

Downtown Theatre

by

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Cast of Characters
(2M)

MIKEY: Younger, eager to impress.
CHUCK: Older, not easy to impress.

Scene

Some years in the future, in a theatre buried under rubble.

Logline

Downtown Theatre tells the story of two workers excavating an old theatre in post-apocalyptic Manhattan, and takes place entirely by the light of the actors' headlamps.

Production History

Downtown Theatre was originally produced in 2010 as part of EndTimes Productions' Vignettes for the Apocalypse. The enclosed script has been edited for running time.

NOTES

TIME: Some years in the future.

PLACE: A downtown theatre, buried under rubble.

Any set may be used, but none is required.

The theatre remains dark throughout the piece.

DOWNTOWN THEATRE

The stage is dark.

From the rear of the audience, a pair of lights approach slowly, sweeping around erratically.

Gradually two voices are heard: CHUCK (older) and MIKEY (younger). They speak in thick Brooklyn-ese.

MIKEY

Hey. How deep ya think we are?

CHUCK

Gotta be half-mile, at least.

MIKEY

I don't like being this deep.

CHUCK

Whattaya, scared?

MIKEY

Ya hear things in training-

CHUCK

Ah, that'sall a buncha bullshit.

MIKEY

But they said this far from the surface-

CHUCK

You got your radio?

MIKEY

Sure, but-

CHUCK

Then fuhgeddaboutit.

The door opens.

Lights bounce around the space.

MIKEY

The fuck is this?

CHUCK

The fuck is this? 'sa fuckin the-A-ter!

MIKEY

A the-A-ter?

CHUCK
Yeah, a the-A-ter. Whattaya, moron?

MIKEY
Zip. I never seen a the-A-ter!

CHUCK
You never seen a the-A-ter?

MIKEY
Never. I never seen a the-A-ter.

CHUCK
Well. Now you seen one.

Two men in HEADLAMPS enter.

They wear hardhats, perhaps.

The headlamps sweep over the audience.

MIKEY
It's kind of a dump.

CHUCK
Ya gotta imagine it in its prime.

MIKEY
I mean this place is seriously crash.

CHUCK
Seriously what, now?

MIKEY
Crash, you know. Messed up.

CHUCK
Oh sure. Yeah it's crash all right. Real crash.

MIKEY
What's this?

Mikey climbs on stage.

CHUCK
You kidding me?

MIKEY
What.

CHUCK
'at's da friggin' stage!

Chuck joins him.

MIKEY

Oh, zip. Where's the screen?

CHUCK

The screen?

MIKEY

Yeah, you know. The screen.

CHUCK

There's no screen.

MIKEY

So whattaya watch?

CHUCK

You watch *actors*.

MIKEY

Real actors?

CHUCK

Real actors.

MIKEY

They stand on the stage?

CHUCK

They stand right on the stage.

MIKEY

With you sittin there?

CHUCK

You are sittin right there.

MIKEY

Zip! I never seen a famous actor before.

CHUCK

Oh they're not *famous*, these actors. Not in a the-A-ter this size, anyways.

A half-beat.

MIKEY

How'd ya control em?

CHUCK

Ha?

MIKEY

Where's the controls?

CHUCK

You are one friggin' moron, kid. You know that?

MIKEY

Well you don't just sit there and *watch* em.

CHUCK

Sure ya watch 'em! Watch 'em, listen to 'em.

MIKEY

And whatta they do? They talk?

CHUCK

Yeah, they talk. What'sa matta whichyoo?

MIKEY

And you just *sit there*?

CHUCK

Ya just sit there.

MIKEY

Sounds boring.

CHUCK

Yeah.

MIKEY

Like super boring.

The headlights play over the audience.

CHUCK

I ain't gonna lie to ya, kid -- it's pretty boring.

A half-beat

MIKEY

Are they good-lookin at least?

CHUCK

Nah.

MIKEY

Sheesh!

CHUCK

Yeah.

A long beat. They look around the audience.

MIKEY

Like watchin paint dry!

CHUCK

Huh?

MIKEY

Boring.

CHUCK

Oh, right.

Another long beat.

MIKEY

I wouldn't do it.

CHUCK

I *couldn't* do it.

MIKEY

Yeah I couldn't sit in this crash dump watchin that.

CHUCK

No, you idiot. I could watch. 'Course I could watch! I couldn't get up there in fronna all those people.

MIKEY

Why not?

CHUCK

You kidding? I don't even like talkin video to my kids.

MIKEY

You don't like talkin video?

CHUCK

No, I don't like talkin video.

MIKEY

Everybody likes talkin video!

CHUCK

Not me, all right? I don't like it.

MIKEY

I love talkin video.

CHUCK

Are we done with this, kid?

Mikey produces a phone-like device.

MIKEY

Look at that. I got no reception down here.

CHUCK

Huh. I guess we're too deep. Ya got voice?

MIKEY

Nope, no voice. Chuck I ain't even got position lock. How we gonna get back to the surface?

CHUCK

Relax kid, willya? I been doin' this for a minute.

Chuck sits down.

MIKEY

Whattaya doin'?

CHUCK

I'm takin a nice long lunch, that's what I'm doin.

MIKEY

But we gotta get back to the office with a report-

CHUCK

We're off the grid, kid! Why d'ya think we came down here? Now we have ourselves a nice- long- lunch. When we're done, we go back to the office and file the same report we always do. No activity, no sightings, nuttin.

MIKEY

Ziiip! You have been doing this for a minute.

CHUCK

I know the old city like the backa my hand. I used to come down here all the time before the infestations.

MIKEY

Long as you know your way out.

CHUCK

Fuhgeddaboutit.

Sandwiches are produced.

MIKEY

That looks good.

CHUCK

What you got there looks good.

Food is bitten, chewed.

Appreciative, mouth-full sounds.

MIKEY
Mmmm.

CHUCK
Mmm-hmmm.

A beat.

MIKEY
You ever seen one?

CHUCK
Not in a very long time. I think they're all dead.

MIKEY
Or hiding.

CHUCK
Some guys in the 44 stumbled into a massive nest a few years back. Terrible. Took four teams to clear it. But ever since, we been down to one or two sightings a month. And that could just be shadows. You ask me? They're dead. All of 'em.

A beat. They eat in silence.

MIKEY
I hadda aunt used to be on stage.

CHUCK
Yeah?

MIKEY
Oh, yeah. Aunt Gretchen. Aunt Gretchen, used to be on stage. I remember it very clearly. When I was young my mother- every time we saw her, she'd tell me, "She used to be on stage, that one! That one was on stage!"

CHUCK
Heh. That one.

MIKEY
Yeah. Everybody was "that one" to my mother.
(impersonating)
"That one's a good girl, Mikey. You hang on to that one!" "That one's got a funny look, don't trust her!"

CHUCK
"That one."

MIKEY

Yeah, Aunt Gretchen. "That one used to be on stage."

They continue eating in silence.

Chuck looks out at the audience.

CHUCK

I couldn't. I couldn't do it!

MIKEY

Betcha could.

CHUCK

No way. No freakin' way. I'd be too scared.

MIKEY

You could do some now.

CHUCK

Huh?

MIKEY

Ga'head. Do a little somethin.

Chuck stands up.

Mikey shines his headlight on him, like a spot.

CHUCK

(dramatically)

"To be? Or not to be. THAT is the-

A loud SCURRYING from the back of the audience.

Both men jump to their feet, alert.

MIKEY

Shit! You hear that?

CHUCK

Shhhh. Prob'ly just a rat.

MIKEY

Sounded bigger than a rat to me.

CHUCK

Me too.

MIKEY

We should go up a level. Radio back to the office.

CHUCK
Nah. Nah, that was a rat.

MIKEY
You sure?

CHUCK
Yeah. Smelled the food.

MIKEY
Oh, sure. Zip.

CHUCK
What does that mean, "zip."

MIKEY
It means, you know. Zip. Like, zip. Like, "that's zip."

CHUCK
You mean like, "cool?"

Mikey laughs.

MIKEY
Cool!

CHUCK
What?

MIKEY
You sound like my grandpa! "Cool."

CHUCK
You're a friggin moron, you know that?

MIKEY
(like "chill out")
Hey, space.

A piercing SHRIEK brings them to their feet.

CHUCK
The fuck was that?

Mikey starts trying to work his radio.

MIKEY
Delta three-six-eight, Delta three-six-eight, come in?

*Chuck looks out at the audience, his LIGHT
SWEEPING SLOWLY over them.*

CHUCK
Shhh-shh-shh...

MIKEY
Delta three-six-eight this is Tango two-four-niner,
we're in C quadrant with a sighting, repeat we have a
sighting-

CHUCK
Turn that fuggin thing OFF, willya?

MIKEY
Chuck we gotta-

Another SCRAMBLING sound.

CHUCK
Come on!

They start for the door.

When they are nearly out, Chuck SCREAMS.

A SCUFFLE, punctuated by an AIR HORN.

Silence. Finally Mikey's headlamp clicks ON.

MIKEY
Chuck! Chuck, where are you?

Chuck GROANS.

Mikey's light finds him on stage.

MIKEY
You okay? Hey! You all right?

CHUCK
I'm awright, I'm awright.

MIKEY
Did it get you?

CHUCK
I think so. On the leg.

Mikey's headlamp illuminates his leg.

His pants are ripped and bloody.

CHUCK
(his leg)
How's it look?

MIKEY

Crash. Real crash.

CHUCK

We shouldn'a come down here. I'm sorry, kid.

MIKEY

Fuhgeddaboutit. Oh, no!

CHUCK

What?

MIKEY

They got your sandwich.

CHUCK

(forces a chuckle)

Between that and my leg, they's eatin' like kings.

MIKEY

That's good. It means they won't be back.

(to his radio)

Delta three-six-eight, this is Tango two-four-niner, I got a man down in C quadrant. Repeat: man down.

CHUCK

I never heard of em attackin like that. Outta the blue, like that?

MIKEY

Me neither.

(to radio)

Delta three-six-eight, do you copy?

Delta-three-six-eight?

CHUCK

Why you think they did that, Mikey?

MIKEY

I don't know. But the sound scared 'em off, you'll be safe here. I'm gonna go up a level, see if I can get service. You keep your hand on that leg. Okay?

CHUCK

Wait. Don't leave me here, kid--

MIKEY

I'll be right back. If you need me, just use this.

CHUCK

Wait a minute, kid-- don't leave me here alone. Please!

But Mikey is gone, and the LIGHT is gone with him.

CHUCK
Mikey?

Silence.

CHUCK
Zip.

Chuck gets up, slowly. He finds his headlamp.

He turns his headlamp on, limps around the stage.

CHUCK
Friggin kid. Don't know what a the-A-ter is? Moron!
Nah. He'll be fine. He'll get service again in the B
quadrant. If he can find it. Oh, crash! Mikey! MIKEY?

A SCURRYING sound from the audience.

Chuck moves toward it.

CHUCK
Mikey? That you?

He sweeps the audience with his light.

Another SCURRYING.

He turns off his light.

He sounds the AIR HORN repeatedly.

CHUCK
Mikey! Mikey come back! 'sa friggin NEST!!!