

ROS: I think I lost it.

GUIL: What coin?

ROS: I don't remember exactly.

Pause.

GUIL: Oh, that coin . . . clever.

ROS: I can't remember how I did it.

GUIL: It probably comes natural to you.

ROS: Yes, I've got a show-stopper there.

GUIL: Do it again.

Slight pause.

ROS: We can't afford it.

GUIL: Yes, one must think of the future.

ROS: It's the normal thing.

GUIL: To have one. One is, after all, having it all the time . . . now . . . and now . . . and now . . .

ROS: It could go on for ever. Well, not for ever, I suppose. (*Pause.*)

Do you ever think of yourself as actually *dead*, lying in a box with a lid on it?

~~GUIL: No.~~

ROS: Nor do I, really. . . . It's silly to be depressed by it. I mean one thinks of it like being *alive* in a box, one keeps forgetting to take into account the fact that one is *dead* . . . which should make all the difference . . . shouldn't it? I mean, you'd never *know* you were in a box, would you? It would be just like being *asleep* in a box. Not that I'd like to sleep in a box, mind you, not without any air—you'd wake up dead, for a start, and then where would you be? Apart from inside a box. That's the bit I don't like, frankly. That's why I don't think of it. . . .

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GUIL *stirs restlessly, pulling his cloak round him.*

Because you'd be helpless, wouldn't you? Stuffed in a box like that, I mean you'd be in there for ever. Even taking into account the fact that you're dead, it isn't a pleasant thought. *Especially* if you're dead, really . . . *ask* yourself, if I asked you straight off—I'm going to stuff you in this box now, would you rather be alive or dead? Naturally, you'd prefer to be alive. Life in a box is better than no life at all. I expect. You'd have a chance at least. You could lie there thinking—well, at least I'm not dead! In a minute someone's going to bang on the lid and tell me to come out. (*Banging the floor with his fists.*) "Hey you, whatsyname! Come out of there!"

~~GUIL (*jumps up savagely*): You don't have to flog it to death!~~
Pause.

ROS: I wouldn't think about it, if I were you. You'd only get depressed. (*Pause.*) Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, ~~where's it going to end?~~ (*Pause, then brightly.*) Two early Christians chanced to meet in Heaven. "Saul of Tarsus yet!" cried one. "What are you doing here?!" . . . "Tarsus-Schmarsus," replied the other, "I'm Paul already." (*He stands up restlessly and flaps his arms.*) They don't care. We count for nothing. We could remain silent till we're green in the face, they wouldn't come.

GUIL: Blue, red.

ROS: A Christian, a Moslem and a Jew chanced to meet in a closed carriage. . . . "Silverstein!" cried the Jew. "Who's your friend?" . . . "His name's Abdullah," replied the Moslem, "but he's no friend of mine since he became a convert." (*He leaps up again, stamps his foot and shouts into the wings.*) All right, we know you're in there! Come out talking! (*Pause.*) We have no control. None at all. . . . (*He paces.*) Whatever became of the moment when one first knew about death? There must have been one, a moment,

Male Monologue

by Rosenkrantz & Guildenstern are Dead
by Tom Stoppard