By Clara Passarinho

This is water

The story how two fishes changed the world
Characters:

BEGGAR
FISH NUMBER ONE
FISH NUMBER TWO
LITTLE GIRL
MAN
NEIGHBOUR
Act I

Scene I

A window. A closed door. A desk with a chair behind it. Upon the desk, a dry aquarium with two dead fish. A closed box on the floor. Two armchairs and a carpet. A small table with a coffee machine on top. A wardrobe. MAN is sited on the armchair reading “Noah's Ark”, but the book is upside down. He is reading out loud.

MAN - For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased, they lifted the ark high above the earth. (Someone knocks at the door: MAN looks to the door but keeps reading) The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; (Someone knocks at the door again) people, animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

Someone knocks at the door again; MAN leaves the book and opens the door.

Scene II
NEIGHBOUR enters, removes his jacket, and throws it to the floor.

MAN- I was waiting for you.

NEIGHBOUR- Sorry for the delay.

MAN- It’s fine. I was finishing some paperwork for the company. What was the urgent thing you wanted to tell me?

NEIGHBOUR- I solved our problem.

MAN- Did you discover if God exists or not?

NEIGHBOUR- Better. I discovered the right answer for that question.

MAN- I don’t understand.

NEIGHBOUR – It's not about discovering the truth but what is most convenient.

MAN- I don’t understand.

NEIGHBOUR- I will explain.

NEIGHBOUR takes two bread rolls from his pocket.

NEIGHBOUR - Imagine: these two rolls represent our problem. The first one represents a world where God doesn’t exist. If God doesn’t exist and you believe he exists, well, nothing happens. If you believe he doesn’t exist and he doesn’t exist, nothing happens again, except this time you were right. In both cases, you can eat the bread in peace.

While NEIGHBOUR is explaining, MAN is following what NEIGHBOUR is saying with his head, shaking it sometimes like he understands.
NEIGHBOUR- However, this one, represents a world where God exists. If you believe he exists and he exists that’s amazing, you can eat the bread. But if you believe God doesn’t exist and he does, you will be a sinner and you will starve because the bread is only for the faithful.

*MAN is not fully convinced and looks confused.*

MAN- Why is God a bread roll?

NEIGHBOUR – It’s a metaphor.

MAN- But metaphors are for things that are not real, and you are trying to convince me that God is real. That doesn’t make sense.

NEIGHBOUR- You are missing the important part! We must believe in God for our sake. We want this bread. We need this bread.

*Someone knocks at the door. MAN opens it and there is BEGGAR.*

Scene III

BEGGAR- Sorry to bother you, sir.

MAN- What do you want?

BEGGAR- Can you please give me a glass of water? I haven’t drunk anything in 4 days and I don’t know if I can handle it anymore.
MAN- I understand, but the government have just announced new measures. People are not allowed to give things to beggars because that will perpetuate their laziness and they will never leave that position.

NEIGHBOUR- That’s right.

BEGGAR- It’s just a glass of water. No one is watching.

MAN- Do you see what you are doing? You are already trying to break the laws. I was recently promoted, and everyone has high expectations of me as the boss, besides that, I won an award last year for my work.

BEGGAR- Until the workers have a voice, the bosses will continue to be applauded without questions.

*MANN ignores what BEGGAR said and continues talking.*

MAN- Sorry but I must respect the government. I’m not telling you this for you to hate me because, even though we are in this situation, I consider myself a charitable man.

BEGGAR- It is not possible to follow the rules and be charitable in this country.

*BEGGAR leaves the space, MAN and NEIGHBOUR continue their conversation.*

Scene IV

MAN- Well, I also have something to tell you. As you know “New Year, New Life.” I have decided that this year I will be nicer to me and take care of myself. Everyone
says that animals help you to have a longer life so …. I bought an aquarium with two fishes.

NEIGHBOUR- That’s amazing. I know someone who did the same last year, and everything went well.

MAN- Exactly. Come here and look at them.

Both men stand up and approach the aquarium.

FISH NUMBER ONE –

FISH NUMBER TWO –

NEIGHBOUR- They look so happy. Look how they swim.

MAN- Yes. They spend their days swimming. Sometimes it reminds me of when I used to go to the lake and swim.

NEIGHBOUR- Why did you stop?

MAN- My parents told me to grow up and start focusing on the important things in life.

NEIGHBOUR – Well, about the aquarium, I think you made the right decision. We can’t let others control our lives. (NEIGHBOUR approach the coffee machine) Do you want some coffee?

MAN- No thanks. I’m also trying to be healthier this year. (MAN lights a cigarette) And you are right those politicians do nothing for us. All the bureaucracy makes the actions, the words and the thoughts never coexist in the same space because the
actions stay in the workplace, the words in the meetings and the thoughts in the pillow.

Offstage, a voice talks about next week’s elections.

NEIGHBOUR- Are you going to vote?

MAN- No, I am going to keep my neutral position.

NEIGHBOUR – Me too.

Scene V

All this time a girl has been hiding inside of the wardrobe. She can now be heard crying.

NEIGHBOUR- What’s that sound?

MAN- Sounds like someone crying.

MAN and NEIGHBOUR approach the wardrobe, open it and they see LITTLE GIRL inside.

MAN- Is everything okay? Come here and join us.

LITTLE GIRL- I don’t want to enter there.

NEIGHBOUR- What do you mean?

LITTLE GIRL- I’m fine outside. Why don’t you come outside with me?

MAN and NEIGHBOUR look confused
MAN- Let’s talk.

MAN extends his hand to LITTLE GIRL, she leaves the wardrobe and joins them in the living room.

NEIGHBOUR- What happened? Why are you crying?

LITTLE GIRL- They think I’m crazy.

MAN- Who?

LITTLE GIRL- They.

MAN and NEIGHBOUR are still very confused

NEIGHBOUR- Why do they think you are crazy?

LITTLE GIRL- Because I look to the moon.

MAN- What?

LITTLE GIRL- Every night I stare at the moon and people think I’m crazy.

NEIGHBOUR- Why would you do that?

LITTLE GIRL- Did you ever look to the moon?

NEIGHBOUR- No… Why would I? What’s the point of that?

LITTLE GIRL – Of course you don’t understand me. Come to the window and look to the moon with me.

MAN, NEIGHBOUR and LITTLE GIRL approach the window and they look up at the same time. They stay like this in silence for a few moments.
NEIGHBOUR- I see nothing.

MAN- Me neither.

LITTLE GIRL- That’s because you are looking with your eyes only.

*LITTLE GIRL leaves the stage.*

Scene VI

NEIGHBOUR- What a strange moment.

MAN- Yes. Anyway, about the aquarium, I bought a better one this week, it is bigger so they will have more space now to swim.

*MAN approaches the box and removes the new aquarium tank, instead of being bigger it is just taller.*

NEIGHBOUR- That’s amazing, you are really trying to help them.

NEIGHBOUR helps MAN to change the aquarium, a net is used to transfer the fish from the old to the new tank.

NEIGHBOUR- Do they have names?

MAN- No. I didn’t think that was necessary. They will live inside of my house forever so no one will ever speak to them, so if they are not going to be spoken to they don’t need names.

NEIGHBOUR- Are you going to put the fish into the ocean before you move this summer?
MAN- No. I’m going to leave them here so they do not follow me.

NEIGHBOUR – But you are sure about moving to Paris?

MAN- Yes.

NEIGHBOUR- Explain to me again, what will Paris give you that England can’t?

MAN- Is not about what Paris gives to me but what it doesn’t take.

NEIGHBOUR- Sometimes you sound like that girl talking or like the crazy man who is always in front of the church, near your house.

MAN- The other day he invited me to have tea with him, of course, I said no. Clearly, he was making fun of me.

NEIGHBOUR- You shouldn’t be like that. He is crazy not a murderer. You know what? Go outside and invite him to have a cup of coffee with us.

MAN- Now you are the one who sounds like that girl talking. Why would I do that?

NEIGHBOUR- First because you are a good man, and you want to go to paradise, and second because I heard that his father is one of the richest men in Liverpool and it would be amazing to have that contact.

MAN- Are you sure about this? How am I going to convince him to come with me?

NEIGHBOUR- Just pretend that you really care about the things he is saying and then invite him for a cup of coffee in your house. Besides that, everyone always says that the crazy people are the only ones who see God twice and I would like to confirm that. It will be easy. Now go and I’ll wait here.
MAN leaves the space and NEIGHBOUR stays alone in the house. While MAN is out NEIGHBOUR start looking for something around the desk. Eventually he finds a box with money in and takes some for himself before hiding the box again. He moves and sits in the armchair as if nothing has happened.

Scene VII

MAN returns and with him there is another man, THE SICK. THE SICK sits near NEIGHBOUR in the other armchair and the man stays standing near the desk.

NEIGHBOUR- Coffee?

THE SICK- No, thank you.

MAN- So what do you think about the elections next week?

THE SICK- I prefer ants.

MAN- What did you say?

THE SICK- I prefer ants to men.

NEIGHBOUR- Why would you say that?

THE SICK- There was an incident when I was six years old; I saw some children playing with ants. I remember it was a Wednesday and it was sunny. I was wearing blue shorts and a white shirt. I always liked to wear white shirts. I decided to approach the children, as I got closer to them, I noticed what they were doing. They were lighting matches and throwing them at the anthill. I was shocked. They were having fun seeing all the ants moving because of the fire. But then I noticed
something. When I looked closer, I noticed that the ants were getting together in pairs and moving very close to each other as they waited for death.

*MAN and NEIGHBOUR are speechless with this story. They remain silent.*

**NEIGHBOUR**- Well, what a sad story. Do you have more stories? Maybe happy ones?

**THE SICK**- The other day I went to the cinema

**NEIGHBOUR**- That’s great, what did you see?

**THE SICK**- People.

**NEIGHBOUR**- Yes, but what was the story of those people?

**THE SICK**- I don’t know. They were just looking at a screen.

*MAN and NEIGHBOUR look confused but pretend they understand what’s happening.*

**NEIGHBOUR (to MAN)**- Do you remember the last time you went to the cinema?

**MAN (nervus)**- No. I think it was a long time ago. And you?

**NEIGHBOUR**- I think I stopped going when my son was born.

**THE SICK (to MAN)** – Why did you stop going?

**MAN (nervus)** – Because since working for this company, it has become hard to manage more things than just work. I’m busy all the time and I must prioritise and going to the cinema is not one.

*THE SICK keeps staring at MAN even though he is not talking anymore.*
NEIGHBOUR- Well, if you don’t mind, I’m going to the bathroom.

NEIGHBOUR leaves the space, and MAN quickly approaches THE SICK.

Scene VIII

MAN- Tell me what did you watch the other day at the cinema?

THE SICK- I already told you it was only people looking at the screen.

MAN- Yes, but what was happening on the screen?

THE SICK – Now I get it. You should be clearer when you talk.

MAN- Yes, you are right. Now tell me what was the movie?

THE SICK- It was a classic: Romeo and Juliet.

MAN looks so excited. He let his body fill the armchair and relax.

MAN- Tell me more.

THE SICK- Don’t you know the story of Romeo and Juliet?

MAN- Of course I know but tell me.

THE SICK (confused) – So, as you know, there is a boy and a girl, and they are from rival families. They fall in love and run away together and then…

MAN- Slowly! More details!

THE SICK – Their families don’t know about their love and then there is a letter, the girl pretends to be dead, but the boy doesn’t know she is pretending.
MAN - Tell me about that part when he says he is in love with her.

THE SICK - He says she is like the sun (MAN listens and looks delighted) and describes the way her eyes sparkle. Why did you stop going to the cinema?

MAN - I already told you. I’m too busy nowadays.

THE SICK - You are lying. Why did you stop?

*MAN looks nervous and exposed.*

THE SICK - You can trust me.

MAN - I can’t go to the cinema because… because… because in the cinema I cry.

THE SICK – Of course. The first time I saw you I thought “This man cries in the cinema”. That’s why I invited you to have a cup of tea with me.

*MAN gets emotional and his eyes are sparkling.*

Scene IX

*NEIGHBOUR comes back. MAN pretends nothing happened.*

NEIGHBOUR - You know, I like your attitude. However, there are some things we could change. When was the last time you cut your hair?

THE SICK - If the hair was important, it would be inside the head, not outside.

NEIGHBOUR – Ok… I heard that your father is making an advertisement for a new phone in Liverpool.

THE SICK - Advertisement is only art at the service of capitalism.
NEIGHBOUR is starting to get annoyed by this conversation, he looks to MAN, silently seeking his help.

MAN- Come here. I bought this new aquarium; I have two fish. They say that having animals at home helps you to live a longer life.

They all approach the aquarium and THE SICK screams. MAN and NEIGHBOUR get scared by the scream.

NEIGHBOUR- Is everything ok?

THE SICK looks terrified. MAN is trying to calm him down.

MAN- What’s wrong?

THE SICK- They are dead!

MAN – What?

THE SICK- They are dead!

NEIGHBOUR- Why would you say that? They are fine. Look how peaceful they are in this expensive aquarium.

THE SICK- Did you kill them?

MAN- What do you mean? Is this a metaphor?

NEIGHBOUR- I think he is having a crisis.

THE SICK- How can you say they are fine when they are clearly dead?

MAN- Why do you think that?

THE SICK- How can they live when they don’t have water?
NEIGHBOUR- Ok, now you are being too dramatic. Do you see how much space they have and the quality of these walls?

THE SICK- They don’t have water.

_Suddenly, it starts raining a lot outside._

THE SICK- It is raining.

MAN- That’s a fact.

THE SICK – Do you know what I do when it’s raining?

NEIGHBOUR- You stay inside.

THE SICK- I grab an umbrella and go outside. Let’s go. I know a beautiful place where we can see the moon and still feel the rain.

NEIGHBOUR and MAN are not fully convinced about this. However, they decide to go with THE SICK. They grab their umbrellas.

MAN- Let’s go in my car.

THE SICK (_excited_)- No. Let’s walk. I know a longer path; it will take us twice as long as it would by car.

_They all leave the stage._

_The end_