Finis? Hardly… Essay, Research Paper

?There are no happy endings, because nothing ends.?

-Peter S. Beagle/ Rankin-Bass

The Last Unicorn

People tend to wish for their lives to play out perfectly, as in a movie or fairy tale. Sadly, this rarely happens, and sadder still is the fact that many of us trust that this fairy tale will come true that it is be the only thing that keeps some of us going. Godot is the end, and Vladimir and Estragon are waiting like so many of us for the end to come. He never comes because his coming would signify the end of the story (among other things), and there really is none.

Vladimir is the one of the pair who is actually waiting for Godot. He is waiting for Godot to bring the answers, to bring some sense or meaning to his life. Godot has the answers, and, in Act One, Vladimir says that Godot has their lives in his hands. Vladimir feels that he can do nothing until he has taken care of whatever business he and Estragon have with Godot. So he meets his friend, day after day, at the same spot, without fail until Godot finally comes. Vladimir is the kind of person who buys into blind faith, but he is smart enough to try to make some rational explanation for it. At first, he thinks that perhaps their meeting, which is to take place on Saturday, is not on that day. He questions weather it is Sunday or Thursday that day, or any other day. By the end of the play, he is questioning everything; weather Pozzo is telling the truth when he says he is blind, weather he is awake or asleep, and who Godot really is. He finds no answers, but he continues to think. Vladimir represents the person who can rationalize everything; he thinks, he believes he knows something, and if his knowledge fails him, he wonders if maybe all his thinking has been a complete waste. He can do nothing because he feels he does not understand enough to be able to do anything. That is why he resolves to go and does not move.

Estragon, on the other hand, does not bother with all of the thinking. He understands what he feels, and generally does not ask for anything else. He is only waiting for Godot because Vladimir is, and when Godot finally comes they can both get on with their existence. But he is tired of waiting, he does not sleep enough, he is hungry, and he was happy ?before? (presumably before they started waiting for Godot), so he complains and threatens to leave. He does not know weather Godot will ever come, nor does he care. Estragon represents the kind of person who is only interested in the sensual world. All of the thought processes that Vladimir goes through to rationalize why he is still waiting are wasted on Estragon. It would be a mistake to say that Estragon is completely dependent on Vladimir. He manages to survive on his own night after night being beaten by an unknown number of people without Vladimir even being there. He just likes the company (and Vladimir does too, for he says more than twice that he was lonely while Estragon was sleeping). To Estragon, the coming of Godot will mark the end of this part of their lives, and they will be able to start a new story somewhere else together.

Godot never comes. The end of the second act is exactly as the first; the pair resolve to leave and do not move. There is also a question of exactly how much time passed between the first and second act. Though Beckett says that it is the next day, many physical signs, such as leaves on the tree and Pozzo?s blindness, suggest that it has been longer than that. So the story never really ends. There is no finality, no closure, in the way either Estragon or Vladimir want. Estragon cannot get on with his life without this end, and Vladimir needs this end to validate all his waiting (symbolic of the life of the faithful). In my experience, actively seeking any sort of end leads to a great deal of disappointment and unforeseen complications. Endings do not happen the way we want them to, or when, and if we do not accept that our lives will be very frustrating.

-Veronica Guzzardi, AP Lit. 1999