

Selected scenes from

*The Trees Don't Talk Anymore*  
A short play

## Summary:

Brian, a young man, takes a job at a firewatch tower in Wyoming in order to get his life back on track. His only daily contact is with his supervisor, Carol. Over the weeks the two begin to connect in ways they didn't anticipate as they are forced to deal with isolation, regret, and existential dread. Meanwhile, in the outside world the climate crisis picks up pace to apocalyptic levels. While the vast woods of Wyoming may seem like the safest place to be in any disaster, no one is safe from the natural forces of Planet Earth.

## Note from the playwright:

Despite this play's short length, the piece is intended to reach up to an hour in length due to the slow pacing of the scenes. Silence is a key component of this play, as most of the time spent in the firewatch tower is time spent alone. The minimalism of the conversation is meant to cram 99% of a day's silence into the only moment of dialogue in a day.

## Characters:

Brian, late twenties, quiet, dark.  
Carol, forties, snappy, witty, never seen onstage.

## Scene 1

*Lights up, the interior of a fire watch cabin. BRIAN enters through a door on the right. He carries a large duffel bag. He looks around and sets the bag down by the door, closing it over behind him. The sound of bird chirping can be heard from the right primarily. It's about mid-day, and the cabin is fully lit by the sun streaming in from the windows. The sky is clear and blue.*

*BRIAN turns on the radio*

### **BRIAN**

Hello? This is Brian Delahanty at Outpost 452, Reid Wyoming.

*There's a beat. BRIAN fumbles with the radio.*

### **CAROL**

*(abruptly)* Who's there?

**BRIAN**

It's Brian Delahanty, I'm the new resident for the season.

**Carol**

Delahanty? (*flips through papers*) Says here you aren't supposed to arrive for another three days.

**BRIAN**

Yeah uh, I got in early.

**Carol**

That's highly irregular.

**BRIAN**

Irregular—

**CAROL**

—Skip should've told me— (*The sound of ruffling through papers*)

**BRIAN**

(*Over CAROL's adlibbing*) What do you mean by highly irregular?

**CAROL**

I mean any transportation in and out of the park would've had to be approved by me. Outpost 452 is only accessible on seaplane, and we only run seaplanes out of Kelly station.

**BRIAN**

I didn't go to Kelly station.

**CAROL**

So, you mean to tell me you hiked in? Do you know how dangerous that is?

**BRIAN**

No

**CAROL**

You're seriously fucking stupid.

**BRIAN**

Excuse me?

**CAROL**

Skip always sticks me with the fuck-ups...

**BRIAN**

What's that supposed to mean?

**CAROL**

It means these next few months are gonna be absolute dogshit. Word of advice. Don't hike twelve miles again. Don't do any other stupid stuff either.

**BRIAN**

I didn't do anything stupid.

**CAROL**

Hey stupid, here's another word of advice. Listen to what I'm fucking telling you. In case you haven't noticed you don't have many other people to talk to.

**BRIAN**

Fine. OK.

*BRIAN begins to take things out of his bag. There's a long pause. The sun's position will shift slightly, signifying the passage of time. BRIAN looks out one of the windows.*

**BRIAN**

That's quite a view.

**CAROL**

One of the perks of the job. Look at the horizon to the northwest.

**BRIAN**

Looking

*A slight flash is seen through one of the windows.*

**BRIAN**

What is that?

**CAROL**

That's Rodney. He's your nearest outpost. You'd be wise to flash back somehow.

*BRIAN takes a mirror and catches the sunlight with it, flashing back*

**CAROL**

Go to him if there's any trouble.

**BRIAN**

Trouble?

**CAROL**

Yeah

**BRIAN**

Why would there be trouble?

**CAROL**

You never know. It's the woods.

**BRIAN**

I thought that was the whole point. You go in the woods because it's peaceful. You become a firewatch tower operator to write your screenplay or whatever- because it's like, refreshing, or whatever.

**CAROL**

Well, are you writing a screenplay?

**BRIAN**

No.

**CAROL**

Good. Would hate to have to send an evac out to you when you throw yourself off your tower when you realize that going out here wasn't going to make your screenplay any easier.

**BRIAN**

What does this have to do with Rodney?

**CAROL**

You're right, we're getting sidetracked. You're supposed to flash back at Rodney twice a day. Once at 9 AM and once at 9 PM. Let him know you're still here. You know?

**BRIAN**

Isn't that something you could relay?

**CAROL**

Sure, I could, if I didn't have better things to do. I'm not here to make your friends for you. Don't want to talk to Rodney? That's fine. Just don't expect him to hike across the valley when shit goes wrong.

**BRIAN**

I understand, I'll make sure to reach out.

**CAROL**

Good boy. You know I'm not going to be here to walk you through all of this? I've got a meeting to get to. Any check-ins in the off-hours go right to the dispatch answering machine.

**BRIAN**

Right. I think I can handle things from here anyway.

**CAROL**

Good. That's how we like it. Keep this up and these will be a very easy three months. You'll hardly realize the time's gone by.

**BRIAN**

Right. Sounds easy enough.

*There's a beat, BRIAN isn't sure if he can put step away from the radio or not.*

**CAROL**

Say, you're not one of those crazy people, right? This isn't an on-the-run-killed-your-girlfriend-disappeared-in-the-woods type of deal. I'd hate for the real guy to show up in three days and see you with your Ouija board out on the floor trying to bring your sweetheart back.

**BRIAN**

No, nothing like that.

**CAROL**

And you're not going to back out of this halfway through citing some sort of ridiculous reason? Missing your family or your girlfriend or anything? Medical emergency perhaps?

**BRIAN**

I can't predict the future...

**CAROL**

Just... tell me. I just need to know you won't be a liability.

**BRIAN**

I won't be a liability.

**CAROL**

Good. I'm logging off for today then. Over and out.

*CAROL's radio frequency cuts off. BRIAN sighs and begins to go about his day, cooking, unpacking, cleaning, etc. The sun slowly sets as he does so, and the deep blue sky is replaced with a brilliant tapestry of stars as night falls over the forest. As night falls BRIAN flashes a light through the window, receives a flash back, then goes to bed.*

*-BLACKOUT-*

Scene 4:

*Dark stage, the only light comes from the stars and moon outside the windows of the building. Objects in the room should be just barely visible. BRIAN sits up in his bed, he sighs. There's a long beat, in this time, BRIAN will imperceptibly reach for his lantern. In an instant he'll turn it on. After a while he stands up and walks to a cabinet in the room. He pulls out a rope and ties a noose. He then throws it over one of the beams in the ceiling of the cabin. He puts the noose around his neck and places a chair under it. He stands on the chair, takes a deep breath in and out, just as he looks about ready to kick the chair, CAROL radios in.*

**CAROL**

Hello, Brian? Are you there?

*As this line is said, BRIAN's concentration is broken, causing him to slip and push the chair. This causes him to accidentally begin hanging himself. He also knocks the lamp over in this time, distorting the lights throughout the stage. He struggles wildly as he chokes, attempting to gain footing on anything in reach. Eventually he is able to get his feet on the stove, managing to somehow make the line slack. He sits there struggling to catch his breath.*

**CAROL**

I know its late but it's important. I need to tell you something.

*He keeps struggling, then begins loosening the noose around his neck. Once its off he immediately collapses off the stove to the floor. He lays there for a minute, trying to gather himself somehow.*

**CAROL**

Ugh... must be asleep. *(Beat, then yelling)* WAKE UP!

*The yelling startles BRIAN. He snaps out of it and rises to receive the call.*

**BRIAN**

HI. Yeah, sorry I'm here.

**CAROL**

Sorry. Did I wake you up?

**BRIAN**

No. Not at all. Haven't been able to sleep tonight.

**CAROL**

Then why'd you take so long to respond?

**BRIAN**

I don't really want to talk about it. What do you need to say?

*There's a beat. The kind that comes when both people in the conversation know that the truth isn't being told.*

**CAROL**

I'm leaving.

**BRIAN**

What?

**CAROL**

You heard me.

**BRIAN**

Yeah but I don't understand.

**CAROL**

I'm not staying here.

**BRIAN**

*(Confused, speechless)* err... ok?

**CAROL**

Ok?

**BRIAN**

I just don't see why this couldn't wait for the morning.



**CAROL**

What do you mean?

**BRIAN**

You're quitting your job. Why on earth are you telling me now?

**CAROL**

I'm not quitting. I'm leaving.

*Another beat*

**BRIAN**

You're leaving?

**CAROL**

Jesus Christ you're dense. Yes. I'm leaving. I'm not quitting. I'm getting the fuck out of here in my ranger truck and I'm going to find my family. I'm not going to stay out here watching for fires while the whole world is burning. I just can't stay here.

**BRIAN**

So, you're abandoning your post?

**CAROL**

Oh, don't get all high and mighty with me.

**BRIAN**

I'm not. I don't give a shit, but I don't exactly have many other lifelines out here. What if something happens? I'll die.

**CAROL**

You'll die anywhere else too. The whole world is burning or flooding.

**BRIAN**

It's really that bad?

**CAROL**

It only gets worse every day.

**BRIAN**

How do you know?

**CAROL**

I can only guess. Comms are breaking down more and more each day too. This is why I can't stay here. I need to go to find my

family. I'm worried about my kids, my husband, and my mom. I haven't heard from any of them in weeks.

**BRIAN**

Right.

**CAROL**

You understand that, don't you?

*There's a pause, BRIAN looks to the noose*

**CAROL**

Brian?

**BRIAN**

Yeah.

**CAROL**

Ok

*A long pause, the sounds of the wilderness can be heard.*

**CAROL**

Look, I'm going to need to get going now.

**BRIAN**

Take me with you.

**CAROL**

What?

**BRIAN**

Take me. There's nothing for me out here. I learned that as soon as I got out here. That's why I took the job but learning that the world is burning out there makes this even more pointless.

**CAROL**

Is that what you really want? What's out there for you?

**BRIAN**

Nothing more than there is here. I'm telling you I need to leave. I need to go out into the world where at least I can do something.

**CAROL**

You're going to save the world, singlehandedly?

**BRIAN**

No but it's better than killing myself in a wood tower.

*This hangs in the air.*

**CAROL**

Rodney's just across the valley.

**BRIAN**

I know.

**CAROL**

Have you been reaching out to him? Flashing a light twice a day?

**BRIAN**

Yeah.

**CAROL**

And he's been flashing back?

**BRIAN**

Yeah.

**CAROL**

Then you're not alone.

**BRIAN**

Yeah but—

**CAROL**

—Look Brian I know there isn't much out there for you, but I promise there's gonna a hell of a lot less with every passing day. It's better to stay here. Look at the trees, the mountains. Take it in. You may be one of the last people to look at this beautiful land for quite some time.

*They both pause. BRIAN takes in the scenery around him. Perhaps the stage becomes slightly more illuminated around him, and the sounds of the forest increase slightly.*

**BRIAN**

It is beautiful, isn't it?

**CAROL**

I'll have to take your word for it. I haven't been to your outpost in quite some time.

**BRIAN**

*(Chuckling slightly)* I don't blame you.

**CAROL**

Believe it or not I manned that outpost for a season.

**BRIAN**

Oh really? Is this like, a rite of passage or something?

**CAROL**

No, nothing like that. The place is a shithole but it's not a lovable shithole. It's just a shithole.

**BRIAN**

Understood.

**CAROL**

That shithole is all you have now, you hear me?

**BRIAN**

Well that just makes me feel great

**CAROL**

I mean it. That shithole is up there on the list of the safest places to be right now. You need to stay there. If things get a lot worse go find Rodney. Please.

*Beat.*

**BRIAN**

I'll stay.

**CAROL**

Thank you. I need to go but I hope I see you again.

**BRIAN**

You've never seen me.

*Another beat.*

**CAROL**

Right. I hope to meet you some day.

**BRIAN**

You too Carol, good luck.

*CAROL's radio clicks off. The sounds of the forest are deafening. BRIAN looks out at the stars on his bed.*

*-BLACKOUT-*