

# Rooftop

A short play by Joey Sellers

Rooftop. Pay phone off to the left with a light above it. There is a man on the phone. Another figure is off to the right in the dark. Words and actions alternate between them with each set of words and actions.

Man on Phone

Yes....yes....yes.....Okay.....All I can tell you is there are stars in the sky.....Yes....That's all I know.....Okay.

(hangs up...thinks for a second)

Man on Phone

(emerging from the darkness)

Are we set?

Man on Phone

I think.

Man on Phone

You can't tell.

Man on Phone

They're always vague.

Man on Phone

What about the information?

Man on Phone

They said it was vague.

Man on Phone

What do they know? They had to be told about it in the first place. Vague is better than nothing.

Man on Phone

Precisely.

Man on Phone

Why are we working for these fools anyway? We could teach a child math with more satisfaction.

Man on Phone

You're doing this for satisfaction?

Man on Phone

What do you mean?

You get satisfaction from this?	Man on Phone
Uh...no...did I say I did?	Man on Phone
You implied that it could happen.	Man on Phone
Oh...I don't really think so. It just came to mind, you know.	Man on Phone
I know.	Man on Phone
So the next step?	Man on Phone
What about it?	Man on Phone
What is it?	Man on Phone
I don't know.	Man on Phone
What did they say?	Man on Phone
They didn't say anything.	Man on Phone
Yes, they didn't say anything. (he crosses further over to the left)	Man on Phone
You have an idea.	Man on Phone
Vaguely. Inspiration in some manner. Their lack of instruction. ... Perhaps I feel free.	Man on Phone
We are not free.	Man on Phone

Man on Phone  
Of course not. But this moment in time... I feel more in control than usual.

Man on Phone  
You don't say.

Man on Phone  
I just did.

Man on Phone  
Well we've given them the stars. I'm sure they expect something to follow.

Man on Phone  
How would they know?

Man on Phone  
It's just how this sort of thing works.

Man on Phone  
Usually.

Man on Phone  
Usually.

Man on Phone  
But now we are on our own.

Man on Phone  
Not really.

Man on Phone  
Why?

Man on Phone  
We just aren't.

Man on Phone  
So?

Man on Phone  
So.

Man on Phone  
We have given them the stars...

Man on Phone  
Yes...

And we are to continue...	Man on Phone
Yes...	Man on Phone
But the path of continuance has been left...vague...	Man on Phone
Vague...yes...	Man on Phone
(begins to pace)	Man on Phone
(begins to follow his pace) You are thinking we could give them something else.	Man on Phone
Should.	Man on Phone
That we have given them the stars...	Man on Phone
Yes...	Man on Phone
And now they are expecting something...	Man on Phone
Yes...	Man on Phone
But they haven't set out specific instructions to follow...	Man on Phone
Follow. (he stops pacing)	Man on Phone
(also stopping) So though they expect more...	Man on Phone

Give it to me... Man on Phone

We could somehow give them less? Man on Phone

You forgot something. Man on Phone

Yes... Man on Phone

We could give them less and make them think more of it! Man on Phone

I like that. Man on Phone

Me too. Man on Phone

This expectation thing. Expecting without thought. Man on Phone

Expecting just to expect. Man on Phone

Expecting just because. Man on Phone

They're in a rut! Man on Phone

We can't tell them that. Man on Phone

You can't tell anyone anything. Man on Phone

Especially straight out like that. Man on Phone

Yes, you have to say it a certain way. Man on Phone

Almost as if you weren't saying anything at all. Man on Phone

Man on Phone  
It's the only way the ears will hear it.

Man on Phone  
You mean the mind.

Man on Phone  
Of course. What are the ears going to do about it?!

Man on Phone  
(pausing for a moment...then a great revelation...snaps his fingers)

Man on Phone  
Yes?

Man on Phone  
Call them.

Man on Phone  
Now?

Man on Phone  
Quick.

Man on Phone  
Already?

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
(moves to the phone, looks back, returns eyes to the phone and dials, looks back, and then slowly puts the receiver to his ear.)  
It's me....Yes...it's me...of course...Yes....Yes....there is more....  
(looks over to the other with needy eyes)

Man on Phone  
(walks over with great energy and confidence)  
We have the shoes on our feet.

Man on Phone  
(takes it in and returns a big smile)  
We have the shoes on our feet. ....Yes....Yes....Yes....that's it.....Okay....yes....thank you....uh.....not too long...okay.  
(hangs up phone)

Man on Phone  
(turns and walks halfway across the roof before facing the other again.)

Man on Phone  
They loved it.

Man on Phone  
(confident gesture)  
Yes! I knew it..... So what did they say?

Man on Phone  
Nothing much.

Man on Phone  
Nothing much.

Man on Phone  
Nothing new.

Man on Phone  
Nothing new.

Man on Phone  
....They said it was good work.

Man on Phone  
(questioning the air for a moment)  
I think this is working. Would you say that was a success?

Man on Phone  
I believe it was.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
Fine.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
(aside to other)  
You did great on the phone by the way.

(aside back) Thanks.	Man on Phone
(begins to sit down)	Man on Phone
What are you doing?	Man on Phone
Taking a break.	Man on Phone
We don't have time.	Man on Phone
What do you mean?	Man on Phone
They were very excited.	Man on Phone
As they should be.	Man on Phone
And they want more.	Man on Phone
(getting back up) More?	Man on Phone
Another.	Man on Phone
They're expecting it?	Man on Phone
This is becoming a cycle. I feel it.	Man on Phone
Feel it.	Man on Phone
There is a beginning and an end and they tie together.	Man on Phone



Feed one another.	Man on Phone
Feed is good. Yes.	Man on Phone
What is it that I'm looking for?	Man on Phone
Some condition.	Man on Phone
A condition which is developing.	Man on Phone
Slowly. It's almost imperceptible.	Man on Phone
But it's there.	Man on Phone
I feel it.	Man on Phone
A name.	Man on Phone
Give it a name.	Man on Phone
They need.	Man on Phone
Yes.	Man on Phone
They feed.	Man on Phone
Certainly.	Man on Phone
They...are depending on us.	Man on Phone

Man on Phone  
They are becoming dependent on us.

Man on Phone  
That's it.

(Pause.)

Man on Phone  
Dependents.

Man on Phone  
(concerned)  
There's some responsibility in that.

Man on Phone  
In what?

Man on Phone  
In having dependents.

Man on Phone  
We have to take care of them.

Man on Phone  
We aren't taking care of them though.

Man on Phone  
This isn't a real relationship.

Man on Phone  
We have taken on this responsibility in order to unburden ourselves from further obligation.

Man on Phone  
To put it simply, yes.

Man on Phone  
But this is a temporary arrangement.

Man on Phone  
In the end, we will neither have responsibility nor obligation.

Man on Phone  
We are letting the two cancel each other out.

Man on Phone  
Hold on, I'm getting lost here. They have expectations.

Man on Phone  
Expectation creates obligation.

Man on Phone  
Then we slowly replace expectation with need.

Man on Phone  
Their need is their problem, not ours.

Man on Phone  
And thus we take on a feigned responsibility in the meantime to facilitate this.

Man on Phone  
I wouldn't say feigned, it's real enough.

(short pause as they are taken slightly aback)

Man on Phone  
...Real enough.

Man on Phone  
There's a lot right there.

Man on Phone  
(saying it just to say it out loud, to the air)  
This situation is real enough.

(Pause.)

Man on Phone  
But it isn't too real.

Man on Phone  
That's important.

Man on Phone  
Very.

(Both look to the air.)

Man on Phone  
So we haven't got much time.

Man on Phone  
You mean?

We have to keep it going.

Man on Phone

Then are we obligated?

Man on Phone

No, we are fulfilling our responsibilities.

Man on Phone

Ours is a free choice.

Man on Phone

That's going too far.

Man on Phone

We are making decisions from a range of choices.

Man on Phone

I like that.

Man on Phone

We are picking the apples from the barrel.

Man on Phone

I like that too.

Man on Phone

So what's next?

Man on Phone

Think.

Man on Phone

(Both separate slightly.)

(he gets it and stops)  
Call them.

Man on Phone

You have it.

Man on Phone

We have to hurry.

Man on Phone

Man on Phone

(moves to phone and dials)  
Me again....Yes....Yes.....  
(looks to the other)

Man on Phone

We have the clothes on our back.

Man on Phone

We have the clothes on our back. .... That's it....I think....yes....yes....okay....sure.....I don't know....it's just up here.....yes....yes....in the air.....not as far as the stars.....yes....they are in the sky.....okay.  
(hangs up.)

Man on Phone

What?

Man on Phone

What?

Man on Phone

That last part.

Man on Phone

What about it?

Man on Phone

What was with that last part?

Man on Phone

They were just wondering.

Man on Phone

Wondering.

Man on Phone

They were curious.

Man on Phone

You said something about the air.

Man on Phone

They wanted to know where it came from.

Man on Phone

They were questioning us.

Well I wouldn't put it that way. Man on Phone

It was in the form of a question? Man on Phone

Well yes. Man on Phone

Do they doubt us? Man on Phone

They were curious. Man on Phone

So you fear they might be questioning us. Man on Phone

Interrogating. Man on Phone

But they have nothing to fear. Man on Phone

There must be something driving it. Man on Phone

But what? Man on Phone

They have motive. Man on Phone

It has to be simple though. They don't know enough to be driving at anything very specific. Man on Phone

Yes, we have been feeding them the vaguest of vague. Man on Phone

I thought we were feeding their dependency. Man on Phone

Yes, from a jar of vague. Man on Phone

Certainly. Man on Phone

Man on Phone  
So they can't know much and can't expect much.  
(stops suddenly and looks over surprised)  
...Did I just say that?

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
They have no idea.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
(repeating it to understand)  
They can't be expecting much.

Man on Phone  
How did we change that?

Man on Phone  
We gave them less.

Man on Phone  
Less and they thought more.

Man on Phone  
This is better than I expected.

Man on Phone  
Don't get started.

Man on Phone  
No seriously, I didn't think we would get very far.

Man on Phone  
Well we must keep up.

Man on Phone  
They're waiting.

Man on Phone  
Did they say that?

No. Man on Phone

We don't have much time. Man on Phone

Why is it always like that? Man on Phone

I don't have time to explain. Man on Phone

(both look to the air)

Oh. Man on Phone

(a beat and he goes to the phone and dials)  
Man on Phone  
Yes... me again...no, this is me...yes....yes...why do you ask....that's fine....yes....yes....

It's the thought that counts. Man on Phone

It's the thought that counts.....yes...definitely....no, not long....yes...yes...fine....not that chilly....no....it's alright up here....okay....yes....yes....  
(hangs up)

The weather? Man on Phone

They asked about it. Man on Phone

They didn't want to talk about the weather though. Man on Phone

They are trying to find out what is going on up here. Man on Phone

Did they hear what we said? Man on Phone

I'm not sure they understand. Man on Phone



We've given them a lot. Man on Phone

You think too much? Man on Phone

Maybe. There is only so much new information one can take in at once. Man on Phone

You think there is only one of them? Man on Phone

No. Man on Phone

You think this information is new? Man on Phone

No. Man on Phone

This is too easy. Man on Phone

You fear them. Man on Phone

No. Man on Phone

You want to confess. Man on Phone

Not at all. Man on Phone

I do get the feeling that things are different between us now. Man on Phone

In what way? Man on Phone

I don't think they need us. Man on Phone

Do they know that? Man on Phone

It isn't to know.	Man on Phone
Are they still expecting more?	Man on Phone
Not more.	Man on Phone
Expecting less?	Man on Phone
It isn't about expectations anymore.	Man on Phone
We have given them information.	Man on Phone
They wanted to know.	Man on Phone
They already knew it.	Man on Phone
Then what have we given?	Man on Phone
Order.	Man on Phone
Order.	Man on Phone
Do we still work for them?	Man on Phone
They don't pay.	Man on Phone
But are we employed?	Man on Phone
For the moment.	Man on Phone

I don't know what to say. Man on Phone

Everything is kind of lost. Man on Phone

I want to call them though I don't know why. Man on Phone

They have people don't they? Man on Phone

A few. Man on Phone

I've heard other figures. Man on Phone

People exaggerate.  
(looking to the sky)  
The world is far more simple than you would ever believe. Man on Phone

I'd believe that. Man on Phone

Do you like the sky? Man on Phone

I like the stars. Man on Phone

When I travel, I always wish the night sky were tinted differently there. Man on Phone

How do you tint darkness? Man on Phone

I have no clue. Man on Phone

It's just dark. Man on Phone

Yes, it's all the same. At night, I always feel at home even if I'm away. Man on Phone

Man on Phone  
There are no mountains here.

Man on Phone  
If there were, I couldn't see them anyway.

Man on Phone  
Well it's dark.

Man on Phone  
Sure.

Man on Phone  
You get used to it.

Man on Phone  
What?

Man on Phone  
The darkness.

Man on Phone  
The eyes.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
So if there were mountains, we could see them.

Man on Phone  
But there are no mountains here.

Man on Phone  
I know.

(both look around for a moment at sky, all around)

Man on Phone  
I'm getting tired.

Man on Phone  
Yes.

Man on Phone  
With just the sky to look at, there isn't much to say.

Or do.	Man on Phone
Or look at.	Man on Phone
It's late.	Man on Phone
We're supposed to call them.	Man on Phone
Supposed to.	Man on Phone
That's different isn't it.	Man on Phone
Much.	Man on Phone
Obligation?	Man on Phone
No.	Man on Phone
Supposed to.	Man on Phone
I wanted to call a minute ago.	Man on Phone
And now?	Man on Phone
I don't really care.	Man on Phone
How do you think they feel?	Man on Phone
I don't really care.	Man on Phone
There was a pattern.	Man on Phone

Barely. Man on Phone

But they knew it. Man on Phone

They expected it. Man on Phone

Yes. Man on Phone

We were supposed to call. Man on Phone

What do you think they will do? Man on Phone

I couldn't say. Man on Phone

I guess not. Man on Phone

(The phone begins to ring. They look at each other.)

Did you know that was going to happen? Man on Phone

How could I? Man on Phone

Other than guessing, there was no way for you to know. Man on Phone

You had a vague feeling about it. Man on Phone

(nonchalantly walking to the phone)  
I can't even say vague. I think I knew exactly what would happen somewhere way off in my head. It was all there, but I was still surprised when it happened.  
(picks up phone)  
Hello...yes...it's me...right...I don't know.... what is there to say?...what do you want me to say?...yes....yes...yes...but still....the cards are on the table....yes...yes....okay.  
(hangs up)

The cards are on the table.	Man on Phone
Yes.	Man on Phone
You like that.	Man on Phone
Very much.	Man on Phone
Did you know that before?	Man on Phone
No clue.	Man on Phone
Where did it come from?	Man on Phone
Nowhere.	Man on Phone
You mean it?	Man on Phone
Yes. It wasn't there and suddenly it was. I said it before I knew it.	Man on Phone
That must feel nice.	Man on Phone
Nice.	Man on Phone
I like that word.	Man on Phone
Nice?	Man on Phone
Yes.	Man on Phone

It's nice but it's had its day.	Man on Phone
No, no, people are just in a bad mood.	Man on Phone
Nothing is nice about a bad mood.	Man on Phone
Exactly.	Man on Phone
I'm hungry.	Man on Phone
Yes.	Man on Phone
(They both look to the sky.)	
Bread and water.	Man on Phone
What?	Man on Phone
That's what they feed prisoners.	Man on Phone
No it isn't.	Man on Phone
No?	Man on Phone
They eat great.	Man on Phone
Great?	Man on Phone
Well, people exaggerate.	Man on Phone
Sure.	Man on Phone



I think bread and water is fine.	Man on Phone
Fills you up.	Man on Phone
Sure.	Man on Phone
You can't complain.	Man on Phone
No, I could.	Man on Phone
Complain?	Man on Phone
Yeah.	Man on Phone
Right now.	Man on Phone
Oh, it doesn't matter when.	Man on Phone
I guess not.	Man on Phone
(Pause.)	
I feel as if something has fallen between the cracks.	Man on Phone
Something.	Man on Phone
A lot of things.	Man on Phone
What else can we do?	Man on Phone
I'm sure there's plenty.	Man on Phone

Sure.

Man on Phone

(Pause.)

I think I'm going to go.

Man on Phone

(Short pause.)

It's late.

Man on Phone

(Pause and they begin to walk toward the stairway down.)

You have to get up in the morning?

Man on Phone

No.

Man on Phone

(They exit.)