

The Trash Heap Does Not Exist

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A short play

By Drew Petriello

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## CAST

CASS: Female. 20s-30s. Any ethnicity. A classy career-woman.

DENNY: Male. 20s-30s. Any ethnicity. A mopey schlub.

TRASH HEAP: Genderless. Ageless. Raceless. Eternal. Trashful. Vast. Amen.

## A NOTE

The Trash Heap can be played by multiple actors if desired, in which case the lines can be either divided up among them, chanted as one, or a combination of both.

SCENE 1: EMPTY SPACE

An apartment. Denny plays video games on a couch. A massive Trash Heap is behind him. A single pine-scented air freshener dangles from a lamp.

An exhausted Cass, roller suitcase in tow, walks past Denny.

DENNY

Hey, Cass. How was that red-eye?

CASS

(grunts)

DENNY

Rent check is on the table.

CASS

(grunts)

Cass is about to go into her bedroom when she smells something so intense that it penetrates her extreme exhaustion. She becomes aware of the Trash Heap and screams.

CASS

(pointing at the Trash Heap)

Truh...

(shaking)

T... truh... tray... Trash!

(beat)

Trash.

DENNY

Okay.

CASS

How is there so much trash?! I was gone for a month!

What are you talking about?  
DENNY

The trash heap.  
CASS

I don't follow.  
DENNY

That. The trash heap.  
CASS

Oh. You mean the trash heap?  
DENNY

Yes!  
CASS

That trash heap?  
DENNY

Yes.  
CASS

That one right there?  
DENNY

Yes.  
CASS

That trash heap?  
DENNY

YES.  
CASS

It doesn't exist.  
DENNY

Silence.

CASS  
Excuse me?

DENNY  
It doesn't exist.

CASS  
What doesn't exist? The trash heap?

DENNY  
Yep.

CASS  
That trash heap?

DENNY  
Yep.

CASS  
That one right there?

DENNY  
Yep!

CASS  
It doesn't exist?

DENNY  
Doesn't exist.

CASS  
But I can see it.

DENNY  
You may think that.

CASS  
But I can touch it.

DENNY  
You may think that.

CASS

But I can *smell* it.

DENNY

You may think that.

CASS

Have you been ordering Thai food?

DENNY

How did you know that?

CASS

Because I *smell* peanut sauce. Because of the TRASH HEAP.

DENNY

(scoffs)

Okay.

CASS

This trash heap exists!

DENNY

Cass, I'm starting to get worried about you. There is no trash heap. There has never been a trash heap. There has never been *trash*.

CASS

It... but... right there... wait, did you just say there's never been any trash?

(realizing)

Oh, I see. Okay. Uh-huh. I get what's going on here.

DENNY

(confused)

What's... going on here?

Cass sits on the couch, indicates for Denny to sit next to her.

CASS

Denny. Hey. Denny. Look at me. It's okay. I'm not mad. Look at me. The two of you were together almost seven years. I get it. I would love for you to clean up more, but I get it. You loved him a lot.

Cass holds out her arms for a hug, which Denny sinks into.

DENNY

Thank you. Trash still isn't real though.

Cass laughs.

DENNY

No, for real, Cass! Trash. Isn't. Real.

CASS

Don't worry, pal. I'll take it out for you.

DENNY

Oh my god.

CASS

(noticing a laptop sticking out of a trash bag)

Is there a reason you threw out your laptop?

DENNY

What do you mean? I lost it. Did you find it? Stop teasing me.

CASS

Dude, it's in the --

(about to say "trash heap," but bursts into laughter)

-- that-which-does-not-exist!

(spooky)

WooooOOOOOOOOOooooo...

Cass opens a trash bags, recoils from the smell, removes Denny's stained laptop.

Cass presents the laptop to Denny.

CASS

Ta-da!

DENNY

No way! Where did you find it?

CASS

In the... trash heap.

DENNY

No but for real, where did you find it?

CASS

This isn't funny anymore.

DENNY

What are you talking about?

CASS

Please, Denny, I'm tired. I'm so tired. Just tell me you're messing with me.

DENNY

(confused, unconvincing)

I'm... messing with you.

CASS

Right. I'm going to bed. You're a sad sack about Kevin and I'm sorry, but you don't have to be a dick about it. Please take out the trash. It smells awful.

DENNY

TRASH ISN'T REAL.

(opening his laptop)

hold up hold up hold up -- Cass. Cass! Just give me a couple minutes. I was skeptical too -- I mean, "trash doesn't exist," that sounds crazy! But then I found some videos...

CASS

no no no no no no no

DENNY

I'll show you just this one article, then you can zonk out. Promise. They want us to think trash exists because the Cabal of Garbage Collectors wants it to be so. What do you think they're actually up to, garbage collectors?



CASS

...collecting garbage.

DENNY

That's what they want it to look like, that's what they want you to think, but actually it's a great excuse, these scheduled so-called "garbage pickups", to visit every single residence every single week. Think about it. Every residence. And business. We just let a bunch of weirdos come over. Every week! Why? It's because garbage collectors run the world! They want to keep tabs on us so we don't discover what they're really up to!

CASS

So, hold up -- if garbage collectors run the world, why does that mean trash doesn't exist?

DENNY

Trash can't exist because trash never actually existed. "Trash" is just a form of control. "Trash" is a state of mind. For millennia, the garbage collectors have been convincing us -- nay, *grooming* us -- to be their perfect pets of control. They told us where to deposit what we didn't want. And we listened. Then they told us to split that stuff up more. Recycling. Compost. All types of "trash." And we listened. It may seem like harmless waste disposal but no -- "trash" is control. Pure and simple.

CASS

Okay, but what I can't get over is that even though you think trash doesn't exist, the trash heap is still some how made up of a bunch of garbage bags and not like... scattered on the floor.

DENNY

Open your mind, Cass. There's nothing there!

Cass takes Denny by the arm and leads them both into the Trash Heap.

CASS

Wow. Weird. Why can't we move forward if there's nothing here?

DENNY

Oh no. This is bad.

(taking out a burner phone)

This is Den Lion. I am requesting an immediate scrubitization! ASAP!

(hangs up, gently tucks the phone into one of the Trash Heap's many bags)

They know I know! This is what the garbage collectors do to anyone who *wakes up* and overcomes their trash programming. They shut us up by removing space from our homes.

CASS

Removing space? What replaces the space?

DENNY

I don't know! No one knows! The space is just gone! And unless you pay four K for someone to scrubitize your place --

CASS

WHAT?!

DENNY

Hey, in installments, it's not so bad -- if you don't scrubitize in time, you're screwed! There'll be no space left in your home and you'll be crushed to death.

CASS

You run out of space... because... your home fills with... *trash*... that you don't think exists... and that *trash* takes up so much space it... smothers you to death...

DENNY

No, Cass, no! You've got to let go of the trash mindset!

Cass rips open a trash bag and dumps its contents onto Denny.

CASS

I pulled it out of empty space.

DENNY

Hold on... are you... one of *them*? This whole time?

CASS

(deadpan sarcastic)

Yes. You got me. Oh, I was so close, but you found it out. Now we will never be able to weaponize humanity in a grand war against the lizard people in our hollow Earth and the gray aliens who reside in our hollow moon. Oh, Denny... Denny... you got me... our plan is doomed. Unless... I kill you, Denny.

DENNY

I'm trying to free your mind, to get you to take these revelations seriously, and you're just laughing at me!

Cass rips open another garbage bag and dumps its contents onto Denny.

CASS

Where's it all coming from, Denny?

DENNY

What are you...?! What --?

Cass rips open another, dumps it on Denny.

DENNY

Stop! You're going crazy.

CASS

Whole lot of empty space on your face, Denny!

Cass picks up a bag. She takes a big whiff.

CASS

This one smells real nasty, Denny. Decomposing Pad Thai. Mm-mm, delish, Denny!

Cass rips the bag -- they both gag from the stench.

CASS

Oh, sweet Christ...!

The smell is overpowering. Gagging, they fall to the ground. The world dims.

SCENE 2: THE WORLD AIN'T NOTHING BUT TRASH WAITING TO HAPPEN

In the dark:

## TRASH HEAP

Welcome to a land of stench and filth  
 A blight unleashed by your pungent waste  
 The world ain't nothing but trash waiting to happen  
 The world ain't nothing but trash waiting to happen

The darkness bursts apart. The Trash Heap,  
 alive, towers above Cass and Denny, who  
 continue to gag on the awful stench.

## CASS

Do you believe in trash now?

## DENNY

Never!

Cass rips open the top of the trash heap,  
 revealing a spinning disco ball is inside. The  
 smell it unleashes causes Cass to swoon a little.

## TRASH HEAP

The world ain't nothing but trash waiting to happen!  
 I'm filling oceans with my mighty spread -- ha!  
 My stench leaves land and wildlife diseased and dead -- ha!  
 Just try to recycle 'cause Planet Plastic is here to stay -- ha!  
 Melt me down, I'll clog your ozone! I'm here to stay -- ha!  
 Endless trash! Endless waste! I'll smother the whole human race!

Denny stands under the dangling pine-scented  
 air freshener and sniffs it.

## CASS

Good thinking! The air freshener can keep the smell away while we rip the trash heap  
 apart!

## DENNY

The trash heap doesn't exist, Cass! I bet it's just a baby stinking up the whole complex.  
 Besides, Bruno will be here soon. He'll scrubitize the whole apartment, don't you worry.

Cass looks at him sadly.

CASS

I didn't want to have to give up on you, bud.

Cass rips the dangling air freshener off the lamp and inhales a big whiff of it.

CASS

Oh yeah. That's the good shit.

She places the air freshener in her mouth so it sticks out and she can keep smelling it.

Cass demolishes the Trash Heap.

TRASH HEAP

You fool! You think I am defeated? You are merely spreading me around!

Cass rips apart trash bags until the Trash Heap's contents are scattered all over the floor.

TRASH HEAP

THE WORLD AIN'T NOTHING BUT TRASH WAITING TO HAPPEN! YOU'LL NEVER DEFEAT ME ALONE!

CASS

I'm going to find a way to eliminate all trash -- *all of it!* But you're right, I can't do it alone... that's why I'm changing careers. I'm now Cass: *garbage collector!*

Denny gasps.

DENNY

No, don't you see?! This was all a garbage collector plot to convert you into one of them!

CASS

I AND MY TRASH COLLECTOR BRETHERN WILL KICK YOUR TRASH ASS INTO THE SUN!

TRASH HEAP

FOOLISH LASS. I AM MULTITUDE. I AM VAST. I AM INEVITABLE. YOU HEAR ME? INEVITABLE! I'LL CLOG YOUR SEAS, FILL EVERY INCH OF LAND. I AM INEVITABLE, IN--

Cass stomps on a used coffee cup.

TRASH HEAP

owie

CASS

Sorry it's come to this. But I don't know if can room with someone so detached from reality. We'll talk... later. Because I was on the red-eye. And I'm exhausted. G'night.

Cass exits.

TRASH HEAP

Good going, dingus.

DENNY

This was your idea.

TRASH HEAP

You're trash.

DENNY

Yeah...

Denny pulls up his shirt and turns to the audience to reveal... *a garbage bag!*

DENNY

...I am.

THE END