

Anthem

by

Ayn Rand

Adapted by

Ethan Fox

Ethan Fox
Efox3@asu.edu

CHARACTERS

EQUALITY 7-2521

A tall man, street sweeper.

LIBERTY 5-3000

A woman, fieldworker.

OTHER CITIZENS

Can (and should) be reused. A maximum of
4 other chorus members.

SCENE 1

(A blank stage. There is a long table, industrial and lengthly; a stool or chair (also industrial, of the kind that might be found in a chemistry classroom); and a light box. On the table is also a notebook, pencil, and chalk (the chalk which is used to write words/phrases/images on the ground for emphasis). In the corner, two brooms.)

(Equality 7-2521 walks on stage, sits down, and picks up the book. He talks as if preaching, yet also as if the words are being fresh-written. There is a sense of urgency in his sermon.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to speak alone to no ears but our own. It is base and evil, and we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or to think alone. Still, we must also write, for we wish to speak for once to no ears but our own. May the council forgive us!

(He sets the book down and stands)

SCENE 2

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our name is Equality 7-2521, as it is written on the iron bracelet which all men wear. We are six feet tall, and this is a burden. Ever have the Teachers and Leaders pointed to us and frowned and said:

(A teacher walks out on stage, in the background, and points at Equality 7-2521.)

TEACHER

There is evil in your bones, Equality 7-2521, for your body has grown beyond the bodies of your brothers.

(The teacher walks off stage.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

We strive to be like our brother men, for all men must be alike. But this curse we were born with has always driven us to thoughts which are forbidden. We know that we are evil. And there is no will in us and no power to resist it.

(International 4-8188 walks on stage and grabs the two brooms. He is a street sweeper, like Equality 7-2521. He has a smile on his face.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

Two years ago in the spring we found this place. We were with International 4-8818, who is not liked because they took pieces of coal and they drew pictures on the walls which made men laugh. But only our brothers in the Home of Artists are permitted to draw pictures, so they were sent to the Home of the Street Sweepers as punishment, like ourselves.

(International and Equality sweep the stage.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

We were gathering the papers and rags which the wind had blown from the theatre when of a sudden, the Earth

fell in before us and we saw an old iron grill over a black hole.

(International 4-8188 steps back,
afraid. Equality 7-2521 steps forward.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont.)

And we saw iron rings as steps leading down into a darkness without bottom, and we said:

(to International 4-8188)

We shall go down.

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

It is forbidden.

EQUALITY 7-2521

The Council does not know of this hole, so it cannot be forbidden.

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

Since the Council does not know of this hole, there can be no law permitting to enter, and everything which is not permitted by law is forbidden.

EQUALITY 7-2521

(beat)

We shall go nonetheless.

(to the audience)

And they stood by and watched us climb down the iron rings with our hands. And when our feet touched the ground, and our eyesight became accustomed to the dark, we could not believe what we saw. No men known to us could have build this place, walls smooth to the touch and long tracks of... We knew suddenly that this place was left from the Unmentionable times, and that they are damned who touch the things of the Unmentionable times, and we climbed back to the earth.

(Equality 7-2521 climbs back up to the world.)

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

Equality 7-2521, your face is white.

EQUALITY 7-2521

But we could not speak, and we stood looking upon

them. And they said:

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

We shall report our find to the City council and both of us will be rewarded.

EQUALITY 7-2521

No. We shall not report our find to the City Council. We shall not report it to any men.

(to the audience)

And they raised their hands to their ears, for never had they heard words such as these.

(to International 4-8188)

International 4-8188, will you report us to the Council and see us lashed to death before your eyes?

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

Rather we would die.

EQUALITY 7-2521

This place is ours. This place belongs to us, and to no other men on earth. And if we surrender it, we shall surrender our lives with it also.

(to the audience)

And they looked at us, and nodded in understandment, and said:

INTERNATIONAL 4-8188

May the Council have mercy upon both our hearts!

(International 4-8188 leaves the stage.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

At night, we lay awake, looking at the heads of our brothers, bowed in submission. Their eyes are dull and never do they look one another in the eyes. They are silent, for they dare not speak the thoughts of their minds. For all must agree with all, and they cannot know if their thoughts are the thoughts of all, and so they fear to speak. And they are glad when the candles are blown for the night.

SCENE 3

(Liberty 5-3000 walks along the back stage, slowly. She carries a bucket or bowl in a sacred manner, that looks equally utilitarian.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

We have broken so many laws, and today we have broken one more. We were sweeping near the fields, where the women work. And that's when we saw them.

VOICE

(off stage)

Liberty 5-3000!

(Liberty 5-3000 turns and walks off stage. Equality 7-2521 watches her go.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

Liberty 5-3000. For days we said her name over and over. Liberty 5-3000. And we take no heed of the law which says that men may not think of women, save at the Time of Mating when men are randomly assigned one woman to mate with. But we do not care to think of this.

(Liberty 5-3000 walks on stage, approaching Equality 7-2521.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

And on a day when the sky turned white, as if the sun had burst and spread it's flame in the air, we approached them, and they, us. And for a moment, we stared at each other.

(beat)

You are beautiful, Liberty 5-3000.

LIBERTY 5-3000

Your eyes are not like the eyes of any among men.

(beat)

What is your name?

EQUALITY 7-2521

Equality 5-3000, we answered.

LIBERTY 5-3000

You are not one of our brothers, Equality 7-2521, for we do not wish you to be.

EQUALITY 7-2521

And they frowned, for that is not what they had meant to say, but we knew the meaning of their words. And we answered:

(to Liberty 5-3000)

No. Nor are you one of our sisters. We have given you a name in our thoughts.

LIBERTY 5-3000

What is our name?

EQUALITY 7-2521

The Golden One.

LIBERTY 5-3000

Nor do we call you Equality 7-2521 when we think of you.

EQUALITY 7-2521

What name have you given us?

LIBERTY 5-3000

The Unconquered.

(There is silence for a long time.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(to the audience)

Then we said:

(to Equality 7-2521)

Such thoughts as these are forbidden, Golden One.

LIBERTY 5-3000

But you think such thoughts as these and you wish us to think them.

EQUALITY 7-2521

Yes.

(to the audience)

We whispered, and they smiled.

(to Liberty 5-3000)

Our dearest one, do not obey us.

(Liberty 5-3000 takes a step back, not in alarum of fear, but in a surprise of delight.)

LIBERTY 5-3000

Speak these words againe.

EQUALITY 7-2521

Which words?

LIBERTY 5-3000

Our dearest one. Never have men said this to women.

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our dearest one.

LIBERTY 5-3000

Our dearest one.

(a pause.)

LIBERTY 5-3000

(cont)

The day is hot, and you have worked for many hours, and you must be weary. There is water in the fields, are you thirsty?

EQUALITY 7-2521

Yes.

(to the audience)

We answered.

(to Liberty 5-3000)

But we cannot cross the hedge.

(Liberty 5-3000 walks off curtly, and returns with a bucket or bowl of water.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

(to the audience)

And they held the water to our lips. We do not know if we drank that water, we only know that suddenly their hands were empty, but we were still holding our lips to their hands. We raised our head and stepped back. For we did not understand what had made us do this, and we were afraid to understand. Then the Golden One

moved away, even though no others were coming, and they moved stepping back as if they could not turn from us, their arms bent before them, as if they could not lower their hands.

SCENE 4

EQUALITY 7-2521

Every night, when the stars are high, the bell rings and we all gather in the City Theatre for three hours of Social Recreation.

(Equality 7-2521, Liberty 5-3000, and another citizen walk in a straight line to the audience and sit down amongst them. Two other citizens walk on stage in costume, carrying brooms.)

ACTOR 1

Brother, is it not glorious to toil for all mankind?

ACTOR 2

But we should like to rest, for we grow weary of this work which we did not choose.

ACTOR 1

Brother, it is a great transgression to speak such words! Surely it is enough to know the Council have placed you in a Home best fitting for all mankind.

ACTOR 2

What were we thinking, of course. It all makes sense now! Life is short and there is no time for such thoughts.

ACTOR 1

Come brother, let us go and dip candles for our brothers to have light at night for their Social Recreation!

(They freeze.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

It is easy to leave the Theatre; when the candles are blown and the Actors come onto the stage, no eyes can see us as we crawl under our seat and out of the Theatre.

(The actors exit to sit in the audience. Equality 7-2521 is in the lab.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

In this way did it come to pass that each night, we Equality 7-2521 steal out and run through the darkness to our place. We stole candles to light our work, manuscripts from the Home of Clerks, and vials and powders from the House of Scholars. And we have learned more in these two years than was learned in the ten years of the Home of Students, when we were scolded for asking too many questions, and beaten for being smarter than our fellow men, and punished by being sent to the Home of Street Sweepers instead of the Home of Scholars, which was our burning desire.

(Equality 7-2521 has been tinkering with the box, maybe drawing some plan on the floor. He now puts his full attention to the audience, a magician about to reveal his trick.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

Now we have discovered it: a new power of nature. And we have discovered it alone. The Council of Scholars is blind, for they think they know all, but only we know of this new power. And from this, we made it. We created it. Tonight, after more days and trials than we can count, we finished building this strange thing from the remains of the Unmentionable Times, a box of glass devised to give forth a power of greater strength than we had ever achieved before: the power of the sky!

(The box of light glows brilliantly, casting light everywhere. It is powerful, and Equality 7-2521 stares at it in awe, yet also with an air of arrogance at knowing he alone has harvested this power. After a time, the light dims.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

We know what we must do. Our discovery is too great for us to waste our time in sweeping the streets. We must not keep our secret to ourselves, but bring it into the sight of men. The World Council of Scholars

is to meet in a few weeks, and we shall go to this Council and we shall lay before them, as our gift, the glass box with the power of the sky. We will confess everything and they will see, understand, and forgive. For our gift is greater than our transgression.

(The box of light glows brilliantly,
then goes out.)

SCENE 5

EQUALITY 7-2521

That night we forgot to watch the time.

(Actors, Liberty 5-3000 vacate the seats. The non-actor rises and stands in front of Equality 7-2521)

COUNCIL MEMBER

Where have you been?

EQUALITY 7-2521

(to the audience.)

The Council of the Home questioned us. And we answered:

(To council)

We will not tell you.

(Two citizens enter. They grab Equality 7-2521 by the arms.)

COUNCIL MEMBER

Take our brother Equality 7-2521 to the Palace of Corrective Detention. Lash them until they tell.

(The Council Member exits, taking the glass box and stool with him. The two citizens lead Equality 7-2521 and around the table.)

CITIZEN

Where have you been?

EQUALITY 7-2521

We shall not tell.

(Citizen 2 lashes Equality 7-2521's back.)

CITIZEN

Where have you been? Tell us!

EQUALITY 7-2521

We cannot tell.

(Citizen 2 lashes Equality 7-2521.)

CITIZEN

Over the portals of the Palace of the World Council are words cut in the marble. Do you know what those words are?

EQUALITY 7-2521

We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, One, indivisible, and forever.

CITIZEN

If you do not tell us where you have been, then you are divisible. Weak! And through that you weaken us, the great We. Where have you been?

EQUALITY 7-2521

We shall not tell!

(He is lashed some more.)

CITIZEN

We learned that the earth is flat and that the sun revolves around it. We understand that it causes day and night. We have solved all mysteries of this earth and sky because of the great we. Because of what we have done as an indivisible brotherhood. Do you deny this?

(beat)

Do you -

EQUALITY 7-2521

Yes!

(Lashings.)

CITIZEN

We have also learned how to bleed men to cure them of all ailments. Where have you been?!

EQUALITY 7-2521

We shall not tell!

(Lashings)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

We shall not tell! We shall not tell! We shall not tell!

(He passes out. The two citizens look at each other. and drag him on the table to sleep. They walk out.)

(There's a slight lull (if by some weird feeling you're compelled to have an interlude, it should happen here), a stillness, stiffness. Perhaps Equality 7-2521 tries to sit up but finds he cannot.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

We lay in our cell for many days. The door opened twice each day, once for the men who brought us bread and water, and once for the Judges. Many Judges stood before us in their white togas and they asked:

(Judge 1 enters.)

JUDGE 1

Are you ready to speak?

(Judge 1 exits. Judge 2 enters.)

JUDGE 2

Are you ready to speak?

(Judge 2 exits. Judge 1 enters, accompanied by Judge 3.)

JUDGE 3

Are you ready to speak?

(Judge 3 exits. Judge 1 stays)

JUDGE 1

Are you ready to speak?

EQUALITY 7-2521

But they are like the others, reflections of reflections, echos of echos. We counted each day and each night as it passed.

(Judge 1 leaves, Equality 7-2521 sits up and faces the audience.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

It is easy to escape the Palace of Corrective Detention for the locks are old and there are no guards about, for men have never defied the Councils so far as to escape. Tomorrow, in the full light of day, we shall take our box, and leave our tunnel open and walk through the streets to the Home of the Scholars.

(The light box rolls on stage, and Equality 7-2521 picks it up.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

We shall put before them the greatest gift ever. Tomorrow, you shall take us back into your fold and we shall be an outcast no longer.

SCENE 6

(The council enters the stage, talking amongst themselves. They see Equality 7-2521 and stop, cautiously gathering around the table.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our greetings to you, our honored brothers of the World Council of Scholars!

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

Who are you, our brother? For you do not look like a Scholar.

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our name is Equality 7-2521, and we are a Street Sweeper of this City.

FRATERNITY 9-3452

A Street sweeper!?

DEMOCRACY 4-6998

Unbelievable!

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

This is against all the rules and all the laws!

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our brothers! We matter not, nor our transgression. It is only our brother men who matter. We bring you a gift such as has never been brought to men. Listen to us, for we hold the future of mankind in our hands!

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

Go on.

EQUALITY 7-2521

We have toiled many years to discover a new power, which we hold in our hands. Look upon it, for we give you the power of the sky!

(Equality 7-2521 turns the light box on and it glows brilliantly. Immediately, the Council are struck with terror and run back from the table, seeking warmth of one another's bodies, huddled

against the wall.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

Fear nothing brothers. There is a great power in these wires, but it is tamed! We give it to you!

(Equality 7-2521 tries to take the box to the Council, but they run away.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

We give you the power of the sky! We give you the power of the earth! Take it, and let us be one of you, the humblest among you. Out us all work together, and harness this power, and make it ease the toil of men! Let us bring a new light to men, and flood our cities with light!

(A pause. Perhaps Equality 7-2521 attempts to approach againe.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(cont)

Our brothers! Have you nothing to say to us?

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

Yes. Yes, we have much to say to a wretch who have broken all the laws and who boast of their infamy! How dared you think that your mind held greater wisdom than the minds of your brothers?

DEMOCRACY 4-6998

You had been decreed a street sweeper! How dared you think that you could be of greater use to men than in sweeping the streets! How dared you to hold yourself as one alone and with the thoughts of the one and not the many? You shall be burned at the stake!

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

No! They shall be lashed till there is nothing left under the lashes.

FRATERNITY 9-3452

No. We should deliver this creature to the World Council and let their will be done, for no such crime has been committed. We cannot decide its fate.

EQUALITY 7-2521

Our brothers, you are right. Let the will of the Council be done upon our body. We do not care. But the light? What will you do with the light?

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

So you think that you have found a new power. What about your brothers? Do they share your thoughts?

EQUALITY 7-2521

No.

FRATERNITY 9-3452

What is not thought by all men cannot be true, and what is not done collectively cannot be good. We are humanitarian: when one rises above another and calls himself God, is it not the responsibility of men to stamp them out, for all are meant to be equal.

DEMOCRACY 4-6998

This box is useless. Should it be what they claim of it, then it would bring ruin to the Department of Candles, a great boon to mankind approved by all men.

FRATERNITY 9-3452

And if this should lighten the toil of men, then it is a great evil for men have no cause to exist save in toiling for other men.

COLLECTIVE 0-0009

This thing must be destroyed!

FRATERNITY 9-3452

Obliterated!

DEMOCRACY 4-6998

It must be destroyed!

(The Council members advance. Equality 7-2521 is jolted into action, defensively.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

You fools! You fools! You thrice-damned fools!

(He leaps onto the table and escapes with the light box. The Council removes

the table from the stage.)

SCENE 7

(Equality 7-2521 enters. He's a little worse for the wear. He carries his light box, and sets it down center stage. He pants, and after a beat he gathers his surroundings.)

(Liberty 5-3000 enters, cautiously.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

(at a whisper, in fear)

How come you to be here Golden One?

LIBERTY 5-3000

We have found you.

EQUALITY 7-2521

How come you to be in the forest?

LIBERTY 5-3000

We have followed you.

EQUALITY 7-2521

You should not be here.

LIBERTY 5-3000

When I was a child, a brother were found the Unspeakable word, which no men may speak nor hear. When such men hear this word they are put to death, and we have seen one such men burned alive in the square of the City. And it was a sight which stayed with us through the years and it haunts us, for when they brought the Transgressor out, he walked calmly to the pyre. And as the flames rose a thing happened which no eyes saw but ours, else we should not be living today. Out of all the eyes in the crowd, it seemed to us that the eyes of the Transgressor had chosen us from the crowd and were looking straight upon us. And it seemed as if these eyes were trying to tell us something through the flames, to send into our eyes the word, as if begging us to gather that word and not let it go from us and the earth. But the flames rose and we could not guess the word. We want...

(beat)

We want to find this word with you. We want to find

this word for when we speak we do not mean what we say.

EQUALITY 7-2521

What is it you say?

LIBERTY 5-3000

We love you.

(beat)

We are one... Alone... And only... And we love you who are one... Alone... And only.

(They stand like that for a short while before he grabs her and pulls her in, violently, as a declaration. He kisses her, and she kisses back; not out of love, but as an act of claiming. They release, breathing heavily.)

SCENE 8

(Liberty 5-3000 slowly walks off stage.)

EQUALITY 7-2521

We walked in the Uncharted Forest for days until we came to this house from the Unmentionable Times. There, we found more paper and instruments to write with, and books. We found ourselves new names. Prometheus and Gaea. And we found the word and the word is individual, and powerful. I am. I think. I will. Many words have been granted me, and some are wise, and some are false, but only three are holy: I will it! I do not surrender my treasures, nor do I share them. The fortune of my spirit is not to be blown into coins of brass and flung to the winds as alms for the poor of spirit. I guard my treasures: my thought, my will, my freedom! For what is my life if I am but to bow, to agree, and to obey? For I see the face of god, and I raise this god over the earth. This god whom men have sought since men came into being, this god who will grant them joy and peace and pride. This god, this one word. And here, I shall cut in stone the word which is to be my beacon and my banner. The word which will not die, should we all perish in battle. The word which can never die on this earth, for it is the heart of it and the meaning and the glory. The sacred word:

(Equality 7-2521 writes in large font on the floor one word: Ego.)

BLACKOUT