

ROT, and those who eat it.

a ten minute play

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<u>CHARACTER.</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>AGE/GENDER</u>
VULTURE	A vulture	Who cares?
CORPSE	A corpse	An Adult

Time:

Night, in late autumn or early winter.

Setting:

In the forest, over the edge of a cliff.

THE END

A CORPSE lays on the ground somewhere in the forest, surrounded by broken sticks and hiking equipment. The CORPSE does not move. Because it is a corpse. And corpses do not move.

A VULTURE swoops in and lands on the CORPSE on the ground. The VULTURE begins delicately unbuttoning the CORPSE's shirt.

CORPSE

What are you doing?

VULTURE

Woah. What the fuck? What are you doing?

CORPSE

I don't know. But what you're doing seems worse.

VULTURE

No, I don't think so.

CORPSE

I'm just laying here.

VULTURE

You're talking.

CORPSE

It's not illegal, is it? To talk?

VULTURE

You're dead.

CORPSE

What? I'm not dead. I'm talking.

VULTURE

That's the problem, isn't it?

What? CORPSE

You're dead, and you're talking. VULTURE

Then I'm not dead. CORPSE

I'm pretty sure you're dead. VULTURE

The VULTURE gently presses their forehead against the CORPSE's forehead.

You're cold.

It's cold out. CORPSE

The point is, you're dead, you're trespassing, and you talk too much. For a dead guy. VULTURE

The VULTURE continues unbuttoning the CORPSE's shirt. The CORPSE moves attempting to push the VULTURE off, but corpses should not move, and the blood is stiff in the veins and moving is difficult.

I asked you a question. What are you doing? CORPSE

I'll give you 3 guesses. VULTURE

I don't like games. CORPSE

Everyone likes games. VULTURE

Not when I'm laying on the forest floor getting stripped down by a giant bird of prey. CORPSE

I'm not a bird of prey. VULTURE

Giant bird. CORPSE

To help with your guessing game. I'm a scavenging bird. VULTURE

A vulture. CORPSE

Good to meet you. VULTURE

So you're going to... CORPSE

Almost there. VULTURE

You're not, though. Right? CORPSE

Not what? VULTURE

Going to. CORPSE

Going to.. What? VULTURE

To eat me.

CORPSE

Why wouldn't I?

VULTURE

Aren't there plenty of dead things in the woods? Why me? I'm alive, I'm talking to you. I'm alive, and you eat dead things.

CORPSE

It's getting to be that season where things stop being born, and things start hibernating, and during that time food is hard to come by.

VULTURE

You've made it this far. Right?

CORPSE

Because of people like you.

VULTURE

They talked to you?

CORPSE

Not before now.

Were you talking to a lot of scavenging birds while you were alive?

VULTURE

I don't think so. Maybe the fall knocked something loose in my brain.

CORPSE

Maybe the fall knocked loose your brain.

VULTURE

Maybe this is the after life?

CORPSE

Death?

VULTURE

CORPSE

After life. Like, heaven and hell. Like eternal punishment? Damnation.

VULTURE

Humans are so ridiculous. After Life? There is nothing after life. There is death. And rot. And decay. And you return to the earth.

After life is more life. You die, and things like me feed on your flesh, and the worms and mushrooms churn you into dirt, and eventually a seed gets planted in the pile that was once a body, and a tree grows, and things like me get born high up in the top of that tree, to go out into the world to eat things like you.

Unless you're a human. Because things are different when you're human, right? You pump your veins full of poison, to stop the rot, and put your body in a sealed box to stop the rot, and paint your face to hide the rot. So a million years down the line some archeologist will come and dig up your perfectly preserved, plastic-filled body from the dirt. Why? It is ridiculous.

CORPSE

Comfort. Maybe?

VULTURE

Comfort from what?

CORPSE

Maybe they are scared. Maybe they want to be like me. The talking dead. Maybe they think one day they will be brought back, and their perfectly preserved bodies will still be beautiful. Maybe they are scared to not be beautiful.

I always wanted to be cremated.

VULTURE

Cremated?

CORPSE

Like, burned.

They spread your ashes. Or they like, keep you in a jar, to put on the mantelpiece, it's usually a beautiful jar, like decoration

VULTURE

Oh, but I can't eat you? That's too far? That's unnatural?

I'm too alive to be eaten. CORPSE

You stink too much to be alive. VULTURE

I stink? CORPSE

Like death. You can't smell it. VULTURE

I guess not. CORPSE

Your senses leave you fast in death. VULTURE

What about my family? My friends? What if they never find me? They don't know I died. CORPSE

That's life. Isn't it? I don't know where half of the birds I've met in my life ended up. Animals die all the time. What makes you different? VULTURE

Crows hold funerals. CORPSE

What? VULTURE

Crows. They mourn. They gather in groups and mourn their dead. Right? CORPSE

Mourn? VULTURE

Like, they are sad. That their fellow crow has died. CORPSE

VULTURE

That's what you think they are for? Humans like to project their empathy onto everything.

CORPSE

What does that mean?

VULTURE

It means, you do this thing that no one else does, where you force your personhood onto everyone else. Like every creature in the world feels the things you feel. Crows gather to assess the potential danger in the area where a fellow crow died, and you say, it's a funeral. You say they are sad. You say they miss each other. But we don't miss each other.

CORPSE

The point is, there is acknowledgement, there is mourning.

In the distance there is a wailing howl, like a sob, of a mourning wolf.

VULTURE

There's one now. Mourning. In a way.

CORPSE

See, we aren't so alone, are we?

VULTURE

But you can't deny the truth of it. You are a dead thing. And you will be eaten, if not by me, then by someone. So why not by me?

CORPSE

Do you think my body will be found?

VULTURE

The truth?

CORPSE

Please.

VULTURE

I've never seen anyone come down here on purpose. They usually fall.

CORPSE

Can you do me a favor?

VULTURE

What is it?

CORPSE

My wallet, it's on the ground, can you set it out there? Above us. So if they do come looking, they'll know.

VULTURE

Okay.

CORPSE

Alright.

VULTURE

You're ready?

CORPSE

Yes.

The VULTURE eats the CORPSE's flesh. And when there is nothing left, but the pure white clean bones, they clatter together in a beautiful noise, like windchimes. And the VULTURE, against everything they said they believe, keeps them, for a long time.