

*timor mortis,
timor vitae*

draft number three

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The stage is pitch black. A spotlight turns on to reveal SOLLICITUS, standing downstage in completely white attire. Two narrow white sheets lower from the ceiling to the left and right of SOLLICITUS, which they are live projected onto both. SOLLICITUS begins to slowly examine themselves. They run their hands along the top and back of their head. They put their hands to the side and hold their breath. They exhale before pulling their pants down to have a thorough inspection of their genitals. They lift their pants back up and bring their hands to their chest to feel the heartbeat. Content, they move their hands to their back. Suddenly, SOLLICITUS pauses. The projection dissolves into a video of a prominent lump on skin. As their breath grows more rapid, they start to scream before the spotlight, projection, and music immediately cut, leaving the stage in quiet darkness once more.

White light slowly rises across the entire stage to reveal a glass enclosure in the shape of a cube sat on a revolving platform in the center of the stage. SOLLICITUS, now wearing a blank white mask, is sitting on a chair in the center of the cube. On the back wall of the cube is a large clock. Throughout the show, the clock will sporadically either run normal, completely stop, or run backwards. On the front wall is a door and just outside of the cube sits a pedestal with a rotary phone on it. SOLLICITUS timidly lifts their shirt to glance at their back, which causes a projection of a larger and redder lump to cast onto the sheets. Anxious, SOLLICITUS quickly drops their shirt, cutting the projections. As they calm themselves, they begin to speak in a neutral peaceful tone.

SOLLICITUS

I called my doctor. Every word seemed to get caught in my throat before he granted me a presence with him. In one week. The betrayal. I could be rotting away from the inside and he sees it fair to have me sit still and wait? Maybe there are pigs fatter and more selfish in hell whose skin will sear far worse than he will. But why must everyone be more worthy than I?

As SOLLICITUS rants, they grip onto their knees which gradually becomes tighter and more intense. Yet their voice remains neutral.

SOLLICITUS

Could it be? Has it finally come to claim me? Or are my organs savoring my own tainted blood, pumping into my kidneys like a balloon to pop as soon as the clock strikes midnight? I can sense it's evil. It's numbing. It's painful. It's growing. And now, it's me. I've been branded for death. Will it be all I remember when I'm taking my final rest? Thin and pale as my breathing slows until the last sound I hear is that of my own flatline.

SOLLICITUS' tension reaches a high before they sigh and breath out, releasing the grip on their knees.

SOLLICITUS

I agree to a week. And we do not speak another word. Seven days. One hundred and sixty eight hours. Ten thousand eighty minutes. And every one passing by me so much slower. They stop to see what becomes of me. I feel their presence for I cannot feel anything else. My body is numb. Is this a symptom of things to be?

SOLLICITUS reaches for their shirt again as they consider checking their back once more. The sounds of church bells faintly ring.

SOLLICITUS

The bells. Do they ring for me?

SOLLICITUS rips their hands away from the shirt.

SOLLICITUS

No. I must not heed their siren call. It's only me. The fear I place on myself. I cannot descend into a panic any deeper.

SOLLICITUS sits still in the chair. They gradually become more agitated as they peer over their shoulder and down to their back. They slowly lift their shirt as the faint image of the lump, now bigger and redder, is projected on the sheets. Suddenly, SOLLICITUS stands themselves up, placing their hands on their knees on the verge of vomiting, causing the projection to cut.

SOLLICITUS

How are people so easily to not concern themselves with their own mortality?
Our lives are loaned to us and the time comes when we must return our debt. Today?
Tomorrow? A week? I'll be gone and yet the world keeps spinning.

SOLLICITUS brings their attention to the phone outside the cube. They stare at it before slowly lifting off their mask to reveal their face is completely disheveled, thin and fraught with sadness. Suddenly, SOLLICITUS runs to the downstage wall of the cube and begins to slam their hands against it.

SOLLICITUS

You're killing me! Don't you understand?! You're killing me!

Suddenly, all the lights turn out and dark red lights fade up as the revolving platform begins to slowly spin the cube.

SOLLICITUS

I'm too late...it's come for me...

SOLLICITUS peers up and lets out a frightened gasp. The shadows of four hands stretch out from each direction and converge onto where SOLLICITUS is standing. SOLLICITUS begins to choke as the sound of an eerie siren is heard, starting faintly and growing louder with each ring. The shadows dissipate as SOLLICITUS grabs at their throat, trying to breathe. The projection turns on to show the lump, even bigger and redder, now pumping similar to a heartbeat. With each pump, the lump grows bigger and redder, culminating in an explosion of blood and pus. SOLLICITUS to scream out painfully, replaced with the sound of high pitched ringing. They fall to the ground, fainting, causing the red lights and projection to cut, the platform to stop moving, and the ringing to go silent, bringing everything to quiet darkness.

Several seconds of dark silence pass before a loud phone ring causes the entire stage to be lit up as normal and SOLLICITUS to immediately wake up in a panic. As the phone continues to ring, SOLLICITUS takes a moment to regain their composure. They stand themselves up, timidly walk to the door of the cube, and exit. They slowly walk themselves over to the phone on the pedestal and answer it.

SOLLICITUS

Yes? Speaking...Doctor Kushney?...Nothing?...Nothing at all?...

SOLLICITUS hangs up the phone and stands quietly still, unsure how to feel. An insurmountable amount of relief, but inner remorse of their fear too. They turn their back to the audience and lift their shirt to reveal nothing was ever there. They continue to stand there quietly before the lights slowly fade out to darkness.