

ZOOMotional Support

By Heather Day and Martha Day

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NAME: Heather Day and Martha Day

WHERE ARE YOU FROM: Heather is a Jersey girl living in Pittsburgh, PA
Martha is a Jersey girl living in Cedar Grove, NJ

BIO: Heather and Martha are a daughter-mother team. Heather is from Montclair, NJ and currently teaches Latin at a Catholic all-girl's high school in Pittsburgh. Martha is retired from corporate and is a singer, actor, pastor, and playwright who raised Heather in the wings and on the stage of community theater. Heather always has duct tape and a power drill with her. Seriously. She does. This play is their first collaboration.

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What's keeping you positive? Seeing the good happening in the world through acts of kindness and by watching the beauty of birds, foxes, and yes, even the thousands of chipmunks that have inexplicably appeared out of nowhere.

Yes, you can publish this!

CHARACTERS

DOCTOR: male or female, any adult age, professional

#1: female, any age, contemplative

#2: male or female, mature, well balanced

#3: male or female, any age, brassy

#5678: male or female, any age, aggressive

#777: male or female, any age, playful

#X: male or female, any age, trustworthy

TIME

Tuesday at 7 pm

PLACE

Scene: A Zoom meeting that DOCTOR is hosting. All the characters but #777 have joined the meeting with their video off. They've renamed themselves to be their characters' names.

DOCTOR

So again, thank you all for joining our meeting promptly. And I see that you all renamed yourself to be whatever number is meaningful to you. Thank you for that. As you know, this is a safe space for everyone. So being anonymous is very very important.

#X

No problem.

DOCTOR

We have a nice sized group tonight so let's be respectful. We're here to support and listen to each other. Remember, we have two ears, but just one mouth.

#5678

Speak for yourself.

DOCTOR

Listen, I really don't want to have to mute everyone and go through the hassle of looking for the little hand-waving icon so I can unmute someone who wants to speak. So again, let's be respectful at all times.

(silence)

Good! So, what's on your mind? Who'd like to go first?

#X

I'd like to say something, but I can't. It's a secret.

DOCTOR

No problem. We'll come back to you.

#3

I'd like to go first. I often go first, like a herald trumpet. Bra-bra-bra-bra-bra-bra-BRA!

DOCTOR

OK, #3. Let's start with you. Everyone, give your attention to #3. You may begin.

#3

Here's the scoop. When I was young, I was abandoned. I was shuffled around from house to house. At first, they'd be nice to me. They'd play with me. But then they'd get bored with me. Found me to be too difficult. And they'd hand me off to someone else. Sure... I can get a little shrill. But I don't deserve to be treated this way.

#5678

Wah-Wah. Put a stopper in it. For God's sake, you belong in the back of the closet with all the others discarded instruments. There's nothing worse than a trumpet.

#3

Wait – I thought this was to be anonymous. You’re not supposed to know who I am.

#5678

It’s hard to miss when a trumpet is blaring.

#1

If you don’t mind my asking, why’d you choose #3 as your identity?

#3

It’s a clever shout out to the third valve.

#2

That’s a nice pitch!

#5678

Trumpet jokes are the worst.

DOCTOR

All right. Let’s let the trumpet – I mean #3 – take a rest.

#3

For how many measures?

DOCTOR

Again...I have to ask you all to be respectful. Feelings of abandonment are very real, as many of you know.

#3

Since my cover’s been blown, I might as well put my real name on my box. (#3 renames their Zoom box “TRUMPET”).

#2

I’d like to go next.

DOCTOR

That would be nice, #2. Let’s all listen to #2 now.

#2

I don’t really know what happened. I used to be included in everything. I was part of helping people get together and stay together. But now, I’m by myself all the time. No one comes near me, or checks up on me, or includes me in their lives. The loneliness is killing me. I’m coming unhinged! (Starts to tear up)

DOCTOR

Take your time, #2. We’re here for you.

#2

I am so angry at Netflix. It's swayed people away from me. Now people are always indoors. Instead of cuddling with me, watching the stars at night, they stay indoors 24/7, eyes glued to that stupid screen. I don't even know how people stay together anymore. They never talk to each other. They used to talk constantly, sipping a glass of lemonade with me in the summer, hot cocoa in the winter. Now? I'm useless. Worthless. Ignored. Beautiful, but empty. You think you're abandoned, Trumpet? Try being me. I'm just hanging here, left swinging in the breeze.

#X

You can never tell about someone.

#1

Could you go inside and be with them?

#2

That's not happening. They keep me chained to the porch ceiling. I'm lucky if they leave the shades up so I can see them in their living room.

#X

Ooooo! I know who you are! I know who you are! But I won't tell!

#3/TRUMPET

Hey #X— what are you? A secret or something?

#X

Rats. (#X renames their Zoom box "SECRET").

DOCTOR

We'll get to you in a minute, #X. Go on, #2.

#2

Well I...

#5678

Get over yourself, #2. You're nothing but an old porch swing. A remnant from a gentler world when people talked to each other face-to-face.

(silence)

DOCTOR

I'd like to remind you that we need to be respectful.

#5678

Well excuse me if I step on a couple of toes! Professional hazard.

DOCTOR
#2 are you okay?

#2
(sighs loudly) I think I'll just sit here quietly for a moment. (#2 renames their Zoom box "PORCH SWING").

DOCTOR
5-6-7-8? You seem to be pretty aggressive this evening. What's going on with you?

#5678
The world has gone mad. I had such a good gig going. I could always find work. Sure, my shin splints have stress fractures on top of heal spurs. And then the world turned upside down.

DOCTOR
Can you take me through it step by step?

#5678
I have just one word for you. *Hamilton*. No more "We're in the Money." Nobody wants jazz hands. *Hamilton* wrecked it all. Dance is now completely intertwined with everything. Goddamn *Hamilton*. Busby Berkeley must be rolling in his grave.

#X/SECRET
Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! I know who you are! I know who you are! But I won't ruin the big reveal!

#5678
Listen, Secret. We know who you are. You've got nothing to hide. And since I'm usually the showstopper, why not go big. Might as well see my name in lights. (#5678 renames their Zoom box to "DANCE BREAK").

DOCTOR
Dance Break, you sound tapped out.

#3/TRUMPET
I love the sound of Taps!

#X/SECRET
Do tell!

DOCTOR
Why don't you cool down and take five?

#1
Five's on the call?

DOCTOR

No five had an oil change. Why don't we now listen to Secret, I mean, #X.

#X/SECRET

I've been listening to you guys. And I think it's safe to say that we all have something in common. This modern world has rendered us obsolete. Look at me. What's the point of being a secret anymore? Everything's out there on social media. Cameras are on every street, in doorbells, sitting on our kitchen counters. Nothing is hidden that isn't being revealed. Big Data knows everything. And even when a good juicy secret is let out of the bag, "They" just call it "Fake News." It's hard times for someone like me.

DOCTOR

Thank you Secret for being so open. Do you have anything more you'd like to disclose?

#X/SECRET

I'd rather keep it to myself.

DOCTOR

Very well. So #1, you've been pretty quiet. Penny for your thoughts?

#1

That's the problem! People see me on the street. I could be sitting on the curb, or just lying dead in the middle of the crosswalk. And they pass me by. Every. Time. I can't make heads or tails of it. I'm a gift from heaven. So unexpected! I'm even good luck. No one cares.

#X/SECRET

(muttering under their breath). Trying not to tell...trying not to tell...

#1

If only I could circulate with the others.

#5678/DANCE BREAK

Listen, you Penny you, it costs more to make you than you are worth!

#1

I feel so unloved. (#1 renames their Zoom box to "PENNY")

#2/PORCH SWING

Don't feel bad Penny. I really like you. You're someone with good cents.

#1/PENNY

Thanks. It's nice to be appreciated.

#5678/DANCE BREAK

Isn't that sweet. A penny saved....

DOCTOR

(Ding dong sound) Oh look. We have someone new in our Waiting Room. Give me a second to bring them in.

(enter #777 with the video off, and renamed “#777”).

#777

Greetings and salutations! Boy I had a hell of a time dialing in just now. Sorry I'm late.

DOCTOR

Better late than never! So glad you're with us. Why don't you tell us a little something about yourself?

#777

Thank you for letting me join you. I've been tempted to do so many times before. I finally decided – tonight's the night. So here I am. You might say I'm a longtime listener, first time caller.

DOCTOR

Well we're glad to have you.

#777

Yeah? Well you might be the only one. I don't get any respect these days. Ever since some crazy guy said, “Hell is other people,” my life has taken a turn for the worse. I used to be so important. In the old days, everyone talked about me constantly. Blamed me for everything...which...I might add...was pretty accurate. But now? Now I can go weeks without someone even considering for a teeny weeny tiny moment that I just might be behind all the mess in the world.

DOCTOR

That must be very difficult.

#777

It's living hell. I feel like I'm damned for all eternity to be ignored and dismissed. I'm just not needed. People are doing a bang-up job all by themselves making a hell-hole out of everything.

#1/PENNY

Wait...wait...shouldn't your number be 666?

#777

Jesus Christ! People can't even get that right! 666 is not *my* number! That's Ralph's! My dog's? It's the Mark of the Beast, for God's sake! The devil's in the details, people! (#777 renames his Zoom box “DEVIL”).

#5678/DANCE BREAK

You aren't completely obsolete. You're still doing fine work in the theater.

#777/DEVIL

So glad you noticed!

DOCTOR

Well our time is just about up for this week. We've really made some great progress today!

#5678/DANCE BREAK

Wait – I want to talk more about stupid people.

#X/ SECRET

We always stop right when we are getting to the good stuff! I always learn new things!

#1/ PENNY

I really want to talk about what we have in common. We have more in common than we have differences!

#3/ TRUMPET

I'm a pro at articulating. Let me start by saying...

#2/PORCH SWING

If it's ok with you, I've been going back and forth on it all. And I agree with Penny. Each of us used to be valued by people in our world. Somehow, we've been left behind like unrealized dreams. And yet, I am convinced that we still have value. Because, at our very core, we bring people together. Friendships deepen when secrets are kept. Life is fuller with live music and dance. Unexpectedly finding a penny has meaning. There's nothing nicer than to cuddle with someone on a nice comfy cushiony front porch swing. And even the devil has a value by helping people see that they have a choice to do the right thing. We might be lost for now, but I have faith that we will be found again. We will be appreciated again. And the world will be the better for it.

#777/ DEVIL

Ugh. Who made you our mouthpiece? I'm outta here. I'm going down to Georgia.
(exit #777/ Devil)

DOCTOR

Thank you, Porch Swing. I think that's a great place to stop for tonight. Don't forget we have another ZOOMotional Support Group starting up next Monday at 7 pm. It's called "Living with Toxic People." You might consider it. We have a lot of theater people signed up already. Again, thank you all for being part of our group. I look forward to Zooming with you again soon. Stay well.

BLACKOUT