

The Human Issue  
by  
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## SYNOPSIS

Ciera and Evander are contemplating whether or not they should end human existence. Their job in the scheme of the universe is to oversee humanity, and while the two get into the occasional argument, they've always ended on the same side- Until Ciera insists that the Earth should be wiped clean for the sake of "changing things up". In the liminal space between the world and the universe, Ciera pitches this idea to human-loving Evander through a hypothetical human named Ronald, and when she's finished with her point, Evander constructs Ronald and brings him into the room to give his two cents on humanity. After another argument between Ciera and Evander and an existential crisis from Ronald, Evander snaps his fingers and starts Ronald over... Again and again. Once they've reached their third run with Ronald, Ciera tells Evander to start him over at a darker point in his life. When Ronald comes to, he gives his opinion of humanity which- albeit less cheerful- secures the existence of people on Earth for a good few hundred more years.

## CHARACTERS

CIERA: An omnipotent, inhuman being. She's very stubborn and has a bit of a temper.

EVANDER: An omnipotent, inhuman being. He's on the benevolent side and cool-headed when making decisions.

RONALD: A human constructed to be a "tie-breaker" and decide the fate of humanity. He's anxious and in the way most of the time.

**NOTE:** All roles can be played by any gender

SETTING

Ciera's dining room, just outside of Earth, hanging sleepily between the atmosphere's reach and the bend of the universe.

TIME

Late afternoon, just after work. Also, all time that has ever occurred, or ever will and yet, so far outside of time that it might as well not exist.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES:

***On punctuation:***

*The Human Issue* often utilizes this symbol // in the middle of lines. This means that the next actor should begin to speak, overlapping their dialogue and interrupting the current speaker.

You will also see brackets during dialogue, like these: []. This surrounds text that is unspoken and clues the actor to see what the character is leaving unsaid.

***On the characters,***

This play is the story of two inhuman characters, but their relationship with one another and humanity itself is very human. Neither Ciera nor Evander have been made in critique or resemblance of religious figures, and they should not be played as such.

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*(The stage is set with only a table and two chairs. On the table rests a salt shaker and two mugs. Lights up on EVANDER and CIERA sitting at the table, mid conversation. They are both dressed in suits with their ties slightly undone, as if just coming back from a long day at the office. This is not the first time the two of them have met after work, and while they should be having coffee like normal, they're currently in a heated argument. RONALD is crumpled up in a motionless ball on the floor stage right. He should be somewhat out of sight and not lit.)*

EVANDER

-But if you consider the actual situation- The actual responsibility we've been given and how we plan// on using it...

CIERA

Oh, wow, once again! Evander has a plan, everyone! Do you ever act on impulse?

EVANDER

Ciera, even you cannot be that careless.

CIERA

What's the carelessness in wanting to change things up?

EVANDER

"Changing things up" is one thing. The issue is that you're completely disregarding literal billions of lives-

CIERA

Why does that matter to you so much? They're just lives. They come, and they go.

EVANDER

Right! They've come and gone the same way for 4 billion years-

CIERA

4 and a half, Evander.

EVANDER

Yes, 4 and a half billion years. That's how long humanity has operated this way. Why risk it just for the chance that things *might* go smoother the second time?

CIERA

I'm *bored*, Evander!

EVANDER

(A beat)

(In disbelief) Bored?

CIERA

Well, yeah. Aren't you?

EVANDER

(Slowly, trying not to lose his temper) We have been assigned to protect and oversee humanity// (Quickly) and you think I'm going to throw all of that away because-

CIERA

I didn't ask what we were *assigned*, Evander, I asked if you were *bored*.

EVANDER

That doesn't matter. That's not a part of the job.

CIERA

The job is boring.

EVANDER

You think that serving the universe is boring?

CIERA

I think that watching wars start, then end, then start again gets repetitive. I'm tired of watching animal shelters get overfilled and oceans get polluted and the *Black Eyed Peas* release music. I'm bored of all of it.

EVANDER

You can't focus on positives for once?

CIERA

No, I can't. That's not my job.

EVANDER

You're impossible.

CIERA

Humanity is impossible. I'm realistic.

EVANDER

Just do your job, Ciera. Why complicate things?

*(CIERA begins to stand and leave)*

CIERA

I'll bring it to the council, Evander. And we both know how persuasive I can be.

EVANDER

They won't even consider it unless it's agreed between the both of us.

*(CIERA freezes, looks at EVANDER, then sits again.)*

CIERA

What will it take for you to follow through with it?

EVANDER

Very funny.

CIERA

Come on, Evander. I'm really passionate about this.

EVANDER

Clearly.



CIERA

What don't you like about the idea?

EVANDER

Hm, well- just off the top of my head- probably the whole *erasing humanity* of it all.

CIERA

Don't look at it that way, then. Look at it as... Recycling. That's a good thing humans do, right?

EVANDER

*(A little reluctant to give in)* Yeah, recycling is awesome.

CIERA

Right! It's awesome! And you and I are just recycling the planet. You know, getting rid of the old and evil and bitter people and starting all over!

EVANDER

Okay, but what about the good people?

CIERA

What good people?

EVANDER

Plenty of good people. Like Canadians or artists or... Taylor Swift.

CIERA

Two out of three of those groups are clinically depressed.

EVANDER

And yet, they're good people.

CIERA

But, *other people* made them depressed// so they can't possibly-

EVANDER

Other people did *not* make them depressed!

CIERA

But other people definitely *like* the fact that they're depressed.

EVANDER

So what? If they're able to make art while struggling then// shouldn't that [count for something?]

CIERA

That's ridiculous.

EVANDER

It's not ridiculous to look for the good in the bad.

CIERA

*So much* of it is bad. You haven't been down there in a hundred years, Evander. You don't know how things are.

EVANDER

Show me, then.

CIERA

*(A beat)*

Show you?

EVANDER

Go on. I want strong, profound reasoning as to why we should wipe the entirety of the human race and build it back up again.

CIERA

Fine.

*(CIERA pulls the salt shaker forward and RONALD is lit as he rises stage right, stands straight up, and faces the audience. CIERA and EVANDER cannot see him.)*

CIERA (Continued)

Picture this salt shaker is a man living on earth.

EVANDER

What's his name?

CIERA

His name doesn't matter.

EVANDER

How am I supposed to believe that this salt shaker is a human if he doesn't have a name?

CIERA

*(Annoyed)* Okay, fine. This is Andrew.

*(RONALD waves enthusiastically)*

RONALD

Hi! I'm Andrew!

EVANDER

Eh...

CIERA

What?

EVANDER

I'm not convinced. He doesn't look like an Andrew to me.

CIERA

That's because he *isn't* an Andrew. He's a salt shaker.

EVANDER

How about Isaac?

*(RONALD waves again)*

RONALD

Hi! I'm Isaac!

EVANDER

No, that doesn't seem right either. Ronald, maybe?

*(RONALD waves again)*

RONALD

Hi! I'm Ronald!

CIERA

Great. Ronald works fine. Now, Ronald is in his 20's, living alone, working at Applebee's.

EVANDER

Yikes.

CIERA

Yes! Yikes indeed. And, if you asked him, he'd rate his life a solid 6 out of 10.

EVANDER

Okay, so- he's boring, but sort of happy?

CIERA

Exactly. Now, imagine his parents die.

*(CIERA shakes out some salt into her mug)*

RONALD

Womp, womp.

EVANDER

Wait, what?

CIERA

And then, Applebee's fires him.

*(CIERA shakes out more salt)*

EVANDER

Slow down-

CIERA

And he isn't able to pay rent after paying for the funeral, and he's too depressed because of his parents death so he doesn't go looking for a job, and eventually, he's living on the streets. And every person who passes him tries to avoid his eyes, because if he really wanted money or food, he wouldn't have lived a life that put him in that position. It's his fault that he ended up there, and not a single person thinks to help him. So, he just lives out there, on a bench in the city, for the rest of his life, and *nobody cares*, and *nobody's* there when he dies.

*(CIERA shakes the salt shaker until it's empty throughout the monologue, then slams it on the table.)*

EVANDER

*(A beat)*

Why would any of that happen?

CIERA

Because it happens every day. And nobody does anything about it. *That's* humanity, Evander, and it's worse off than you think.

EVANDER

*(A beat)*

Okay, let's make it real then.

CIERA

What?

EVANDER

Let's make Ronald and bring him here and see what he thinks about humanity.

CIERA

Evander, come on. That's-

*(EVANDER snaps his fingers, RONALD falls limp on the ground before slowly standing up. CIERA and EVANDER can now see him.)*

RONALD

*(A beat)*

Hi! I'm Ronald!

EVANDER

...Hi, Ronald. I'm Evander. This is Ciera.

CIERA

*(Whispered)* I've never spoken to a human before.

RONALD

What's going on?

CIERA

Oh, wow. It's *real*.

EVANDER

Go on, Ciera. Ask him what he thinks.

CIERA

Nope, no way.

EVANDER

Well, if you don't want to do the whole "recycling" thing then...

CIERA

I just don't want to talk to it!

RONALD

Are you guys talking about me? I'm right here.

CIERA

I'm too creeped out. You ask.

RONALD

Ask what?

EVANDER

Ronald, please. We're trying to have a conversation.

CIERA

Are all humans so...

RONALD

So what?

CIERA

I don't know. Fuzzy.

RONALD

Fuzzy? What does fuzzy mean? And what do you mean "all humans"?

EVANDER

Jeez, why is he so nosy?

CIERA

You made him.

RONALD

Where am I right now?

CIERA

Shut up, Ronald.

EVANDER

You can't talk to him like that!

CIERA

Well, he needs to shut up.

EVANDER

Yeah, but you know how fragile humans are. You have to filter yourself.

CIERA

*(Carefully, to RONALD)* Hey, champ. Would you mind shutting up?

EVANDER

*(Genuinely, to CIERA)* Very good.

RONALD

I'm sorry, I'm just a little confused.

EVANDER

Okay, let me catch you up. You're human, we aren't. There's not exactly a *word* for what we are, but if there was, it'd probably sound something like-

*(EVANDER makes a very high pitched squeal)*

EVANDER (Continued)

Ciera and I watch over humanity, but since we ourselves aren't human, it's hard to make certain decisions about the state of things. So, we made you as a sort of tie breaker. Understand?

RONALD

*(A beat)*

And, where am I exactly?

CIERA

That doesn't matter. Can you give us a synopsis of your life?

RONALD

Like, from birth to...

CIERA

Death, yeah. You're dead.

RONALD

Oh my God, I'm dead?

EVANDER

Well, technically, you never existed.

RONALD

Wait, *what*?

EVANDER

Like... We made you. Just now.



RONALD

Oh my God. Oh my God.

*(RONALD starts hyperventilating.)*

EVANDER

Did we break him?

CIERA

I don't like this one. Let's make someone different.

EVANDER

No, that's not fair. He's the perfect middle-ground.

CIERA

Well, we can't talk to him like *this*.

*(RONALD is still hyperventilating, but he's now assumed a position on the ground, curled up, rocking back and forth.)*

EVANDER

Okay, fine.

*(EVANDER snaps his fingers and RONALD falls limp before slowly standing again while EVANDER sets the table's chairs facing toward himself.)*

RONALD

*(A beat)*

Hi! I'm Ronald!

EVANDER

Hi, Ronald. I'm Evander. Thanks for coming to our focus group.

RONALD

Focus group?

EVANDER

That's right. You can have a seat. We're about to get started.

*(RONALD and CIERA sit down and face EVANDER)*

RONALD

I'm sorry, I don't even remember registering for this. What topic are we looking at?

*(EVANDER meets eyes with CIERA)*

EVANDER & CIERA

*(ad libbed)* Oh, That's a good question, Ummm, Etc.

CIERA

People.

RONALD

People?

EVANDER

Yes. Human people. Um, more specifically- *Men*.

CIERA

No [, a human wouldn't say that].

EVANDER

*(trying to play it cool)* No, no. Not men. I hate men.

CIERA

Except for good men. Like, Mr. Rogers.

RONALD

The dead one?

CIERA

*(Crushed)* What?

RONALD

I think he died, like, ten years ago.

CIERA

Oh, you guys are screwed.

EVANDER

Let's refocus! Our topic is people. Ronald, do you wanna kick things off?

RONALD

Just... Talk about people?

EVANDER

Yeah! You know, what good stuff have they done, what sketchy stuff have they done, why do they deserve to stay on Earth instead of being snapped out of existence...

RONALD

Okay, uh- I guess people really just want to be... Comfortable.

EVANDER

Interesting. What do you mean comfortable?

RONALD

Like, we talk about wanting happiness or money or love, and people *do* want those things, but mostly we want to be comfortable. We want to feel safe.

CIERA

Sooo true, fellow human. And don't you think- and I'm just spitballing here- people would do *anything* to feel comfortable? Even really terrible, evil things?

EVANDER

Well, I think people are complicated, and some of them might do bad things to get what they want, but that shouldn't make them bad people.

CIERA

I was asking Ron.

RONALD

It's Ronald, actually.

CIERA

(To RONALD) Shut up!

EVANDER

Ciera, you love to talk about how "evil" humans are, but you're just as stubborn as they are when you want something.

CIERA

I'm literally omnipotent, so I'm sorry if I get a little frustrated when the guy who's only been in this field for 500 years wants to override my project.

RONALD

Okay, I'm lost. Is this a roleplaying thing?

EVANDER

*(Ignoring him)* You just told me that you want to follow through with this because you're bored! That's not a// very strong case, Ciera!

CIERA

Stop acting like the reasoning behind it is important! You don't want to do this because *I'm* the one who recommended it.

EVANDER

That's not true at all.

CIERA

You hate the idea of letting me win, don't you?

EVANDER

Ciera, you're my friend.

CIERA

Don't kid yourself. We're not human, Evander. We know better than that.

RONALD

I'm sorry, you're *not* human?

*(EVANDER snaps his fingers, RONALD falls limp, then very slowly starts to stand again.)*

EVANDER

I'm officially unbiased, okay? Let's hear what he has to say and just... Go from there.

CIERA

This is a lost cause.

RONALD

*(A beat.)*

Hi! I'm Ronald!

EVANDER

Ronald, listen to me very closely. This is a dream.

RONALD

What?

EVANDER

In a few minutes, you're going to wake up, so I need to be brief. Tell me everything you can about humanity.

RONALD

Wait, what's going on?

EVANDER

I just need you to tell me if people are good or bad.

RONALD

I don't... I don't know. Where am I?

EVANDER

This is useless.

CIERA

*(To EVANDER)* Did you make the Ronald before the scenarios I came up with took place, or after?

EVANDER

What?

CIERA

Is this the full salt shaker or the empty one?

EVANDER

Full, I guess.

CIERA

Start him over. As the empty shaker.

EVANDER

That's unfair and you know it. We're supposed to have a middle ground.

CIERA

Hey, you're the one vouching for humanity. You gotta take every part of it.

*(EVANDER very begrudgingly snaps his finger, RONALD falls limp again. He stands up- considerably less cheerful- and CIERA crosses to him)*

CIERA

Hi. I'm Ciera.

RONALD

Where am I?

CIERA

You're safe. Listen, I know this is a bit of a shock, but I want to ask you about some stuff.

RONALD

What's going on? *(toward EVANDER)* Who's he?

CIERA

This is my friend, Evander. Now, Ronald, we're making a very important decision, and you've been chosen to weigh in on it. Understand?

RONALD

No, not really.

CIERA

That's okay. Do you think you could answer some questions for us?

RONALD

What happens if I say no?

CIERA

We'll just send you back.

RONALD

Back?

CIERA

Home.

RONALD

Home?

CIERA

Back to your city. Back to your life.

RONALD

That's not home.

CIERA

You don't have to go back, Ronald. Why don't you just answer one question for us?

RONALD

What's the question?

EVANDER

In your eyes, are people good, or evil?

RONALD

I... I don't really know. Could I answer something else?

EVANDER

That's the main thing we need.

CIERA

Why don't we start smaller? What's one instance when someone treated you poorly?

RONALD

I've been treated poorly most of my life.

CIERA

Tell us about it.

RONALD

I don't have a good place to stay right now. Mainly, I sit on this bench in the city. Some people give me money or food, but most of the time, everyone acts like I'm invisible. Like I didn't even have a soul anymore. That sort of thing gets to you, you know? You start to wonder if you really are invisible.

EVANDER

That's terrible.

RONALD

That's life.

*(Silence)*

CIERA

Thank you, Ronald. I think that's all.

RONALD

Aren't you gonna ask when someone treated me well?

CIERA

Do you have an answer for that?



RONALD

*(A beat)*

I used to go to the library all the time. I wasn't even that big of a reader. I think... I just liked having somewhere to go that wasn't my apartment or my job. And the lady behind the counter- Magnolia was her name. She was a real young woman, younger than any librarian I'd ever seen, and she'd watch me like a hawk from the moment I stepped inside. I figured she thought I was trying to steal or something. It really bothered me most days. Anyway, I'd go there for hours at a time and just read whatever textbook I could find. I picked up a new one every day. Sometimes it was about psychology, or ancient Greece, or art composition. And, when I read this stuff, it felt like I wasn't really living, you know? Like, half of me was somewhere outside of my body, watching everything go down. I got really into that feeling. But, some stuff happened- like it always does- and I stopped going to the library. I never did stop feeling like that, though. Not all there. It was like... Like I was a salt shaker, and everytime something bad happened, I'd be shaken out, over and over. Anyway, I ended up losing my job, and then my apartment, and I'd just sit on this bench in the city for entire days and watch people pretend I was invisible. But, one day, this woman sits next to me, and I look at her and see that it's *Magnolia*, from the library. And she says, "I've been looking for you, Ronald", and digs through her bag for a book. It's this massive anthropology textbook, one of the only one's I hadn't gotten around to reading. So, I lean over and I hug her. And she doesn't even flinch when she feels me.

CIERA

*(A beat.)*

So, Ronald. Good, or evil?

RONALD

Good. Despite the evil, we're good.

*(Blackout.)*