

### *Summary and Analysis of Act I*

#### *(Estragon and Vladimir)*

#### **Summary:**

In a lonely place, Estragon struggles with his boot while sitting under a tree with no leaves. His friend Vladimir shows up and they greet each other. Estragon tells Vladimir that he got beat up while he was sleeping, which seems to happen often. Vladimir shares that he's also not feeling well, with pain in his groin and trouble peeing.

Ignoring Estragon's request for help with his boot, Vladimir rummages through his hat, trying to remember a saying about "hope deferred." After a while, Estragon finally gets his boot off, but they both search it and find nothing. Vladimir suggests they should say sorry for something, but they don't know what. They talk about a story in the Bible where one of the criminals crucified with Jesus was saved, but it's only mentioned in one part of the Bible, making them wonder why they believe it.

They're waiting for someone named Godot, but they're not sure if they're in the right place or if it's the right time. They talk about the tree, what day it is, and if they were here yesterday. Estragon falls asleep, and when Vladimir wakes him up because he's lonely, he doesn't want to hear about Estragon's bad dream or tell a story. This makes Estragon upset, but they make up quickly.

To pass the time, they talk about hanging themselves, thinking it might give them a thrill. But they worry about the branch breaking and leaving one of them alive. So, they decide to ask Godot about it. Vladimir says they should bow down to Godot because they've given up their rights. Estragon gets hungry and eats a carrot, but it doesn't satisfy him for long. Vladimir says he's getting used to their miserable situation. Estragon wonders if they're stuck with Godot, and Vladimir says yes, for now, but there's nothing they can do about it.

#### **Analysis:**

In the play, "Nothing to be done" are the first words spoken by Estragon, and they sum up what the play is all about: nothing important ever really happens, and nobody ever really does anything meaningful. At first, Estragon seems to be talking about his boot, but when Vladimir responds, it becomes

clear that they're talking about life in general. This phrase shows a big idea of the play—life doesn't seem to have a point. Despite this, the two characters keep hoping they'll find something worth it if they keep trying or waiting. But their attempts, like searching for their hat and boot, show that trying to find meaning in life is pointless.

The characters, Vladimir and Estragon, are deliberately left undefined. They're described as shabby and not well-respected, but they're never called tramps. Most other details about them are left for the director and audience to imagine. Both characters are meant to represent everyone and also different parts of everyone. Estragon focuses more on basic bodily needs like pain and hunger, while Vladimir is more interested in big ideas and thoughts. This difference is shown through their concerns about their boots and hats.

Vladimir's statement “blaming on his boots the faults of his feet” sounds like a profound truth, but becomes absurd on closer examination. This is often interpreted as pointing out the tendency of humans to blame their problems on external sources (the boot) rather than looking to themselves (one's own foot) for the root of the problem. It also is an example of situational irony that Vladimir and Estragon are never able to take it upon themselves to escape the excruciating waiting by just leaving instead of waiting for an external figure, Godot, to appear and save them.

The setting is also left vague. Since the characters represent ordinary people, the setting could be anywhere. There are a few hints that it might be in France in the past, but it's not clear. The leafless tree adds to the feeling of emptiness, symbolizing the lack of meaning in life. The characters talk about suicide, which is both funny and unsettling. They seem to think about it as a way to escape their endless waiting, but they decide against it because they don't want to be alone. It's later revealed they couldn't even do it if they wanted to.

Nothing in the play is certain. Estragon can't remember much of the past, showing how people often forget things that don't benefit them. Vladimir sometimes seems sure of things, but when questioned, he isn't so sure either. Even the playwright, Beckett, didn't have a definite idea about what the play meant. Suffering in the play is often ignored. Estragon's boot hurts him, but Vladimir doesn't seem to care. They accept beatings as just another part of life. There are moments of connection between the characters, but they quickly push each other away.

Religion is mentioned, but it's not clear what role it plays. Vladimir talks about a story from the Bible but questions its reliability. Estragon makes this statement “People are bloody ignorant apes” in response to Vladimir's complaint about the story of the two thieves in the Bible. As an audience, we might have reached three different concepts through these statements as Religions, Darwinism and the blood shed of the second World War. It is also interesting to note that this statement, which is based on the theory

of evolution, occurs during a discussion of a Bible story. It is only in evolutionary science that humans are believed to have descended from apes. The characters also talk about someone named Godot, who some think is like a god or ruler. But Beckett, the playwright, said he didn't know who Godot was or if he even existed. Deep in thought, Vladimir comes up with the idea of repenting of something, Estragon suggests they repent having being born. In Christianity, repentance is usually understood to involve feelings of deep regret for past wrongs, so Estragon is suggesting their very existence is a regrettable mistake. Another interpretation suggests itself in the idea of Estragon repenting of something that cannot possibly be his own fault—his birth. This exposes the idea of repentance as absurd.