

The Parlor of Souls

A scene
By Adrian Clayton

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Characters

ANTHONY, early middle age, male, sophisticated-looking and prone to nerves

Setting

A parlor with walls that lean at uneven angles, and a single light at the center, low to the ground, that makes everyone inside cast long shadows against the backdrop.

SCENE 1

ANTHONY sits on a bench in the parlor, hands in his lap. He is oriented slightly towards the figure sitting to his right, who is dressed in a similar suit as his own but exaggerated to a garish and impractical degree. As the scene progresses, figures in impractical and uncanny outfits – exaggerated caricatures of normal dress – occasionally walk across the stage, passing between the audience and the parlor's main light source.

ANTHONY

~~You know, this would be a lot easier~~ To be honest, I feel like I'm repeating myself. Granted, you're a wonderful listener, but it makes it very difficult to hold a proper conversation.

The figure does not respond, staring straight ahead.

ANTHONY

I'm just trying to get to Battersea. It **should** be down this way, but it seems pretty apparent I've made a wrong turn. Really, if you could just direct me, I'd be happy to leave you alone.

A new figure passes in front of the light source.

ANTHONY

I will say, it's a stunning ~~ensemble~~ sense of fashion you all have down here. I'm not really one to say too much about that – never really kept in touch, if I can tell you the

truth. Honestly, I'd hate to ruin the coordination. That's why I'd just—

The figure ANTHONY is speaking to opens their mouth to let out a long, throaty wheeze.

ANTHONY

Ah, yes. Well, we've all had a long day, I'm sure. Frankly I was just hoping...

Another figure comes and goes. ANTHONY stares.

ANTHONY

My word. Er... Look, perhaps you don't quite know the directions to Battersea.

(chuckling)

I can take a hint, I assure you. But maybe, if you would be so kind as to indulge me, you could help me understand a little what's going on in this place? It's a... fascinating arrangement, truly.

ANTHONY has shifted to sit sideways on the bench, facing the figure fully.

ANTHONY

And I'm sure I'm being terribly rude by interrupting, only the thing is, I would very much like to **know** if that were the case, if only so that I could stop, eh?

ANTHONY chuckles.

ANTHONY

Right, right. "Strong and silent", yes. And it suits you! Your... Well, let's see. Yes, yes it's your tie — that tie simply **screams** "I am someone who shall answer no questions!" Eh? Right on the money, aren't I?

(pause)

Yes, well the issue is that it's actually rather **frustrating** that you ~~won't be~~ aren't answering me. Maybe if I just...

ANTHONY reaches out towards the tie, and the figure abruptly stands.

ANTHONY

Oh! Right, no, of course. No, that was foolish of me – I do apologize. I–

The figure begins walking towards stage right. ANTHONY stands.

ANTHONY

Oh, have I ~~made~~ driven you off, then? I certainly didn't mean... Oho! No, I see – is this the way to Battersea? Wonderful! I shall... Yes, don't worry, I'm coming right along!

ANTHONY follows the figure off stage right, crowding right behind them.