

TOMORROW GAME  
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## **CHARACTERS**

**Bell**—F. Whip smart but careful not to show it off. Gifted is not a thing anymore. Calculating but also sometimes impulsive. Tough but not that strong. A good liar. Lonesome.

**Roe**—F. Physically imposing. Doesn't talk much but not because she's dumb. Instinctive, careful. Athletes are not a thing anymore. Strong but only sometimes tough. A bad liar. Lonesome.

## **THE EARTH**

This is a world of profound solitude brought about by extreme danger. The dangerous things are also beautiful. Terrible things happened and billions of people are dead. Infrastructure is gone, order is mythic, no one believes anymore that help is coming. There is no military, no government, no doctors, no safety net. Just death, and not-death, not yet, not today.

## **A NOTE ON LANGUAGE**

The women in this play have been mostly alone. They speak in the shorthand of familiarity they learned when the only people around them were familiar. Silences are long and it's ok for them to sometimes be weightless—the silence of people who are used to being alone, rather than the silence of people trying to hold something back. They say nothing that doesn't need to be said. People who speak to fill the void are not the kind of people who have survived in this world.

## **A NOTE ON CASTING**

Both performers may be any age between 20 & 50. Both performers may be any race. However, anything that might impose a sense of inequality between them (i.e. a major age disparity, or casting one white and one non-white performer) should be avoided. The biggest differences between them are: Roe is big and Bell is small; Bell is analytic and Roe is emotional; Bell reads books and plays games and lives for tomorrow while Roe watches, listens, and remembers.

## **SYNOPSIS (Up To This Point)**

Bell and Roe live in a postapocalyptic wasteland that is so far gone they don't remember a time when there were grocery stores, safe drinking water, or 911. They each live in isolation, until one day they happen to meet. On a clear day Roe sees Bell take off her gas mask and *taste* a tiny yellow flower growing by the road. Roe believes the earth and air are poisoned, so how is this possible? After convincing Roe to put aside her gun, Bell shows Roe a game: take off your mask and see if you can breathe. Try this vegetable and see if you survive. Do more than just not-die. The women come to a tenuous arrangement: Bell will bring vegetables back to this spot to trade. She wants a gun but Roe will only promise meat. When they come back the weather has turned dangerous. An acid rainstorm looms. They flee to the only safe place nearby: Roe's home.

Inside.

*They are in a cave. It is unlit. We can hear them fumbling in the dark. Roe turns on a flashlight. She locks three inside locks. Bell strips off her clothing.*

BELL  
you have batteries?

*Roe doesn't answer. She moves around the room lighting homemade candles. As soon as one or two are lit she turns off the flashlight and stows it away. Roe strips off her clothing. After they are down to their underwear they stop and look at each other. Silently. They each have raw red acid burns on their shoulders, necks, and arms. Roe takes a large bottle of water and splashes it carefully on her burns. She hands the bottle to Bell, who does the same. Roe goes back to lighting candles. Then she goes to light a fire in a pit in the very center of the room.*

BELL  
Is that safe?

ROE  
The cave goes up and out. Smoke comes out a mile or so south.

*Pause. Bell waits.*

ROE  
I've lived here a long time.

*Pause.*

BELL  
How do you have batteries?

ROE  
...Only for emergencies.

*Bell looks around. It is one large room. There is a pile of blankets in one corner, and one whole wall is just stacks of rusty aluminum food cans, mostly labels torn off. One wall has three or four guns hanging on it.*

BELL  
You said you only have one gun.

ROE  
...no bullets for those.

BELL  
—

*Bell still has her bag slung over her shoulder, over her underwear. She checks inside it to see that the beans & carrots are intact. Roe finally gets the fire started. She gingerly picks up her clothes from the floor and inspects them. They have holes. They're wet. Sighing, she hangs them by the fire to dry.*

*Bell takes her own clothes and hangs them up as well. Roe places her gas mask on a shelf next to two others. She goes to a chest or cardboard box and finds new, unburnt clothes to put on.*

BELL

Do you have something I can wear?

ROE

For trade?

BELL

Hospitality. Until my clothes are dry.

ROE

what will you give me.

BELL

That's not what hospitality means.

ROE

...You can bring something later.

BELL

—

*Outside we can distantly hear heavy rain. There is a shock of thunder, like an explosion.*

BELL

Lightning

ROE

Don't touch the door

*Roe hands Bell a large man's shirt to put on.*

ROE

Storm could last for days

BELL

I suppose it could. Or it could clear up tomorrow.

ROE

Maybe

*Roe places a pot over the fire, fills it partly with water. She goes to the corner, where there is a large flat stone on the floor, and lifts it to reveal a deep dark opening. She reaches her arm deep into the hole in the ground and pulls out a packet wrapped in burlap and twine. Roe looks up and sees Bell watching.*

ROE

Meat

BELL

It's...cool? In there?

ROE

Cold.

BELL

Brilliant. Did you build...all this?

ROE

My grampa did

BELL

Is he—

ROE

Gone

BELL

I'm sorry.

ROE

—

BELL

Do you want to make a stew? I have the beans, and the carrots.

ROE

MY beans and carrots—

BELL

Is that *my* meat?

ROE

...yes

BELL

Then we should put it all in the same pot and make a stew. It will taste good and it will feed us both. Fair.

ROE

...Alright

BELL

Is there a knife?

ROE

—

BELL

For cutting the carrots?

*Roe reluctantly pulls a large knife from a sheath on her ankle. Bell looks at it. Wipes it on the shirt she's wearing. She chops the carrots, dropping them in the pot with the beans. Bell looks expectantly at Roe, who drops the meat into the pot.*

BELL

Do you have...seasonings? Onion?

ROE

I have meat

BELL

...what's in all those cans?

ROE (*shrugging*)

Food

BELL

How did you get so many?

ROE

Looked for them. Found them. Brought them back here.

*Looking up at the stack of cans, Bell gasps.*

BELL

you have coke!

ROE

Coke

BELL

It's a—it's not food, it's a drink.

*Roe stares at her.*

BELL

It's from...before. I had it once. It was sweet but also...like nothing else I've ever tasted.

ROE

Coke

BELL

you should try it

*Roe looks up at the stacks of cans.*

ROE

Which one is it?

BELL

It says "coke" on it. In red letters.

*Pause.*

ROE

you get it.

BELL

Is there a ladder?

*There is a stool. Bell climbs up precariously, reaches on her tiptoes, and just snags the can.*

BELL

Ha!

*Roe looks at the can. Opens it. Smells it suspiciously.*

ROE

you first.

*Bell smells it. She takes a long drink. She smiles a big satisfied smile.*

BELL

It's good.

*Roe tastes it. She grins. She takes a big gulp.*

ROE

It is good. It's good!  
We can put it in the stew.

BELL

Maybe just a little bit.

*Roe pours a small amount of the coke in the stew pot. Looks at Bell. Bell nods. Roe drinks the rest of the coke in one long swig.*

BELL

Oh.

*Roe burps, satisfied, then goes over to a bar near the ceiling and does rapid pull-ups, as an expression of her satisfaction. She jumps down and stretches.*

ROE

You want to try?

BELL

...No thanks.

ROE

you can.

BELL

Not right now.

ROE

You try

BELL

I don't want to

ROE

*You try.*

BELL

...Ok.

*Bell goes up to the pull-up bar. Takes a deep breath. Jumps up to grab it and struggling, pulls herself up, once. She hangs there for a moment. Then drops down.*

ROE  
...You're weak.

BELL  
I'm better at other things.

*Roe jumps up and does more pull-ups.*

ROE  
you're weak and little. I'm strong.

BELL  
Clearly.

ROE  
Ha!

BELL  
But you can't grow radishes

ROE  
...you told me how

BELL  
Do you have seeds?

ROE  
You'll give me seeds

BELL  
No

ROE  
Give me seeds

BELL  
Maybe. But you'd have to trade. Trade *Big*.

ROE  
Trade what?

BELL  
A gun.

ROE  
I said. No bullets.

Bullshit.

BELL

I *said*—

ROE

Fine. Let me know when you change your mind. Let me know when you want seeds.

BELL

*Long pause.*

Stew ready yet?

ROE

Probably not

BELL

I'm hungry

ROE

So am I.

BELL

*Long pause. Bell walks around the room, inspecting this and that.*

What happened to your grandfather

BELL

Died

ROE

How?

BELL

He was old.

ROE

Huh. I've never met an old man.

BELL

He was...special. He was strong.

ROE

I haven't seen *any* man in—huh. I don't know. Years. I was—small.

BELL

ROE  
Men die stupid

BELL  
That's a fact

ROE  
Trying to be big

BELL  
Trying to be heroes

ROE  
...weren't many to start with

BELL  
Oh there used to be—just as many as women. Lots.

ROE  
I don't remember it

BELL  
Neither do I

ROE  
Then how you know?

BELL  
My mother told me...it was...before the big war. Mostly men fought in that war, is how they died. and I—read books. Lots of books about men.

ROE  
Books

BELL  
I live in a...a library

ROE *(never heard this word before)*  
A...library.

BELL  
a place in the city that's...big and made of stone, to protect from the bad rain. and...it's filled with books.

ROE  
I have a book

BELL

What book

*Roe goes to get the book. It's an old battered HOLY BIBLE.*

BELL (*this is a phrase she read in a book*)

Are you...a believer?

ROE

It's old.

*Bell flips open to the first page and sees handwritten inscriptions. When she reads dates, she does it like this: "one-nine-nine-six." there is no reason for her to know to do it another way.*

BELL

"Clarence Moore, b. 1968, d. 2047

"married to Sarah Winston, 1987, d. 2055

"Drew Moore, b. 1989, d. 2065

"Alice Moore, b. 1992, d. 2065

"Winston Moore, b. 1996

ROE

That's my Grampa!

BELL

It's a...family history. Of your family.

ROE

My family. What are the numbers?

BELL

...time, I think. People used to mark time. With numbers.

ROE

Oh.

BELL

Do you want me to keep reading?

ROE

Yes.

BELL

"...married to Lucy Johnson 2028, d. 2065

"Roana Johnson Moore, b. 2035, d. 2065

“Ember Johnson Moore, b. 2037...died  
“married to Don Walsh 2062, died  
“Ash Moore, b. 2066 or 2067, died  
“Clare b. later. died  
“Roe, b. last”

ROE

That’s me! I’m Roe! I’m in the book!

BELL

You didn’t know?

ROE

No one told me

BELL

You can’t read?

ROE

So?

BELL

Do you want me to teach you?

ROE

What for.

BELL

For...for stories I guess. For...something to do other than...eat and sleep  
and...try not to die.

ROE

I like eating

BELL

Of course

ROE

I’m hungry

BELL

...yes. So am I

ROE

Stew ready yet?

BELL

...maybe

*Bell goes to look at it. She pokes the stew with a long-handled fork.*

BELL

We could eat it, but the meat's tough

ROE

Meat's always tough

BELL

It might get more tender if we cook it longer

ROE

Meat's always tough

BELL (*sighing*)

Ok. Fine.

*Roe brings two bowls and spoons and Bell drops some food in each one. They eat. They chew. They chew.*

BELL

My name is Bell.

*Roe looks at her.*

BELL

Your name is Roe. My name is Bell. I know your name, now you know mine. Fair trade.

ROE (*nodding*)

Bell.

BELL

Yes.

ROE

OK. It's fair.

BELL

OK

*They chew. They chew. They goddamn chew.*

BELL  
Meat's tough.

ROE  
—

BELL  
What kind of animal is this?

ROE  
An old one.

*Bell lets that sink in. Hoping she's wrong.*

BELL  
...Where did you find an old animal?

*Roe looks at her as if she's stupid.*

ROE  
He was old. I had to.

BELL  
You mean—

ROE  
I had to.

*Long pause. Bell looks at her food in disgust. Bell makes the decision to eat her food.*

BELL  
Did...was it him that read the bible?

*Roe holds in her silence a wailing pain. Yes he did. No words for this feeling. We don't cry here. She takes as long as she needs to get back in control.*

ROE  
Can you read it? He marked the part he liked.

*Bell opens the bible and finds a corner turned down. She reads.*

BELL  
“For there is hope for a tree,  
If it is cut down,  
that it will sprout again,  
And that its tender shoots will not cease.

Though its root may grow old in the earth,  
And its stump may die in the ground,  
Yet at the scent of water it will bud  
And bring forth branches.  
But man dies and is laid away;  
he breathes his last

    And where is he?  
As water disappears from the sea,  
And a river becomes parched  
    and dries up,  
So man lies down and does not rise.

“Oh, that you would hide me  
    in the grave,  
That you would conceal me until your wrath is past,  
That you would appoint me a set time,  
    and remember me!  
If a man dies, shall he live again?  
All the days of my hard service  
    I will wait,  
Till my change comes.”

*Long silence. The sound of rain. Lights and sound fade.*

Later.

*It's still raining. Bell lays awake under a blanket on the floor. She watches Roe, asleep in the pile of blankets. Bell quietly creeps around the cave in the firelight searching, carefully, slowly. She looks in the chest of clothes, in nooks and crannies, baskets and bags. She tries to quietly move the large rock covering the hole where the meat is kept. It's heavy. She makes as little noise as she can. She hears Roe stirring and looks over at her, frozen.*

*Roe seems to be still asleep.*

*Quietly she removes the large men's shirt and wedges it under the rock, trying to move it silently. Finally, almost quietly, she moves it. She tries to look down inside and finds it's too dark to see. Gingerly she lays down on the ground and reaches her arm inside. And reaches. It's deep. She pulls up a small box, opens it, and removes four bullets from the box. She returns the box to the hole. She stuffs the bullets in her bra.*

*Deep breath. She carefully, desperately, re-covers the hole. Brushes dirt off the shirt. Puts it back on. Creeps back to her blanket to sleep.*

Later.

*Roe makes no effort to be quiet as she stokes the fire, puts water in the pot, pisses in a bucket in the corner.*

Is it morning? BELL

We slept ROE

...the rain stopped BELL

Too soon to go out ROE

I have to shit BELL

Can't open the door yet ROE

Then where do I shit? BELL

Outside ROE

You said we can't open the door. BELL

It's too soon ROE

OK. Then *where* do I— BELL

Piss in the bucket. Shit outside. ROE

But since it's too soon to go outside, what do you expect me to do? BELL

Wait ROE

BELL  
Don't be absurd.

ROE  
Wait

*Bell goes over to the bucket and pisses. She shits.*

ROE  
Hey!

*Bell wipes her ass with her hand and goes to wash her hand in the water bucket. Roe is PISSED.*

ROE  
We shit outside

BELL  
You weren't going to open the door.

ROE  
I kept you alive.

BELL  
Maybe. Maybe not.

ROE  
You stink

BELL  
Shit smells.  
I had to. *You* understand 'had to'. Right?

ROE  
—

BELL  
I'll bring seeds. When we open the door.

ROE  
For the shit?

BELL  
For a gun.

ROE  
Got no bullets.

BELL

—

ROE

—

BELL

Let's eat.

*They put cold stew in bowls. They eat.*

BELL

How long until we can open the door?

ROE

Soon.

*Long pause. They eat.*

BELL *(slowly)*

If Pete is hungry...he can eat meat...and if Hazel is hungry, she can eat...what?

ROE

Who's Hazel?

BELL

...If Pete is hungry...he can eat meat...And if Hazel is hungry, she can eat...Basil.

ROE *(wtf is basil?)*

Who. Basil.

BELL

If Clare is hungry, she can eat...a pear. And if Jean is hungry, she can eat...? What?

ROE

A pear.

BELL

Think.

ROE  
...It's a game.

BELL  
Yes.

*Pause.*

ROE  
I don't know.

BELL  
Think.

ROE  
—

BELL  
Pete has meat. Hazel has Basil. Clare has a pear. Jean has—

ROE  
—a Bean!

BELL  
Yes.

ROE  
Jean has a bean!

BELL  
If Anne is hungry, she can eat...

ROE  
...Food in a can?

BELL  
Sure. And if Shelly is hungry...

ROE  
Jelly.

BELL  
Right.  
OK. So. If Ryan is hungry, he can have—

—Lion ROE

Um. No. BELL

Lion's food. ROE

BELL  
Wait. If Ryan is hungry, he can have radishes. But if Bell is hungry, she has to have beets.

No. ROE

BELL  
Yes. So if Marit is hungry, she can have...?

Carrots. ROE

BELL  
No. But she could have meat.

No. ROE

BELL  
Yes. If Chloe was hungry, she could have Carrots.

ROE  
You changed the rules.

BELL  
I made the game.

ROE  
That's not fair.

BELL  
This is how games work.

ROE  
—

BELL  
If Tara is hungry she can have...what?

ROE  
Tara...Tara... I don't know

BELL  
Think.

ROE  
AH!

BELL  
Tara can have Tomatoes. Sam.

*Pause.*

ROE  
Sam. Sam. Tara, tomatoes. Sam...S....Stew? Stew.

BELL  
Right. Good.

ROE  
Roe could have rats.

BELL  
Uh. Yes.

ROE  
Winston could have watermelon!

BELL  
Yeah.

ROE  
...good game.

*Pause. Roe takes the empty bowls. Pause.*

BELL  
It's time to open the door.

ROE  
Not yet.

BELL  
...I'll come back.

ROE  
...don't care.

BELL  
I'll bring seeds, I want to trade.

ROE  
Not yet.

*Bell sighs. She checks the dryness of her clothes. Good enough. She starts to change her clothes.*

ROE  
That shirt is dirty.

*Bell looks down.*

BELL  
I ran through the woods during a bad rain.

ROE  
No. My shirt.

BELL  
I slept on the floor.

ROE  
—

*Bell continues to change her clothes. Roe does pullups, or other exercises focused on strength: Pushups, lunges, that kind of thing.*

BELL (*singing*)  
Singing dandy, where did you go? Where will we go? Feathers of green,  
flowers of gold, singing dandy where did you go? Together in a city with  
purple clouds. Four crooked trees, someone grows old, singing dandy,  
where did you go—

ROE  
It got more words.

BELL  
What?

ROE  
The song

BELL  
Yes.

ROE  
How.

BELL  
I...gave it more words.

ROE  
Why.

BELL  
To help me...remember things. And for fun, I suppose.

ROE  
For fun.

BELL  
Like how games are fun

ROE (*duh*)  
Yeah.

*Pause.*

ROE  
We can open the door now.

BELL  
Good.

*Bell puts on her gas mask. Roe does the same. Roe unlocks the multiple locks on the door. She slides the heavy metal door open. Outside it is sunny and bright. Some of the plant life has been killed by the bad rain, withered and blackened, but the big trees, and some bushes with glossy bright colored leaves, still live. They look out.*

*Quick as a flash Bell grabs a gun from the wall and points it at Roe, pivoting so her back is to the door. Roe reaches for her rifle.*

BELL  
Don't move.

*Roe doesn't move.*

ROE  
No bullets.

BELL  
That's a lie.

*Pause.*

ROE  
That's mine.

BELL  
I need it.

ROE  
Thief.

*Bell backs slowly and steadily toward the door, and out, as she speaks.*

BELL  
I'll bring seeds. Soon.

ROE  
*You're a goddamn cunt thief!*

BELL  
It's a trade. You don't need this many guns. You can spare one. And I'll bring seeds. Tomorrow. Or the day after.

ROE (*seething*)  
—

*Bell gets all the way out the door, as far as she can. Then she runs.*

*As soon as Bell is no longer pointing the gun at Roe, Roe grabs for her rifle and runs to the door. She points it out the door after Bell—waits. Waits. Doesn't shoot. Eventually she lowers the gun. She closes the door. She slumps.*

Tomorrow. Or the day after.

*Bell walks cautiously in the same outdoor spot. Mask on. Gun out.*

BELL

Roe!

I brought seeds! Radishes, beans, carrots! Roe!

*She stays where she is, listening. Softly and slowly she begins to sing, pausing often to listen.*

BELL

Singing Dandy, where did you go...

Feathers of Green...

Flowers of Gold...

Four crooked trees...

Say I can grow old...

Where did you go? Where will we—

*Roe has crept toward her, partially obscured by trees or bushes. Mask on. Bell points the gun.*

BELL

I see you, Roe.

No closer than that.

*Roe fully reveals herself, gun in hand.*

BELL

Put the gun down.

ROE

You first.

BELL

I don't think so.

*Pause.*

BELL

I brought seeds.

ROE

You took my gun.

BELL

I had to.

ROE  
Give it back.

BELL  
No.

ROE  
I'll shoot

BELL  
You don't want to do that.

ROE  
I will

BELL  
If I thought you would I'd shoot you first. But you didn't before and you won't now. You know you need my help with the plants. You know we can trade for more vegetables, more seeds. Books. Isn't that right?

ROE  
—

BELL  
*Isn't that right.*

ROE  
... Yes.

BELL  
I'm going to count to three and at the same time—at the very same moment—we are going to put down our guns. OK?

ROE  
I'll count.

BELL  
Fine.

ROE  
One. Two. Three.

*Neither one of them moves.*