

# NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

By Sydney Walker

## Cast of Characters

CHARLIE DUNN: 20's, person of color, can be played as male or female or neither, but will be written as male, somewhat of an eccentric, though dressed in a very modern, dapper manner. Preferably in almost completely white clothing. An avid piano player, he works the night shift fronting shelves at the local Aldi to put himself through school.

TEAGUEN CLAY: 20's, any race, can be played as male or female or neither, but will be written as female. Sharp, purposeful movements. Depressed. Vaguely androgynous. A cigarette is tucked behind her ear.

## Setting

A barren rooftop, shown by a few stray bricks scattered about and two worn silver pipes standing upright.

## Time

Very early morning. Modern era, but up to interpretation.

## Props

A wind-up lamp, a cigarette

At Rise: Open on CHARLIE sitting. He appears to be waiting. A wind-up lamp next to him, lit. Charlie rewinds the lamp whenever it goes out throughout the play. Silence, then noticing something off stage. He jumps up and exits.

CHARLIE  
Hey! Stop!

A short struggle. CHARLIE reenters trying to restrain TEAGUEN. CHARLIE pins TEAGUEN. TEAGUEN sits up. CHARLIE sits again, TEAGUEN next to him.

	TEAGUEN
Why are you up here? It's really early.	
	CHARLIE
I'm waiting.	
	TEAGUEN
For what?	
	CHARLIE
The sun.	
	TEAGUEN
Why?	
	CHARLIE
It's time.	
	TEAGUEN
For?	
	CHARLIE
For me to wait for it.	
	TEAGUEN
But why?	
	CHARLIE
Because I just got off work.	
	TEAGUEN
It's a little late to just be getting off. Or early, I guess. Where do you work?	
	CHARLIE
The Aldi on the corner of 6th and Stevens Street. Why are <i>you</i> awake?	
	TEAGUEN
For the same reasons you are.	
	CHARLIE
Work? I doubt it.	

TEAGUEN

I couldn't sleep.

CHARLIE

I could sleep if I wanted to. But it's time to watch the sun, I always have to make sure it comes up. It's not like I have anything else to do.

TEAGUEN

But I can't. *You* can't.

CHARLIE

I can too.

TEAGUEN

But you don't.

CHARLIE

I mean, you're not wrong.

TEAGUEN

Why not just go then?

CHARLIE

I thought that was obvious. It's pretty, you know? The sunrise.

TEAGUEN

Yeah. I assume you see a lot of them.

CHARLIE

Like I said before, I get off work and come up here every morning. No one has ever been up here before.

TEAGUEN

I usually only see the light streaming in through my blinds.

CHARLIE

Why not open them?

TEAGUEN

They've been closed for so long I'm not sure they'll open anymore. An old tenant probably broke them. Easier to not try at this point. Besides, it's only the sunlight.

CHARLIE

But it's there. It's available.

TEAGUEN

And it always will be.

CHARLIE

But it will never be the same as that morning. Sunrise is beautiful. Just wait, any minute now, it'll-

TEAGUEN

Then I don't want to see it.

CHARLIE

What? Why not?

TEAGUEN

No.

CHARLIE

... Why were you up here?

TEAGUEN

I thought that was obvious.

CHARLIE

As obvious as it may be, I still need to ask.

TEAGUEN

Why? If it's so damn obvious.

CHARLIE

Because.

TEAGUEN

Because isn't an answer!

CHARLIE

Okay!

TEAGUEN

Simply because you feel obligated to ask, for no reason other than asking in itself, doesn't make me want to answer. I want to answer less.

CHARLIE

Okay!

TEAGUEN

How about you answer honestly instead?

CHARLIE

Okay. (Quietly) I don't usually do this.

Sitting. CHARLIE checks his watch.

TEAGUEN

What time is it?

CHARLIE

4:47.

TEAGUEN

A.M. or P.M.?

CHARLIE

A.M.

TEAGUEN

Thanks.

CHARLIE

I assumed you would know it was A.M. if we're waiting for the sun to rise, you know? Or...?

TEAGUEN

Or?

CHARLIE

... Or?

TEAGUEN

Restating that preposition won't change it.

CHARLIE

I don't think "or" is a preposition.

TEAGUEN

What is it then, English Major? A conjunction?

CHARLIE

Not a preposition, that's for sure.

TEAGUEN

How would you know if you don't know what else it is? You have no baseline to go off of. And it still won't change what happened anyways.

CHARLIE

I'm not an English Major.

TEAGUEN

What are you then? You look pretentious enough to be an English major.

CHARLIE

A pianist.

TEAGUEN

You play piano?

CHARLIE

Yes.

TEAGUEN

Do you like it?

CHARLIE

Well, I've always done it. So I-

TEAGUEN

-That's not the same thing.

CHARLIE

But it is.

TEAGUEN

But it's not.

CHARLIE

But it is.

TEAGUEN

Nope.

CHARLIE

It's like arguing with a freakin' child.

TEAGUEN

I *am* a child. You're a child. We're all just children with no idea what to be when we grow up.

CHARLIE

Are you over 18?

TEAGUEN

Are you?

CHARLIE

Yes.

TEAGUEN

Yes.

CHARLIE

It's different. Piano, it's just-It's what I do all day. I have to like it. It has to be different.

TEAGUEN

Nope, it's the same. You only play out of habit. Do you actually like it?

CHARLIE

I guess I do.

TEAGUEN

(makes noise like a game show buzzer) Wrong answer.

CHARLIE

How is that the wrong answer?

TEAGUEN

Everyone is entitled to their wrong opinion.

CHARLIE

It wasn't an opinion! It was a fact! My fact!

TEAGUEN

A weak fact then. "I guess"? *You* should know, it's about you. It's a yes or no answer. By saying "I guess I do," you're actually saying you don't, which, indirectly, is still the right answer. Or opinion. If you meant yes, you would have said it.

CHARLIE

Yes, then! I love it.

TEAGUEN

Yes?

CHARLIE

No.

TEAGUEN

(pointing) Aha!

CHARLIE

Can you be quiet please? I'm used to ending my mornings in silence, and I would appreciate it if you let it stay that way. I can't stand being--manipulated for information!

TEAGUEN

... What time is it now?

CHARLIE

It is...6:32?

TEAGUEN

A.M. or P.M.?

CHARLIE

No way. It isn't up.

TEAGUEN

A.M. or P.M.?

CHARLIE stands and looks out.

CHARLIE

I thought that was obvious.

TEAGUEN

And I thought this was.

CHARLIE

(Still looking) A.M.

TEAGUEN

Isn't it obvious?

CHARLIE

The sun hasn't risen.

TEAGUEN

Bingo.

CHARLIE

Huh. (He sits.) The sun didn't rise today.

TEAGUEN

Everyone deserves a vacation day.

CHARLIE

Can it really be a vacation day if the day never comes? How would that technically work?

TEAGUEN

Good question.

CHARLIE

And the answer?

TEAGUEN

I don't think there is one. *I* don't have one.

She pulls a cigarette out from behind her ear and pretends to light up. CHARLIE watches. TEAGUEN blows “smoke”.

TEAGUEN

Oh, don’t look at me that way. You couldn’t let me have my last adrenaline rush. Nicotine will have to do.

CHARLIE

But, you know that’s bad for you?

TEAGUEN

That’s the point.

CHARLIE

Well, yeah, but-

TEAGUEN

(aside) It’s too bad I don’t have any lighters.

CHARLIE

Why did you do it? Try to do it?

TEAGUEN

I thought that was obvious.

CHARLIE

Because it’s bad for you.

TEAGUEN

Yes.

CHARLIE

But, it’s seriously bad for you. Kill you and all that. *Bad* for you... How could you not worry about your health?

TEAGUEN

How could *you* not worry about the fact that the sun hasn’t risen? Or that you hate the one thing you’ve based your life on? (Another drag)

CHARLIE

I guess *that*’s bad for your health too.

TEAGUEN

Everything is bad for your health.

CHARLIE

Hell, even when the sun rises it’s bad for your health. More than 4 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year.

TEAGUEN

Lucky bastards.

CHARLIE



My aunt had skin cancer... I wasn't allowed to talk about her at home.

TEAGUEN

Then you still shouldn't to me, but I'm thinking you'll talk anyways.

CHARLIE

Will you listen?

TEAGUEN

(Another drag.) As long as we're both here. I guess. I wouldn't have to do this if you hadn't panicked and been a hero, but yeah. Fine.

CHARLIE

I hated her.

TEAGUEN

Oh.

CHARLIE

I hated her and she knew it. She smelled like molasses and pipe tobacco and the way the air feels after it rains. Humid. And kind of, like, worm-y. But you could smell the sun on her too. Years of driving her truck with one window down left her smelling like the happy springtime you see in those dumb cartoons... The window down is what got her. The sun fried one side of her face.

TEAGUEN "puts out" cigarette.

It gave her an ugly mole, made her look like a witch. So when they had to cut up her face, everyone was kind of glad, you know? Because she didn't look like a witch anymore.

TEAGUEN

Maybe I should be a truck driver too.

CHARLIE

She survived. But didn't drive trucks anymore after that. I wish she had died though. Her and her witch face and her witch fingers. Like the witch from Hansel and Gretel. Fatten children up, seduce them with sweets, do what she wants to them. I hated her for it... Do you hate me?

TEAGUEN

I thought that was obvious.

CHARLIE

She's dead now.

TEAGUEN

Good.

CHARLIE

Yeah, it was a good day. The food at the service was pretty spectacular too. They had mini quiches.

TEAGUEN

That does sound pretty good.

CHARLIE

People had eaten most of the cheese ones by the time I made it to the buffet table. Which was disappointing. Cheese is always my favorite.

TEAGUEN

Just eat one of the others next time, sausage quiche is delicious.

CHARLIE

I'm vegetarian...

TEAGUEN rises.

CHARLIE

Where are you going?

TEAGUEN

The same place you did.

CHARLIE

Don't go too far.

TEAGUEN

You wouldn't mind if I did. It'll give you another excuse to tackle me, right?

CHARLIE

What are you going to do?

TEAGUEN

Figure out why the sun isn't here.

CHARLIE

We can't know that. It's literally the damn sun.

TEAGUEN

We can if we try hard enough.

CHARLIE

Don't try it.

TEAGUEN

I already have.

CHARLIE stands.

CHARLIE

No.

TEAGUEN shoves CHARLIE.

TEAGUEN

You had no right! No right to stop me!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

TEAGUEN

Wasn't it obvious?!

CHARLIE

I'm sorry!

TEAGUEN

Why did you have to be here?

CHARLIE

Why did *I* have to be here? I'm always here! I'm always here over and over and over again! Why did *you* have to be here?

TEAGUEN

It was my turn! My time! I live here too, you know!

CHARLIE

*Live* here? It's my spot! My roof! My morning sunrise, and now you've even taken *that* from me! It is still. Not. Up!

TEAGUEN

I don't control the planets! God, man, you need to calm down.

CHARLIE

Seriously?!

TEAGUEN

Seriously.

CHARLIE

The sun hasn't risen, you screwed up my morning, I haven't slept, and you're telling me to calm down?! What gives you the right? After all I've done? For you?

TEAGUEN

I *knew* you hadn't slept.

CHARLIE

Of course you do! I told you that!

TEAGUEN

But you also told me you could have. Which is it? ... It really isn't there.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

TEAGUEN

(Looking out at the audience; maybe a fourth wall break. Maybe she wanders out.) If it really isn't, then what are they doing?

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

TEAGUEN

Nothing... They're doing nothing.

CHARLIE

Well, they're obviously doing something if you feel the need to mention it. Probably going to work. It might be about that time. People exist outside of us, you know.

TEAGUEN

They're doing nothing.

CHARLIE

It has to be something.

TEAGUEN

The something is nothing, Mr. Piano-Player. They're carrying on, like nothing is happening. They're doing nothing and the sun hasn't risen!

CHARLIE

(beat) What if it's just us?

TEAGUEN

Just us?

CHARLIE

Just us.

TEAGUEN

Why us that can't see it? That's not possible.

CHARLIE

Maybe plausible. It's our most feasible explanation. Everyone else is just doing nothing, scurrying around like ants from all the way up here.

TEAGUEN

Not really. If it's only us-

CHARLIE

Then back to the same question! We just keep going in circles and circles all damn morning! ... Morning? Night. No, morning. It's just so *dark* out here.

TEAGUEN

Why us.

CHARLIE

Isn't it obvious?

TEAGUEN

But why?

CHARLIE

We already went over this. Neither of us know.

TEAGUEN

But why don't we know?

CHARLIE

That is a ridiculous question.

TEAGUEN

So what is your equally ridiculous answer?

CHARLIE

I don't want an answer. I don't want to answer.

TEAGUEN

Why?

CHARLIE

Because I want to go to bed! I want the sun to rise, I want to go back downstairs, I want the ridiculous chain of events that have made up this morning to end so I can go to school and go to work and watch the sun rise again tomorrow.

TEAGUEN

That sounds tedious. What apartment number are you?

CHARLIE

507.

TEAGUEN

709.

CHARLIE

Oh, you're right next to John.

TEAGUEN

John? Who's John?

CHARLIE

The guy in the apartment right next to yours.

TEAGUEN

With the cat? I like that cat. He's friendly. He drools when you pet him.

CHARLIE

No, that's Sarah's dog.

TEAGUEN

Sarah? That cat drools too. Cats can be friendly.

CHARLIE

Don't get defensive. She has a Saint Bernard named Beasley. So he kind of drools all the time I guess.

TEAGUEN

Stop guessing!

CHARLIE

Sorry!

TEAGUEN

Stop being sorry! Just know!

CHARLIE

But I can't know!

TEAGUEN

*I can.*

CHARLIE  
You can't either! No one can only know!  
TEAGUEN  
We can try! What else is there to do?  
CHARLIE  
I thought that was obvious.  
TEAGUEN  
Yeah... I'm tired.  
CHARLIE  
Why not go to sleep?  
TEAGUEN  
I tried to.  
CHARLIE  
I'm... sorry to stop you.  
TEAGUEN  
Don't be sorry.  
CHARLIE  
I'm sorry.  
TEAGUEN  
It's okay. It's not your fault.

Silence. TEAGUEN holds CHARLIE's hand.

TEAGUEN  
"This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a whimper."  
CHARLIE  
What?  
TEAGUEN  
T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*.  
CHARLIE  
Why do you say that?  
TEAGUEN  
Where did it go? It didn't explode. It's just entirely gone.  
CHARLIE  
*The Hollow Men?*  
TEAGUEN  
Yeah. What about it?  
CHARLIE  
Hollow.

TEAGUEN  
I like that word.  
CHARLIE  
Why?  
TEAGUEN  
It's accurate. I mean, say it, first. Hollow. Hollow. It even sounds like, like what would happen in an empty space. It moves from the back of your throat to the front of your mouth and then out of your lips. It's *made* of all our empty spaces.  
CHARLIE  
Hollow.  
TEAGUEN  
Hollow. You're hollow. I'm hollow.  
CHARLIE  
Hollows can be filled. We could be more than that.  
TEAGUEN  
I've tried that already.  
CHARLIE  
We've both tried that already.  
TEAGUEN  
I thought that was obvious.  
CHARLIE  
... Why are you holding my hand?  
TEAGUEN  
Because.  
CHARLIE  
Because isn't an answer. I thought we were past-  
TEAGUEN  
I wanted to, okay?  
CHARLIE  
Why?  
TEAGUEN  
I like it. Kind of, fills all those holes, right? I don't have it often, didn't have it often.  
CHARLIE  
From?  
TEAGUEN  
Anyone.  
CHARLIE  
What about your parents?  
TEAGUEN

Not around.

CHARLIE

Where were they?

TEAGUEN

Hell if I know.

CHARLIE

I feel that.

TEAGUEN

I didn't.

CHARLIE

Clearly. You always hear about how depriving children of touch can lead to problems later in life.

TEAGUEN

Don't be rude.

CHARLIE

Are you kidding?

TEAGUEN

Do I look like a kid?

CHARLIE

Well, you are over 18.

TEAGUEN

(Extends hand) I'm Teaguen. Teaguen Clay.

CHARLIE

(shakes hand) Charlie. Charlie Dunn.

TEAGUEN

My sister liked a boy named Charlie once... He broke her heart.

CHARLIE

How did he manage that?

TEAGUEN

He thought she hated him.

CHARLIE

She didn't?

TEAGUEN

No one but herself.

CHARLIE

I suppose so. How would he even know?

TEAGUEN

He wouldn't. Didn't give her a chance.

CHARLIE



If you think someone hates you, why would you?

TEAGUEN

Give them chances?

CHARLIE

Yes, chances.

TEAGUEN

Maybe he took it.

CHARLIE

Maybe he did. Maybe he hoped she would take a chance too. Maybe we could. You could.

TEAGUEN

But she still didn't hate him.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

TEAGUEN

So, your aunt...?

CHARLIE

Yes, she did. That kind of... never really stops hurting. It's more like, grief? I think. Except you aren't mourning anything but yourself. But you can't mourn yourself, because that's selfish. It's pathetic. It's everything you avoid, but you just go day after day grieving what might have been.

TEAGUEN

I'm really sorry. I know there isn't much else to say but-

CHARLIE

Then don't say it.

TEAGUEN

I understand though.

CHARLIE

Do you?

TEAGUEN

Talking helps. I guess. I mean, I guess it didn't for me. It might for you though.

CHARLIE

Please. (beat) Why did you ask? I thought you didn't want me to-

TEAGUEN

I don't know.

CHARLIE

Why isn't it up?

TEAGUEN

What time is it?

CHARLIE

It's only... 6:59.

TEAGUEN

A.M.?

CHARLIE

A.M.

TEAGUEN

It's getting colder.

CHARLIE gives TEAGUEN his jacket. Maybe more. They are comfortably close with one another.

CHARLIE

I thought that was obvious.

TEAGUEN

It is, but I said it anyways.

CHARLIE

Tension breaker?

TEAGUEN

No. Nothing but a statement.

CHARLIE

Why?

TEAGUEN

You seem to like it more when I talk. You're more comfortable.

CHARLIE

Are you sure?

TEAGUEN

Yes.

CHARLIE

You can't be comfortable with that though.

TEAGUEN

But I can try.

CHARLIE

But you stopped trying.

TEAGUEN

Yet I'm still here.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. You were right.

TEAGUEN

It's okay.

CHARLIE

It's my fault though.

TEAGUEN

Definitely. But I think that's okay.

CHARLIE

It's okay.

TEAGUEN

It is. It actually is this time.

CHARLIE

How long did it take you?

TEAGUEN

Take me?

CHARLIE

To try.

TEAGUEN

Depends on your perspective. And it looks like I'm trying something else now.

CHARLIE

You are. I think we both are.

TEAGUEN

Even a stopped clock is right twice a day. One in the morning and once at night. It's...  
semidiurnal. High tides and low tides. Maybe this surge is looking up.

CHARLIE

A.M. or P.M.

TEAGUEN

A.M. or P.M.

CHARLIE sits next to TEAGUEN. A beat. CHARLIE holds TEAGUEN's hand.  
Both look out waiting. Or not. Lights out.

END