.

ESTRAGON Well? They don't agree, and that's all there is to it.

VLADIMIR But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?

ESTRAGON Who believes him?

VLADIMIR Everybody. It's the only version they know.

ESTRAGON People are bloody ignorant apes. *(He rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into the distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into the distance)*

VLADIMIR *watches him, then goes and picks up the boot, peers into it, drops it hastily.*

VLADIMIR Pah! *(He spits)*

ESTRAGON *moves to centre, halts with his back to the auditorium.*

ESTRAGON Charming spot. *(He turns, advances to the front, halts facing the auditorium)* Inspiring prospects. *(He turns to* **VLADIMIR***)* Let's go.

VLADIMIR We can't.

ESTRAGON Why not?

VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON *(despairingly)* Ah! *(He pauses)* You're sure it was here?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON That we were to wait.

VLADIMIR He said by the tree.

They look at the tree.

Do you see any others?

ESTRAGON What is it?

VLADIMIR I don't know. A willow.

ESTRAGON Where are the leaves?

VLADIMIR It must be dead.

ESTRAGON No more weeping.

VLADIMIR Or perhaps it's not the season.

ESTRAGON Looks to me more like a bush.

VLADIMIR A shrub.

ESTRAGON A bush.

VLADIMIR A... What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?

ESTRAGON He should be here.

VLADIMIR He didn't say for sure he'd come.

ESTRAGON And if he doesn't come?

VLADIMIR We'll come back tomorrow.

ESTRAGON And then the day after tomorrow.

VLADIMIR Possibly.

ESTRAGON And so on.

VLADIMIR The point is—

ESTRAGON Until he comes.

VLADIMIR You're merciless.

ESTRAGON We came here yesterday.

VLADIMIR Ah no, there you're mistaken.

ESTRAGON What did we do yesterday?

VLADIMIR What did we do yesterday?

ESTRAGON Yes.

VLADIMIR Why... *(Angrily)* Nothing is certain when you're about.

ESTRAGON In my opinion we were here.

VLADIMIR *(looking around)* You recognize the place?

ESTRAGON I didn't say that.

VLADIMIR Well?

ESTRAGON That makes no difference.

VLADIMIR All the same...that tree... *(He turns towards the auditorium)* ...that bog.

ESTRAGON You're sure it was this evening?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON That we were to wait.

VLADIMIR He said Saturday. *(He pauses)* I think.

ESTRAGON You think.

VLADIMIR I must have made a note of it. *(He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish)*

ESTRAGON *(very insidiously)* But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? *(He pauses)* Or Monday? *(He pauses)* Or Friday?

VLADIMIR *(looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape)* It's not possible!

ESTRAGON Or Thursday?

VLADIMIR What'll we do?

ESTRAGON If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again today.

VLADIMIR But you say we were here yesterday.

ESTRAGON I may be mistaken. *(He pauses)* Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind?

VLADIMIR *(feebly)* All right.

ESTRAGON *sits down on the mound.* **VLADIMIR** *paces agitatedly to and fro, halting from time to time to gaze into the distance off.* **ESTRAGON** *falls asleep.* **VLADIMIR** *halts before* **ESTRAGON.**

Gogo! ...Gogo! ...GOGO!

ESTRAGON *wakes with a start.*

ESTRAGON *(restored to the horror of his situation)* I was asleep! *(Despairingly)* Why will you never let me sleep?

VLADIMIR I felt lonely.

ESTRAGON I had a dream.

VLADIMIR Don't tell me!

ESTRAGON I dreamt that—

VLADIMIR DON'T TELL ME!

ESTRAGON *(with a gesture towards the universe)* This one is enough for you?

Silence.

It's not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?

VLADIMIR Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

ESTRAGON *(coldly)* There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

VLADIMIR You wouldn't go far.

ESTRAGON That would be too bad, really too bad. *(He pauses)* Wouldn't it, Didi, be really too bad? *(He pauses)* When you think of the beauty of the way. *(He pauses)* And the goodness of the wayfarers. *(He pauses. Wheedling)* Wouldn't it, Didi?

VLADIMIR Calm yourself.

ESTRAGON *(voluptuously)* Calm…calm… The English say cawm. *(He pauses)* You know the story of the Englishman in the brothel?

VLADIMIR Yes.

ESTRAGON Tell it to me.

VLADIMIR Ah, stop it!

ESTRAGON An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual goes to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one, or a red-haired one. Go on.

VLADIMIR STOP IT!

VLADIMIR *exits hurriedly.*

ESTRAGON *gets up and follows him as far as the limit of the stage. Gestures of* **ESTRAGON** *like those of a spectator encouraging a pugilist.*

VLADIMIR *enters. He brushes past* **ESTRAGON**, *crosses the stage with bowed head.*

ESTRAGON *takes a step towards him, halts.*

ESTRAGON *(gently)* You wanted to speak to me?

Silence. He takes a step forward.

You had something to say to me?

Silence. Another step forward.

Didi...

VLADIMIR *(without turning)* I've nothing to say to you.

ESTRAGON *(with a step forward)* You're angry?

Silence. Again a step forward.

Forgive me.

Silence. A step forward. He lays his hand on **VLADIMIR***'s shoulder.*

Come, Didi.

Silence.

Give me your hand.

VLADIMIR *half turns.*

Embrace me!

VLADIMIR *stiffens.*

Don't he stubborn!

VLADIMIR *softens. They embrace.* **ESTRAGON** *recoils.*

You stink of garlic!

VLADIMIR It's for the kidneys.

Silence. **ESTRAGON** *looks attentively at the tree.*

What do we do now?

ESTRAGON Wait.

VLADIMIR Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

ESTRAGON *(highly excited)* An erection!

VLADIMIR With all that follows. Where it falls, mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that?

ESTRAGON Let's hang ourselves immediately!

VLADIMIR From a bough?

They go towards the tree.

I wouldn't trust it.

ESTRAGON We can always try.

VLADIMIR Go ahead.

ESTRAGON After you.

VLADIMIR No no, you first.

ESTRAGON Why me?

VLADIMIR You're lighter than I am.

ESTRAGON Just so!

VLADIMIR I don't understand.

ESTRAGON Use your intelligence, can't you?

VLADIMIR *uses his intelligence.*

VLADIMIR *(finally)* I remain in the dark.

ESTRAGON This is how it is. *(He reflects)* The bough…the bough… *(Angrily)* Use your head, can't you?

VLADIMIR You're my only hope.

ESTRAGON *(with effort)* Gogo light – bough not break – Gogo dead. Didi heavy – bough break – Didi alone. Whereas—

VLADIMIR I hadn't thought of that.

ESTRAGON If it hangs you it'll hang anything.

VLADIMIR But am I heavier than you?

ESTRAGON So you tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly.

VLADIMIR Well? What do we do?

ESTRAGON Don't let's do anything. It's safer.

VLADIMIR Let's wait and see what he says.

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR Godot.

ESTRAGON Good idea.

VLADIMIR Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand.

ESTRAGON On the other hand, it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes.

VLADIMIR I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it.

ESTRAGON What exactly did we ask him for?

VLADIMIR Were you not there?

ESTRAGON I can't have been listening.

VLADIMIR Oh…nothing very definite.

ESTRAGON A kind of prayer.

VLADIMIR Precisely.

ESTRAGON A vague supplication.

VLADIMIR Exactly.

ESTRAGON And what did he reply?

VLADIMIR That he'd see.

ESTRAGON That he couldn't promise anything.

VLADIMIR That he'd have to think it over.

ESTRAGON In the quiet of his home.

VLADIMIR Consult his family.

ESTRAGON His friends.

VLADIMIR His agents.

ESTRAGON His correspondents.

VLADIMIR His books.

ESTRAGON His bank account.

VLADIMIR Before taking a decision.

ESTRAGON It's the normal thing.

VLADIMIR Is it not?

ESTRAGON I think it is.

VLADIMIR I think so too.

Silence.

ESTRAGON *(anxiously)* And we?

VLADIMIR I beg your pardon?

ESTRAGON I said, "And we?"

VLADIMIR I don't understand.

ESTRAGON Where do we come in?

VLADIMIR Come in?

ESTRAGON Take your time.

VLADIMIR Come in? On our hands and knees.

ESTRAGON As bad as that?

VLADIMIR Your Worship wishes to assert his prerogatives?

ESTRAGON We've no rights any more?

Laugh of **VLADIMIR**, *stifled as before, less the smile.*

VLADIMIR You'd make me laugh, if it wasn't prohibited.

ESTRAGON We've lost our rights?

VLADIMIR *(distinctly)* We got rid of them.

Silence. They remain motionless, arms dangling, heads sunk, sagging at the knees.

ESTRAGON *(feebly)* We're not tied? *(He pauses)* We're not—

VLADIMIR Listen!

They listen, grotesquely rigid.

ESTRAGON I hear nothing.

VLADIMIR Hssst!

They listen. **ESTRAGON** *loses his balance, almost falls. He clutches the arm of* **VLADIMIR**, *who totters. They listen, huddled together.*

Nor I.

Sighs of relief. They relax and separate.

ESTRAGON You gave me a fright.

VLADIMIR I thought it was he.

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR Godot.

ESTRAGON Pah! The wind in the reeds.

VLADIMIR I could have sworn I heard shouts.

ESTRAGON And why would he shout?

VLADIMIR At his horse.

Silence.

ESTRAGON *(violently)* I'm hungry.

VLADIMIR Do you want a carrot?

ESTRAGON Is that all there is?

VLADIMIR I might have some turnips.

ESTRAGON Give me a carrot.

VLADIMIR *rummages in his pockets, takes out a turnip and gives it to* **ESTRAGON** *who takes a bite out of it.*

(angrily) It's a turnip!

VLADIMIR Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. *(He rummages again in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips)* All that's turnips. *(He rummages)* You must have eaten the last. *(He rummages)* Wait, I have it. *(He brings out a carrot and gives it to* **ESTRAGON***)* There, dear fellow.

ESTRAGON *wipes the carrot on his sleeve and begins to eat it.*

Give me the turnip.

ESTRAGON *gives back the turnip which* **VLADIMIR** *puts in his pocket.*

Make it last, that's the end of them.

ESTRAGON *(chewing)* I asked you a question.

VLADIMIR Ah.

ESTRAGON Did you reply?

VLADIMIR How's the carrot?

ESTRAGON It's a carrot.

VLADIMIR So much the better, so much the better. *(He pauses)* What was it you wanted to know?

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