

*timor mortis,  
timor vitae*

or the play formally known as “to fear death is to fear life”

by mason arsenault

*The stage is pitch black. A spotlight turns on to reveal SOLLICITUS, standing downstage in completely white attire. A narrow white sheet lowers from the ceiling behind SOLLICITUS, which they are live projected onto. 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. They turn around to reveal a small yet noticeable lump. As their breath grows more rapid, panicked from this anatomical discovery, 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 the lump which has now grown slightly larger and redder. SOLLICITUS quickly drops their shirt, anxious by its presence. As they calm themselves, they begin to speak in a neutral peaceful tone.*

### **SOLLICITUS**

I called my family 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**

Cancer? 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 as they watch 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 the lump 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 up to reveal the lump has grown even larger and even redder. They stand themselves up, placing their hands on their knees on the verge of vomiting . SOLLICITUS speech becomes more emotional.*

**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. SOLLICITUS tears off their shirt to reveal the lump has grown even larger and redder, now pumping similar to that of a heartbeat. SOLLICITUS peers at it, horrified, before bringing their hand up to touch it. However, upon the moment of contact, SOLLICITUS screams out painfully, replaced with the sound of high pitched ringing. As SOLLICITUS screams, the lump continues to grow with each pump, growing larger and redder before exploding and causing a rush of blood and pus to pour from SOLLICITUS. They fall to the ground, fainting, causing the red lights to cut, the platform to stop moving, and the ringing to go silent, bringing everything to quiet darkness.*

*Thirty 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. Still shaken by the events that have "occured", they slowly walk themselves over to the phone on the pedestal and answer it.*

### **SOLLICITUS**

Hello?...Doctor Kushney?...Yes this is Sollicitus...Just a cyst?...A harmless cyst?...Well yes, that is wonderful news...Uh huh...Yes, thank you so much...You as well.

*SOLLICITUS hangs up the phone and stands there quietly. They peer down at the torn, bloodied remains of the lump still stuck to their body. They reach down and slowly tear the last of it from their body. As they stare at it, an overwhelm of emotion rushes through them as they fall to the ground and break into tears. An insurmountable amount of relief, but inner remorse of their fear too. They curl up on the ground, cradling themselves as they continue to cry. The lights slowly fade out as the sound of SOLLICITUS' emotional breakdown continue to be heard in the darkness.*