

to fear death

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to fear life

(draft 1)

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The stage is pitch black. A spotlight turns on to reveal APOLLO, standing center stage with a tissue and wearing only a T-Shirt and a pair of boxer shorts. A narrow white sheet slowly lowers from the ceiling behind APOLLO as he is live projected onto the sheet. APOLLO begins to slowly and methodically examine himself. He starts by running his hands along the top and back of his head. Satisfied, he moves to his face, closely observing and stopping to feel any blemishes. He puts his hands away and holds his breath for twenty seconds. He exhales and brings the tissue to his nose, blowing into it. Content, he throws the tissue off to the side. He lifts his shirt and runs his hand along his torso and stomach. He feels his heartbeat for a few moments before letting his shirt fall and bringing his hands to his back. Suddenly, he sharply pauses and his breath becomes slow and shaky. He quickly turns his back to the audience to reveal a small yet noticeable lump. His breath grows more rapid, panicked from this anatomical discovery. He goes to let out a scream, but the spotlight and projection immediately cut, leaving the stage pitch black once more. After a few moments, light slowly rises across the entire stage revealing a bed on stage right, a fridge on stage left, and APOLLO still in center stage, now sitting on a stool and wearing pajama pants.

APOLLO

I call my family doctor immediately after and I feel like I can hardly get a word out. But I tell him what I found and he tells me to come in and have it looked at. In one week. I've never been a selfish person, but I found myself more important than anyone else in the world at this moment. Why can't I have it looked at now? Why do I have to wait? Why are other people more important than me? Can't he see I need to know this right now?

As APOLLO rants, the lights slowly begin to turn dark red.

APOLLO

I could be slowly rotting away from the inside. I need to know what I have to do before it's too late! Do I have cancer? How can you be so cruel to let me live with this? I need this now! Before I die! What does cancer feel like? What do tumors look like? Is it like the bump on my back? How do you expect me to wait a whole week?! Can't you see as clear as the sun is hot that this is something I need NOW?!

APOLLO sighs and catches his breath, reverting the lights back to normal.

APOLLO

I tell him that I'll see him in a week and I hang up. Seven days. One hundred and sixty eight hours. Ten thousand eighty minutes. And every single one of them passing by so much slower. I feel every single one because I can't feel anything else. My body is numb. Is this a symptom of cancer? Maybe I should look it up on my phone.

APOLLO goes to reach for his phone, but stops.

APOLLO

No. It's only my anxiety. I can't stir myself into any deeper a panic. My doctor will know what to do. Until then, I need to put my attention elsewhere. Maybe I'll watch some TV. Something fun and light. That'll keep me occupied.

APOLLO lifts a TV remote from under the stool and clicks it, causing a game show to project onto the sheet behind him. The show plays for a few moments before cutting to a commercial break for a children's hospital, portraying a young boy with cancer as the spokesperson. APOLLO freezes with his breathing becoming more hyper. The sound of a siren can be heard faintly in the distance. He quickly shuts the TV off, causing the projection on the white sheet to cut. APOLLO takes a moment to catch his breath.

APOLLO

Maybe I should try having something to eat instead.

APOLLO stands up and wanders to the fridge.

APOLLO

My doctor asked me if I was losing any weight. The truth is I was, but I knew that was from my anxieties. There was some comfort in that thought. But I had to swallow the truth that despite all my fears stripping me of my appetite, I was going to eventually starve myself if I didn't get something in my stomach. Wouldn't that be devilishly ironic? My fear of death being what kills me.

While monologuing, APOLLO opens the fridge and begins searching through it.

APOLLO

How are some people so easy to not think of their own mortality? It's a debt we all know we're going to have to pay eventually. I feel like we all come to a point when we're able to accept it. But what scares me most is that I might die before that point. While I'm still young. I'll be gone and yet the world keeps spinning.

APOLLO pulls a single slice of bread from the fridge. He tears off a small piece from it and slowly chews it, struggling to swallow it. He stops to stare at the slice before lifting his shirt to reveal he is much thinner than he was at the start of the play.

APOLLO

That should be enough for now.

APOLLO puts the slice of bread back into the fridge. He takes a deep breath, leans himself onto the fridge, and closes his eyes. The sound of the siren is heard once again, a little louder and closer this time. The lights also slowly begin to fade into red again. But as sudden as APOLLO opens his eyes, the lights immediately revert back to normal.

APOLLO

I really haven't had much of a chance to sleep. Maybe I should have a nap.

APOLLO goes to the bed and climbs into it, crawling underneath the sheets.

APOLLO

After I called my doctor, I called my mom. I can't imagine a thought scarier to a parent than a child telling them that their baby isn't going to live longer than they will. But my mom told me the usual. I was overreacting and that I have to stop bothering my doctor every week with something new. She always suggested my panic stemmed from not having enough to do in my life. Could she be right? Am I afraid that my life will end before it's had a chance to begin? But then is that all life is? Keeping ourselves distracted from accepting that any random day we're going to fall into an eternal sleep of nothing? But I love that I can be alive. So why do our bodies have to take that away from us so soon?

The sound of the siren is heard again, even closer and louder this time. The lights too slowly begin to fade into red again. APOLLO shakes his head, once more reverting the lights to normal.

APOLLO

No. I can't think that way. I'll know the truth in just a few short days. I just need to get some sleep now.

APOLLO lays on his side and shuts his eyes. However, as much as he forces himself, he is unable to sleep. He tosses and turns, breaking out into a cold sweat and his breathing getting heavier. Dejected, he opens his eyes, uncovers himself, and sits on the side of the bed. He sits in discomfort before lifting the back of his shirt to look at the lump. He stares at it and feels it for a moment before standing up, walking to center stage, and sitting himself back on the stool.

APOLLO

I can't do this. I can't watch TV. I can't eat. I can't sleep. It doesn't matter if I have my eyes opened or closed...all I can feel is...

There is a brief silent pause. Suddenly, the sound of breathing can be heard playing overhead. It starts out slow and heavy, but gradually builds faster and more sporadic. The sound of a flatline accompanies it; beginning quietly but slowly growing louder and louder. The siren returns as well, but now it repeats and becomes louder with each ring. This builds to a soundscape of anxiety that should create a sensation of discomfort. While this is playing, the lights fade into that deep red; almost black to a point. Suddenly, the entire stage becomes blindingly white as every light shines intensely bright. White noise replaces the soundscape and APOLLO makes subtle yet disturbing convulsions in his seat, succumbing to the overwhelming sight and sound. But then, with the loud ring of a telephone, everything reverts back to normal. APOLLO takes a few deep breaths before he reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone to answer it.

APOLLO

Hello?...Doctor Kushney?...Yes this is Apollo... You have the results back?...So...it's just a cyst?...A harmless cyst?...Well yes, that is wonderful news...Yes, I can come in tomorrow and have it drained...So I'm okay?...Uh huh...Okay, thank you so much doc...yeah, I'll see you tomorrow...yes, you as well.

APOLLO hangs up the phone and sits there quietly. An overwhelm of emotion rushes through APOLLO as he breaks into tears and has a deep cry. He feels an insurmountable amount of relief and yet some inner remorse of his fear. His head falls into his hands as he continues to cry. The lights slowly fade out as the sound of APOLLO's emotional breakdown continue to be heard in the complete darkness.