Acting Edition

Eternal Life
Part 1

by Nathan Alan Davis

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ETERNAL LIFE PART 1 was originally commissioned and produced by the Wilma Theater, Philadelphia, PA, on April 11, 2023. The performance was directed by Morgan Green, with sets by Matt Saunders, costumes by Azalea Fairley, lighting by Masha Tsimring, sound design by Jordan McCree, and projection design by Alan Price. The production stage manager was Patreshettarlini Adams and the assistant stage manager was Chloe Kincade. The cast was as follows:

WOMAN / MOTHER SNOWFLAKE. . . . . Jennifer Kidwell
JUNIOR / SNOWFLAKE CHILD / HEARSE DRIVER . . . . . Brandon J. Pierce
GRAY-BEARDED MAN / DEATH CONSULTANT . . . . . Lindsay Smiling
GOOSE . . . . . Sarah Gliko
MAN / FATHER SNOWFLAKE . . . . . Steven Rishard
VOICE . . . . . Pax Ressler

CHARACTERS

WOMAN
MOTHER SNOWFLAKE

MAN
FATHER SNOWFLAKE

GOOSE

SNOWFLAKE CHILD
JUNIOR
HEARSE DRIVER

GRAY-BEARDED MAN
DEATH CONSULTANT

AUTHOR'S NOTES

An ellipsis on its own line

…

represents a pause, a beat, or perhaps a physical action.

A slash / marks the beginning of an overlap.

SPECIAL THANKS

Morgan Green for championing this play and bringing it to such powerful life at the Wilma.

The Wilma's HotHouse Ensemble and Jennifer Kidwell for your collaboration and artistry.

Ben Pesner, Peter Richards, and Venturous Theater Fund for supporting the world premiere.

Seonjae Kim and Mandy Greenfield for early conversations that helped me identify the essence of the story.

Andrea Hiebler and Krista Williams for your galvanizing encouragement long before this script took its present form.

ACT ONE

One

(Night. **WOMAN** *and* **MAN** *are in their most recently acquired home.)*

(There is a very large window. It is snowing outside.)

*(***WOMAN** *looks out the window. She takes a long sip from a cup of tea. She's trying her best to enjoy the moment.)*

(But something catches her attention.)

(It's a **GOOSE***, which is outside in the yard.)*

WOMAN. The goose is staring at us.

MAN. *Staring?* I'm not sure if that's…um –

WOMAN. What would you call that?

MAN. Well.

We're new here.

So I'd call it curiosity.

WOMAN. I don't remember a goose being discussed. As part of the purchase.

MAN. It was discussed.

It was a perk.

WOMAN. Okay but she's staring directly at me.

MAN. If you're not happy with the place, let's talk about that. Let's not make it about the goose.

WOMAN. …

MAN. We can sell, you know.

WOMAN. We *just* moved in.

MAN. Exactly. So, if it's not working…now would be the perfect time to cut bait. Minimal furniture? Seller's market?

WOMAN. …

MAN. I mean how long do you think we really need to give it?

WOMAN. More than a *day*.

MAN. Okay, so…how long?

WOMAN. Six months? A year? I mean…to give it a fair shot.

MAN. What can you learn in a year that you can't learn in a day?

WOMAN. Is that a serious question?

MAN. …

I think the problem, actually, is that you haven't quite…

Don't take this the wrong way:

WOMAN. Okay, I'm gonna need you to pause. And think about what you're about to say / before you –

MAN. Right, yeah, good idea.

*(***WOMAN** *finishes her tea.)*

WOMAN. Would you like some water? I really like the tap water here, don't you?

MAN. No, thanks.

WOMAN. …

MAN. I'm good for now.

*(**WOMAN** exits.)*

*(**MAN** gets up. Paces for a bit. Looks out the window.)*

(Looks around the mostly empty house.)

Weather report.

(Instantaneously, the walls of the house light up with information. Stock prices. Graphs describing air quality and water purity. Movie trailers. Several ads for furniture sales. A voice speaks.)

VOICE. Good evening!

Looks like you could use help furnishing your place. I'll show you some options while I look up the weather.

(Icons of chairs, tables, and sofas are highlighted on the walls, with designations listed below them, such as "only two left" and "free delivery.")

MAN. Just the weather, please.

VOICE. Of course.

(The walls go mostly dark, but a faint glow remains. A temperature reading appears on a wall, along with a moving image of snow falling from a cloud.)

The current temperature is 24.8 degrees Fahrenheit, negative 4 degrees Celsius. It's snowing like the Dickens out there. Flurries are expected to continue through the night and into tomorrow morning. Here are some options for professional snow removal in the area –

MAN. No thanks.

(A calendar appears, listing the weather forecast for the next several days.)

VOICE. Skies are expected to clear tomorrow afternoon. Here's what the rest of the week looks like.

Also, I went ahead and curated a list of songs, films, and television episodes that you might enjoy on a night like this, cuddled up next to your wife under a blanket as the snow falls outside. Would you like to see it?

MAN. Maybe later.

VOICE. You seem upset. Something on your mind?

MAN. ...

What are the chances of a brain-eating amoeba entering our bodies through the tap water?

VOICE. Roughly one in 200 billion.

MAN. So. Not zero.

VOICE. Perhaps a comparison would help. In your present environment, you are about as likely to be killed by a meteorite crashing through your window as you are to be killed by a brain-eating amoeba.

*(**MAN** looks out the window. And up into the sky.)*

This conversation doesn't seem to be helping. Enjoy the evening!

(The walls return to normal again.)

*(**MAN** sits back in his chair. Looks out the window.)*

*(**WOMAN** returns with a glass of water.)*

WOMAN. I don't want to install a water filter. Whatever is in the aquifer, I want it. I want all of it. I hope that's okay with you.

MAN. ...

Want to watch a movie?

WOMAN. I thought you were going to educate me on "what the problem actually is."

*(***WOMAN** *takes a drink of water.)*

Something I haven't quite figured out yet?

MAN. Can we, maybe, reset?

WOMAN. By all means.

MAN. Alright. Let me start with myself.

I'm not entirely comfortable. With the way the water tastes.

That doesn't mean I can't get used to it.

But, at the same time,

Why should I have to?

You know? Just like, for you, if there's anything about any of this that you don't like,

Why should *you* have to?

WOMAN. Have to what? Have problems?

MAN. Growing up like I grew up.

Where you just kind of...*have* things.

There's a certain discipline to it, okay?

WOMAN. Go on.

MAN. I learned, kind of by osmosis I guess, that you have to make quick decisions. Because if you don't, just, the sheer number of options alone, the variables, they can get to you.

WOMAN. I can see that.

MAN. So, yeah!

That's all I'm trying to say.

It would be one thing if we *had* to make it work out here. But we *don't*.

We've got the house in Maine.

We've got the Brazil house.

We've got the Hong Kong place.

I think it's quite clear.

I think the proverbial writing is on the proverbial wall.

We thought we might be happier here but we're not, so great, we tried it, let's move on.

WOMAN. On to what?

MAN. Vacation?

We could do one of those low-orbit cruises, maybe?

(The walls of the house wake up again. A "raised hand icon" appears on the wall.)

Go ahead.

VOICE. There is an L.E.O. cruise departing in eight days from Palm Bay, Florida, with four seats available, at present, in the V.I.P. section only. Would you like to make a partially refundable deposit tonight to reserve your tickets?

WOMAN. No, thank you.

VOICE. Should you change your minds, I might suggest a weeklong stay in Miami prior to your launch. I've drawn up a preliminary itinerary. If you'd like to see it, just say the word.

(The walls of the house go to sleep again.)

MAN. You sure? It's just like a regular cruise except it's in space.

WOMAN. Yeah, I know exactly what it is and it sounds terrifying.

MAN. …

You know, when we got married, I thought you were adventurous.

WOMAN. …

MAN. People change.

Or our perception of them changes.

Or both!

That's an observation, not a criticism.

WOMAN. Well. Given that observation.

If I'm not what you thought you were getting in a life partner, I guess you should *move on*. To a person that's more immediately compatible.

MAN. That's not at all what I meant –

WOMAN. That seems to be your life philosophy now –

MAN. It's not my life philosophy. It's a strategy for managing abundance.

WOMAN. What *is* your life philosophy?

MAN. …

Live and let live?

WOMAN. …

MAN. What's *your* life philosophy?

WOMAN. Leave every place you've been better than it was when you found it.

MAN. Oh.

That's. That's really good.

WOMAN. Thank you.

MAN. You actually *do* that, too. That's amazing.

WOMAN. I know I do.

Every day of my life.

MAN. Is that why you want to see this through?

So you can perform your duty, as it were, to this place?

WOMAN. That's part of it. Yes.

I'm sick of not being *rooted*.

I'm sick of not having a place that I can love and hate and for better or worse, it's home.

I'm sick of everything being like…shopping.

I like the fact that there's *work* to do here.

(The **WOMAN** *looks out the window again.)*

(The **GOOSE** *has stopped staring but is still present.)*

MAN. Do you want me to kill it?

WOMAN. Oh my God, no, what is wrong with you?

MAN. I mean, if we try to sell her or remove her it would just be a big hassle.

For all we know she'd just, migrate right back.

WOMAN. That is the most repulsive thing I've ever heard you say.

You'd honestly go outside and kill that goose?

MAN. I'd call someone to take care of it.

Humanely.

WOMAN. You'd call a hit on our pet!?

MAN. Okay, it's not a *hit,* and she's not our pet / she just –

WOMAN. She was here before us. We have an obligation to take care of her –

MAN. You said just this morning that you wished she'd drop dead!

WOMAN. I don't want to get everything I want!

MAN. Why not!?

WOMAN. Because my morality is going to atrophy and then I'll become a myopic, entitled, self-righteous waste of land and air, like all the people in the world I hate most!

MAN. How did you learn to express yourself so precisely when you're angry?!

WOMAN. I HAD TO BECAUSE I'M MARRIED TO *YOU*!

(A short silence.)

MAN. Okay, so no space cruise.

We'll work on the house.

We'll uh –

We'll make ourselves useful. Around the neighborhood.

We'll go on walks.

How does that sound?

WOMAN. And I'll start a garden?

A vegetable garden?

MAN. Sure.

WOMAN. And an herb garden.

And a flower garden.

MAN. Of course.

And the goose won't last long.

WOMAN. ...

MAN. I mean,

It's going to be a temporary problem is what I'm saying.

Because the lifespan of a goose. As compared to the lifespan of a human…there's a gap there.

She'll only be around for ten, fifteen years tops. And then, you know.

*(**GOOSE** smiles.)*

(And exits.)

WOMAN. Right.

MAN. And we'll still have four more decades to go.

WOMAN. Sure. Or five or six or seven or eight or nine or ten more decades to go.

MAN. I mean. I'm not interested in living past eighty.

WOMAN. Don't say that / what is wrong with you!?

MAN. What? That's what I always say.

WOMAN. …

I've been thinking, you know?

…

It's so quiet out here.

And this terrible thought

Imposed itself on my mind.

MAN. Yeah?

WOMAN. …

I really don't want to die.

Like,

Ever.