

# This Play is Epic

A thought-provoking tale of epic theatre

## Scene 1: Direct Address

### Characters

Speaker (Narrator)

Protagonist

Antagonist

*A simple stage set is revealed to the audience: three chairs spaced evenly across an otherwise barren stage. From stage left, the SPEAKER emerges, followed by the PROTAGONIST and the ANTAGONIST, entering from stage right and centre, respectively.*

*All three characters are clearly wearing theatre 'blacks' underneath a distinguishable attire: the Speaker is business-like, the Protagonist rugged and honest, and the Antagonist sleek and polished. None of the characters wear a complete costume, only the essential fragments necessary to convey intended meaning.*

SPEAKER: *(Stepping forward, addresses the audience directly)* Ladies and Gentlemen, we gather here not for escape or entertainment, but for a critical reflection on our world. Tonight, we invite you to participate, to question, to challenge, in the true spirit of the Epic Theatre. Let me introduce you to our characters for the evening, the Protagonist and the Antagonist.

*(The PROTAGONIST steps forward, gives a curt nod to the audience. He carries an air of quiet strength.)*

PROTAGONIST: *(Briefly breaks character, acknowledges the audience)* Good evening. Today, I represent every common man and woman, facing the trials and tribulations of life.

*(The ANTAGONIST steps forward, a smug grin on his face, and nods to the audience.)*

ANTAGONIST: (*Breaks character, addresses the audience*) And I stand before you as the embodiment of the forces often working against the common man and woman. The hurdles, the systemic issues, the corrupt power structures.

SPEAKER: (*Turning towards PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST*) Remember, we are not just characters in a story. We are representations of larger ideas, larger conflicts.

(*They nod in understanding.*)

SPEAKER: (*To the audience*) As we journey tonight, keep in mind, we are here to reveal truths, to challenge notions, to critique the society we inhabit. Remember, in Epic Theatre, the world is our stage, and you, dear audience, are an integral part of this play. We welcome you.

(*The SPEAKER exits while the PROTAGONIST, and the ANTAGONIST take a seat in the front row of the audience, ready to commence the rest of the play.*)

## Scene 2: Projections

### Characters

Protagonist

Antagonist

*A soft hum fills the room as a projector flickers to life, casting a warm light against the centre-stage screen. The sound of paper rustling and typewriters clacking fills the theatre, and the screen begins to show a flurry of newspaper headlines. Scenes of wars, political unrest, economic crises, and protests begin to flicker and merge, creating a chaotic montage of global turmoil.*

PROTAGONIST: (*Rises from his chair in the front row, taking slow, measured steps toward the screen. His eyes narrow as he takes in the chaotic collage.*) Look at this, all this turmoil, this disruption. It feels like our world is collapsing beneath the weight of its own discord.

ANTAGONIST: (*Languidly reclines in his audience chair, lazily spinning a pen between his fingers. He squints at the screen, unimpressed.*) Collapsing, you say? That's a bit dramatic, isn't it? Could it not simply be ... evolution? A harsh, painful transition, yes, but a necessary one. A metamorphosis, the shedding of old skin for the emergence of something new ... something better.

PROTAGONIST: (*Standing, levels a pointed stare at the ANTAGONIST. His voice rings out, clear and sharp.*) Better? Is that what you call the consequences of greed? Leaving millions to suffer in poverty, fuelling unnecessary wars, causing political instability? If that's your vision of a 'better' world, I fear for us all.

*The projector shifts gears, moving from global events to personal ones. Charts displaying economic disparity take center stage, images of luxurious mansions are juxtaposed with dilapidated slums, scenes of extravagant parties cut to images of famine and hunger.*

ANTAGONIST: (*Rises, mirroring the Protagonist's stance. He squints at the images.*) I never said it was ideal. But this ... this isn't about you or me. It's a reflection of the societal structure we've all played a part in creating. It's the mirror of the world order that we all participate in, either as puppeteers or puppets. (*The ANTAGONIST resumes his seat.*)

PROTAGONIST: (*Faces the rest of the audience, his gaze sweeping over the crowd.*) And that's what we're here to question tonight, ladies and gentlemen. The system, the world order, and our complicity in its creation and continuation. We're here to question, to challenge, and perhaps ... to change.

*The images continue to play, casting an eerie, flickering light over the stage as the characters remain in a standoff, their challenge ringing through the air. The tension is palpable, setting the tone for the rest of the play.*

### **Scene 3: Historicisation**

#### **Characters**

Speaker (Narrator)

Protagonist

Antagonist

Assistants

*The projector fades out, leaving the stage bathed in a soft twilight. The PROTAGONIST remains on stage while the ANTAGONIST quickly jumps from his seat in the audience to the stage. The SPEAKER re-emerges, followed by two ASSISTANTS carrying a rail of clothes. The ASSISTANTS silently help the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST into fragments of 1920s period costumes. There is no attempt to hide the ASSISTANTS or the costume changes from the audience.*

*A faint jazz tune hums in the background. Once the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST are clothed in their new attire, the two ASSISTANTS exit to the wing with the clothes rail.*

SPEAKER: *(Holding out a bowler hat to the PROTAGONIST)* Time travel, ladies and gentlemen, is not merely a dream for those in the theatre. Tonight, we journey back to the Roaring 20s.

PROTAGONIST: *(Looking down at his attire, he touches the fabric, the pocket watch chain)* This era ... it feels somewhat familiar, doesn't it? Almost like we're seeing our reflection in the mirror of time.

ANTAGONIST: *(Checking out his own attire, he straightens his tie, smirking)* The age of jazz, flappers and bootleggers. A time of prosperity, but also of great disparity. But isn't it all just history repeating itself?

SPEAKER: *(Nods, walking to the projector, his silhouette casting a long shadow)* That's what we're here to explore. To dig through the archives of the past and see if they reflect our present ... and potentially, our future.

*The projector flickers back to life, painting the backdrop of the 1920s - speakeasies and flapper dancers. These are then juxtaposed with current images reflecting similar social issues - nightclubs and socialites.*

ANTAGONIST: *(Gestures towards the screen, a wry smile on his face)* Different times, same stories. Wealth, power, corruption. The costumes change, the stage evolves, but the script, it seems, remains remarkably the same.

PROTAGONIST: *(Turning to the audience, earnestly)* But we're not bound by this script, are we? We've learned from our past, haven't we? We can make different choices, choose a different path ... can't we?

SPEAKER: *(Steps forward, looking directly at the audience)* Indeed, that's the question we pose to you tonight. Are we doomed to replay our history, or can we rewrite the narrative, sculpt a different future? The answer, ladies and gentlemen, is in our collective hands.

*The jazz tune rises and then softly fades out. The stage is left in a hush, a thoughtful silence hanging in the air as the SPEAKER, PROTAGONIST, and ANTAGONIST stand*

*looking out at the audience, the images of the past and present flickering behind them.*

**Scene 4: Verfremdungseffekt** (to make the familiar, strange)

**Characters**

Speaker (Narrator)

Protagonist

Antagonist

Assistants

*The stage remains bathed in open white light. The two ASSISTANTS return with the same clothes rail, but this time, new costumes are hanging from it. They help the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST change out of their 1920s attire into fragments of oversized suits and grotesque masks. The two suddenly become caricatures of greedy, capitalist Wall Street traders. The stage is transformed into an exaggerated version of a stock market floor. The two ASSISTANTS exit with the clothes rail.*

SPEAKER: *(Appearing from the wing and stepping forward, gesturing back towards the stage)* Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the world of Verfremdungseffekt, a tool we use to make the familiar strange, to distort reality in order to offer new perspectives.

PROTAGONIST: *(Holds out his arms, looking at his grotesque outfit, then to the audience)* Strange indeed! This outfit, this mask, they are distortions, exaggerations of the norm.

ANTAGONIST: *(Laughs behind his mask, clapping his hands)* Yes, indeed! I feel almost monstrous in this getup. It's as though we've stepped into a carnival funhouse mirror.

SPEAKER: *(Smiling, nodding)* That's the point, gentlemen. In this moment, you are not just yourselves, but symbols, distortions of a reality we all know too well.

*(The PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST begin to act out a scene of stock trading, their movements exaggerated, their voices distorted and very loud. It's a strange, unsettling performance that makes the audience think. A blaring soundscape accompanies their shouting on the stock market floor ... and then stops abruptly.)*

SPEAKER: *(To the audience)* By distorting what we know, making it unfamiliar, we hope to invite you to look closer, to question, to see beyond the surface.

PROTAGONIST: *(Turning to the audience, removing his mask)* By stepping into this absurdity, we can start to see the reality we inhabit in a new light. We can start to question, critique, and even challenge it.

ANTAGONIST: *(Also removes his mask, addressing the audience)* And through this challenge, we might see not only the failings of our systems but also the possibilities for change.

SPEAKER: *(Concludes)* In the world of *Verfremdungseffekt*, nothing is as it seems. Remember this as we delve further into our narrative.

*The music now starts up again and grows louder for a moment before fading, the lights dim as the SPEAKER, PROTAGONIST, and ANTAGONIST leave the stage, setting the scene for what comes next.*

## **Scene 5: Gestus** ('guest-oos')

### **Characters**

Protagonist

Antagonist

Assistants

*In the scene change that occurs in full white light, the two ASSISTANTS enter once more with their clothes rail. They help the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST take off their oversized suits and masks, leaving just their theatre blacks underneath. They are each given elements of a typical lawyer outfit to wear in this scene. The PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST are standing on opposite sides of the stage. The two ASSISTANTS carefully place a table and papers and a lectern and book on the bare stage. They are now in a courtroom.*

PROTAGONIST: *(He raises a bundle of papers high above his head, with a clear, decisive jerk of his hand. His other hand is placed firmly on his hip, embodying the character of a passionate prosecutor. Addressing the audience.)* We stand at a crossroads, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, a fork between the path of morality and the alleyway of legality.

ANTAGONIST: (*Leaning nonchalantly against a lectern, he casually flips through a thick, leather-bound book with a dismissive flick of his wrist, embodying the slick, calculated character of a defense attorney. Addressing the audience.*) Morality, eh? Quite the chameleon, isn't it? Its hues change from person to person, from moment to moment.

PROTAGONIST: (*Suddenly, he slams his hand down onto the table, the sound reverberating around the auditorium. His face is contorted with indignation, his eyes ablaze.*) But surely there exist irrefutable truths, immutable values that cannot be swept away by the tides of individual perception!

ANTAGONIST: (*He chuckles softly, shrugging his shoulders, lifting his hands palms-upwards in a gesture of feigned helplessness. He lifts an eyebrow, a sly smile playing on his lips.*) Truths, my dear prosecutor, are often nothing more than the opinions that have won the popularity contest.

*The PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST fluidly transition across the stage, their physical gestures, their body language mirroring the roles they inhabit, yet subtly revealing their own personal perspectives on the debate. The PROTAGONIST is a picture of righteous passion, his every move bold and charged with energy. The ANTAGONIST, on the other hand, is a study in cunning nonchalance, his movements slick and purposefully relaxed.*

PROTAGONIST: (*His voice rings out clear and determined. He turns to the audience, his arms wide open, his palms facing upwards in a universal gesture of appeal.*) Are we not bound by a shared responsibility, a collective onus to uphold values that champion justice, equality, fairness?

ANTAGONIST: (*He laughs out loud, his head thrown back, his hand leisurely patting the thick book in front of him. He too, turns to the audience, his hands held out in front of him, his fingers splayed out in a gesture of candid honesty.*) Or do we, in our quest for this utopian 'shared responsibility', risk smothering the very essence of our humanity – our individuality?

*The final image is a tableau of the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST, frozen mid-gesture, the tension between them palpable. The discourse, and the physical embodiment of the discourse through gestus, encapsulates the ongoing struggle between collective moral responsibility and the right to individual freedom. The audience is left to deliberate this precarious balance.*

## Scene 6: Breaking The Fourth Wall / No Resolution

### Characters

Protagonist

Antagonist

*As the lights come up, the PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST are left in their final tableau from the previous scene. The PROTAGONIST, his arms open in a gesture of appeal, the ANTAGONIST, relaxed and poised in a posture of casual honesty. With slow, calculated movement, they both de-robe and place their courtroom garb at their feet, leaving just their 'theatre blacks'.*

PROTAGONIST: *(Slowly lowers his arms, his gaze meeting that of the audience)* As our tale draws to a close, you might find yourselves grappling for resolution, for a neat, tied-up ending. But such is not the nature of our world, nor of this narrative. Because this is not just theatre. This is a *reflection* of our world, of our society. We stand here, in front of you, not just as actors but as your equals, as part of this shared reality.

ANTAGONIST: *(Straightening up, also addressing the audience directly)* We play out these scenes, not to escape the world, but to confront it, to understand it, and to challenge it.

PROTAGONIST: *(Steps forward, closer to the edge of the stage)* We do not exist in isolation on this stage. You, our audience, are part of this narrative, part of this discourse.

ANTAGONIST: *(Following the PROTAGONIST's lead, steps closer to the audience)* Our voices are no more significant than yours. This space we share, it's a place for dialogue, for thought, for questioning.

PROTAGONIST: *(Looks around, gesturing towards the audience)* Theatre is not a mirror held up to nature, but a hammer with which to shape it. Your perspectives, your voices, can help shape this narrative.

ANTAGONIST: *(Nods, his gaze scanning the audience)* And so, we ask you to *think*, to *question*, to *engage* with us. We stand here, on this stage, not as mere performers, but as provocateurs of thought, instigators of dialogue.



*The PROTAGONIST and ANTAGONIST retreat from the edge of the stage and meet in the middle, face to face. They then pass each other, slowly exiting the opposite wing, in full light. They leave behind them a thought-provoking silence in their wake. The audience is left to ponder their own role in this discourse, not just as passive spectators, but as active participants in the narrative.*

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