

To Life

Artistic Statement:

The year 2080 is a time when Earth is no longer a suitable place for human life. With the corruption of ecosystems, the human government starts to find an Earth substitute in space. Due to the urgency of this mission, it decides that a massive amount of spaceships must be sent into different directions in space to maximize the opportunity of finding a suitable planet. This, however, requires enormous human resources. Therefore, the Earth's government decides to bring people from the underclass onto the spaceships.

The story of *To Life* happens on one of such spaceships. The five characters are all people from the underworld—criminal, bar stripper, poor photographer, drunk, and a sick pregnant mother. They are told that they can be pioneers for the new planet, but in reality, nothing is waiting for them except death. By showing how each of the five characters reveals their sparkling personalities and maintains their beliefs in the face of death, the play celebrates themes of individuality, freedom, truth, and hope. The play aims to show that every individual, whether poor or excluded, has their values and their own versions of life.

(Set: a dark, messy spaceship area with four chairs aligned near the center and a camera set at upstage right)

(Lights on)

(Yoyo is doing her makeup; beside her, Lillian is sitting on her place; Aaron is drunk and half-asleep at downstage right; Brooklyn is trying to fix her camera; Justin is wandering around, making anxious footsteps)

Aaron: What the...? Where am I?

Justin: A spaceship.

Aaron: Spaceship? Wait a second, where am I going? Why am I on a spaceship?

Justin: We are the lucky ones selected by the Earth government. We will be the first immigrants to a new planet. Pioneers of human beings. How exciting! *(ironically)*.

Aaron: Huh, the “lucky ones”? *(looks around)* Doesn't seem like it, Ha! *(drinks)*

Justin: It's a sarcasm, dude. Everyone knows we are here to die.

Lillian: **coughs*

Aaron: *(Angrily)* For god's sake, could you please stop coughing? Can't you see where we are? We are in a closed environment, closed, ma'am! Wanna get us all affected by your virus? Wanna let us all go to hell?

Lillian: Sorry...*(coughs again)*

Aaron: Shut up, lady! I mean it!

Yoyo: Hey! *(puts down her makeup)* Why are you so rude to her? Don't you see she's pregnant?

Aaron: Now you speak up, Miss-Lots-of-Makeup.

Yoyo: Excuse me?

Aaron: Excuse me? We're being sent to a deserted planet and are gonna die soon, and you are having so much make-ups on your face. For what? To seduce the aliens? WE'RE GONNA DIE, lady!

Yoyo: What do you know about makeups! Make up is an art, ok? We cannot live without art. Art is the most beautiful reflection of human heart; it can purify one's soul, and...

Aaron: Remind you, miss: we don't need your childish art to survive.

Yoyo: That's nonsense. Our new planet needs art. Our offspring need something spiritual to live a real life! And that's why they chose me for this project, to spread the artistic vibes around the new world. Isn't it?

Aaron: *(ironically)* Terrific! I bet your night-bar style of art must be extremely fit for that new world.

(Yoyo looks at Aaron straight and confronts him; Justin interrupts and tries to conceal the tension)

Justin: Young lady, just think about it. Is there any reason for the government to care about our spirituality when they do not expect us to survive at all?

Yoyo: How would you know if we don't give it a try?

Justin: I've tried, *(pauses; Yoyo is silenced by Justin's seriousness and sits down)* for many times. I used to be as naive as you. I hoped to devote myself to society, to make this world a better place. When the Earth officials announced their cruel plans of immigration, I joined the rebellion and went on the parade to protest. But where did I end up in? Prison. This is a world where the government cares nothing but themselves, where the "elites" get to rule over the mediocre, and where people live like puppets under high-handed policies. So see, no matter how much effort we make, ordinary people like you and I are always the ones to be sacrificed. The justice that I used to believe in is nothing but a lie.

Yoyo: *(wavers, but pretends to hold her opinion)* Not everyone is as crazily cynical as you, mister.

Justin: No. But you should realize the truth--justice does not exist in the time we live. The Earth government does not care about us and our poor dreams. We are just the little rats for the "great experiment".

Yoyo: Well, I don't believe you. I mean, come on, the world is a positive place! Back in my bar, everyone appreciates my songs and I always get my salary on time. I lived happily under this false society that you described, so what? They even selected me to this grand journey, to become the pioneers of the new civilization!

Justin: Wake up, girl. This is not a lifetime original movie we are shooting. Think about it, you're just an insignificant bar singer; I'm a person with paper trial, this guy over here is a drunk, that lady right there is sick and pregnant, and that camera girl, who knows? She'd be a stooge of the government

Yoyo: So? (*a little bit more weakly*)

Justin: We ain't the "pioneers for new observations and civilizations"! We're just five poor people abandoned by our world, to sacrifice our insignificant lives in finding a planet that can substitute Earth. That's why they sent us to that unknown planet without any protection.

Yoyo: (*trembles*) That can't be real... That can't be!

Aaron: He's right, young lady! Time for some harsh truths! Haha!

Justin: In a world like this, the government won't do anything good to us! (*Stares at Brooklyn*) Hey you! How's your mission of spying on us going?

Brooklyn: (*hesitantly*)... What? Why are you turning to me?

Justin: Why? I can already picture the conspiracy of those people. They sent you, the seemingly innocent one to watch us and control us.

Brooklyn: Uh-huh?

Justin: You take pictures, you record all these funny things in the spaceship, you send them back to that government. In the end, no matter how we're gonna end up on that planet, you and your selfish employers are gonna benefit from us somehow!

Brooklyn: Do I look like some sort of stooge?

Justin: Ask yourself!

Brooklyn: Well, I don't want to get involved by any of these stuff. If you are angry or something, I'll just shut up. Good luck with that...

Justin: (*grabs Brooklyn's shirt; explosively*) Listen! I don't care what your purpose is, all I want is to be alive! Alive, with wills and power, instead of being a soulless slave like you!

Brooklyn: Calm down, I'm not any stooge!

Aaron: Wow, wow. Nice imagination bro. You think that camera girl is good enough to be the stooge of the government? Look at her clothes. You call this the friend of the government? You gotta be kidding!

Brooklyn: *(ashamed)* Yes, I'm just an ordinary camera worker. I promise don't know anything about what you said.

Aaron: Yeah, we know we know. You're just a poor little worker who's underpaid just like us. *(knocks down Brooklyn's camera playfully)*

Brooklyn: *(tries to control her anger)* What was that for?

Aaron: *(mockingly)* Huh? What was that for?

Brooklyn: That's enough! You've been acting like a psycho since the beginning. Why on earth are you so mean to others? *(turns to Justin)* And why are you so suspicious toward me? This young lady is right! You're indeed a cynical coward!

Justin: Coward? So what did you do for us, We do not need to shoot any videos to survive!

Brooklyn: I...

Aaron: you what?

Brooklyn: *(concedes to her broken camera and murmurs)* Even in a world like this, you can't keep an ordinary fellow from her dream. I...I just want to tell the stories.

Aaron: Wow! Congrats! We're gonna die soon, and you'll have no stories to tell!

(Brooklyn does not answer and starts to fix her camera)

Lillian: *(gets up, struggling)* Let's pause over here, gentlemen. We can't always argue like that. We're not going to die if we have faith in life.

Aaron: Now you speak up! No coughs this time?

Yoyo: SHUT UP!

Lillian: *(coughs)* As you can see, I'm pregnant, but this child is not made to my wish. The father of this child is one of the mobs during the parade, and I don't even know his name. At first, I was desperate to seek death because I wasn't expecting to be a mother of a child. But you know what? If I give birth to this child, there's going to be a hope in my life. Once there's hope, there's a future.

(silence)

Lillian: I know we're now in a bad situation, but don't forget there's still hope for us to be alive. Dying is no act of bravery; living is.

Justin: True. Our goal is to find a way to stay alive—it's the only prerequisite for us to talk about our dreams. We can only survive if we believe we can.

Lillian: That's right!

Aaron: *(suddenly changes his tone)* I wish I can be as positive as you guys...

Lillian: Of course you can, you just have to believe we can survive.

Aaron: *(interrupts)* You don't understand, there's no such possibility.

Lillian: Why?

Aaron: The chance for us to survive on that planet is less than 5%. The earth is already a wracked place, and the government are desperate to find a tiny chance to survive in the space. That's why they send us, a bunch of insignificant people on to that dangerous planet.

Justin: Wait, what? How did you know about all these?

Aaron: Because I know about science.

Yoyo: You? Know about science?

Aaron: Of course! I used to be a scientist working for National Science Institution. I could maintain a fine life at first. But then I discovered how the Earth environment can no longer support Earth population. I wanted to announce it to the public, but my boss said no because that would destroy the fame of the institution. And I got fired. I became an insane, homeless drunk guy after that.

Justin: So you were a scientist...

Yoyo: Oh no, he must be right. We're really going to die.

Aaron: Not precisely. Chance is 95%.

Justin: Great, ladies and gentlemen, we have 95% chance to die!

(The fear of death has made the room silent. Even Brooklyn has stopped her camera work)

Justin: Well... *(smiles in sorrow)* So that is gonna be the end of the story...

Brooklyn: *(sighs)* Not every story has a happy ending...

Aaron: I guess we have to accept the harsh truth.

Yoyo: *(suddenly)* But wait, you said there's still 5% of chance for us to survive?

Aaron: Only 5%.

Lillian: But it's better than none!

Aaron: Well, scientifically speaking, it's pretty small.

Justin & Yoyo & Lillian: But it's better than none!

Justin: Everyone, please listen to me. We all seem like nothing to the rest of the world. But we are all significant in our own ways!

Brooklyn: What do you mean?

Justin: You see, (points at Lillian), this ma'am here is kind and positive, she believes in hope; this lady here has a strong enthusiasm on arts; and you (points at Brooklyn) , you helped us to record the history.

Aaron: What about me?

Justin: You are a responsible scientist who always tries to tell the truth!

Aaron: That sounds pretty nice.

Yoyo: And you, mister, are the brave rebellion who will bring justice to the world!

Justin: Yes! Each of us has some sort of spirit or skills that are important for a civilization. If we believe in hope, if we hold the truth that we're gonna stay alive, then we can not only stay alive, but also build a civilization!

Yoyo: A civilization that is artistic!

Brooklyn: That has unique history!

Aaron: That is open to truth!

Lillian: A civilization that is full of hope!

Justin: That's way better than the one on earth!

All: Exactly!

(Voice from the radio: Attention please, the spaceship will arrive at Planet 251 in 5 minutes, please get ready for the landing!)

Brooklyn: Hey guys, the camera is ready! Wanna record the very first history of this civilization?

Justin: Sure!

(Everyone comes to Brooklyn)

Brooklyn: Okay, let's shout out our names and remember this moment forever!

Yoyo: Hi everyone, my name is Yoyo. These are the nails that I just painted. you see? I drew a paintbrush, and this is a microphone. I want to bring art and music to the new planet.

Aaron: Hi, I'm Aaron, as you can see. I'm a totally insane drunk. Here is my favorite for beer, but I have to say goodbye with you. I know I'm not a good scientist, but I have faith in science and truth.

Lilian: Hi, I'm Lilian and I have a little baby here. His name is Jackie. I have come through these dark days in my life, and what's been left in my heart is the firm belief of living in hope.

Justin: I'm Justin. Being in the past is not going to take us anywhere. As long as we cherish the seeds of freedom, equality, injustice in our mind, we are always able to make more human miracles.

Brooklyn: I am Brooklyn. Gee, I'm not used to stand in front of the camera. Filming has always meant something more to me. Despite whatever happens, I will play my part to the very end. I am the storyteller of the new world.

Yoyo: Well, to life.

Aaron: You're right, young lady. To life. *(drinks)*

All: TO LIFE!

(A huge "Boom". Lights off, all characters fade in darkness)