

**Otso's Friend**

**By:  
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## **Otso's Friend**

### **Cast of Characters:**

#### **Guy (He/Him):**

Somewhere in his 20's. He loves the woods. He wants to be an artist. Not very many defining features or facts about him. Pretty neutral, pretty subpar.

#### **Otso (Any Pronouns):**

A bear. A very smart bear. A bear that has seen life. A bear with a calming voice. A bear that has seen the world and embodies all bear spirits.

### **Setting**

Somewhere in the woods. It's a pretty vague location. Maybe suggests the idea of somewhere that could be anywhere. Maybe it suggests the idea of somewhere supernatural.

### **Notes**

When it comes to the staging of the piece I'd like to see how creative one can get with stage blocks. How tall can they be staked to become a tree? How wide can they be placed to show a log or a cave? Can you make a cave out of three stage blocks? The more imaginative and abstract you are the better. I have a preference for our puppeteer to be hidden but if you want them visible, or need them visible to make it work, I get that. If the puppeteer is visible though, make a strong choice with their costuming. We're about to watch a man talk to a bear puppet, suspension of disbelief is already pretty high, why not reach for the moon.

GUY enters the stage carrying an easel and backpack. He's dressed for a hike. He looks around the forest and takes in the peacefulness. He finds a stump that's worthy of sitting and takes his claim. He sets his easel up and gets out his canvas and starts to paint something. Maybe he's painting the scenery. Maybe he's painting something more abstract like an emotion or a thought. Maybe it's a portrait of a loved one. No matter what he's actually painting it's deeply important to him. This goes on for a couple of beats. We can hear the brushstrokes. Basically hear his thoughts through his painting. As he paints OTSO appears from behind a tree, or rock, or cave, or bush, or thin air. OTSO is a bear puppet. Maybe they look like Fozzy Bear... maybe a Greatful Dead Bear, maybe just a plain Black Bear. Nonetheless... OTSO is a bear puppet. Neither acknowledge each other until:

GUY  
(continues painting, casual)

Hey

OTSO  
(also casual)

Hey

*Beat*

It's been a minute...

GUY

Yeah... I haven't felt like painting

OTSO

Why?

GUY

I don't know

OTSO

Well, if you don't know, then I don't know... and if I don't know then I can't help you.

GUY

Sometimes I don't need your help/

OTSO

I beg to differ

GUY

/and maybe nothing's wrong.

*Beat*

OTSO

How's the painting going?

GUY

It's not.

OTSO

Let me see.

*GUY gets up and takes his painting over to OTSO so he can look at it.  
OTSO really takes it in before passing judgment.*

You're right... that's bad.

GUY

Thanks for the support.

*GUY takes his painting back to the easel and sets it there. He walks back over to OTSO and sits with him. The conversation continues through this action.*

I have a question.

OTSO

Okay.

GUY

Do you like hibernating?

OTSO

Do you like sleeping?

GUY

Yeah

OTSO

Same thing

GUY

But not really... I mean... you hibernate for like months and never see anyone, never talk to anyone, do anything, eat anything... nothing.

OTSO

What's your point?

GUY

Doesn't that drive you insane? The fact that you don't know what's happening around you for months? The whole forest could be on fire and you wouldn't know until it was at your feet.

OTSO

Kind of.

*Beat*

I *do* get up and move around... it's like when you wake up in the middle of the night because your back is in pain after you worked all day but couldn't fall asleep in the right position. You're lucid enough to know that your house is on fire but not enough to know that your sink is leaking.

GUY

I guess but that's still like nothing. Me waking up to flip from my left side to my right side doesn't mean I'm having a conversation with my friend. It doesn't mean I can eat my favorite

meal or listen to my favorite song. It just means that I can relieve my body from some temporary pain... I just feel like hibernating wouldn't be fun.

OTSO

It's not fun... I do it to survive. I do it so my children will have a safe place to sleep and grow. I do it because I have to, because it's in my nature to do it. Not because I want to.

GUY

So you really don't have a choice whether you like it or not...

OTSO

Exactly... just like you don't have a choice if you like sleeping. You have to sleep or you won't function as a person.

*Beat*

Have you been sleeping?

GUY

(he takes a minute to respond)

No. Not really.

*Beat*

It's never more than like a couple of hours here and there. The most I've slept at one time within the last week is like three hours.

OTSO

You have to be tired.

GUY

I am...

*beat*

I'm tired of a lot of things.

OTSO

Like what?

GUY

Like the idea of having to work everyday until you can finally retire and then pray to some magical idol that you're not sick enough to enjoy your retirement. Or the fact that my body is dying just a little bit everyday and I can feel the decay... I can feel the ache and pain of my body. I can feel my bones getting weaker everyday... It feels like my organs cry for help more and more each day. My stomach bangs on the muscles around it hoping someone will hear it. It feels like my vision blurs more and more each day but it does it at a rate that I can't notice but I know it's happening if that makes any sense?

*beat*

I want to be able to hibernate but all I can do is sit and think about hibernating instead of actually hibernating.

OTSO

Hibernating is for bears

*Beat*

You are not a bear.

GUY

But what if I was? Like maybe in another universe I'm a bear and you're a human.

OTSO

If that was true I can promise you I wouldn't waste my days talking to a bear, I'd be out living life. I'd be planning a skydiving trip. I'd find the love of my life and build a house together. I'd be traveling the world right now. Or maybe I'd get my PhD and be a world renowned surgeon. Maybe I'd be saving lives everyday instead of thinking about the next fish I'm going to eat.

*Beat*

But I know for a fact, I wouldn't waste my time in the woods with a bear.

GUY

That sounds like a fun life... a world renowned surgeon who builds houses and skydives in Paris on the weekend... really realistic.

OTSO

The man making shitty art in the middle of woods has no room to talk about my imaginary life.

GUY

Maybe I don't... but maybe I do...

OTSO

You don't...

*Beat*

GUY

So, I did something weird the other day

OTSO

What was it?

GUY

You'll make fun of me

OTSO

If what you did is as bad as your art then yes... yes I will

GUYS

Okay... then nevermind

OTSO

I'm just kidding

I know...

GUY

So tell me

OTSO

Promise you won't make fun of me?

GUY

Promise

OTSO

*Beat*

GUY

So, I accidentally ripped off my toenail the other day.

OTSO

What?

GUY

Yeah... I was clipping my toes and something snagged on the clippers and when I went to pull it away the whole toenail came with it.

OTSO

You would've had to pull pretty hard to rip your whole toenail off

GUY

I guess so... I really didn't even realize it was gone until it was and then I didn't really know what to do.

OTSO

I've just never heard of anyone accidentally ripping a toenail off before.

GUY

I'm also your friend so... yeah... you haven't heard of it before because I never told you that could happen before.

OTSO

I'm just thinking of my nails, and I couldn't *accidentally* rip one off and if I did it would hurt and I wouldn't be able to function. Hell... I might even die.

GUY

Well obviously I didn't *die*... don't be dramatic. Human toenails grow back in like a week.

OTSO

Oh... so you know how fast toenails grow back but you've never ripped one off before

GUY

I mean... I've like stubbed my toe really bad before and the nail just kind of fell off. And then it grew back in like a week. I wouldn't think that it's any different this time.

OTSO

How many toenails have you lost?

GUY

I don't know... maybe like two a year or something like that.

OTSO

That feels oddly high and consistent for it to be an accident each time.

GUY

What do you mean?

OTSO

Do you purposely pull your toenails off?

GUY

(takes a minute to respond)

Maybe.

OTSO

Oh... sometimes I pull my fur out.

GUY

Really?

OTSO

No

*Beat*

I made it up to make you feel better.

GUY

Oh... well I don't *feel bad* about pulling my toenails off anyways

OTSO

Why?

GUY

Because it's not like I cut myself or think of killing myself. I just pull my toenails off every now and then so I don't take a razor blade to my thigh.

OTSO

But you think of it?

GUY

Think of what?



Cutting yourself. OTSO

Yeah. GUY

I'm sorry. OTSO

Me too. GUY

*They sit with this for a minute... then GUY gets up from wherever he is and moves over to his easel if he's not already there and starts to pack everything away.*

What are you doing? OTSO

I'm leaving GUY

Why? OTSO

I'm tired. GUY

So? It's not like you're going to go sleep anyways. OTSO

Maybe I will tonight... Anyways it's getting dark and I don't wanna be out here when it gets cold. GUY

You could always just stay with me OTSO

Where? In your *cave*? GUY

It's actually very- OTSO

I can't sleep in a cave GUY

Like I was saying- OTSO

GUY  
(kind of upset)

Maybe I will get some sleep tonight. Maybe I will be able to shut out all the fucking thoughts in my head and actually get some sleep tonight. Maybe I'll get so much sleep, I won't wake up for eight fucking months.

OTSO

You could.

GUY

I *could* what?

OTSO

Not wake up for eight fucking months.

GUY

Are you suggesting I hibernate?

*Beat*

I can't hibernate! I'm not a fucking bear!

OTSO

I can teach you. It's really easy. You just eat a lot of food, make a little bed, then go to sleep. Your body will do the rest... I promise.

GUY

You promise?

OTSO

Yes

*beat*

I promise.

GUY

And I won't have to think about the world for eight months?

OTSO

Yes.

GUY

But what happens after those eight months are up?

OTSO

You face the world reborn and try again.

GUY

But what if I fail again. What if I rip off another fucking toenail so I won't jump off a bridge.

OTSO

Then we hibernate again.

GUY

Really?

OTSO

I promise

GUY

It's that simple?

OTSO

If you let it be... if you let me help you... it can be that simple.

*GUY turns away from OTSO*

GUY

But what if I can't let you help me? What if I can't accept help from a literal fucking bear?! That would make me insane. And I'm not crazy... I just hate my life. I hate it so much there's a constant black hole in my stomach and I don't know what to do about it. So... yeah... maybe I rip a fucking toenail off everynow and then and think of what it would be like to hibernate. And maybe when I'm in deep thought of what it would be like to hibernate I don't realize that it's 2 in the fucking morning and I have to be at work by 8am so I take sleeping pills that only work for three hours. And then I wake up to the sound of the worst alarm in the world but if I change it I won't wake up and I *have* to wake up because I *have* to earn money. And in this never ending quest for money I think about the fact that I'll probably get cancer and die before I can actually retire because OF COURSE I think about that on top of the other million things I think about. So... I don't know if I can hibernate because I'm afraid that if I do I'll never wake up and I *have to wake up*.

*Beat*

Otso?

*GUY turns around OTSO is nowhere to be found. All that is left on stage is the stump and his easel and other painting supplies. He's stunned not to see OTSO. Unfortunately this isn't the first time it's happened.*

But you promised this time...

*Beat. Starting to feel the weight of the words he just said.*

Please come back...

*GUY waits to see if OTSO will come back. He wants him to come back more than anything else in the world right now.*

I just want to hibernate.

*GUY realizes OTSO isn't coming back. He picks up his easel and things and leaves. Once he leaves OTSO pokes his head out from wherever he was hiding.*

OTSO

Next time...

*Beat*

I promise.

*End.*