

THE BLACK STAGE

A Play



STEVE GRAY

- *The Black Stage* -

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A word scape that takes a surreal look at the world and its crazy shenanigans.

Setting:

A black stage, bare. Minimal front-on lighting. A faint glow illuminates the shapes of up to seven standing actors dressed in black, in front of this group are three seated figures. Two figures, (S1 - S2) wear grey. (S3) is in the middle of these two, is dressed in white, barefoot, and wears a black hood, holding a black torch vertically pointed straight down at the floor, it's turned off. Menacing dystopian sounds play as the audience enters, deep and foreboding, it then fades out

- Each actor holds a script. They're positioned in a straight line about one metre back.
 - The main group of actors have the same script to follow, although each one reads the lines and statements of the 'Chorus' in varying, random order.
 - Each statement they read has a clear break in between for a silent count of two.
 - They aim to speak at about the same pace.
 - Each back line actor, therefore, selects one line to read, then they all stop for two seconds and continue on.
 - The two actors in grey Speaker one and two (S1 - S2) are seated at either side of the stage facing forward.
 - Speaker three (S3) is in the middle at the front, seated.
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Main Actors:

(Lights up. The Actors are already in place. They quietly begin reading aloud, all at once, randomly emphasising the lines that they might connect with. Their tone ranges from anxious to solemn, confused to outraged. **Chaos reigns.** The volume rises as they read for **30 seconds**. With two second breaks after each group of statements. Voices swell, some whisper, some yell a random line. The noise becomes louder.)

(**10 seconds** of louder chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume of the voices drops to a low murmur and continues, as S1 speaks over the top of them. S1 listens to the murmur for 5 seconds.)

S1:

'What is this, but noise dressed as truth? We speak of despair like it's fashionable, when did silence stop being wisdom?'

Main Actors:

(The background voices hush briefly, for 2 seconds after S1 has stopped, then restart at a murmur and build up in volume, gradually over **30 seconds**.)

(**20 seconds** of louder chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a quiet murmur for **10 seconds**.)

S2:

(S2 starts to speak when the main actors have reached a murmur)

'We mimic comprehension. We throw words like darts. But our aim is absent. Has logic fled the cave?'

Main Actors:

The background voices hush briefly at the end of S2's reading, for 2 seconds, then restart at a murmur and build up for **20 seconds**.)

(**10 seconds** of louder chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a quiet murmur for **10 seconds**.)

S1:

'The horror is not the machete, but the hand that swings it, all while reciting the gospel.'

Main Actors:

(**2 seconds** of silence after S1. Then **20 seconds** of low murmuring voices.)

(The murmurs intensify in speed and volume, chaos reigns for **20 seconds**. The voices quickly fade to nothing. A small brass bell slowly rings twice when the voices stop.)

(The chorus of actors exchange scripts with each other. Randomly they say a line distinctly and wait, allowing another to say a line, the others are murmuring their lines quietly. **20 seconds**. There is silence for **2 seconds**.)

S2:

'I watched the ice melt in real time. The arctic sobs, but we sold more SUVs this year.'

Main Actors:

(The voices restart reading at a murmur for **10 seconds**.)

(**10 seconds** of loud chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur for **10 seconds**. Then **2 seconds** of silence.)

S1:

'Entropy is not evil. It's the nature of the universe. But our disorder appears to be chosen.'

Main Actors:

(They restart reading at a murmur for **10 seconds**.)

(**10 seconds** of chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur over **20 seconds**. Then 2 seconds of silence.)

S2:

'Garage sales of morality. Everything must go. Make an offer.'

Main Actors:

(The background voices hush briefly, for a slow **2 seconds**, then restart at a murmur for **10 seconds**.)

(**10 seconds** of loud chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur for **20 seconds**. Then **2 seconds** of silence.)

S1:

'We studied forces. We mapped motion. But we never asked why we move toward the abyss.'

Main Actors:

(The background voices hush briefly, for a slow 2 seconds, then restart at a murmur for **10 seconds**.)

(**10 seconds** of loud chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur for **20 seconds**. Then 2 seconds of silence.)

S2:

'In Sudan, the rain fell once. In Gaza, it fell red. In Australia, they bartered the bushfires for property value.'

Main Actors:

(The background voices hush briefly, for **2 seconds**, then restart at a murmur. **10 seconds** of chaotic voices.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur for **20 seconds**.)

(The voices rise again, chaos rebuilds. **30 seconds**.)

(Then the volume drops to a murmur for **15 seconds**. Then they stop)

(The main actors gently drop their scripts to the ground and become silent, as if realising some degree of futility. Then **2 seconds** of silence before the next speakers start.)

The three lead players, lit by dim pools of light. Their words are slightly slower, more distinct.

S1:

'I asked questions. Not to lead, only to open the silence.'

S2:

'We built a Republic. But forgot the soul.'

S1:

'There is no nation in compassion, only a species, frightened, proud, and desperately loud.'

S2:

'I touched a glacier once. I still dream of that cold.'

S1:

'We're a miracle of stardust. So why do we act like shadows?'

S2:

'The horror was never out there. It's in the mirror.'

S1:

'An apple falls, and we fall with it.'

S3:

(A loud whisper):

'Maybe next time... we listen.'

S1:

'What light through yonder window breaks?' (Pointing briefly to S3 at middle stage. As S1 - 2 drop their scripts to one side.)

(Everyone on stage looks to where S3 has a torch, which he now turns on.)

S3:

(Waving the torch gently about on the floor in front of him as if they are searching for something. The other actors watch in interest. S3 then faces the audience.)

'Tis only my torch, 'tis not a worthy light to follow, I am merely lighting my own way as I journey through life's maze.'

(S3 then stands and exits stage left using the torch to light their way.)

(The rest lower their heads. Silence falls. Lights dim, for **5 seconds**.)

(S3 returns to centre stage, and invites S1 and 2 to stand, the three bow, then return to their seated position, when the applause fades S3 stands, then turns, and gestures to the main actors to take their bow when S3 is seated.

(As the audience departs the actors remain in place as if they are frozen.)

End.

The main 'chorus' lines.

The president said.

Stolen cars, stolen futures, stolen words.

Gaza bleeds, while satellites blink
indifferently.

Garage sales on stolen land.

Budget blowouts in the palace of reason.

Entangled meanings, like lovers after a
war.

A machete of language hacks at logic.

Genocide, yet we change the channel.

The Pope prays. Who listens?

Electric cars hum over dying rivers.

Ukraine watches clouds for drones.

Nuclear power, nuclear family, nuclear
fear.

Domestic abuse behind dark soundproof
walls.

Is that window open?

Old age, the waiting room of fading
values.

Neil says the universe expands, but what
about us?

Elon, are you brave?

We so desperately care.

Did you sleep well?

Are we having fun yet?

All good things come to those who pray.

Where there is darkness, there is light.

Is there reason in this madding world?

I think therefore I am.

Am I wealthy yet?

I was held wrongly, I now hurt.

Hello, my name is...

I consciously believe.

He's got a gun!

It's all stopped again.

In the absence of any real view.

And here I stand on the edge of a new
beginning.

What rage, what protest, what an illusion.

I came, I saw and then what?

You know I have to.

The cost of living.

Rosebud.

There was that one moment.

Abuse, is that a thing here?

Is there strength in logic?

The language of regret.

Travel, if you wish, then again no.

I only need to be here for a few years.

I then move on, retire, sit back and relax.

Oh I care, I care a great deal, only I don't really care.

Do I have to care?

So there you are all smug and agreeable.

No longer caring is the new me.

Let us be went.

Ah, there you are.

The journey is the ONLY treasure.

The beach beckoned but we did not respond.

Alice? Is that you?

We should hold true to our values.

The former president declared.

Pillaged vehicles, hijacked destinies, and plagiarised thoughts.

Devastation ravages Gaza while orbital tech watches without emotion.

Trading secondhand goods on occupied territory.

Financial ruin inside institutions built on logic.

There was more than just mess.

Mass atrocities occur, but we simply switch stations.

The Pontiff offers his intentions, but is anyone actually receiving them?

Eco-friendly vehicles cruise past collapsing ecosystems.

Eyes in Ukraine scan the overcast skies for incoming unmanned weapons.

Atomic energy, the suburban household, and existential terror.

Abuse hidden away in acoustically isolated luxury.

Intertwined truths, resembling survivors embracing after a conflict.

Brutal rhetoric slices right through rational thought.

Geriatric years serve as antechambers for decaying principles.

DeGrasse Tyson notes cosmic inflation, but what of human growth?

Does sanity exist within this chaotic reality?

Such beauty is extolled.

I fell asleep.

Trapped.

Please help, I am stranded.

It can't last forever.

The aircraft hit with terrifying force.

Cognition validates my existence.

I hold an active, deliberate faith.

Bad history.

Lacking any concrete perspective.

I pause on the precipice of a fresh chapter.

Such fury, such resistance, yet it is all a mirage.

I arrived, I witnessed, but what follows next?

Do you possess courage, and was your
slumber peaceful?

Has the entertainment value kicked in?

Have I reached peak affluence?

The financial burden of surviving.

My tenure is brief; soon I will exit the
workforce, unwind, and rest.

I claim deep investment, though
fundamentally I remain unbothered.

Is emotional investment mandatory?

Is that a bomb I see before me?

You sit there, completely self-satisfied and
compliant.

Apathy defines my current identity.

The shoreline called out, but we ignored
its invitation.

Blessings await the faithful.

Is this a dystopian world?

Why am I not in a hurry?

I stand tall against all odds.

I never liked you.

A bully and a fool.

Don't hold me here or there.

In wonderment we watch.

Are we there yet?

Genocide, deny that.

Every sperm is sacred.

Who would be a female?

Who would be a male?

Illumination coexists with obscurity.

Greetings, I am known as...

Tangled.

You are aware of my obligation.

A final, dying whisper of lost childhood
innocence.

I woke up.

How violent.

Forty two, Is that still relevant?

The vocabulary of remorse.

Journey outward if motivated, or perhaps
remain still.

Allow us to depart.

Is this a genocidian thing?

Number nine.

I am tangled, please help

Greetings, I have located you.

Engagement with the path itself is the sole
reward.

Are you the one from Wonderland?

'**The Black Stage**' by **Steve Gray (2026)**, is an avant-garde, surrealist short play that explores the chaos, apathy, and moral fragmentation of contemporary human society.

Overview of Structure & Mechanics

The play relies heavily on a **chorus-driven, non-linear structure**. It utilises a group of background actors (6 –18) reading identical scripts in a disordered, random manner to create a sonic wall of 'chaos'. This serves as the auditory backdrop for three focal characters: S1, S2, and S3.

- **The Chorus (The Noise):** The chorus lines function like a social media feed brought to life. Jarring political statements, heavy existential dread, pop-culture nods ('Rosebud', 'Elon, are you brave?'), and mundane thoughts clash directly against each other.
- **The Lead Players (The Signal):** S1 and S2 serve as the pseudo-intellectual commentators trying to make sense of the noise, while S3 acts as a brief, minimalist catalyst for quiet reflection.

Core Strengths

- **Powerful Use of Soundscape:** The dramatic shifting of audio levels, surging from chaotic yelling down to an isolated murmur or absolute silence, is an excellent theatrical device. It beautifully mirrors how modern society cycles between collective outrage and sudden, apathetic burnout.
- **Evocative Imagery:** Gray crafts some incredibly punchy, memorable lines. Phrases like *'Garage sales of morality. Everything must go'* and *'The horror is not the machete, but the hand that swings it while reciting scripture'* carry sharp, distinct thematic weight.
- **The 'Linguistic Echo' Design:** The backend text reveals that many chorus lines are actually variations of the exact same thoughts rewritten with different vocabulary. For example, *'Gaza bleeds, while satellites blink indifferently'* evolves into *'Devastation ravages Gaza while orbital tech watches without emotion'*. This cleverly underscores how information becomes diluted, regurgitated, and intellectualised over time.

Final Verdict

'The Black Stage' is a **compelling, confined piece of experimental theatre** that would translate to an intimate black-box stage. Its strength lies entirely in its rhythm and orchestration.

If a director can successfully manage the complex vocal audio mixing required by the text, it promises to be a deeply unsettling and thought-provoking experience for an audience.