

STRANDED

by

Brandan Ngo

Commissioned by Plan-B Theatre for Play at Home

CHARACTERS

Popi - A stubborn pirate

Poppy - A bubbly, encouraging friend

Poppie - A no-nonsense, tough-love friend

Stranded

(A tiny, tiny, sunbaked, deserted tropical island. POPI the pirate naps restlessly underneath a tall coconut tree.)

POPI

(Mumbling sleepily) Nay... I swear... I didn't cheat... It was him! I'm an honest pirate! ... AH!!

(POPI jumps awake.)

POPI

Blimey, 'twas nothing but a dream. What a relief! I'm still stranded on this island!

Beat.

POPI

(Crying.) I'm still stranded on this island!! Mutinied by my own crew! What a lonely end to a glorious pirate career... Oh, I'd give up all the doubloons in the sea to have a soul or two to parley with again! There must be someone else here. Aye, that's what I'll do! A bit of exploring might reveal a bit of good company! Not to mention, stretch me aching legs.

(POPI walks around the entire island. It takes about seven seconds.)

POPI

That didn't take long. Why, there's nothing on this island save for this coconut tree -- and hardly good conversation that would be! But, whose footprints be these in the sand, then? Surely not mine? Unless I already explored the island and completely forgot... Cor blimey! I must be going mad. How long have I been stranded here?

(POPPY appears out of thin air, and looks just like POPI.)

POPPY

Must be about seven days, now!

POPI

Seven days? What makes ye so sure?

POPPY

Hm. I don't know!

(*POPI turns and sees POPPY.*)

POPI

AH!! Who -- what -- where did you come from??

POPPY

Hm. I don't know!

POPI

... Why do you look just like me?

POPPY

Hmm...

POPI

You don't know.

POPPY

I don't know!

POPI

Is there anything you *do* know?

POPPY

Well, I know that if I look just like you, as ye say, then *I must be you!*

POPI

What do you mean, you must be me?

POPPY

What other explanation could there be? If I came by ship, where did I drop anchor? If I shipwrecked and drifted here, why be my garments dry as the white sand? By Neptune, this is fun. I've never had a conversation before!

POPI

Surely ye can't be some sort of *imaginary friend* that I've suddenly dreamed up?

POPPY

Ohh, is that what I be? An imaginary friend? Why, that sounds absolutely enchanting! The stuff of adventures! Alive for two minutes and I'm already someone's friend!

POPI

I've gone mad. This morning sun has cooked me out of me right mind.

POPPY

'Tis late afternoon.

POPI

Shut it! If you *are* me, then prove it! What be my deepest, darkest, most regrettable secret?

POPPY

Ooh, a fantastic, foolproof idea. I'll have to dig deep into our chest of memories for that one... let's see... Aha! We cheated on our final pirate exam in pirate school!

POPI

Uh-oh.

POPPY

Aye, and there be something else... something worse... blimey! We framed our best matey, Josey, and let him take the fall! *We* got to graduate pirate school and live the pirate's life, but *Josey* had to get a boring landlubber job selling parrot insurance!

POPI

What -- ? No one knows that but me!

POPPY

And me! ... And probably Josey!

POPI

No, no, that doesn't count. I had a nasty dream about that earlier, talking in my sleep, you were likely just eavesdropping!

POPPY

Aye, then, how about a different memory? Ooh, there's one where we ate a rancid sea bass and heaved it up on our mother's favorite peg-leg, then blamed it on our wee brother. The poor lad was made to swab the floors for a week with nothing but a dishrag.

POPI

Alright, I've heard enough.

POPPY

How about another one... Oh blimey, this one is quite the doozy: We only just found out, after years of professional pirating, that *port* means left and *starboard* means right. Why, that one is unforgivable, simply embarrassing. I suppose that's what happens when we cheat in pirate school, though...

POPI

I said I've heard enough! Neptune, when I said I wanted company, this be *not* what I had in mind. I've wasted far too much energy gabbing with you and now I've got a throbbing headache! I'm going back to sleep on this side of the island, and if you don't want me to *un-imagine* you out of existence, you'll do well to stay on *that* side of the island and not open yer mouth a peep!

POPPY

But --

POPI

Not!

POPPY

You're --

POPI

A!

POPPY

My --

POPI

Peep!

(POPI stomps to the napping spot and lies down. POPPY goes to the other side of the island and sits alone.)

POPPY

Alive for three minutes and I've already lost my only friend. But I suppose that's life! Y'arr, souls move in and out of our lives, each searching for their own port on the horizon. And Davey Jones comes for us all --

POPI

Shut it!

(POPPY quiets down for a moment and looks around.)

POPPY

Popi is right. It is quite lonely on this island. Well, Popi might not want to parley, but there must be someone on this island who does! Aye, that's what I'll do! A bit of exploring might reveal a bit of good company.

(POPPY walks around the island. POPI pretends to sleep, but is extremely annoyed at the footsteps. POPPY looks off into the distance.)

POPPY

That didn't take long! ... Yes, but I suppose I wanted to see for me-self. ... Aye, but that coconut tree would have hardly made for good conversation! Ha! ... Oh, there on the other side of the island. Taking a nap. ... Asleep? Nay, I don't believe so. ... Oh, about five minutes! Aye, it's been a fine life. I made a friend, lost a friend, and it appears I've made a friend again! ... Y'arr, Popi was my first friend. But we got to digging up our deepest, most shameful memories and Popi grew a wee bit uncomfortable. Aye, introspection can be difficult.

POPI

WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU TALKING TO??

POPPY

Poppie!

POPI

Decidedly not! It takes two to parley and I have been ignoring you with extreme prejudice!

POPPY

Ohh, no, not *you* Popi. *This* Poppie!

(POPPIE appears out of thin air, and yes, looks exactly like POPI and POPPY.)

POPPIE

Ahoy there!

POPI

Oh, Neptune...

POPPY

Aye, I became so lonely after losing you as a friend, that I decided to dream up my *own* imaginary friend!

POPI

Wonderful. Now I've the impossible task of drowning out *two* unbearable voices. If I wasn't certain before, I know it now: The sea be mighty angry with me.

POPPIE

Blimey, this one's a miserable sot!

POPPY

We mustn't cast judgement. Popi is dealing with many inner demons. As I always say, one can only suppress one's guilt and shame for so long!

POPI

What do you mean, "as you always say?" You've been alive for not but five minutes!

POPPY

Aye? And?

POPI

And I've heard every single word you've uttered!

POPPY

Surely I've said many things by now, that very well could have been one of them. Is five minutes not a long time? I honestly don't know.

POPI

All you've done is mutter behind my back about my own personal, private memories!

POPPIE

Aye, they be some shameful memories as well. Poppy here told me everything. You've a life full of betrayal and deceit! It's no wonder you're stranded here. Were you my captain, I too would have mutinied the first night we set sail, and cast you overboard for the sea to swallow. Cheating on the final pirate exam... P'tooey!

POPPY

(Stage-whispered to Poppie) Come now, ease up on the lass. Popi is a victim; a childhood of unattainable parental expectations coupled with a deep, crippling fear of failure that manifested in a general and manic succeed-at-all-costs anxiety. What can be expected?

POPPIE

(Stage-whispered) I suppose ye be correct. Popi deserves our pity and our help. No one is born a dirty conscienceless cheater who cares only about themselves. Introspection can be scary! Only Popi can decide to make a change.

POPI

I know what ye be whispering about me!

POPPIE

Of course you do, we're you! You're saying this to yerself! Maybe we wouldn't be whispering if only you were a bit more responsible and a bit kinder to your crew! Aye, you certainly wouldn't be stranded with no hope of rescue if that were so.

POPI

Oh, shut it!

POPPY

You can't just say "shut it" anytime anyone says something that makes you uncomfortable! Poppie utters harsh words but they be true.

POPI

I'm an adult! A professional, fearsome pirate! I don't have to listen to criticism if I don't want to!

POPPIE

What sort of professional, fearsome pirate is thrown overboard by their own crew their first night at sea? Surely it was something you did.

POPI

Impossible.

POPPY

Popi... come now, lass, it's time to take a wee bit of responsibility.

(POPI pouts, arms folded.)

POPPIE

We've got all the time in the world.

POPPY

Aye, we'll wait 'til Davey Jones' arrival itself if we must.

POPPIE

How long do ye suppose that'd take?

POPPY

Well, the last meal we ate was about a week ago, so...

POPI

Fine! Fine! I admit it... I shouted at my crew and called them names. I was angry, because I was embarrassed, because they politely corrected me, because I didn't know port from starboard, because I cheated in pirate school! There! I'm a terrible pirate and a terrible captain! And yes, I did vomit on my mother's favorite peg-leg! I'm sorry!

(POPI breathes a deep sigh of relief.)

POPPY

Sweet music to our ears. Was that not a great weight off your shoulders?

POPPIE

We're proud of you! ... Of us!

POPI

I must return to my ship... to my crew! And apologize! But how? There's nothing here but a coconut tree. Cor blimey, the only way I could fell it is if I had the strength of three pairs of hands...

POPPY

Ah, but technically you do!

POPI

Aye? Is that how this works?

(POPPY and POPPIE shrug.)

POPPIE

Let's have a crack at it and see!

(The three pirates dig up the coconut tree and tip it over.)

POPPY

We done it!

POPPIE

Y'arr!

POPI

Mateys, I couldn't have done it without ye. And I'm not just speaking of felling this tree. Now let's be off -- I've got a crew to apologize to!

POPPY

And a parrot insurance agent to make amends and possibly switch careers with!

POPI

Ah, hm, one thing at a time, eh?

(They push the coconut tree into the sea and hop aboard.)

THE END