

$$2 + 2 = 5$$

by:
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Players:

HERSLIP, a young woman wearing a Victorian style gown

FORMOST, an unusually short man wearing a moustache and a long sleeved shirt that is at least four sizes too big

TWO MEN, or women, if you like, wearing white

The play takes place in an ambiguous place.

AT RISE: There is a settee or bench up stage center.

Formost stands at center stage, fiddling with his moustache.

Herslip rushes in from stage right. She pauses to look at her naked wrist.

HERSLIP

There's just enough time. Just enough.

She stops abruptly at center stage.

Formost stands in her way.

Get out of my way.

FORMOST

Out of your way?

HERSLIP

Yes, you're in my way.

FORMOST

What's the rush, dearest miss?

HERSLIP

There's no rush, unless you delay me further. Now, move.

FORMOST

I wonder. Could I interest you in a cup of coffee?

HERSLIP

A cup of coffee?

FORMOST

Yes. A cup of coffee.

HERSLIP

No. Step aside.

FORMOST

You don't like coffee?

HERSLIP

[Peering around him] You don't have any coffee.

FORMOST

It's not a good idea to rush a cup of coffee.

HERSLIP

It's not a good idea to pretend to have coffee.

FORMOST

You could burn your lips or your tongue—

HERSLIP

Step aside.

FORMOST

Or both...

HERSLIP

Fine. If I must. Give me a cup, then let me pass.

FORMOST

[Pouring two cups of imaginary coffee] Certainly. And I have one question.

HERSLIP

[*Taking the imaginary cup*] It's not enough to drink your coffee?

Formost shrugs.

Troll.

FORMOST

Droll.

HERSLIP

Here [*handing back the imaginary cup*]. I've finished. Now, let me pass.

FORMOST

First, my question.

HERSLIP

Then I may pass?

FORMOST

I expect you'll have the right answer.

HERSLIP

But, that wasn't our agreement.

FORMOST

Not our agreement?

HERSLIP

No. You said nothing about having the right answer. In fact. To be accurate. I agreed to answer only one question, which I just have. So, let me pass.

FORMOST

But, my dearest miss, what's your hurry?

HERSLIP

Is that the question?

FORMOST

It's *a* question.

HERSLIP

O! Just ask your question. [*Cautioning*] And not a single more.

FORMOST

You're not very obliging.

HERSLIP

I could say the same about you. The question.

FORMOST

Okay... What. [*Elaborately*] What is the meaning of life?

HERSLIP

I have to get *that* right?

FORMOST

You'll have the right answer.

HERSLIP

[*Flustered*] But, life has many meanings.

FORMOST

[*Stepping aside with a complicated bow*] Yes. Yes, indeed it does.

HERSLIP

Finally.

She moves past Formost, then hesitates.

Say?

FORMOST

What?

HERSLIP

Was there a point to your question? Have I helped you in some way?

FORMOST

Yes.

Herslip eyes her naked wrist again. She adds time in her head.

HERSLIP

Okay. How?

FORMOST

How, what?

HERSLIP

How did my answer help you?

FORMOST

It didn't.

HERSLIP

But, you just said it did.

FORMOST

No. I said that you helped me. Your answer certainly did not.

HERSLIP

Then, what was the point of your question?

FORMOST

What was the point of your answer?

HERSLIP

To get past you. Really, I had no other reason.

FORMOST

So, your answer had no reason?

HERSLIP

[*Mildly insulted*] Do you think I'm daft?

FORMOST

Daft?

HERSLIP

I said I had no other reason to give you an answer, not that my answer had no reason.

FORMOST

You're a most complicated woman.

HERSLIP

You're an odd, little man.

Pause.

Formost wanders into Herslip's path again.

FORMOST

My dearest miss, I think we've been sidetracked.

HERSLIP

My goodness. Look at the time!

FORMOST

[*Fussing with his long, long sleeves*] I can't.

HERSLIP

Let me pass.

FORMOST

What's the rush, dearest miss?

HERSLIP

You're kidding...

FORMOST

Could I interest you in a cup of coffee?

HERSLIP

Step aside.

FORMOST

You don't like coffee?

HERSLIP

No. No, no, no. We're not doing this again.

FORMOST

[*Pouring two cups*] What again?

HERSLIP

You really are—

FORMOST

Sugar?

HERSLIP

No. Black.

O! Get out of my way.

FORMOST

Certainly.

Formost doesn't move.

HERSLIP

Well?

FORMOST

I have a question for you.

HERSLIP

[*Ugh!*] Life has many meanings.

FORMOST

Ah, indeed it does...

Holding forward a cup.

Won't you have some?

HERSLIP

No. I answered your question. Now, let me pass.

FORMOST

I don't recall asking a question.

HERSLIP

Then, for heaven's sake, ask!

FORMOST

Then you'll let me pass?

HERSLIP

Yes. What? Let *you* pass?

FORMOST

Yes. You've been blocking my way for some time, and I must say, it's very irritating.

HERSLIP

I've been blocking your way?

FORMOST

Yes. [*Aside*] I've tried my best to be hospitable...

HERSLIP

O!

Stepping aside.

Pass! Pass!

Formost moves past Herslip, then hesitates.

FORMOST
Say?

HERSLIP
What?!

FORMOST
Do you think I'm knockers?

HERSLIP
That's a polite term for what I think you are.

FORMOST
I think you're knockers too.

HERSLIP
Fine.

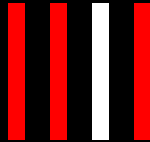
FORMOST
Fine.

Herslip and Formost stride toward stage right and left.

They are met by two men, or women, wearing white.

FORMOST'S MAN
Where do you think you're going?

HERSLIP'S MAN
And you, dearest miss, in a hurry?



**FIND OUT HOW
THIS PLAY ENDS.**

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