

## **BEE ALL, END ALL**

Cast: 1F, 6M

One – catatonic  
Two – meek, conciliatory, accommodating  
Three & Four – gentle, peaceful, self-contained  
Five – self-confident, haughty, not overly bright  
Six – bitter, aggressive, fearful

Lili – sharp, sexy, taunting

*Setting:*

Somewhere between a gentleman's club and a waiting-room  
*If possible, the playing area should be hexagonal*

Exit backstage centre (to the Queen)  
*If possible, the backstage exit should be through a hexagonal arch lit by golden bulbs which flash whenever the buzzer sounds*

Exit stage left (to the 'comfort room')

Entrance stage right (to the hive)

Armchairs and sofa (on which Six lies)

Two and table (at which Three & Four play chess)

The column downstage centre (on which the crown or ceremonial hat is placed)

*Costume:*

The male cast should be dressed in black with yellow accessories, for example, scarf / handkerchief / tie / cravat

Lili should be dressed skimpily in black and yellow

Badges, sashes or tabards with each character's number clearly visible: '1' / '2' / '3' / '4' / '5' / '6'

*Props:*

Six's cellphone

Three & Four's chess-set

The crown (or ceremonial hat)

*Lights up.*

*One stands motionless staring out at the audience. Two sits lost in thought. Three and Four are sitting at a table playing chess. Six is lying across a sofa, playing games on his cellphone.*

*Lili enters carrying a crown (or ceremonial hat).*

*One, Two and Six watch Lili closely while, with a degree of ceremony, she places the crown on top of the column.*

*One now stares, and remains staring, fixedly at the crown on the column.*

Six (anxiety) Well, Lili?

Lili (about to exit) Well what?

Six How is she today?

Lili (shrugs) We'll see.

*A loud buzzer sounds and lights flash.*

*Lili exits. Two and Six watch her go.*

*Pause and then they resume their occupations. Three moves a piece. Four moves a piece. Six presses keys on his cellphone.*

*Pause and then Five enters. He is confident, strutting, plainly expecting to be noticed. No one looks up. Five clears his throat loudly to attract attention but this has no effect. He taps his foot.*

Two (waking from his reverie) Oh, hello.

Five (importantly) I have arrived.

Two (pleasantly) Yes. So you have.

Five I am expected.

Two Yes. That's right. We've been expecting you. Well, not you exactly. But someone.

Five And you are?

Two I'm 'Two'.

Five 'Two'?

Two Yes. (explanatory) I'm a waiter. We're all waiters.

Five A waiter? I see. Well, now that I'm here, perhaps you would be good enough to show me where I should go next.

Two Oh, you needn't go anywhere. Not yet.

Five I may not have made myself clear. I am expected.

Two Yes, that's right. There are always six of us, you see. I'm not sure why but that's the way it is. Six waiters. Which means that when one of us – well – when one of us ... Then another one comes here to take his place.

Five I'd like to speak to whoever's in charge.

Six (*looking up and addressing Five*) You're a cocksure bugger, aren't you?

Five I beg your pardon?

Six You don't have a clue, do you? Not a bloody clue.

Five Look here. I have been 'summoned'. Selected. Specially chosen. And now that I've arrived, I need to know where to go next.

Six (*unpleasantly*) You listen to me, sunshine. You're a waiter like the rest of us. Don't worry. When the time comes, you'll be going somewhere all right. But, for the present, you'll be waiting here with us. Let's see how you stick it, shall we?

*A sound is heard from off stage. Everyone stops what they're doing to listen.*

*The sound begins as a slow pulse or heartbeat, accelerates to a crescendo of frenzied beating, and then – at the climax – there is a sudden, sickening snap or crack.*

*After which, there is silence.*

Five What in God's name was that?

Six (*contemptuous*) As I said. Not a bloody clue.

*Six returns to his cellphone.*

Two (*courteous*) Perhaps you'd like me to introduce you to your fellow waiters? This is 'One'.

*One makes no response.*

I'm afraid 'One' doesn't say much. Nothing at all in fact. He's been here longer than the rest of us. And waiting – well –

waiting isn't easy. It takes its toll. It wouldn't surprise me if 'One' ...

Five If 'One' what?

Two If everything gets too much for him and he decides to make use of the comfort room.

*Five looks puzzled but, before he can ask another question, Two has continued the introductions.*

This is 'Three' and this is 'Four'.

*Three and Four look up from their game of chess and smile briefly.*

Five Hello, there. I'm ...

Two (*interrupting*) You're 'Five'.

Five I'm ... ?

Two 'Five'.

Five 'Five'?

Two Yes. That's what you'll be when Lili comes back.

Five (*studying the chess-board*) I can see a move.

*Three and Four don't look up.*

Obvious really. (*about a move a piece*) Black Queen to –

*Three and Four both grasp his arm to prevent him touching the piece.*

Three We never move the Queen.

Four Never the Queen.

Three That would be disrespectful.

Five Disrespectful?

Four Yes. Very disrespectful.

Five (*disconcerted*) Oh. Right. I see.

*Three and Four keep their eyes fixed on Five. Pause and then Two leads Five away from the table.*

Two                    (confiding) I'm worried about 'Three' and 'Four'. They've become very close since they've been here. Very close indeed. Which means that when one of them has to – well – move on ...

*Lili re-enters holding a badge (sash or tabard) on which is the number '5'. She looks round, sees Five and hands it to him.*

Five                    (taking it and putting it on) Thank you very much.

*Lili looks at him with a mixture of pity and contempt.*

Six                    (wheedling) Well, Lili. How is she today?

Lili                    As far as I know she's satisfied. Reasonably satisfied. For the time being, at least. Although she did say ...

Six                    What did she say?

*Lili smiles but says nothing.*

Lili! What did she say?

Lili                    She said, 'I'm feeling a little frisky today, Lili. A little 'frisky.'

Six                    (anxious) 'Frisky'?

Lili                    Yes.

Six                    (hesitant) And was that before or after?

Lili                    (mocking) Before or after what, 'Six'?

Six                    (pleading) Tell me, Lili.

*The buzzer sounds and lights flash.*

Lili!

Lili                    Must go. But you never know. I may be back later.

*Lili exits, and Six puts his head in his hands.*

Two                    (distracting five) Is there anything you'd like to do to pass the time? Let me see. There are magazines, puzzles, cards. Personally I find patience very soothing.

Five                    I'm fond of cards. Whist, bridge. Does anyone else here play bridge? Perhaps we could make up a four?

Two      Maybe bridge isn't such a good idea. You see we're quite often interrupted and then there's a good chance that – well – one of us would have to leave the table ...

*Pause.*

Five      I don't want to press you, 'Two', but are you sure I'm not supposed to be going somewhere? I was specially chosen, you see. I have the letter. Very official. With a seal. Here.

*Five holds out the letter but Two doesn't take it.*

*Six stands up suddenly.*

Six      (exasperated) You're quite right. You were specially chosen. We were all specially chosen. That's why we're here. And here is where we'll stay until the time comes when we're chosen again. And then ...

Two      I don't think you should ...

Six      (ignoring Two) And then make no mistake, my friend, the time will come. That you can be sure of. We don't know when. We don't know why or how she makes her choice. Perhaps, when the mood takes her, she simply rolls a dice. That would make sense, wouldn't it? Dice have six faces and there are six of us here to choose from. Yes, I expect that's what she does.

*Six mimes rattling a die in his hand and throwing it on the table.*

Shake, shake, shake. Let's see now. What is it? Oh, yes. It's 'Five'. And do you know what happens next?

Two      There's really no need to spell it out. (to Five) All we have to do is pass the time we spend here as pleasantly we can. There's no point in worrying.

Six      (menacing) You're right, 'Two'. There's no point in worrying. Not yet. But there will be a time to worry. Once she's made her choice. Then, my friend, you can really start to worry. You'll be led in there and ...

*One moans. He looks round wildly, utters a shriek and exits.*

Two      Oh dear, oh dear. Poor 'One'.

Five      (puzzled and alarmed) What's happening? Where's he gone?

Two      I thought this might happen.

Five      I don't understand.

Six He's done it. 'One' has gone to the comfort room.

Five The comfort room?

Two It's the choice we still have. The other way out.

Six (*spelling it out unpleasantly*) When the waiting gets too much for you. When you can't bear it any longer. When you've had enough. The comfort room is the solution. The only alternative. (*spelling it out further*) Then that's it. The end. You don't come back from the comfort room.

Five The alternative to what?

*Six stares at Five but, abandoning him as a hopeless case, says nothing more and moves away.*

*The buzzer sounds and lights flash.*

Six Oh, my God. She isn't finished after all. She wants another one.

Two Oh dear, oh dear. One's usually enough for her. There are times when she'll go days without any at all. But just occasionally ...

*Lili enters. Horrified and fascinated, they all watch her. She goes to the column and takes off the crown.*

*Lili surveys them. This is 'the reality show moment'. Who will it be? She approaches Two, then Three, then Four, then Five, then Six. Lili stops, turns back and then places the crown on Five's head. The relief among the others is palpable. Three and Four embrace each other.*

Lili There we are. I'll be back for you very shortly.

*Lili exits.*

Five She'll be back for me? Does that mean ... ?

Two Oh dear.

Six (*not unkindly*) Yes, 'Five'. You've been chosen.

Five (*horrific realisation overpowers him*) I've been ... ? Me? My God! I've been chosen. I can't have been. No!

Two I'm afraid so.

Five (*extreme panic*) Why me? It can't be me. It isn't right. I've only just arrived.

Six (comforting) Steady, 'Five'. Steady. (putting an arm round his shoulder) There's really nothing to worry about. Nothing. We were kidding you. Our little joke. We do it to frighten newcomers. Listen. You'll be fine. You'll enjoy it, in fact. You'll have a wonderful time with her. You will. Yes, you will. You'll love her. And she'll love you. And in an hour or so you'll be back here bragging about how wonderful it all was and we'll be green with envy, won't we, boys? Green with envy.

Two (unconvincing) That's right, 'Six'. Green with envy. That's what we'll be.

*The others nod and try to smile.*

*Lili re-enters.*

Lili Ready, 'Five'? Come with me.

Five (shaken but more or less recovered) Yes. Of course. Right. Bye, everyone. I'll see you later then?

Six Yes. Off you go. Enjoy yourself. You can tell us all about it later.

*Lili exits. Five follows her. Two and Six watch him go.*

*Silence.*

Two That was kind of you, 'Six'. I ... I simply didn't know what to say.

Six It's hard when a newcomer's chosen right away. They haven't had time to adjust. But perhaps they're the lucky ones. (beat) Anyway. No need to frighten him more than necessary. Let 'Five' have a moment or two to enjoy himself before – well – before it's all over.

*The same sound is heard again off stage.*

*Two and Six listen. Three and Four cover their ears.*

*The sound begins as a slow pulse or heartbeat, accelerates to a crescendo of frenzied beating, and then – at the climax – there is a sudden, sickening snap or crack.*

*After which, there is silence.*

*Lights down.*

THE END