

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM BEING A ZOMBIE

A SHORT PLAY BY
Jason Pizzarello



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450 Seventh Ave, Suite 809
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toll-free phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY
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*This play is dedicated to my wife, Maria. Thanks for your undying support.
If you become a zombie before me, you can totally eat my brains.*

Cast of Characters

This play can be performed with as few as 5 actors and as many as 45. See additional Casting Notes that follows.

List of the scenes with characters:

All I really need to know I learned from being a zombie. (Intro)

ZOMBIE

Accept your fate.

ZOMBIE ENSEMBLE

Brains aren't everything.

BECKY (ZOMBIE)

SHAUNA (ZOMBIE)

CHERYL

Innocence is meant to be lost.

ZOMBIE TEEN

There is no normal.

TEACHER

MOTHER

FATHER

Don't sweat the small stuff.

ZOMBIE DUDE/DUDETTE

You are what you eat.

ZOMBIE

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

ZOMBIE ENSEMBLE

There's always time for a bad joke.

ZOMBIE

Count your blessings.

YOUNG ZOMBIE WOMAN

Family matters most(ly).

FATHER

MOTHER

SCOTTY

JANIE

ZANE (ZOMBIE)

Kindness is contagious.

ZOMBIE ENSEMBLE

SICK ZOMBIE

Don't let yourself be buried...in work.

JIM (ZOMBIE)

STEVE

Everyone deserves a second chance.

ZOMBIE BUSINESS PERSON

There's more to life than life.

ZOMBIEENSEMBLE

Casting Notes

There are a few “zombie ensemble” scenes that use 8 zombies, but this ensemble can be 4 instead, if needed. Or more. If you really wanted to expand the cast, three different ensembles could be used for each of the scenes. There are also miscellaneous zombies that can come from the ensemble or be cast separately.

Doubling is certainly possible. The only scene that requires five characters is “Family matters most(ly)”.

Directors should feel free to change the gender of the characters as needed and the corresponding pronouns to make it work. The only scene that works best with the genders as written (except for Scotty) is “Family matters most(ly)”. This is essential to keep the focus of the conflict on Zane being a zombie.

Production Notes

The play is meant to be flexible. Scenes could be cut to fit the desired time. However, cuttings within the scenes themselves is not permitted without permission.

The set should be simple. The most important element is the titles.

The titles of each scene should be projected on the back wall or displayed with a sign. (And changed for each scene.) These will also serve as transitions in lieu of blackouts.

Other than that, the requirements are minimal. A table and chairs (for the family scene) can also be used for the parent/teacher conference.

In the original workshop, some of the scenes were set to music, with one zombie at a piano. The “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” scene was even turned into a song. The play is meant to have this kind of flexibility.

Note about the Zombie Ensemble

The “Zombie Ensemble” can also be considered to serve as a traditional Greek chorus. Originally, a classic Greek chorus was made up of a unified group of performers representing a collective voice on the dramatic action. Later on, in the comedies, the members of the chorus expanded, ditched the unified voice, and used several techniques, including singing, dancing, narrating, and acting. This varied, comedic approach is closer to how the “Zombie Ensemble” tackles the play’s themes and reflects on the dramatic action.

Original Director Note

We all have a little bit of zombie in us.

I have always been a bit of an outsider. A bit of an “other.” First of all, I am half-black, half-white and 1/16th Cherokee Indian. (Zombie math doesn’t always add up.) Second, I am a queer. Third, I am a hard-core theatre artist. That said, I have always felt a part of these large, raucous yet continually-silenced minorities that seem somehow eternally condemned to the dirty underbelly of American society.

All I Really Need to Know I Learned From Being a Zombie is a true modern throwback. It is a cross between *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* and the *Twilight*s and *World War Z*’s of today. In the tradition of great zombie flicks, it is both intimate and wildly epic. It touches on the profound, universal themes of gender, race, stereotype, family and death, yet at the same time it is just a hilarious, little play about zombies and humans run amok.

I love this play, and I think it truly has a future as a Rocky Horror-style high school musical. Jason’s text is both quirky and profound. It is at once a reflection and an offering of an inevitable path forward toward diversity and acceptance. Hopefully, this will be just one more step in a long history for this show.

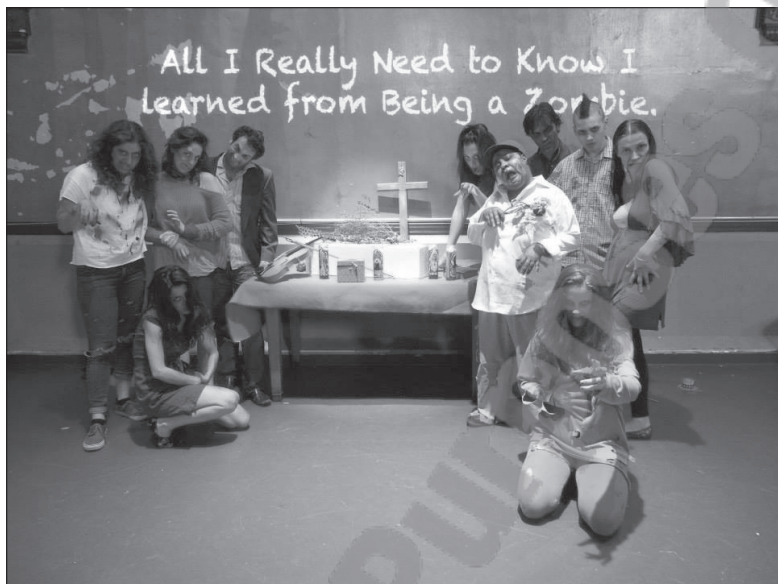
—Damen Scranton, June 14, 2013

Acknowledgments

All I Really Need to Know I Learned From Being a Zombie originally received a stage reading, directed by Amanda Hinkle, and subsequently, a workshop production, directed by Damen Scranton, at Irondale Ensemble in Brooklyn, New York as part of their Play Project on June 14-15, 2013. The Dramaturg was Artistic Director Jim Niesen and the Production Manager was Michaelangelo DeSerio. The ensemble cast was as follows:

Kate Braun
Meredith Cody
Michael Gabriel Goodfriend
Jessi Gormezano
Katie Kopajtic
Patrena Murray
Vaishnavi Sharma
Darrell Stokes
Oskar Strautmanis
Laura Wickens
Oonagh Wickens

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The cast of *All I Really Need to Know I Learned From Being a Zombie*, Irondale Ensemble, Brooklyn, New York (2013).

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM BEING A ZOMBIE

by Jason Pizzarello

*(A ZOMBIE walks across the stage, toward the audience.
He is the walking undead stereotype: Arms out in front of him,
groaning and moaning, head cocked to the side, mouth agape,
trance-like—*

But then he stops. Drops his arms and straightens up.)

ZOMBIE. I bet that's what you think zombies are like.

(Shakes his head:)

No one likes to be stereotyped.

Stereotypes are ugly.

And your uncouth sensibilities offend me.

Everyone thinks being a zombie is easy.

They think we're just soulless meandering corpses,
bereft of consciousness and self-awareness.

That we don't struggle

with our own fears

and desires

and missed opportunities,

Lost loves

and unfulfilled dreams.

You wanna know what's easy?

Being dead is easy.

Being alive is easy.

But being both? Ay, there's the rub.

We're not mindless dullards.

We're capable of complex thoughts

and an extraordinary array of emotions.

We straddle the two worlds

of life

and death,

and draw our knowledge from both.

In fact,

All I really need to know

I learned from being a zombie.

*(A person whistling [non-zombie] walks across and exits. The
ZOMBIE watches him. Beat.)*

ZOMBIE. Now if you'll excuse me,

I'm going to go eat that person's brains.

(He runs out after the person.)

(End of scene.)

Accept your fate.

(An ENSEMBLE of eight zombies, serving as a Greek Chorus [see production notes]. Could also be played as though they're in a group therapy meeting, in a semi-circle of chairs with notepads and stale coffee. Or as if it's an old-fashioned, industrial-style training video)

(Note: Each ZOMBIE is represented by a number. But doubling is certainly possible, as is expanding the number of roles by dividing up the dialog.)

1. Just like with most traumatic events
2. becoming a zombie
3. is a test of your emotional, physical and spiritual strength.
4. Truly accepting what has happened
and being able to move forward with your new life
5. doesn't happen right away.
6. To say the least,
it takes some getting used to.
7. Every new zombie will go through five distinct stages following
their transformation.
8. First, of course, is
Flat out

ALL. Denial.

(ZOMBIES 1 and 3 turn to ZOMBIE 2.)

1. Hey, I just wanna say I'm sorry to hear what happened to you.
3. Yeah, it's too bad you're a zombie now.
2. What're you talking about, I'm not a zombie.
1. Yes, you are.
2. I am not! Who told you that?
3. Uh, you're eating someone's leg.

(ZOMBIE 2 is, in fact, eating someone's leg. He stops.)

2. So? I like legs. I always have. I'm a leg man.
4. Denial can last forever really.
5. Let's be honest, some people will always deny who they really are.
6. But most zombies move from denial on to:

ALL. Anger.

7. Not annoyed. Bristling with rage.
8. Anger can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Sometimes the anger is misplaced.

(ZOMBIE 4 is shaking a cat [stuffed, obviously].)

4. It's all your fault!

(A meow.)

4. Yes, you.
3. Sometimes you're just angry with yourself.

(ZOMBIE 5 is looking in a mirror.)

5. I hate you.
How could you let this happen?
Are you talking to me?
I don't see any other zombies here, you must be talking to me.

3. You may find yourself lashing out at others, especially those close to you.

6. I blamed my mother at first. She gave birth to me after all. If she hadn't done that, this never would have happened. But then I realized that wasn't fair. Someone gave birth to my mother too. So I called up my grandma and really let her have it.

1. When the anger recedes.

2. Which it does.
Eventually.

3. The zombie tries a completely different approach.

ALL. Bargaining.

1. Bargaining involves the hope that the zombie can somehow postpone or delay the inevitable.

2. If only there was some way I could return to living. If only there was a cure.

3. I begged my doctor.
I offered everything I had.

4. I cleared my bank account.

5. I offered my first born.

6. I offered my second born, too. Never liked him anyway.

7. But none of it worked.

8. The doctor told me:

1. You have to learn to accept your fate. Move beyond the denial, the anger, and the bargaining. There's a positive light at the end of the tunnel. But it only comes with the acceptance that a beautiful human being with plenty to offer.

2. No offense, but I'm gonna get a second opinion.

3. Bargaining rarely produces any favorable results.

4. Usually it just leads to:

ALL. Depression.

(ZOMBIE 8 sits, slumped over.)

(ZOMBIE 6 and ZOMBIE 7 turn to him.)

6. Hey look. It's a zombie.

7. He looks so sad.

6. Yeah, you're right.
Let's poke him.

7. Okay.

(They poke him. ZOMBIE 8 doesn't react.)

6. Maybe he's dead. Really dead.

7. Let's poke him again.

(They go to poke him again. ZOMBIE 8 pathetically swipes at them.)

8. Leave me alone!

I'm not in the mood.

Okay? I'm just...not in the mood.

1. When going through this stage, it's completely natural to feel sadness

2. regret

3. fear

4. and uncertainty.

5. But finally, there is:

ALL. Acceptance.

(ZOMBIE 8 is slowly hitting himself in the head.)

(The rest of the ZOMBIES turn toward him.)

1. Hey, man.

(ZOMBIE 8 stops and looks up.)

8. Oh hey.

2. Whatcha doin?

8. Oh. This? Nothing. Just thinking.

3. C'mon, man. Let's go eat some brains.

8. Brains?

4. Yeah, man, we're zombies. Let's go eat some brains.

8. Right. Because we're zombies.

5. It'll be fun.

8. Well, okay, maybe just one.

6. Sure, whatever you want. Just one.

8. Yeah, I'll have one brain. And then I'll stop. I don't need to eat brains all day. I can just have one and that will be that. I'll go home early. Get a good night's rest. And maybe, I'll have a brain or two tomorrow. We'll see.

ENSEMBLE. *(Ad lib.)* Sounds good... Let's go. ...Yeah, sure... Totally.

(They wander off, zombie-style.)

(End of scene.)

Brains aren't everything.

(A school bathroom.)

BECKY and SHAUNA, two cheerleaders, both zombies, groom and inspect themselves in the bathroom mirror. Facing out to us.

They make various noises of disgust as they apply makeup.)

SHAUNA. I don't understand why Mr. Romero is such a tough grader.

BECKY. Yeah, I mean the test isn't even that important. Human anatomy? When are we gonna need that? It's not like we're gonna be

some stupid biomedical engineers or anything. (BECKY *picks at her cheek.*) Ugh. My cheek is falling off again. I look terrible.

SHAUNA. No you don't. You look totally alive.

BECKY. Really?

SHAUNA. Yeah. Really.

BECKY. Thanks. Do you have any more glue?

SHAUNA. Of course.

(SHAUNA *passes* BECKY *a bottle of glue.* BECKY *glues her cheek back on.*)

BECKY. What would I possibly do without you? I'd totally die.

SHAUNA. But we're already dead.

BECKY. Yeah but you know what I mean. I wouldn't be undead. I'd just be plain dead.

SHAUNA. Plain boring.

BECKY. Exactly. You make being undead not worth living for. If that makes sense.

SHAUNA. We should probably go back to class.

BECKY. I really don't want to. Learning is...exhausting. Besides I really don't need to learn anything else. Like I know enough already.

SHAUNA. Enough for what?

BECKY. Enough for life.

SHAUNA. You mean enough for afterlife?

BECKY. Exactly. There are more important things than knowing things. Like your glue.

SHAUNA. It was just some glue, Becky.

BECKY. No! It was more than that. It was... I don't know. Looks are important, too.

(CHERYL, *another student, enters. She is not a zombie.*)

CHERYL. Hi.

(BECKY and SHAUNA *shun her. Embarrassed, she moves down to another part of the mirror and brushes her hair.*)

BECKY. ANYWAY...

SHAUNA. Yeah, anyway.

CHERYL. I'm sorry if I interrupted you.

SHAUNA. We were just talking about—

BECKY. Forget it.

SHAUNA. Yeah, forget it.

BECKY. *(Aside to SHAUNA, but still loud enough for CHERYL to hear:)*
She looks worse than us, and we're rotting.

(SHAUNA can't help but laugh a little.)

CHERYL. I just want you to know that, despite what you may think, I'm not like competing with you.

BECKY. Ha! Yeah we know.

CHERYL. Just because I get better grades. Just cause I aced—

BECKY. Doesn't mean anything!

SHAUNA. At all.

CHERYL. Right. I think it's good you're still on the cheerleading team. Because everyone should excel at something. Even if you're... zombies and all.

BECKY. Yeah, well, brains aren't everything.

CHERYL. I agree.

(SHAUNA smiles at BECKY. An evil idea smile.)

SHAUNA. Yeah but brains can be really good.

(And BECKY knows exactly what she's thinking.)

BECKY. Yeah, I guess they can.

(BECKY and SHAUNA turn to CHERYL. A hungry animal-like look comes over them as they move in closer to her.)

CHERYL. Hey why are you looking at me like that? ...What are you doing?... Get away!...
Ahhhhh...

(BECKY and SHAUNA pounce and eat her.)

BECKY. You know what, Shauna?

SHAUNA. What?

BECKY. I feel smarter already.

SHAUNA. Totally.

(End of scene.)

Innocence is meant to be lost.

(A zombie teenage girl.)

ZOMBIE TEEN. I remember when I got bit.

I was on my way to school
I missed the bus
It was one of those lazy mornings.
Filled with procrastinations.
Counting cracks in the sidewalk.
Anything to avoid arriving at school.
Even a minute delay was like a tiny victory.
So I strolled
and daydreamed.
Of a boy.
Who said hi to me
after fifth period the day before.
He was really...
ugly
actually.
But in a cute kind of way.
If you know what I mean.
Cute enough to be a distraction.

I never saw it coming.
From behind a tree.
That thing.
that person I guess.
Another ugly boy.
Must have been just
waiting.

It hurt at first.
But then the pain
sort of takes over.
And it's a rush.
Before you eventually feel
Numb.
All over.
And then the sleep
the black death
washes over you
like night.
Silence
and
Nothingness.

A void.
Who knows what happens
in the moments
between life
and death
and between
death
and life.
Time
you can't ever get back.
Kind of like the bus I missed.

But then you awaken
everything is bright again.
And
you're never the same.

(End of scene.)

There is no normal.

(A teacher's desk. Two parents sit in front of her.)

TEACHER. Thank you so much for coming in.

MOTHER. Sure. Of course. Anything for our son.

FATHER. So what seems to be the problem?

TEACHER. Right. The problem. It's not a problem per se, it's more, well—

FATHER. If it's not a problem then why are we here?

MOTHER. Let her speak, dear.

TEACHER. Yes, well. Your son has been acting...his behavior has been strange. As of late.

MOTHER. Strange?

TEACHER. Odd.

FATHER. How so?

TEACHER. His behavior is befitting a, typical of a—

FATHER. Of a what?

TEACHER. Of a zombie.

(There's an awkward silence as the parents take this in.)

FATHER. Huh.

MOTHER. How could that be?

TEACHER. Scotty is in that awkward stage between youth and the walking dead. Sometime they just...turn. Like bad fruit.

MOTHER. What makes you think he's a...zombie?

(TEACHER looks in her file.)

TEACHER. Morose demeanor, lack of participation, trance-like boredom, prone to random outbursts, restlessness in class, eating people, late homework.

FATHER. I don't understand. Doesn't one have to die first to be a zombie?

TEACHER. In most cases, yes. Do you recall him ever dying?

MOTHER. Of course not. I mean, he never died, right honey?

FATHER. Not that I can remember.

TEACHER. Are you sure?

MOTHER. Yes. He's alive. I'm sure of it.

TEACHER. He never died at any point?

FATHER. No.

TEACHER. Maybe last summer?

FATHER. Last summer? Why last summer?

TEACHER. Children can be so hard to keep track of in the summer. I know I lost my children one July. For the whole month.

MOTHER. Oh, no, I think we'd remember a thing like that. Wouldn't we, dear?

FATHER. Of course we would.

TEACHER. Then perhaps he was simply infected.

FATHER. How would he be infected?

TEACHER. By the other children most likely. Someone on the playground. During recess. Those kids are passing all kinds of germs. It wouldn't surprise me.

FATHER. You talk as if he caught a cold!

TEACHER. I don't mean to alarm you.

FATHER. You have! Of course we're alarmed. Why wouldn't we be. Our son isn't normal!

(He stands in a threatening pose and grabs his hair.)

I'm gonna pull all my hair out! I'll do it!

MOTHER. He will. He's been bald several times.

TEACHER. Please don't pull your hair out, Mr. Scottysfather. Have a seat.

(FATHER sits, but is hesitant to let go of his hair.)

MOTHER. So, what do we do? Do we commit him to some sort of hospital?

FATHER. Over my dead body!

TEACHER. Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

MOTHER. Oh dear! Do you think he might just...grow out of it?

TEACHER. Unlikely, at this point.

MOTHER. Then what do we do?

TEACHER. Keep an eye on him. That's all you can do. *(Beat.)* But I'd also like to put him on riddlezombian. And start shock therapy right away. Perhaps during recess.

MOTHER. But you're not a doctor, can you do that?

TEACHER. Not legally. But we must take the proper precautions. Like I said, kids this age are going through a lot of changes. One day they're happy as clams and the next day they're biting your neck off.

MOTHER. Haha, yes. Kids. Well I guess you can't be too careful.

FATHER. Let's go, dear. You heard her, there's nothing more to do. He's undead to us now.

MOTHER. We were good parents.

TEACHER. You seem like it.

MOTHER. We were. We really were.

(FATHER takes MOTHER out, comforting her as they go.)

FATHER. There, there. He's going to be fine. *(Beat.)* I mean not really, but we should go anyway. The game's coming on.

(They're gone.)

(The TEACHER shakes her head as she returns to her desk.)

TEACHER. There's one every year.

(End of scene.)

Don't sweat the small stuff.

(A zombie DUDE (or DUDETTIE) meanders out wearing a Hawaiian shirt, shorts, and flip flops. He is the most relaxed zombie you've ever seen. But he's not a stereotype of a surfer dude. He's just a guy who has found his way.)

DUDE. Some say being a zombie isn't easy.

I don't think it could be easier.

Life becomes seriously and permanently less complicated.

Here's my mantra:

Don't sweat the small stuff.

You just gotta embrace the zombie lifestyle.

Don't let anything bother you.

Avoid responsibilities.

You don't need money, man, so close your bank account.

No more withdrawal fees.

Or service fees. Or any fees.

All of these little tasks used to consume my life.

And I'm sure consume yours.

It all adds up. Your life becomes a series of tasks.

Little things like...hygiene.

I don't bathe anymore. Obviously.

Or shave. Or clean my ears. Brush my teeth. Clip my nails.

Flush the toilet. I don't even use a toilet.

Do you know how much I save a year in toilet time?

What about chores? You think I do those?

I don't even have a house. I abandoned it.

Along with my car.

So I don't have to get gas. Or change the oil.

No commuting or traffic jams for me.

Long lines? I walk right by.

I don't have to worry about being late.

Because I don't have anywhere to be.

I mean no one calls me.

I still have my phone. Look at the last ten calls. They're all from my mother. How pathetic is that, right? Once a day she calls.

I think.

Time has lost some of its meaning.

I don't really sleep. I kind of stop and then get up again and keep moving.

Daylight is nice. I like daylight.

The sun still feels very warm on my body and I like feeling warm.

I probably have skin cancer.

But I don't worry about things like cancer.

Or disease.

Or starvation.

Or pain and suffering.

Or joy...

Laughter, success, family, friends.

Like I said, I don't sweat the small stuff.

I don't sweat anything.

I just live.

I just keep on living. That's all I know.

Another day another...

Day.

If you need to...talk...let me know.

Anytime.

Really.

I'll be here.

(End of scene.)

You are what you eat.

(A ZOMBIE comes out. Looks out. Then reconsiders.

Looks back at the screen which reads: "You are what you eat."

Back to the audience.)

(Beat.)

ZOMBIE. Enough said.

(End of scene.)

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

(The ENSEMBLE returns. All are zombies except for 1.

The lines can be divided up however the director sees fit, or can be in order, as written here.)

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

(1 of the ensemble takes off a bandage revealing a nasty, bloody wound. The rest turn and look. Reactions of disgust.)

2. What doesn't kill you...can still kill you, actually.

(1 looks nervous. He quickly puts the bandage back into place.)

1. I'm fine.

3. Because what doesn't kill you...will come back later.

1. Really?

(1 looks around and off stage. He decides to make a run for it. After a moment or two, we hear 1 scream.)

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you...

4. Likely to die at another time.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you...

5. Want to die.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you...

6. Lead a life of fear.

7. Disappointment and regret.

ALL. What doesn't kill you...

8. Makes you bored.

2. Gives you hope.

3. False hope.

4. A second chance.

5. That you may not deserve.

6. Don't deserve.

7. Definitely deserve.

8. Everyone deserves a second chance.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you defensive.

2. Protective.

3. Makes you a survivor.

4. Ha. Survivor. There are no survivors.

5. What doesn't kill you makes you a pessimist.

6. An optimist.

7. The glass is...

8. Not a glass.

2. Broken glass.

3. Shards of glass. Of memories.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you remember.

4. Things you want to forget.

5. Better times.

6. Innocent times.

7. There were never any innocent times.

8. False memories.

2. Rewritten history.

3. Preserved history.

4. Biased. Subjected objectives.

5. Subjective subject subjecting subjects subjectively.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you confused.

6. Questioning your existence.

7. What makes you so special.

8. Fate? Destiny? Luck?

2. None of the above.

3. Totally isolated and meaningless occurrences.

4. There's no such thing as coincidences.

ALL. What doesn't kill you makes you believe.

5. Makes you spiritual.

6. Religious.

7. Full of faith.

8. Curiosity.

2. Wonder.

3. Speculation.

4. Maybe even

5. A miracle.

6. Speechless

7. and

8. In awe.

ALL. What doesn't kill you...makes you alive.

(End of scene.)

There's always time for a bad joke.

(Here's some, told in rapid succession.)

ZOMBIE. What did the zombie call his tax accountant?

...Food.

What did the zombie call the Wall-Mart greeter?

...Also food.

What did the zombie call the call Nobel prize-winning physicist?

...Smart food.

What did the zombie call the kid with bad acne?

...Pizza.

What do zombies call old people in a nursing home?

...Meals on Wheels.

...Two zombies walk into a bar. The first zombie says, "Aaarrrrgggh-hh. Aaaarrrrggghhhh." And the second zombie says, "Aaaarrrrgggh-hhh! Aaaaarrrrgggghhhhh!!" Then they ate the bartender.

...The baby zombie asks her mother "Mommy, do I have daddy's eyes?" The mother says "Yes you do honey! Now eat them before they get cold!"

(A shift.)

Okay.

Have you heard the one about the picnic-ers and the zombie? ...No?

So, there's a young couple having a picnic in a park. It's a nice day and they're unassuming and about as happy as you can be in a zombie apocalypse. So they're enjoying their lunch when suddenly the young woman spots a zombie coming right for them. She jumps up and starts running away. But the young man takes out his running sneakers and starts lacing them up. The young woman screams "What are you doing? The zombie is going to get you!" The young man says calmly "I don't have to outrun the zombie. I just have to outrun you."

(Beat.)

And who said chivalry is dead?

(End of scene.)

Count your blessings.

(A YOUNG ZOMBIE WOMAN enters, limping.

Her left arm is missing a hand [at least].

There's a bandage around her head covering up a missing eye and an ear.

She's damaged goods, even for a zombie.

Around her neck hangs a dirty cloth bag covered in dried blood stains.)

YOUNG ZOMBIE WOMAN. Fourteen.

That was my age when I...
turned.

That was six years ago. So

Now I'm twenty.

I guess.

Not that I've aged in a normal, alive-sort-of-way.

Two thousand one hundred and seventy-eight days.

That's a little over six years.

Six plus fourteen equals twenty.

Right?

Zombies aren't known for their math skills,

But I've always loved numbers.

They're complete in themselves,

But fit neatly together with others.

And when you add them up,

they're more than the sum of their parts.

I'd like to think of myself the same way.

That I'm more than the sum of my parts.

Some days I feel like I'm falling to pieces.

And then I remember that I literally am.

Falling to pieces.

That makes me laugh

most days.

(She takes the bag off from around her neck and opens it up.)

I keep the pieces that fall off in here.

Let's see what we've got.

(She takes a couple of fingers.)

A couple of fingers. Those never stay on.

Here's a toe. Which one is it?

One of the middle ones.

(She takes out an ear.)

Aw. My ear.

I remember when that came off. It's actually a funny story.

Funny if you're a zombie.

But you probably wouldn't get it.

(She shakes the bag and looks in.)

There's a bunch of stuff in there.

(She puts the pieces back in the bag.

She closes it and hangs it back around her neck.

She takes a moment and looks at her body.)

Don't have many pieces left, actually.

But I'm thankful I haven't lost them.

I call the remaining pieces I do have, "blessings."

And I count them every night.

(She points to different body parts.)

One...

Two...

Three...

Four...

Five...

(Then to her teeth:)

Six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

(She smiles with everything she has left.)

(End of scene.)

Family matters most(ly).

(A MOTHER and FATHER and their son, SCOTTY, 12, are in the middle of dinner.

They're all eating and groaning.

They're not zombies, but they almost could be.)

(The FATHER moans and points to something on the table.)

MOTHER. Huh?

(The FATHER moans and points again.)

MOTHER. Use your words, dear.

(He moans again, but manages:)

FATHER. Please pass the salt.

(She does.)

MOTHER. Now I want everyone to be on their best behavior tonight. Son, wipe your mouth.

(He does.)

Wipe your cheek.

(He does.)

Just wipe your whole face.

(He grunts and does.)

MOTHER. Janie is bringing a special friend for dinner.

FATHER. Yeah, what's so special about him?

MOTHER. I just mean, I think she has special feelings for him.

FATHER. She's late. So much for first impressions.

MOTHER. I'm sure there's a perfectly reasonable explanation.

SCOTTY. Yeah, like they were making babies.

FATHER. Don't say things like that!

SCOTTY. Why not? Mom was pregnant with Janie by the time she was her age.

FATHER. That's different.

SCOTTY. How was it different?

MOTHER. The times were different. It was a simpler time. People were kind to strangers. Children were innocent.

SCOTTY. Innocence was meant to be lost.

FATHER. I should...punish you in some way.

SCOTTY. So do it.

FATHER. Is this the attitude you take in school, young man?

SCOTTY. Maybe.

FATHER. You know where that's going to get you? Nowheres! And fast. You're going to end up like these other mindless nobodies aimlessly wandering the streets. No goals. No prospects. No future.

SCOTTY. Yeah, Dad, they're called zombies.

FATHER. And I will not let my son end up as one!

SCOTTY. Derrick's parents let him become a zombie.

FATHER. Because they're probably zombies themselves.

SCOTTY. I want to be a zombie.

MOTHER. No you don't dear. Finish your broccoli.

FATHER. I'm not gonna let that happen to us! We're better than that.

MOTHER. That's right. We're not like those zombie families. They probably don't even celebrate Christmas.

FATHER. That's right. Zombies don't have traditions. Because they don't have morals.

MOTHER. They probably don't celebrate Thanksgiving either.

FATHER. Probably not.

MOTHER. Or Easter. Or Independence Day.

FATHER. Right.

MOTHER. Or Groundhogs Day.

FATHER. Okay, Mother. You're getting excitable again.

MOTHER. *(With a twitch:)* Or Flag Day. All good people celebrate Flag Day. Flag Day is important.

(There's a knock on the door.)

FATHER. Mother!

(She snaps out of it. She jumps up to answer the door but before she can: JANIE and ZANE enter.

ZANE is clearly a zombie. MOTHER yelps.)

JANIE. Sorry we're late.

(Awkward silence as they stare at zombie ZANE.)

JANIE. Everyone this is Zane.

(They can't stop staring.)

(SCOTTY has a giant smirk on his face.)

SCOTTY. Oh this is going to be good.

JANIE. That's my little brother, Scotty. And this is my mother and my father. I don't know their first names. We just call them mother and father.

ZANE. Nice to meet you both.

(FATHER groans and keeps eating.)

MOTHER. We ate without you cause you were late.

JANIE. Oh that's okay.

FATHER. What's wrong, you don't like to eat?

JANIE. No, we ate earlier.

FATHER. (*Looking at ZANE:*) Yeah, what did you eat?

JANIE. We just grabbed something on the run.

(FATHER *groans.*)

SCOTTY. So how long have you been a zombie?

MOTHER. Scotty! That's rude.

SCOTTY. What? I'm just wondering.

ZANE. No, that's okay. I don't mind. I've been a zombie for about five years.

SCOTTY. Cool. So do you like...eat brains?

ZANE. Sometimes.

SCOTTY. Whoa. What do they taste like?

(FATHER *slams down his fist.*)

MOTHER. So how did you two meet?

JANIE. Well Zane was aimlessly wandering the streets one night and—

FATHER. Typical.

(MOTHER *gives FATHER a little hit, like 'Be polite'.*)

JANIE. (*Ignoring him:*) And I was riding my bike. It was over on Pelham Avenue. Near the old library.

FATHER. You mean the old library before it was destroyed by a zombie attack.

JANIE. That's not true. Where'd you hear that?

FATHER. I have my sources.

JANIE. Anyway I was riding my bicycle and Zane wandered right in front of me. And I swerved and I fell over and I thought he was going to attack me—

ZANE. I wasn't going to. I'd never.

JANIE. Right well I thought he was. Because I didn't know any better. But he was so sweet.

ZANE. You were so sweet.

JANIE. No you were. And he helped me patch up my skinned knee.

ZANE. It wasn't that hard. I just had to ignore the smell of blood.

JANIE. He's a genius with medical stuff.

ZANE. I like it. That's all. It's a hobby.

JANIE. You're so modest. He's studying biomedical engineering. It's true.

ZANE. The field is advancing so quickly I'm just trying to keep up! Actually the biological engineering of living and zombie bodies are much closer than originally thought. Soon we're going to be practically the same! Biologically speaking, of course. The, uh, social differences are still are going to persist, it seems.

JANIE. Not for long.

(JANIE and ZANE kiss noses.

The rest of the table is awkward.)

MOTHER. Well that's a very nice story, Janie. You two seem very... happy.

ZANE. I love biomechanics almost as much as I love your daughter.

MOTHER. Don't they, Father? Seem very happy?

FATHER. Who knows!

JANIE. We know.

FATHER. Who knows!

JANIE. We know we're happy.

FATHER. Who knows what happens in his head. Nothing! Only lust for flesh.

JANIE. And we want you to be happy for us.

MOTHER. Please dear.

JANIE. We're in love!

FATHER. He's a monster!

JANIE. We're getting married!

(Another silence settles over the table.)

MOTHER. Do you celebrate Flag day?

ZANE. Of course.

MOTHER. Oh, good. That's good. See that, Father? He celebrates Flag Day.

FATHER. Who cares about stupid Flag Day?! You and your holidays. He eats brains and craves human flesh, okay? You're going to let our daughter marry a zombie because he celebrates Flag Day.

JANIE. He's no different than us.

FATHER. I won't allow it.

ZANE. We'd really like your permission, Mr.—uh—Mr. Father.

FATHER. Over my dead body! But I'm sure that's exactly how you'd prefer it.

SCOTTY. Yes! Zombie fight.

JANIE. Father, please—

ZANE. I love your daughter, sir. And nothing you say is going to change that.

FATHER. Oh no?

MOTHER. Don't you think this is all a little sudden, Janie?

JANIE. For you. Only because I was afraid to bring him around here knowing how you'd react.

MOTHER. How's it going to work, honey? Does this mean you're going to become a zombie too?

JANIE. Maybe.

MOTHER. And you're okay with that?

JANIE. It doesn't matter, that's all.

MOTHER. What about children? Do you plan on having children?

(JANIE and ZANE smile at each other.)

JANIE. Yes. We do.

MOTHER. Aren't you worried about how difficult their lives are going to be? I mean they won't even really be alive, after all. They'll be half dead.

JANIE. Maybe they will. Times are changing, Mother. Zombies are becoming accepted. It's not like when you grew up and soon it will be even better. No one will think anything of it. The undead and the living will live in harmony.

FATHER. Gobbledegook!

MOTHER. That's a lovely dream, dear. But I'm afraid that's all it is.

ZANE. You know Flag Day isn't the only holiday I celebrate. I also celebrate Christmas.

MOTHER. You do?

ZANE. Sure. And Thanksgiving.

MOTHER. Really? Did you hear that, Father. He celebrates lots of holidays.

FATHER. Who cares.

MOTHER. Well I had no idea zombies celebrated so many holidays.

ZANE. Just as many as you do. I love holidays. Traditions are very important in my family.

MOTHER. I think that's wonderful.

JANIE. See, Mother, they're not that different.

MOTHER. You know, when your father and I first met, he was a zombie.

FATHER. I was not.

JANIE. What?!

MOTHER. Yes he was a zombie in his teenage years.

SCOTTY. Seriously?

FATHER. She's exaggerating.

JANIE. Why did we never know this?

MOTHER. Oh it's not a big deal. He was only a zombie for a few years. He grew out of it.

JANIE. I can't believe it.

ZANE. I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, but once you turn into a zombie you're always a zombie. That's science. You can't simply grow out of it.

MOTHER. Well your father did. Isn't that, right dear?

(FATHER *moans.*)

MOTHER. Use your words, dear.

JANIE. So, what are you saying, Zane?

ZANE. I'm saying your father is...still a zombie.

(FATHER *moans some more.*)

MOTHER. Sometimes he just gets like this. He's in one of his trances. C'mon, Father, tell them how you're not a zombie anymore.

(FATHER *groans and becomes more trance-like.*)

MOTHER. He just needs a lie down.

SCOTTY. Dad, is it true? Are you really a zombie?

(FATHER *doesn't answer.* MOTHER *wipes his mouth.*)

ZANE. (To SCOTTY:) Yes, he is.

SCOTTY. Woah, so wait...that means...that I'm...half zombie!

JANIE. So am I!

ZANE. I knew there was something dead about you.

(JANIE and ZANE kiss.)

JANIE. Mom, how could you not know Father's been a zombie all these years?

MOTHER. Oh I don't know...with the holidays and all, you just get so busy.

JANIE. So, I guess we have your approval, then Father?

(FATHER moans and says something inaudible.)

MOTHER. What was that, dear?

FATHER. (Managing the words:) I'm sorry.

(MOTHER hugs FATHER.

JANIE hugs ZANE.

SCOTTY hugs himself.)

(JANIE lifts her glass to make a toast.)

JANIE. To the dead.

MOTHER. To the living.

ZANE. To the living dead.

(They all drink.)

(End of scene.)

Kindness is contagious.

(A crowd of ZOMBIES all trying to walk in different directions.)

[Note: for each small-scene in this series, the key is going to be directing the audience's focus from the crowd to what's happening in the smaller scene.]

(The crowd is bumping into each other, snarling, throwing dirty looks.

Outstretched, tangled arms.

Some are even pushing each other to get where they want to go.

Granted this is at ambling zombie speed, but still, this is not a friendly scene.)

(One of the zombies turns out and sees:

An OLD LADY ZOMBIE struggling to get past a bump with her walker. She is a zombie, so she just tries over and over again to no avail.

It's a sad sight.

The KIND ZOMBIE decides to help her.

He guides her walker in another direction.

She's free.

The OLD LADY gives him a big zombie smile before she goes off on her way.

The HELPFUL ZOMBIE fades back into the crowd.)

(But another ZOMBIE from the crowd has witnessed this act of kindness.

And is genuinely moved.

She steps away from the crowd to get a better perspective.

She sees a ZOMBIE from the crowd drop their arm on the ground.

They don't notice.

The ZOMBIE watching picks it up and gives it back to the ZOMBIE who dropped it.

The ZOMBIE is ever so grateful.)

(The ZOMBIE with the returned arm sees two ZOMBIE CHILDREN begging for change.

They're clearly malnourished. They hold a sign that says "Will Bite for Food".

He gives his arm one last look before giving it to the starving children.

They greedily nosh.)

(Two other ZOMBIES are shocked to witness this act.

They see a struggling ZOMBIE, legs broken, dragging itself by.

The two ZOMBIES lift the broken ZOMBIE and take her on her way.)

(Another ZOMBIE notices this and then sees a ZOMBIE coughing and wiping his nose.

[The SICK ZOMBIE is the original ZOMBIE who helped the OLD LADY ZOMBIE.]

The NICE ZOMBIE approaches the SICK ZOMBIE and offers him a wrapped cough drop.

Pleasantly surprised, the SICK ZOMBIE takes it and eats.)

(He blows his nose.

Sneezes and coughs.)

(Slowly everyone notices and starts to move away from him.)

(The SICK ZOMBIE notices.)

SICK ZOMBIE. What?

(He's the only one left.)

SICK ZOMBIE. It's not contagious. Really.

(He sneezes again.)

(End of scene.)

Don't let yourself be buried...in work.

(Two guys stand around an office water cooler.

They are both dressed in a typical office attire: shirt and tie.

JIM is a zombie and STEVE is not, although the line has begun to blur.)

JIM. I don't see what the problem is.

STEVE. The problem is that it's unconventional. You can't have someone like Bob in charge of a whole department.

JIM. It's unprecedented, I'll give you that.

STEVE. He simply makes people...uncomfortable.

JIM. What are you gonna do, fire him?

STEVE. Can't do that. You'd have the legal department up in arms.

JIM. Not to mention the equal employment people.

STEVE. And you know half of Bob's department are gonna be replaced.

JIM. Yeah well we don't work for Bob.

STEVE. Maybe that's the problem.

JIM. You said it.

(They drink.)

STEVE. Hey, ya know, I think it's real honorable what you're doing.

JIM. What's that?

STEVE. Coming to work every day, just like the rest of us, even though you're a zombie and all.

JIM. Thanks. I appreciate you saying that.

STEVE. It shows real loyalty.

JIM. From your mouth to the boss's ears, right?

STEVE. It's the kinda stuff that'd make you partner.

JIM. Think so?

STEVE. Definitely.

JIM. I figure I've been a slave to this company for the last ten years, why stop now?

STEVE. Haha. I hope I have your work ethic after I die.

JIM. Actually, you know, it's funny you mention that. I had the most frightening dream last night.

STEVE. Oh yeah? Do tell.

JIM. I dreamed I was...alive. You know alive alive. And I came into work. And I shuffled around, and filed my claims, and managed my accounts, organized my paperwork, answered emails, the whole bit. Right in this office.

STEVE. Kinda like what you do now.

JIM. Yeah but I was alive. Steve, I was alive. I could do anything in the world I wanted and I came to work. In this place. It was terrible.

STEVE. But the rest of us are alive.

JIM. Yeah but not really. You're here.

(They look around.)

STEVE. Yeah, I guess you're right.

(JIM finishes his water and tosses his cup.)

JIM. Well, see you at the noon meeting.

STEVE. Sure. Right. See you then.

(STEVE sips at his water.)

(End of scene.)

Everyone deserves a second chance.

(A middle-aged ZOMBIE in a rumpled, torn business suit.)

ZOMBIE. I'm glad I'm not dead.
Yes, I died. But I consider myself lucky.
I could be totally dead.
Hacked to bits.
Sitting at the bottom of a river.
Bloated and broken.
But I'm not. I'm here.
I'm practically alive.

When I was alive alive
I wasn't a good person.
I was rude to people I knew.
And worse to people I didn't.
Now I realize
You're suppose to be kind to strangers.
Apparently it's contagious.

Unless someone had something to offer me,
I wasn't really interested in their lives.
Everything was a means to an end.
What's my next move?
How do I get more?
How do I get it faster?
How do I beat the other guy?
Everything competitive.
So anxious.
So rushed.
The big race.
What's next?
Never: what's now.
I didn't care about the present.
Couldn't understand it, really. As a concept.

I never really took the time before.
To just watch.
Now I go to the park and sit
and that's all I do.
Quietly appreciate the unappreciated.

A leaf
owned by the wind
that tumbles over itself.

A child
skinning his knee
and crying
and his mother
whose presence alone
stops the crying

Sometimes when it rains
I let it.

It stops, eventually
and the clouds drift away
and the sun dries all...
including me.

Living in the present can be overwhelming.
 It takes an enormous concentration.
 Of patience.
 Almost Zen-like.
 You have to clear your mind.
 And be silent.
 And
 Still.
 And
 Aware.
 Of
 Everything.
 Being *not dead*
 is the best thing that's ever happened to me.

(End of scene.)

There's more to life than life.

*(The ZOMBIE ENSEMBLE is back.
 See previous note about casting choices.)*

1. Shakespeare got it wrong.
2. He said all the world's a stage,
3. And all the men and women merely players;
4. They have their exits and their entrances,
5. And one man in his time plays many parts,
6. His acts being seven ages.
7. Seven. He says.
 But there aren't seven ages.
8. There are eight.
1. Let us pontificate.
2. Let us elaborate.
3. Each age represents a new act in a person's life.
 Shakespeare's seven ages:
4. First age:
 The puking Infant.
- ALL. One.

5. Second age:
The whining Schoolboy.

ALL. Two.

6. Third age:
The woeful Lover.

ALL. Three.

7. Fourth age:
The combative Soldier.

ALL. Four.

8. Fifth age:
The wise Justice.

ALL. Five.

1. Sixth age:
The bespectacled Pantaloon.

ALL. Six.

2. And the seventh age:
The second Child.

3. Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

ALL. Seven.

4. Apparently,
That ends this strange eventful life.

5. But then there is an eighth age, the Bard missed.
After death, he unwitnessed.

6. But we know.

7. We've seen.

8. There's more to life than life.

1. After life:

2. There's the afterlife.

3. No matter what you believe.

4. Heaven.

5. Purgatory.

6. Hell.

7. Dust.

8. Dust to dust.

ALL. The undead.

Eight.

Us.

(End of scene.)

End of Play

(In the original production, the Zombie Ensemble danced off the stage in a funeral march in the spirit of the traditions of New Orleans/Creole music and processions. In a theatrical sense, they took inspiration from the closing songs of Shakesperian comedies.)

Also available at Playscripts, Inc.



Goldilocks on Trial

by Ed Monk

Comedy

45–55 minutes

3 females, 4 males, 17 either
(12–24 actors possible)

Goldilocks is on trial for breaking and entering. Will she be found guilty and sent to prison, or will the truth come out? It's up to Judge Wallabee and some very silly jurors to decide, after hearing testimony from Goldee, the bickering Three Bears, and surprise witness Merwin the Big Bad Wolf, among others...

Saving the Greeks: One Tragedy at a Time

by Jason Pizzarello

Comedy

40–45 minutes

6 females, 8 males

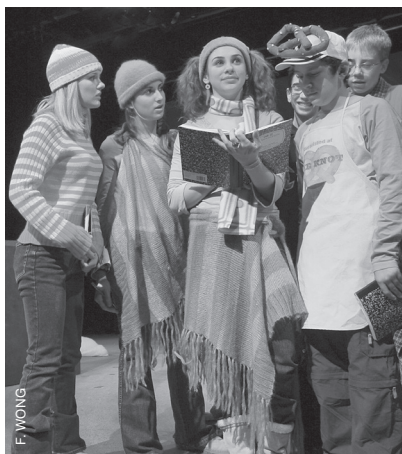
(12–22 actors possible)



In an ambitious plan to bring peace to Ancient Greece, Dialysis and Peon create Betterland, a city where once-doomed tragic characters can start a better life. But this new society of refugees must face enemies and Gods who don't tolerate free will or utopian ideals. Weaving together the stories of Ancient Greek characters from Oedipus to Hercules, this hilarious reinvention of the classics asks the question, "Is it possible to escape your own fate?" (A full-length version of this play is also available.)

Order online at: **www.playscripts.com**

Also available at Playscripts, Inc.



Snow Angel

by David Lindsay-Abaire

Comedy/Drama

60–80 mins

8 females, 8 males

When the quiet town of Deerpoint, Vermont is hit by the biggest blizzard in 107 years, a mysterious girl named Eva steps out of a snow bank and into the lives of 15 confused teenagers who

are asked to help her in her search. What Eva's searching for—and who she truly is—becomes a mystery that baffles, divides, and energizes the teens of Deerpoint. Told through journal entries and interactions among the students over the course of a single snow day, *Snow Angel* is a funny and eerie tale of teen angst, discovery, and the power of believing.

In a Strange Land

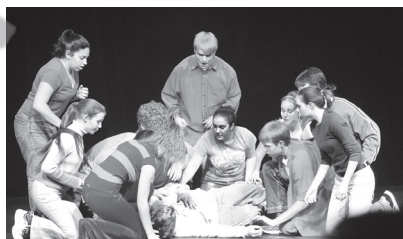
by Alan Haehnel

Comedy

55–65 mins

6 females, 6 males

(gender flexible)



All Tom wanted to do was take a short-cut through the auditorium so he could sign out for a dental appointment. Halfway across the bare stage, though, he finds himself smack-dab in the middle of a strange platoon fighting The Eighth Great War of the Singletery Alliance. In the optional Act II, the tables are turned so that one of the soldiers becomes the stranger, suddenly adrift on a regular high school stage. This absurd battlefield comedy keeps the characters and the audience alike wondering what, indeed, is reality.

Order online at: **www.playscripts.com**