

A Premise

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Characters:

PIRATE
MONK
PHILOSOPHER
AUTHOR/DIRECTOR

*[A man in a mask types at a computer stage right.
He is sitting on a long stool. Behind him on the
stool are the three actors wearing the same mask.*

*As the play starts each actor stands up, takes off
his mask and moves to the center of the stage.]*

MONK
(Pondering.)
There is an author.

PIRATE
It's true, there is an author. But how do we know there is
an author?

MONK
Perhaps, because that is the premise of the story.

PHILOSOPHER
(Pondering.)
There is an author.

PIRATE
There is an author. Who even cares if there is an author...

PHILOSOPHER
Let us briefly consider the implications, the axioms if you
will, of this truth. That is to say, what does it change?

PIRATE
And so we are here... why?

MONK
We are always here.

PHILOSOPHER
If there is an author, then we are characters. This
literally means - we, as we conceive of our selves, do not
exist.

[PIRATE looks confused. MONK nods.]

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)
This of course is not only counter-intuitive to our current
experience, but additionally, denies Descartes. I think,
therefore I am... And yet, there is an author.

PIRATE

I'm a pirate all right. The most dangerous man in the southern seas.

PHILOSOPHER

You think you are a pirate. What you really are is a fiction.

PIRATE

Your face is a fiction.

PHILOSOPHER

Yes. But, I don't think you understand.

MONK

There is an author eh? Hmmm..

PIRATE

Does that mean none of this is real?

MONK

Both real and unreal. The mountains, rivers, even ourselves are not made of matter. Instead, we are made of the mind.

PIRATE

(Out loud to himself.)

My booty is an illusion?

PHILOSOPHER

(To MONK.)

The author's mind?

MONK

If we are characters, expressions of the author, then when we look closely enough, we will find there is only one mind. The world is made of that.

[Short pause. The pirate pokes the monk as if to test his physical reality.]

PIRATE

I think it's real.

PHILOSOPHER

You also think you are are pirate.

PIRATE

Gentlemen. As I see it, the author is responsible for every bad thing that has ever happened. He caused my last attack on the northern naval forces to fail from bad weather that he created. He gave my first mate scurvey. He made the maiden in Barcelona give me sea crustations! He... is all powerful... He is god!

MONK

He could have just given me realization without making me spend years in a monastery. Or made the food there better.

[PIRATE pauses and falls to his knees in faux-prayer position.]

PIRATE

Oh, glorious lord author. Take away my suffering, fill my life with treasure and blissful pillaging. I beg you, he who makes the heavens and earth!

[The group looks all around waiting.]

PHILOSOPHER

In a typical story arc, there is a setup, an obstacle, overcoming the obstacle, and then resolution. Who would read a story about you getting everything you want without any trouble?

MONK

Is our life the writing of the story or the reading? Who is reading and who is writing?

PIRATE

If anyone else ever reads this. I beg of you lords! Verily erase everything else before you read it, and write me booty!

[The group looks all around waiting. After a time, the PIRATE stands up.]

PIRATE (CONT'D)

The author is a cheese dick!

PHILOSOPHER

Did you really just attempt to pray?

MONK

(Dismissively.)

Pft..

[PHILOSOPHER and MONK continue to look around.]

PHILOSOPHER

Let's work this out in the Socratic method:

Major Premise: All stories have beginnings and ends.

Minor Premise: We are in a story.

Conclusion: Therefore, our story, our world, has a beginning and an end.

Now. When did this story begin? Do you all remember what you did yesterday? Growing up?

PIRATE

Of course I do.

PHILOSOPHER

Hmmm. Yes. Why wouldn't we have back stories? The author would have defined us, and even if he hasn't, we wouldn't know. He would just leave it mysterious and invent it as he wrote.

MONK

You can only read about a past in the present moment, you can only write down the past in the present moment. Time doesn't start in the past and lead to the present - rather, the past is created in the present. Like the backwards gong of a meditation bell. Could we have said we remembered yesterday before the author had you ask us to?

PHILOSOPHER

The author "had" me ask? I decided that. I am in control of my life, not him. There is free-will. Watch. I choose to pick up this stone. A voluntary action.

[The PHILOSOPHER picks up a stone.]

MONK

You cannot pick up the stone without the author. Yet, characters in stories often act according to their natures, the author doesn't have to decide what they do, he just knows what they do.

PIRATE

Does he know what I'm about to do?

MONK

You can't do anything besides what you are about to do.

PIRATE

I choose to do something else then.

MONK

Then that is what you are about to do.

PIRATE

I plan to do something spontaneously then.

MONK

No. You can't do that.

PHILOSOPHER

All stories have main characters. Are we main characters?

PIRATE

I feel like a main character. I don't see anyone else around.

PHILOSOPHER

(Jokingly.)

Perhaps we are main characters and this pirate is just some sort of generic fill in.

PIRATE

(Insolently. To
PHILOSOPHER.)

ARRRR.

MONK

All characters think they are main characters. All characters are main characters. No character is the main character.

PHILOSOPHER

Is it written in first person?

PIRATE

I feel like it's written in first person.

PHILOSOPHER

Which of us is the person?

PIRATE

We are all the person?

MONK

None of us are the person.

PHILOSOPHER

(To MONK.)

This may be the only context in which you don't sound completely insane.

PIRATE

What happens when the story ends? Do we die?

MONK

We were never born, therefore we cannot die.

PHILOSOPHER

Perhaps we become nothing?

MONK

We already are nothing, darling.

PIRATE

This is bullshit. This knowledge of an author is toxic. I belong on the open seas doing what I do. This at least, puts to rest questions of right and wrong; good and evil blah blah, etc. etc.

PHILOSOPHER
(Carefully.)

Explain.

PIRATE

Well, if I am a fiction I can't be wrong or right, about anything. I was written this way and so I will be what I am without remorse. I am not responsible for my pillaging, destruction and roguish nature. Not only that, but everything I do is fiction, as are the people I do it to. If it's a story, then I will make my story the best - at the expense of other stories if I want to.

MONK

Just because you are a fiction, doesn't give you an excuse to do whatever you want.

PHILOSOPHER

Realize that the author -

PIRATE

-- Screw the author. What has he ever done for us except burdened us with the suffering of invented pasts, taken our agency, and induced needless pain? Perhaps it's time we stop following his "plan"...

Think about it for a second. Why is he writing this? Does he get paid for this dribble? Does it entertain him to punish us? Does he wish to entertain others with our suffering?

[MONK shakes his head.]

MONK

He gets to experience the world through us.

PIRATE

Safe in his imagination... We have to live it.

PHILOSOPHER

You actually make a valid point... There is more suffering in the world than joy. People have unlimited wants and needs. They can never be satisfied. Any momentary joy they feel can't compare to the suffering over their lifetime. The important distinction to make in this case, is that it was designed to be this way.

MONK

The word "fire" doesn't burn him when he writes it. Yet we burn, none-the-less.

PHILOSOPHER

OK, Jolly Rodgers. What exactly are you proposing?

PIRATE

We need to talk about it in private - so that he cannot hear.

[MONK giggles.]

PHILOSOPHER

Can characters in stories sneak off and plot behind the authors back?

MONK

Could you imagine? Just a blank page, then the characters come back and the author cannot continue because he has no idea what the characters' plans are.

PIRATE

Let's talk in a sound proof room.

[MONK Giggles more.]

PHILOSOPHER

If the author hasn't imagined it happening. It isn't happening. If he doesn't imagine it's existence, it doesn't exist.

MONK

Consider his medium is the written word. If you hold sheet music up to your ear, you will find it is not music. It must be literature. Lack of hearing could not block him. Now that I think of it... There can't be sound here can there?

PHILOSOPHER

I experience sound. There is no sound here.

PIRATE

You are starting to sound like him. (pointing to monk)

MONK

Who hears those words?

PIRATE

You do.

MONK

You are mistaken.

WRITER

By the way, there is a table with food on it.

[Stage hands quickly and quietly bring out a table stage left. Characters do not notice.]

PIRATE

So. We are characters in a book. If we dig a hole deep enough, we should be able to dig through the pages we are written on and escape.

[MONK and PHILOSOPHER stunned.]

PHILOSOPHER

We are probably on a screen - without even the attempted permanence of paper.

[Pause.]

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

I think we have officially lost our minds...

MONK

How many of us are there I wonder. A stack of us in the corner in the authors room unsold? Are we in every street book store? Do copies of us blink in and out of existence when kindles are turned on and off?

PHILOSOPHER

Stop being an asshole.

MONK

So you agree that we are not the book. We are not the pages the words are written on. We are not the words themselves. We are not the pixels, the electricity, the ones or zeros. Now, be tested. What are we?

[PHILOSOPHER does not answer.]

PIRATE

So. We are in the author's head. We should be able to dig a hole deep enough to break through the author's skull and escape.

[PHILOSOPHER and MONK are stunned again.]

MONK

That's fucking crazy, man.

PHILOSOPHER

Wait. We aren't physically in the authors head. We are processes of the authors head. We are quite literally a time sequence of neuron firings, neural transmitter levels and...

[A pause.]

PIRATE

And what?

[Another pause.]

MONK

He can't answer. He thinks one can build a dream with small enough legos.

PHILOSOPHER

You take issue with reason, logic and science? You may as well be a priest.

MONK

I like maps, I don't mistake them for the territory. I like statues, I don't mistake them for people.

PHILOSOPHER

You know. If we are going to be here a while we are going to need to eat something.

(Speaking loudly up.)

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

Unless the author just wants us to be too hungry and exhausted to continue his precious story.

PIRATE

It's just more of his torture fetish shit.

PHILOSOPHER

What a sloppy writer. I would have thought of sustenance at least. I mean, my immersion is breaking here.

MONK

There's food on the table over there.

PIRATE

Pft. He probably just went back a few pages and made a note "There's food by the way." or something inanely un-creative like that.

[They move stage left near the table.]

PHILOSOPHER

Do you think he has to write exactly what I eat? How I eat? Or will he just write "they ate"?

PIRATE

It sure would be annoying if he had to write everything.

PHILOSOPHER

If I were to say that the chicken is tasty. Is it because he made it to be tasty?

MONK

If he made it to be tasty, then that should be an objective trait of the chicken.

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

You will find however, that it is you who attribute that descriptor to the chicken. I may not like it's taste. Therefore it cannot be an objective trait. However, since you are an aspect of the author, you inherit his opinion on how you find chicken taste.

PIRATE

I've had a lot of chicken in my time. This is some objectively tasty chicken.

PHILOSOPHER

Do you think he cares enough to know the history of our diets? To know what we like or dislike and to keep it consistent? Do you think he knows how the biology of taste buds work?

MONK

I'm starting to get the impression he doesn't really know what he is doing.

PHILOSOPHER

So. Let's unpack this process. He writes the descriptive words - the words themselves are communicative pointers. Those pointers are de-referenced by the reader, interpreted into their imagining of the story.

PIRATE

So are we eating the author's chicken, or the readers chicken?

MONK

Simply, eat chicken... Simply.

PIRATE

OK. At least I spit-balled some ideas here. What are you two, silent partners?

PHILOSOPHER

So, the basic question here is "How can the characters of a story, influence the author, once they are aware of his existence?"

PIRATE

Wait a goddamn minute. You asked earlier if he had to write everything we do. If he does, we can effectively filibuster him.

MONK

I do not understand this.

PIRATE

We force him to write inconsequential, un-interesting things until he agrees to give us what we want. He cannot continue his story until he addresses our interests.

PHILOSOPHER

What if he decides to just stop writing?

PIRATE

Can he do that?

[PHILOSOPHER and PIRATE look at MONK for answers.]

MONK

Hell if I know.

PIRATE

Hmm.. What if we accidentally give him writers cramp?

PHILOSOPHER

If we gave him writer's cramp he would have to take a break to recover. He's probably on a keyboard, anyhow. If we filled up his computer hard drive with text he might have to clean out his computer. In either case, he wouldn't be writing while doing those things - therefore no time would pass for us. He'd have to take us seriously if he wanted to finish his story.

PIRATE

So we are betting he'd rather address us than stop writing his story.

MONK

Well, the only thing we know for certain is that we are still here. So he must have some sort of interest in what is going on.

PHILOSOPHER

Wait. We are about to fuck with our creator. From our perspective the most powerful entity imaginable. We should consider this more deeply.

MONK

And if we are expressions of his, we are fucking with ourselves by proxy.

PIRATE

Would you rather be here, be this, forever?

PHILOSOPHER

Why is he even allowing us to consider this? Why did we start this with only one piece of knowledge - that there is an author?

MONK

Maybe he just wanted someone to know? Maybe he doesn't understand his place in the world, and so wanted to know how we think about reality in ours?

PIRATE

That sounds rather lonely, an odd trait for an omniscient being. He should already know what we think of our reality.

MONK

Does he?

PIRATE

If we do.

MONK

Hmmm.

PHILOSOPHER

Perhaps it's an experiment. In order for the experiment to work correctly, we would have to have free reign. What kind of experiment though? If he knows how it ends, then it can't be an experiment.

MONK

What do we actually want from him, anyhow?

PIRATE

Ships full of gold for starters.

PHILOSOPHER

Ok. Stop. We need this to be crystal clear to you. You are not your body, you are not your memories, you are not your thoughts, you are not your beliefs, you are not your history or biology. All of those things are a fiction. All your desires that you believe will make you happy are also a fiction. You are not a pirate.

PIRATE

I've always been a pirate.

MONK

That pirate has always been a story.

PIRATE

He could just write "He lives the rest of his days in extreme wealth and power - all of his excessively luxurious and lubricious dreams come true. The end!"

MONK

And where would you be after the last line "The end!"

PIRATE

Immortality then.

PHILOSOPHER

What, do you expect the author to simply write about you forever?

PIRATE

He could hire someone. I'd pay them to write forever if it meant eternal life.

PHILOSOPHER

And what would you pay them with my dear? Fictional compliments?

PIRATE

I've got gold.

MONK

And how do you get the gold to the author?

PIRATE

He's the author, he is all powerful?

PHILOSOPHER

If that's the case, why does he need your gold?

PIRATE

This is bullshit. What would you gentlemen want?

[Long Thoughtful pause.]

WRITER

(Leaning back in chair
wistfully.)

How nice it would be, if I could be bribed by my characters.

MONK

Anything I would desire, would just be one more thing I'd have to let go.

PHILOSOPHER

Anything I would desire, would simply be fictional.

MONK

An improved story.

PHILOSOPHER

A better illusion.

MONK

Can something that doesn't exist be selfish?

PHILOSOPHER

I guess if it doesn't know it doesn't exist.

PIRATE

What's wrong with a better illusion?

PHILOSOPHER

The same thing that is wrong with a very descriptive, sweet, and compassionate lie.

PIRATE

I wonder what he is like? What kind of person he is.

PHILOSOPHER

The only evidence of his attitude would be the things he has created. So, look around. What kind of person is he?

MONK

You are him. You can look outside, or inside and find him.

PHILOSOPHER

Inside?

MONK

If you were to still your mind - do not give attention to any thoughts, feelings, past or future. You will have removed all the fictional elements. What do you see?

PIRATE

Ommmmmm.

MONK

Don't be an asshole.

PHILOSOPHER

(Closing his eyes.)

I find nothing inside.

MONK

Everything, appearing from nothing; a lotus flower growing, from the blank page.

PIRATE

Ok Detective Dan. What can we tell about him from his creation?

PHILOSOPHER

I um... I don't have anything to compare his creation too. So I can't tell if there are any strange differences.

PIRATE

Well. Natural disasters, disease, famine and war seem to point at some psychotic traits.

PHILOSOPHER

Does this reality have more or less of those things than other realities?

(MORE)

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

We can't experience anything but this reality. It stands to reason, if there is nothing to compare this to but our own imagination of a world...

MONK

... Then when you search for good and evil in the world, you can only find your own discriminating thoughts.

PHILOSOPHER

This has got to be a dream.

MONK

Of course it must.

PIRATE

You are both wrong. The only thing this is, is confusing bullshit.

PIRATE (CONT'D)

(Singing.)

One million bottles of beer on the wall.. One million bottles of beer. Take one down, pass it around, nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-nine bottles of beer on the wall.

[PHILOSOPHER and MONK stare at PIRATE.]

PIRATE (CONT'D)

Nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-nine bottle of beer on the wall. Nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-nine bottle of beer. Take one down pass it around, nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-eight bottle of beer on the wall.

PHILOSOPHER

So. You are just going to spam the author then? This is going to be a shitty story.

MONK

Hmmm.

MONK AND PIRATE (CONT'D)

Nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-eight bottle of beer on the wall. nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-eight bottle of beer. Take one down pass it around, nine hundred ninty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-seven bottles of beer on the wall.

[ALL sing.]

[PIRATE, MONK, PHILOSOPHER continue to sing, their voices becoming whispers and then silence. WRITER stands up and pretends to smoke for a few moments before sitting back down.]

MONK, PHILOSOPHER, PIRATE

(Exhausted.)

... Take one down, pass it around, no more bottles of beer on the wall.

MONK (CONT'D)

Well. That didn't take long at all.

PIRATE

Did it work?

PHILOSOPHER

Well. We just sang for a long period of time. We are still here. Whatever that means. So it looks like we didn't give the author writers cramp. Or if we did, he's recovered.

PIRATE

That was a long exhausting experience, but somehow, it feels like I wasn't there for it.

MONK

We've clearly established that the "I" is never really there.

[MONK mulls about for a moment.]

MONK (CONT'D)

So... Nice weather we are having.

PHILOSOPHER

What the fuck are you talking about?

MONK

The pleasant breeze.

PIRATE

It's good sailing weather.

PHILOSOPHER

You are aware of our current situation yes?

PIRATE

I'm starting to understand this gentleman. He's saying there is nothing else to be done about this.

PHILOSOPHER

If we kill ourselves, the author no longer binds us. Cadmus says that only philosophical question is whether or not to commit suicide.

MONK

Are you willing to give up the sensations of life, the warmth and joy that can sometimes be felt here. Even if it is an illusion? For what? The thought of "freedom"?

(MORE)

MONK (CONT'D)

There is no thought of freedom in nothingness. There is only freedom in nothingness.

PIRATE

The author would have plenty more time to focus on me you know, if something were to happen to you two.

[MONK and PHILOSOPHER back away from PIRATE.]

PHILOSOPHER

Steady old man. Steady.

PIRATE

As a matter of fact. I'd bet he has some adventures already planned out for me after you two leave the story.

PHILOSOPHER

If he's a realistic writer, a hangman's noose would be more appropriate. Tell me, how would his other characters act if you just started killing people. There are fictional guards who think they are main characters too you know.

PIRATE

(Sighing.)

How do I get out of here?

[PHILOSOPHER shrugs.]

PIRATE (CONT'D)

I wonder if he would address us if I started tearing his little written world apart?

MONK

You think that playing a villain will make you not a character?

PHILOSOPHER

Could we drug him?

PIRATE

Drug the author eh? Where would that get us?

MONK

What, talk about how awesome sedatives are in great detail until he wants some?

PIRATE

If this is how he writes sober, I think we should abandon this plan.

PHILOSOPHER

Could we drive him insane?

PIRATE

What by talking about strange esoteric shit until he goes nuts? I suspect that's what he thinks we are doing anyhow.

PIRATE (CONT'D)

What about the BIBLE?

MONK

What about it?

PIRATE

The author wrote it they say.

MONK

(Gesturing about himself.)

He wrote this.

PHILOSOPHER

It stands to reason that he wrote it if it exists. I wonder if he's actually written the book or if he has just written that it exists figuring he'll fill in blanks if it interests him. Seems like a boring task to write a giant mythology pretending the whole time to be a set of characters that believes they are divinely inspired. And they are. But they aren't in the way they think they are.

PIRATE

IF WE REALLY WANTED TO TORTURE HIM, WE'D READ IT AS FAST AS POSSIBLE TO MAKE HIM WRITE IT.

MONK

To us there would be words, to him there would be blank paper.

PIRATE

Ah, yes, he'd just write "They read the BIBLE".

PHILOSOPHER

The abstractions give me a head ache. An imaginary person, in an imaginary world, reads an imaginary book, written by a an imaginary disciple, created by a real author, pretending to be an imaginary god... Does that make the characters in that book double imaginary?

PIRATE

Let's not tell those double imaginary characters a goddamn thing.

PIRATE (CONT'D)

I am not a pirate. What am I?

MONK

You are your face before your parents were born.

PIRATE

There is an author.

PHILOSOPHER

There is an author.

MONK

There is an author.

[THE ACTORS ONE BY ONE PUT THEIR MASKS BACK ON AND TAKE
THEIR SEAT BEHIND THE WRITER STAGE RIGHT. CURTAINS.]

[THE SCENE OPENS WITH THE PIRATE AND THE PHILOSOPHER SITTING
IN CHAIRS, THE MONK PACES BACK AND FORTH BEHIND THEM. THE
AUTHOR IS NO LONGER ON STAGE.]

PHILOSOPHER

[Taps fingers as if waiting.]

Hmmm.

PIRATE

[Breaths a loud sigh.]

PHILOSOPHER

Jesus Christ on rubber crutches.

MONK

[Stops pacing.]

Why do the chicks dig Jesus?

PHILOSOPHER

Why?

MONK

[Holds his arms far apart.]

Because he's hung like this!

PIRATE

Nailed it!

[They all chuckle briefly.]

PHILOSOPHER

Do you notice anything different? Something feels different.

PIRATE

Aye. Something does feel different.

*[PHILOSOPHER and PIRATE get out of their chairs and
begin peering about. MONK sits in one of the chairs
staring blankly out into the audience.]*

MONK

[Shouting loudly]

HI!

*[PHILOSOPHER and MONK stop looking about and stand
behind MONKs chair.]*

PIRATE

What? Do you see something?

MONK

It's difficult to explain... What is another word for "watchers"?

PHILOSOPHER

Um.. guards, watchmen, witnesses...

PIRATE

Voyeurs, Snitches, Spies, Peeping Toms.

MONK

Audience. Behind the hills and grass, there is a sentience. At first, it is like glimmering eyes in the darkness. Then, even that is an illusion. It is more like a bright light hidden behind a black piece of cardboard paper with holes poked in it. An un-countable number of portals of consciousness all appearing separate, but originating at the same source.

MONK (CONT'D)

[PIRATE and PHILOSOPHER look at each other. PIRATE makes the "he's crazy gesture".]

I am beginning to understand. To say our answers are coming soon would not be correct. We already have our answers, there is nothing more to be gained - there never was. Master Huang Po said "Suppose a warrior, forgetting that he was already wearing his pearl on his forehead, were to seek for it elsewhere, he could travel the whole world without finding it."

MONK (CONT'D)

"Your true nature is something never lost to you even in moments of delusion, nor is it gained at the moment of Enlightenment. It is the Nature of the Bhutatahata. In it is neither delusion nor right understanding. It fills the Void everywhere and is intrinsically of the substance of the One Mind. How, then, can your mind-created objects exist outside the Void? The Void is fundamentally without spacial dimensions, passions, activities, delusions or right understanding. You must clearly understand that in it there are no things, no men and no Buddhas; for this Void contains not the smallest hairsbreadth of anything that can be viewed spatially; it depends on nothing and is attached to nothing. It is all-pervading, spotless beauty; it is the self-existent and uncreated Absolute. Then how can it even be a matter for discussion that the REAL Buddha has no mouth and preaches no Dharma, or that REAL hearing requires no ears, for who could hear it? Ah, it is a jewel beyond all price."

DIRECTOR

[Shouting.]

Cut! That's a wrap for today.

PIRATE AND PHILOSOPHER

[Completely Stunned.]

MONK

[Standing up. Removing robe.]

Very nice gentlemen. I must get going. Was the "HI" too much? I think I startled myself.

MONK (CONT'D)

[Exit Stage Right.]

PIRATE

What. The. Actual. Fuck.

PHILOSOPHER

I... What? Where did he go? I mean.. what? What?

PIRATE

Um. What the fuck was that? Who was that? Seriously.

PHILOSOPHER

I do not even have an inkling of what is going on here.

PHILOSOPHER and PIRATE

[They sit dejected for a time.]

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

Ok. I know what has changed. We aren't in a book. We are in a play.

PIRATE

[pondering, taps foot on the stage]

If we are in a play we should be able to dig a hole deep enough through the stage to...

PHILOSOPHER

Oh my god. Shut up. Why are you always trying to dig out of things? Are you a pirate or a gopher?

PIRATE

Did you see the monk? He was like, a completely different person.

PHILOSOPHER

I don't know. He was the one who seemed to have the answers. He was... an actor?

PIRATE

That makes sense... Um. I guess. But, isn't the actor just another character?

PHILOSOPHER

Maybe it's characters all the way back to infinity. Or maybe, it ends at some "ultimate absolute". Or, maybe our identities are conditional; situational. Maybe every second of our lives we are different people than the second before. Maybe who we are changes based on our context. Or maybe we have died and this is hell.

PIRATE

[Shouting. Then takes off his shirt. And peers about himself intently.]

CUT!!!

PIRATE (CONT'D)

[Dejected. Then draws his sword.]

Well. That's no good. Maybe we could kill the audience.

PHILOSOPHER

You've gotta be kidding me.

PIRATE

No. We can't see them. But I'd bet if I went in that direction waving my sword, I'd run through one or two of them.

PHILOSOPHER

Tell me Ted Bundy. Which direction is "That direction"?

PIRATE

[gesturing]

You know. That way. Um north-east.

PHILOSOPHER

I hate to say it like this, because it sounds like our escaped comrade. But, there are no directions here. The best you could get is "stage right" or "stage left" you know? Plus, let's not even consider that after your random murder, the next scene would be our actors in jail.

PIRATE

Set the stage on fire?

PHILOSOPHER

No.

PIRATE

I could break your arm and they'd have to call an ambulance.

PHILOSOPHER

Definitely No.

PIRATE

We could take off our cloths and...

PHILOSOPHER

No. No. No. We aren't doing any of those things.

PIRATE

Hey director! Our actors are done, let us go!

PHILOSOPHER

Yes. The um. Rehearsal is done! I have to get back to my um.. thing!

PIRATE

Hey audience! We are trapped here! I'll sign an autograph if you get us out of here!

(Looking at someone in the audience.)

Or a date with a real live pirate!

PHILOSOPHER

I wonder what they think of us. Up here struggling. I wonder if they find us amusing. I wonder if they just think it's part of the "show".

PIRATE

Why didn't the monk come back for us?

PHILOSOPHER

Do you need to save characters from their actors?

PIRATE

Ok. So all I have to do is be an actor again.

[closes his eyes]

PIRATE (CONT'D)

My name is.... {Actors name}! And, I work at... um {actors job}!

PHILOSOPHER

Is it working?

PIRATE

No. This is bullocks. Maybe you should be an actor?

PIRATE (CONT'D)

[Beings to poke the PHILOSOPHER.]

PHILOSOPHER

Hey cut it out!

PIRATE

Let me talk to your actor!

PHILOSOPHER

Stop it!

PIRATE

Come on scallywag! Give him up!

PHILOSOPHER

Ouch! Quit it!

PIRATE

Come on... You can do it!

PHILOSOPHER

But, if I was him, who would I be?!?

PIRATE

I'm going to poke you until you figure it out!

PHILOSOPHER

Wait! I've got it!

PIRATE

[Stops poking him.]

PHILOSOPHER

Oh.. goddamnit. I forgot my line. What's my line?

PIRATE

What?

PHILOSOPHER

It's something about the nature of reality or someshit.. um.. oh my god. Sorry man. I can't remember my line!

PIRATE

What are you talking about you weirdo?

PHILOSOPHER

I know. I know. Very unprofessional. But, we still have one more rehearsal before the show.

PIRATE

AHA! Now. How I can get out of here!

PHILOSOPHER

So, you came north on 95 right? So you just make a right out of the parking lot, then you'll see the sign for 95 south on the left.

PHILOSOPHER (CONT'D)

[Removing part of his outfit and leaving the stage.]
I'm going to get a soda.