

Island Ecology

by Craig Baxter

One of 4 plays commissioned as part of Menagerie Theatre Company's 'Escapism' project, May 2020.

This is a play for 4 performers of any age

Notes for performers :

- SFX or FX in the script stands for 'Sound Effect'
- Feel free to add live or recorded music if you wish
- If you are unable to create desired sound effect, find a creative way around that (eg. Narration)
- Please open and end your recording of the play with the title followed by the writer's name.
- If you wish, you may also name the performers and anyone else who was involved in the recording. By doing this, you give your consent for those names to be in the public domain when Menagerie releases the recording via our website and social media channels.
- See the guidelines on our webpage for how to send the recording to Menagerie.
- If you have any questions about the play or recording, please email office@menagerie.uk.com
- And don't forget – have fun.

“ISLAND ECOLOGY”

Craig Baxter

Inspired by this true life tale: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHO_RIJxnVI&feature=youtu.be

CAST

Four kids of indeterminate gender:

DREW – the eldest and most practical

ONYX – the willing hand

ARI – the intellectual

BRIAR – the youngest

A fifth kid

SKY – does not speak, except as part of the **CHORUS**

The **CHORUS** should use the voices of all of the actors and a range and variety of tone (e.g.. whispers, chanting, unison, parts....)

SCENE 1 – AT SEA

**SFX - A SMALL SAILING BOAT BOBS AND
CREAKS ON THE OCEAN.**

**SFX - FOUR KIDS: ONYX, ARI, BRIAR AND SKY
SNORE GENTLY ON THE BOTTOM BOARDS AT
THE STERN.**

SFX - SEAGULLS CRY SOME WAY OFF

DREW: (OFF, AT THE BOW) Land ahoy!

BRIAR: (WAKING) What?

DREW: (OFF) Land ahoy!

SFX - BRIAR, ONYX AND ARI SCRABBLE TO
THEIR FEET, DESTABILIZING THE BOAT.

ARI Whoah, careful!

ONYX: The boat will fall over!

ARI: “Capsize”. The boat will “capsize”.

BRIAR What?

ARI: “Capsize”. It’s the nautical term for “fall over”.

ONYX: “Nautical”?

ARI: Like “Shiver me timbers!”, “Sling yer hook!”, “Haul the buntlines!”

DREW: Land ahoy!

ONYX: What’s “Land ahoy!”?

DREW: There’s land. Ahoy. There. Ahoy! Look!

BRIAR: Where?

DREW: Onyx, there.

ONYX: I can’t see....

DREW: An island.

BRIAR: A tiny island.

ONYX: Are we...

ARI "Steering a course"?

DREW: Sort of.

ONYX: Do we need to adjust the.... thing?

ARI: Sail?

ONYX: No, the other thing, the....

ARI: Rudder?

DREW: It's broken.

ARI: Ah.

DREW: And we're leaking.

ARI: Ooh.

DREW: I'll try to get us on a bearing to the island. You three had better bail.

BRIAR: The puddle is getting bigger and bigger.

DREW: Get bailing Briar.

BRIAR What with?

DREW: What happened to your shoes?

BRIAR: Lost.

ARI: I lost one of mine too in the storm.

DREW: Well use the one you have, Ari. Briar, use your hands. Like this.

SFX - DREW BAILS USING HANDS.

DREW Come on. We have to get the water out quicker than it's coming in. Faster.

ONYX: I'm doing it.

ARI: I'm doing it.

BRIAR: Me too.

SFX - FOUR OF THEM BAIL.

DREW How's Sky?

ONYX: Still asleep.

BRIAR: There's blood.

ONYX: Blood?

ARI: Just a trickle.

BRIAR: Coming out her ear.

SFX - SKY STIRS, GROANS AND TWITCHES

CHORUS: We are being punished.
For lying to our parents.
For being bored.
For not listening.
For stealing Mo Habib's beloved boat *The Ariel*.
For risking all.

We lied.
We placed pillows under blankets and stole away in the early
hours of the morning.
We stole Mo Habib's beloved boat *The Ariel*.
We knew not how to sail.
(I knew a little.)
We knew not the names even for all parts of the boat.
(I know the names.)

It was a clear and starry night.
It was then a brisk and breezy night.
It was then a stormy squally night.
But we clung on.
We clung on.
The wooden thing –
Boom!
The wooden thing that swings across –
Boom!

It swung across and caught me, side the head, and hard.
I slept.

We slept.

A heaviness in me.

We slept.

We - in the midst of the wide wide ocean – slept.

The boat creaked.

The boat leaked.

We slept, but

Land ahoy!

We set our course for land ahoy!

And bailed.

And bailed.

Until the boards in the bottom of the boat -

We split, we split!

Opened like a door

and let the wide wide ocean in

And Mo Habib's beloved boat *The Ariel* sank down and down.

We knew not how to swim

(I swim like a duck!)

But the island sucked us to it

And we hauled ourselves out of the waves

Through weed

and sand

and rock.

SCENE 2. – ON THE BEACH

SFX - BRIAR, ONYX AND ARI HAUL THEMSELVES FROM THE WATER AND UP THE BEACH.

SFX - DREW CALLS FROM THE SEA SOME WAY BEHIND THEM.

DREW : (OFF) Hey!

ONYX: Drew's got Sky, quick, help.

ARI: Can't. Too tired.

SFX - ARI SLUMPS EXHAUSTED IN THE SAND.

SFX - ONYX AND BRIAR HAUL THEMSELVES BACK INTO THE WAVES TO HELP DREW

DREW : Onyx, Briar, one arm each. I'll take the legs.

SFX - BETWEEN THEM, THEY DRAG SKY UP THE BEACH TO ARI.

SFX - DREW, ONYX AND BRIAR DROP SKY AT ARI'S SIDE AND COLLAPSE TO THE SANDY GROUND. BREATHLESS.

ARI: Sorry. Couldn't.

DREW: No worries Ari. You. Did well. Didn't know you could. Swim.

ARI: Can't. Sky?

DREW: Sleeping.

ARI: Still?

DREW: Sleeping.

ONYX: I'm thirsty.

BRIAR: Cold.

DREW STANDS.

DREW: You three stay, dry off, look after Sky. I'll scout, see what's to find.

BRIAR: Get help?

DREW: No Briar. There is no help to be got. This is just some rocks and sand in the middle of the sea.

BRIAR: A desert island?

DREW: We have to help ourselves.

SFX - DREW JOGS OFF ACROSS THE SAND.

ARI: Water should be our priority, Drew.

BRIAR: Drew's gone.

ONYX: I don't like it here.

CHORUS: This island was first a volcano.
Plants and birds arrived.
Mammals took their time but, eventually, arrived; swimming
or floating on rafts of weed.

Few new species survive long on an island.
But those that survive are free
To exploit an abundance of niche.
Becoming bigger versions of themselves
Or smaller versions of themselves
Or more trusting versions of themselves
Or just weirder, versions of themselves

Humans took their time but, eventually, arrived; swimming or
floating on rafts of wood.
Established a flourishing population.
Ate fish, cultivated bananas and nuts, domesticated the
weird creatures.
One day a big ship came and took all the humans away to
be slaves.

The fish swam a little freer,
The bananas went nuts,
The nuts went bananas,
Weird creatures now did as they pleased.
Then five new humans arrived.

**SFX - DREW CALLS FROM A LONG WAY OFF BUT
RUNNING TOWARDS THEM.**

DREW: (OFF) Hey!

BRIAR: It's Drew!

ARI: At last.

BRIAR: (CALLING) Hey Drew!

ONYX: (CALLING) You've been gone ages!

ARI: (CALLING) What've you got in your hand?

BRIAR: Weird sort of, weird sort of, weird sort of.... bird?

DREW: (ARRIVING, BREATHLESS) I've. Found a cave. We should make it our camp.

ONYX: Have you got water?

DREW: No water. But I've got this.

ARI: What is it?

BRIAR: Weird sort of, weird sort of...

DREW: Thought we could slit its throat. Drink its blood.

BRIAR: ... Bird.

**SFX - THE BIRD SUDDENLY FLAPS AND
STRUGGLES IN DREW'S HANDS.**

ARI: It's alive!

DREW: Thought I should keep the blood fresh.

ONYX: Did you not find any water?

DREW: No water. We may have to collect rainwater when it rains. Or dig into the roots of trees. I think it will be hard to find. This bird though was easy to catch.

ARI: No natural predators. Which is, probably, a good thing for us.

BRIAR: What's a predator?

DREW: It just came up to me and let me grab it by the neck. There's plenty more. I would think they're full of blood.

ONYX: I don't like blood.

ARI: None of us like blood.

DREW: Blood's just water only thick.

ONYX: I'm vegan.

DREW: Come on, I'll show you the cave. Have you still got your knife Ari?

ARI: Yes.

DREW: We'll need that.

ARI: Mmm.

ONYX: Did anyone hear me say: “I’m vegan”?

DREW: Briar, can you take this? You need to hold it hard, around the neck, like this.

BRIAR: I don’t like it.

SFX - THE BIRD FLAPS AND STRUGGLES SOME MORE.

DREW: It’s just we three need to carry Sky.

BRIAR: I’ll carry Sky.

DREW: If you think you’re strong enough.

BRIAR: I’ll carry Sky.

DREW: Anyone else want to –

ARI & ONYX: I’ll carry Sky.

SFX - ARI, ONYX AND BRIAR SQUAT TO PICK UP SKY.

ONYX: I’ll take this end. You take that leg Briar. Ari...

ARI: I know!

BRIAR: She’s so sleepy.

DREW HAS ALREADY SET OFF UP THE BEACH.

DREW: (OFF) The cave is up this way.

SCENE 3. – IN THE CAVE

BRIAR IS TRYING TO GET SKY TO DRINK WEIRD
BIRD BLOOD.

BRIAR: (CLOSE) Come on Sky, it's really nice, and it's good for you. It's from a weird bird's neck. Sky, please drink.

(ALoud) She doesn't want it!

(CLOSE) We've got no cups but this sea shell is good. It makes a good little cup for bird blood. Sky, yeh? Yeh? Please drink.

SFX - FLAMES CATCH IN THE FIRE DREW IS
LIGHTING.

DREW: Fire's alight!

ARI: It's too hot in here already.

DREW: When the sun goes down, we'll be glad of it. And when I've cooked some bird.

ONYX: (QUIET) I won't be glad.

- DREW: We should collect firewood while it's light.
- ARI: We should have a meeting to decide how to decide who decides who makes decisions, and makes the orders.
- ONYX: You mean who's in charge?
- BRIAR: I thought Drew was in charge.
- ARI: We read a book in school about some kids, some boys, stranded on an island with no adults. They had a conch.
- ONYX: What's a conch?
- ARI: I don't remember exactly.
- DREW: A conch is a type of seashell
- BRIAR: Drew knows the most. And he's the oldest. He's in charge.
- ONYX: Does the conch tell them what to do?
- ARI: No. The conch is a symbol. Whoever holds the conch can speak. Everyone else has to listen. Until it's their turn to hold the conch.
- ONYX: I'll look for a conch. What does a conch look like Drew?
- ARI: I don't suppose it has to be a conch. It could be any type of sea shell.

BRIAR: I've got a sea shell! But it's got weird bird blood in it. And it's Sky's cup.

DREW: What happened in the story to the boys?

ARI: I don't remember.

DREW: I remember.

ARI: I just remember the conch.

DREW: The boys form two separate tribes and start to kill each other.

BRIAR: I don't think we should kill each other.

DREW: I agree.

ONYX: Maybe Briar should be in charge.

BRIAR: (ALMOST IN TEARS) I don't want to be in charge. I want Drew to be in charge.

ARI: Maybe we shouldn't worry for now about who's in charge. But maybe it would be good to, as a group, as a...

ONYX: Gang?

ARI: ... as a democracy, to agree on some basic rules or principles by which we...

ONYX: Live?

ARI: Operate.

BRIAR: We're not going to be here forever though, are we? Our families are going to realise that we're gone and...

DREW: Mo Habib's going to realise someone stole his boat and launch a --

ONYX: Manhunt?

ARI: Will you stop finishing everybody's...

PAUSE.

BRIAR: Sentences?

THEY LAUGH.

DREW: I was going to say "Rescue"

CHORUS: Principles and Priorities.

Immediate priorities are:

Survival, and

Rescue

Drew is to be Head of Survival

Onyx is to be Head of Rescue

Ari is to be Head Concho – in charge of democratic processes.

Briar is not to be in charge of anything

Sky is – for the time being – not to be in charge of anything.

Principles are:

We look after each other

We listen to each other

We don't form into tribes

We don't kill or hurt each other

If we start to feel angry, we leave

And go and be on our own

Until we don't feel angry.

No one is in overall charge.

SCENE 4. – OUTSIDE THE CAVE

**SFX - ONYX AND ARI PLAY A POINT OF
BADMINTON USING EQUIPMENT HOMEMADE
FROM DRIFTWOOD, A CORK AND SOME
FEATHERS: A RALLY OF AT LEAST 5 SHOTS**

ARI: Four-love!

ONYX: How many times?! You only get a point if you're serving.

ARI: I hate that rule.

ONYX: But it's the rule.

ARI: Three-love. My serve. Give the thing to me.

ONYX: The shuttlecock.

ARI: We need a better one of these.

ONYX: Make one then.

ARI: I will. It'll be better than this one.

ONYX: Do it then.

ARI: Who made this one?

ONYX: You know it's only me that makes them. Are you going to serve? Or are you going to complain some more about the shuttlecock? You've not made a shuttlecock all the months we've been here.

ARI: I've been making my chess set.

ONYX: Nobody wants to play chess. Why are you wasting your time?!

ARI: If you're going to get angry, you should go and be on your own.

ONYX: I'm not angry. I just want to play badminton according to the proper rules.

SFX - ARI, UNEXPECTEDLY, SERVES.

ONYX: Hey! Cheater!

**SFX - ONYX SCRAMBLES A RETURN AND
ANOTHER RALLY ENSUES.**

**SFX - BRIAR CAN BE HEARD APPROACHING
FROM SOME WAY OFF.**

BRIAR: (CALLING) Ari! Ari! Ari!

SFX - ARI SWIPES AND MISSES

ARI You made me miss! What's up now?

BRIAR ARRIVES BREATHLESSLY.

BRIAR: Drew's fallen.

ONYX: Drew's fallen where?

BRIAR: Cliffs.

ONYX: How?

BRIAR: Fell. Getting. Eggs. And fell.

ARI: Show us.

BRIAR: Drew said. "Get help." "Light fire." "Be quick"

ONYX: Drew's talking then. That's good, right?

BRIAR: Leg doesn't look good.

ARI: Drew's leg?

BRIAR: Show you.

SFX - BRIAR LEADS ARI AND ONYX OFF.

SCENE 5. – BOTTOM OF THE CLIFF

**ARI, ONYX AND BRIAR ARE SQUATTING DOWN
BESIDE A PRONE DREW.**

DREW: (PAINED) Ah Ah.

ARI: Do you think it's broken?

DREW: I dunno. Listen.

ONYX: Shall I get the stretch thing we made for Sky?

ARI: The stretcher.

DREW: Listen.

ONYX: Is it bad? It looks bad.

DREW: Listen.

ONYX: Shall I get the stretcher?

ARI & BRIAR: Listen!

DREW: I was up there on the cliff. Ah. Sorry. Hurts. I fell because I had eggs in my hand and I was trying to wave. Stupid.

ARI: Wave?

DREW: I was trying to wave at. Out there: a boat. I saw a boat. There's a boat.

ARI: A boat? Where?

**SFX - ARI, ONYX AND BRIAR ARE UP AND
LOOKING FOR THE BOAT ON TIPTOE.**

ONYX: We've not seen a boat since we arrived.

BRIAR: Since our boat – Mo Habib's boat – that split and sank.

ARI: Is it still there? Can anybody see it?

ONYX: I can't.

DREW: You need to go up on the top of the cliff and light a fire. Leave me. Go up there and light a fire. Now. Be quick!

BRIAR: We can't leave you here with your foot all back to front and hurting.

DREW: You can and you must. Go now. Light a fire. Right at the top!
So the boat will see.

BRIAR: We can't leave you.

ONYX: Briar, you stay with Drew. Ari and I will take care of the fire.

DREW: Remember to prepare the ground first.

ARI: And with a layer of dead wood. You've shown us.

ONYX: We're wasting time, come on!

DREW: Wait!

ARI: What?

DREW: One more thing.

ARI: What is it?

DREW: Once the fire is alight and burning bright, once it is burning,
you need to bury Sky.

PAUSE.

BRIAR: (QUIET) Why?

PAUSE.

ARI: Because. She's.

BRIAR: She's only sleeping.

ONYX: The boat will miss us, if it's not missed us already. We need to light the fire.

ARI: Yes.

DREW: Yes. Light the fire first.

SFX - ONYX AND ARI BEGIN TO SCALE THE CLIFF.

SCENE 6. – ON THE CLIFFTOP

FIRE ROARS.

CHORUS: Help us!
Save us!
Save our souls!
Here.
Over here!
See – please see - our great big burning fire!

SCENE 7. – BOTTOM OF THE CLIFF

BRIAR: Does it hurt Drew?

DREW: It hurts.

BRIAR: The fire looks good. They must have did the ground and did the thing with the dead wood.

DREW: They must have.

BRIAR: And did it good. The boat is bound to see.

I wonder if our parents will remember us.

Will Mo Habib remember that we sank his beloved boat, *The Ariel*?

CHORUS: These humans will be gone soon.
It will be as though they were never here.
Save for fading scorchmarks on the clifftop,
A chess-set and a shuttlecock,
Bones buried in the sand.

SFX - WAVES LAP AGAINST THE ISLAND.

END.