

ECO-SUITE

A Short Public Performance Piece by Ingrid Rogers

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Eco-Suite was written to encourage reflection and discussion about our threatened environment. The time for action is now. Theater can be an inviting and inspiring way to get people involved--emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Please spread the news about this play and use it in your community.

The play is available in the short version below, with only five scenes, or as a full-length play that a high school drama club or a church youth group may be wanting to stage. Both versions contain several scenes that can also be performed independently as discussion starters in multiple settings. The longer play with production notes and the lyrics and music for the theme song, along with a discussion guide, is available by contacting the author at ingridnrogers@gmail.com. There is no fee for performances.

Scene 1

Lucifer is sitting on a crate. He wears a gray t-shirt. He is looking at a large screen with projections of the environmental disasters that have plagued the planet: Wildfires; floods; drought; a town destroyed by a hurricane. He nods in appreciation. The Archangel Gabriel enters.

G: Hello, Lucifer!

L (sarcastic, bowing): Oh, what an honor! If it isn't the Archangel Gabriel! Did you come to deliver some good news by any chance?

G: Not exactly. How are you doing, Luce?

L: A bit bored, Gabe, to tell you the truth.

G: Why is that?

L: I'm running out of work, Gabe. It seems like ... everything has already been decided.

G: Really? I don't feel that way.

L: That's right. You never do. Always the hopeful one. (*Exasperated sigh.*) My God! Look at these people! They can't seem to wait to destroy life on this planet. And they don't need me to give them ideas. They are figuring it out all on their own now.

G: Well, I am sure you had something to do with it. At any rate, don't blame me for your bad mood. Aren't you pleased to see the destruction that is happening?

L: I am, of course. And I'm not in a bad mood. I just think it's game over. God made a big mistake, and you won't own up to it. Just admit it. You all were into this big creation thing. And then you screwed up. You lost. (*Looks at him, shouts.*) YOU LOST!

G: And what big mistake would that be?

L: Day six of creation, to be precise. Before that, for the first five, you did mostly okay, even from my perspective. Everything started out beautifully: The cosmos. The stars. The oceans. The plants. The animals. But God ... God just ... couldn't stop somehow. Trying to form this supposed "masterpiece" of yours. Why? Why risk all of creation by placing it in the hands of these ... these ... humanoids? And why couldn't they just be like the rest, happy with what they had?

G: You know the answer, Lucifer. You inspired them. You made them want control. And knowledge. And power. God wanted humans to be in communion with. To be in a relationship of love, and to share that love with the rest of created life. To be caretakers. God loved humans. Still does. And they are still capable of love too. For God and for others as well.

L (*grimaces*): Is that so? Have you looked at them lately?

G: Yes, I have. I grant you that some are making horrible choices.

L: That's putting it mildly. Why did God have to give them the power to choose? And what happens now? Are you not going to take a stand, now that the whole creation is at risk?

G: God has always taken a stand. They have been told what is good and what is evil. They had the prophets. They were shown how to love. They were instructed not to be abusive. God showed them how to live a righteous life. God empowered them to create ... to heal ... to share with one another ... to forgive ... and to be compassionate. But you are right, God has given them options. Why? Because it doesn't make sense to expect them to love God and all creation unless they are given the power to choose, out of their own free will.

L: You should fight. You should punish them.

G: They are punishing themselves, and God suffers with them. But God will love them nonetheless, to the end.

L: So there you are. You are a loser. You and your heavenly hosts. You can't even rescue God's own creation. (*Makes the L sign on his forehead.*) LOSERS!

G: We'll see.

L: All right. Why don't we go pay them a visit. (*They exit.*)

Scene 2

Two actors at a center table, drinking coffee. One is working on a laptop computer, the other reading.

C1: Hey, listen to this. I found this interesting website where they let you test your carbon footprint.

C2: Please don't interrupt me all the time. My what? (*Takes out his/her ear pods.*) Footprint? (*Looks at the sole of his/her shoe.*)

C1: No, not your real footprint. Carbon footprint. It shows what amount of carbon you put into the air. The things you do that cause global warming.

C2: I do? Why me?

C1: Not you personally. We. Most of us. The stuff we should avoid doing.

C2: (*Sighs*) Like what? Give me some examples.

C1: Well, here. Let's just try and see what they say online. It's kind of a questionnaire to show how we are implicated in climate change. (*Reads.*) They say the average carbon footprint for a person in the United States is 16 tons. Globally, it's closer to 4 tons. Sounds like we are the Number 1 polluters. Always US first, I guess.

C2: Somehow that doesn't surprise me. Then what do we have to do to get the number down?

C1: So the goal is ... let's see (*Checks the Ipad*) to avoid a 2 degree Celsius rise in global temperatures. For that we need to drop ...(*Looks up*) to under 2 tons--down from 16 tons-- by 2050.

C2. Sounds like a lot. But at least we have some time then.

C1: Not really. Right now we are on track to make things worse, not better.

C2: Surely that's not all up to us? But okay, what do they want to know?

C1: We have to enter how many miles we travel with our car, how often we fly, how much water we use, how we heat our house, what kind of things we eat, what our shopping habits are . . .

C2: Stop right there. I can already see that we are going to flunk this test.

C1: If you want, we can make some changes in our lifestyle.

C2: Like what?

C1: Get an electric vehicle. Or you can ride your bike to work.

C2: Why me? What about you? You need the exercise more than I do.

C1: There are also a lot of ideas here on what to do around the house--like turning off the lights, installing low-flow showerheads, turning the heat down ...

C2 (*exasperated tone of voice*): Turn the heat down??

C1: ... use rechargeable batteries, plant trees, line-dry clothing, spend less money...

C2 (*Claps her hands*): Spend less money! Now there's an idea for you!

C1: Well, do you want to save the planet or don't you?

C2: Ok, I agree that we can do better. And I'll work at it with you if you like. But I wonder whether this whole thing with the personal "footprint" just distracts from the fact that fossil fuel companies have been wrecking the earth for profits, and now they want us to take the blame.

C1 (*Looks at her. After a pause*): Well, you have a point there. We should probably also take a look at what these companies do. And what the politicians are up to. And what the banks are financing. And how other countries are ruining things. And ...

C2: Stop, I get the point. What you are saying is that we should do our part, regardless.

C1: Exactly. It seems like it all hangs together, right? Our actions, our choices.

C2: Let's learn more about what we can do. Maybe we can talk to our friends about it.

C1: Do you think they'd be interested?

C2: No idea. But it's easier to figure out what to do if you don't work at it alone. I'm going to try this. (*Picks up the phone.*) Lindy, are you busy next Saturday? I was wondering . . . (*Light fades out.*)

Scene 3

G: See? That sounded pretty good. They realized what's going on, and now they'll do something about it.

L: I doubt it. They've been told about climate change for decades. The place is crawling with people ringing alarm bells--but it's like they are all wearing ear plugs. Nobody wants inconvenient truths. They are all too busy shopping for more stuff and wanting to plan their next vacation.

G: I don't believe that. You just don't look in the right places.

L: My minions have convinced them that they don't need to be concerned about the planet going down the tubes. Here is what we taught them to believe.

(Enter a chorus of Fallen Angels. They are dressed in gray, drab clothes. They speak the single lines below, adding gestures for emphasis. They first speak one at a time, then small groups or the rest of the chorus repeat each sentence and gesture in unison. Afterwards, chorus members pick a different sentence and repeat, blending voices. They walk among members of the audience, talking, gesturing, seeking to convince them of the arguments.)

"There is no climate change."

"There has always been climate change."

"I won't be around to suffer the result of climate change."

"People aren't responsible for climate change."

"There are good aspects to climate change."

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G: And people really believe these lies?

L: You bet. All you have to do is repeat slogans often enough, and people believe them. Not only that--they circulate them on social media. Pretty soon everybody shouts the same nonsense.

G: I think the young people know better. It's their future that's at stake. In the long run, the truth will win out. It always does.

L: Oh, yeah? Listen to this.

Scene 4

Spotlight on two teenagers center front, playing on their Ipads. The Chorus of Lucifer's minions at first is in the background, then forms a half circle around the players without being noticed.

A1: Hey, I found this neat new app.

A2: Not another one with guns, I hope? I am kind of sick of gunning everyone down.

A1: You are weird. It's just a game!

A2: It's only a game until we have the next school shooting. Did you watch the news yesterday?

A1: Okay, okay. I get it. But here's another one.

A2: What's it called?

A1: It's called (*checks*) "Life points."

A2: Hmmm. What is it about?

A1: It looks like fun. You can accumulate all sorts of stuff. You know, the latest gadgets you see on TV. Like the ones my friend Al mentioned last night on Instagram.

A2: Really? All right, let's try it. At least it's not violent this time, right?

A1: Correct. And it's pretty simple.

The gray angel chorus emerges from the background, surrounding the players, watching.

A1: You have to press the arrow keys. Get the goods when they come. Quick. Oops! You missed one. Now! There you go! Hey, good deal!

A2: I have to keep holding down the consumer button, right?

A1: Yes. Over there. Take as much as you can get!

Chorus voices, cheering them on, partially overlapping: Move more quickly. More often. More stuff. More quickly. More often. More stuff.

A2: Got it! *(He beams with delight.)*

A1: Great job! Okay! *(Applause. Chorus echoes "Great Job! Okay!")*

A2: Here's another bonus to collect. Let's play again. *(A1 nods.)*

I won! I won!

Chorus: You won! You won! Go again! Get some more!

A2: I'm getting warm. Do you feel warm? Why is it so warm? And what's this on the screen's upper left?

A1 *(looks at the Ipad):* It's a . . .counter. It counts your life points.

A2: But look at that! My life points are shrinking. How come my life points are shrinking?

I want another chance. Where is my next chance?

A1: There it is, flashing red. Hit it! Grab it!

A2 *(loud, excited):* I got it! I got it again! *(More quietly):* But ...Why is it so hot?

Chorus: Hot, hot, hot, hot *(They create a wave, with increasing speed and loudness.)*

A1: Did you see that bargain? It pops up so fast. You should take it while you can.

A2: I have only a few life points left.

A1: Whow, look at that! Just press it. Go on. Just take what you can get.

A2: Success! Fantastic. Let's play another round. Great game! *(Beams at his brother.)*

Chorus: Another round! Go again! There's more to be had!

A1: Okay, let's start over and get some competition going. See who of us can get more stuff. *(L1 sits down at his own Ipad and joins in the game.)*

A2: I love these moves. All these opportunities. More stuff, I mean. *(Moves as if itchy.)* I feel sweaty though. Gosh, it's hot. Why am I breaking into a sweat? How can you stand it? Did someone turn up the heat?

A1 *(surprised):* Gee, I feel it too. And now for some reason my escape key is malfunctioning. Stuff just keeps coming. Weird!

A2: Mine too. I want to stop. It won't let me! Why can't I stop? Now what?

A1: Seems like it's out of control. It continues ... all on its own! The game just continues!

(Chorus, in a wave): The game continues!

A1 *(panicked)*: MY GOD, WHAT GAME IS THIS?

A2: WE HAVE TO STOP IT! RIGHT NOW!

A1: I'M TRYING! I CAN'T!

A1: PULL THE PLUG! PULL THE PLUG!

Scene 5

G: See? They want to stop.

L: I don't think so. If they really wanted to, they would have done it earlier already.

G: There must be some solution. You hear only what you want to hear. There are other voices.

L: Like who?

G: I'll show you just two: Greta Thunberg and Amanda Gorman.

L: They are exceptions.

G: You are wrong. They are exceptional young women, that's true, but there are thousands who follow their message, and millions who are waking up, all over the world. Let's listen to them.

L: I don't want to. You are a fool, Gabriel. Leave me alone.

G: Listen first.

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Projection of the blue planet on screen.

Greta: "I have learned you are never too small to make a difference. Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming whether you like it or not. Everything needs to change – and it has to start today. Giving up is never an option. Together and united, we are unstoppable."

Amanda (read by an actor or projected on a screen in Amanda Gorman's own voice, as recorded here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBERVCT44J4>) :

What was cursed, we will cure.

What was plagued, we will prove pure.

Where we tend to argue, we will try to agree,

Those fortunes we forswore, now the future we foresee,

Where we weren't aware, we're now awake;

Those moments we missed
Are now these moments we make,
The moments we meet,
And our hearts, once all together beaten,
Now all together beat.”

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Lucifer sits down on his crate again. Pushes his control button to turn off the screen image.

L: I have been around humans too long to be persuaded. Just get out of here, Gabriel.

G: I will, but I'll leave you with this message from God.

Lucifer covers his ears, unwilling to hear. Gabriel addresses the audience directly as he quotes Deuteronomy Chapter 30, verse 19.

G: “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now CHOOSE LIFE, SO THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN MAY LIVE.”

Gabriel exists. Lucifer shakes his head, then stands.

L (insistent): I know what choice they will make. (*Runs after Gabriel, shouting.*) You know this too. I won. I WON! I WON!

CURTAIN