

Lifetime Membership

A One-Act play

By Sabina Boyer

Cast List (By Order of Appearance)

- Narrator - (30) - A British meta narrator with a dry sense of humor. Later takes the part of a receptionist.
- Everett E. Man - (45) - A very proper, socially detached gentleman who is seemingly polite, but hates actually interacting with others.
- Imaginary Dog - (25 in dog years) - Everett E. Man's imaginary dog. Very upbeat and encouraging.
- Charity Chipper - (22) - An cheerful telephone receptionist for the Human Resources Department of Humanity Headquarters.
- Sympathetic Investor - (40) - A neighbor of Everett E. Man who's not sure he deserves more chances but wants to be proven wrong.

Prop List

- A bag of letters
- A specific letter in an envelope from Humanity Headquarters
- Clip-on puppy ears
- A cellphone
- An old-timey landline phone
- A table
- A receptionist's bell

Other Effects

- Phone call sound effect
- Main lights shutting off at end

SCENE 1

The lights come up. The stage is empty save a lone table on one side with a tiny receptionist bell on the edge of it.

The NARRATOR walks out to center stage.

NARRATOR

(to the audience)

Once upon a time... there was a man.

MAN half-trips onto stage.

NARRATOR

A very socially adverse man.

Man pats his pockets absent-mindedly and glances up, noticing the audience for the first time. He waves uncertainly.

NARRATOR

In fact, so much did he dislike the unpredictability of other people, that he accomplished a feat many only dream about. In all his years, he never once entered into a meaningful interaction with another human being.

Man smiles, brushing away the statement like it was a compliment.

NARRATOR

Which was a problem -

Man glances at the narrator uncertainly.

NARRATOR

But that's getting ahead of the story.

Narrator moves to the side of the stage, still facing the audience.

NARRATOR

It all started with a letter...

A sack full of mail is thrown into view from stage left, spilling over onto the ground.

Man jumps and points.

EVERETT E. MAN
(excited)

Letters!

NARRATOR

This was very exciting for the man.

Man rushes over to the pile.

EVERETT E. MAN
(ecstatic)

I never get letters!

Man rips the envelope open and pulls out the letter.

EVERETT E. MAN
(reading)

Dear Mr. Man - Greetings from the Human Resources Department of Humanity Headquarters! We at the HRDHH appreciate your long-standing relationship with our organization.

Man pauses and wiggles his head haughtily, straightening his collar in a self-satisfied way.

EVERETT E. MAN
(voice suddenly getting more serious as he reads)

Unfortunately, due to your lack of use in recent years, the board has decided to cancel your membership to the institution. Please be advised that as of midnight of the [current date] your Lifetime Membership to the Human Race will... *expire*.

Man trails off. He slowly lowers the letter and stares off into the distance, stunned.

EVERETT E. MAN
(distant)

... Expire?

NARRATOR
(somberly - to audience)

Expire.

Beat. Man snaps back to reality and turns back to the letter with the jerk.

EVERETT E. MAN
(panicked)

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!

NARRATOR
Lacking any actual people in his life, Mr. Man turned to his dog for support.

An actor with clip-on puppy ears jumps into view from stage right, holding his hands in front of him like little paws.

NARRATOR
Except he didn't have a dog.

The dog turns toward the narrator, confused.

NARRATOR
So he talked to his imaginary dog.

The dog hesitates. Turning to the audience, he moves his hands in a spooky ghost motion.

IMAGINARY DOG
(spookily)
Arooo-ooo-ooooo-ooo-ooooo!

Man rushes over to Imaginary Dog.

EVERETT E. MAN
Oh Imaginary Dog! How is this happening?! My Lifetime Membership to the Human Race expiring - How can a LIFETIME Membership to the Human Race *expire*?!

Imaginary Dog scans the paper again. He points at the end with his "paw."

IMAGINARY DOG
(pointed howl)

Man snatches the paper from Imaginary Dog and holds it up, squinting to read it.

EVERETT E. MAN

To petition for an extension of your membership, please call us at 1-800-911-HELP.

Man flings the paper back over his head.

EVERETT E. MAN

That's it!

As he pulls out his phone and dials, Imaginary Dog runs upstage, picks up the paper in his mouth, and returns it to the ground in front of Man's feet. Man kicks it away off stage.

A woman steps up onto the corner of the stage, holding an old timey phone with the receiver in one hand and the body in the other.

CHARITY CHIPPER

(almost annoyingly cheerful)

Hello. You've reached the Human Resources Department of Humanity Headquar-

EVERETT E. MAN

You've got to help me!!!

CHARITY CHIPPER

That's debatable.

EVERETT E. MAN

Please! My name is Mr. Everett E. Man. I just got a notice that my lifetime membership to the human race is expiring. Surely it must be some sort of mistake!

CHARITY CHIPPER

Hmm... your file seems to indicate the membership is expiring on account of lack of use. Would you like to petition for an extension?

EVERETT E. MAN

YES!

CHARITY CHIPPER

Don't worry. There is still hope! All you need to do is present your case to the Board at HR Headquarters before the date listed on your expiration notice to request a revote.

EVERETT E. MAN

(hesitantly)

But... what if expiration date is... today?

CHARITY CHIPPER

(Extra cheery)

Then you're screwed!

Charity Chipper slams the phone down on the receiver. As she skips off stage, Imaginary Dog puts a paw over his mouth in shock.

EVERETT E. MAN

I'm... screwed.

Man slumps where he stands. Imaginary Dog and Narrator share a sad look. They both hang their heads. Then...

EVERETT E. MAN

(resolutely)

No.

Narrator and Imaginary Dog turn to look at him.

EVERETT E. MAN

Sure I may not be the best human being on the planet, and sure I may not use my humanity as much as some people do, but I don't deserve Oblivion! I've never murdered anyone or kicked any *actual* dogs. If I can just get there before midnight to defend myself, I can still stop this!

IMAGINARY DOG

(encouraging howl)

Narrator steps forward.

NARRATOR

And so, Mr. Everett E. Man set out on the most daring adventure of his life, determined to make it to the Department of HR in time to defend his membership!

Imaginary Dog hops off stage and Man begins running in place, charging with all his might.

NARRATOR

If he had known how perilous a journey it was, I am sure he never would have dared to try for it. But escaping Oblivion can be a remarkable motivator.

Man acts out his epic journey, leaping over and ducking under invisible obstacles.

NARRATOR

At last, with moments to spare -

Man rushes to the table at the edge of the stage, panting hard. He hammers down on the receptionist bell with his fist over and over again, shaking the table.

EVERETT E. MAN

(desperately delirious)

SOMEONE SHOW UP!!!

Narrator pulls out a fake mustache, nods to the audience, and plasters it on. Turning towards the desk, he walks over and stands behind it.

NARRATOR

Hello sir. Welcome to the Human Resources Department of Humanity Headquarters.

EVERETT E. MAN

(still panting)

I thought... you were... the narrator...

NARRATOR

(dismissively)

Like that would pay the bills. Here to defend your membership I take it?

EVERETT E. MAN

(sincerely)

All I need is a chance.

Narrator begins guiding Man across the stage.

NARRATOR

Now, you listen to me Mr. Man. Once we're through the door, you'll only have [TIME] to state your case to the Board of Investors. Once that time is up, they will have to vote on your fate... and that last vote will be final. Do you willingly accept whatever they decide?

EVERETT E. MAN

I do... but... who are the Board of Investors?

Narrator brings Man to the front of the stage and mimes opening a door.

NARRATOR

(motioning to the audience)

They are.

The two step through the door.

NARRATOR

Mr. Man - I present the Board of Investors. Within this audience you will find every single person you have ever interacted with, be it a nod in a grocery store or a "Hello" in the park. They are the ones lacking returns on your membership to Humanity... and they are the ones who will decide your fate.

EVERETT E. MAN

(in awe)

This is... *every* person? I've *ever* interacted with?

Narrator nods. Man raises a finger, silently counting out each of the people in the audience. Hesitant, he turns back to look at Narrator.

EVERETT E. MAN

That's not that many people...

Beat.

NARRATOR

(somber)

The floor is yours..

Narrator walks away and sits on the side of the stage, watching Man silently.

EVERETT E. MAN

Um... good evening, everyone. My name is.... Well, I guess you already know. It's wonderful seeing you all again. Though, to be honest, I must admit I don't recognize most of you...

Man shifts his weight between his feet.

EVERETT E. MAN

(mustering himself)

I'm here today to petition your decision to cancel my membership. I guess you all know me... so you know I'm not the greatest guy in the world. Heck, the person that I'm closest with is literally an imaginary dog. But I still think I have *some* redeeming qualities. I mean... at least it wasn't an imaginary cat.

Man laughs at his own joke. The laughter dies.
He coughs.

EVERETT E. MAN

Surely this is a mistake... isn't it? I mean, you know me. You know the kind of person I am. I'm not perfect... but I don't deserve this. Surely being human isn't something that you have to deserve... surely it's a gift? Something you're born into? All this talk of defaulting... of not giving enough returns... (suddenly growing almost angry) I'm not a *bad* person! I don't murder or shoplift. I've never even flipped someone off in traffic! I don't deserve this. *I have't done anything wrong!*

A long moment passes. Slowly, Sympathetic Investor stands in the front row.

SYMPATHETIC INVESTOR

(sincerely asking)

Then... what *have* you done?

Man hesitates. He considers.

EVERETT E. MAN

I've... volunteered at a charity! Once... for two hours... for a free doughnut.... (thinks harder.) I always vote in federal elections. I wash my laundry twice a month whether it needs it or not. I... I know I don't actually *use* my humanity that much... but I don't want to live without it. I mean... what would I be if I wasn't human?

A troubled look crosses Man's face.

EVERETT E. MAN

(quieter)

...what *am* I if I'm not human?

A timer beeps.

NARRATOR

That's one minute left, Mr. Man.

Man turns back to the audience, desperate.

EVERETT E. MAN

Please... maybe... maybe you were right. Maybe I had this coming to me. But if you just give me a second chance... I can try to find a way to fix it! I mean - I can't fix it for *you*. Not really. But *I* can still be a new man. Right? *I* can find redemption. Sure, I wasted most of my life. I was never there for anyone else. I never added anything meaningful to a single other person's life. But that's what redemption's about, right? Getting another go at it when you wasted the first one? It's not too late for me to turn this thing around. All I need is a second chance. *One* second chance, and I'll never keep my humanity to myself again! I can make everything alri-

The timer cuts him off suddenly.

Sighing, Narrator gets to his feet.

NARRATOR

The time has come.

He makes his way to center stage between Man and the audience.

NARRATOR

(addressing the audience)

If the board members would close their eyes... (beat.) A hand in the air to grant his extension... a fist if his plea is too late.

A long moment passes. The Narrator tallies the audience's votes.

NARRATOR

The Board has decided.

Narrator turns and makes his way back to Man. With his back to the audience, he whispers the result in man's ear.

Sucking in his breath, Man falls to his knees, either with an expression of relieved joy... or a broken spirit.

The lights go dark.

THE END