

Stop. Look. Go.: A Solo Show of My Own Design

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Abstract

Stop. Look. Go.: A Solo Show of My Own Design

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Abstract:

“Stop. Look. Go.: A Solo Show of My Design” follows BP, a young man confronted with his mortality while in (or what he perceives to be) limbo, the void that is neither heaven nor hell. Guided by LORIEN, an enthusiastic and seemingly omniscient voice with the power to bring visions to reality, BP learns to be grateful for the events of his life instead of fixating on what could’ve been. Inspired by a study in brain activity during the process of death and a TED talk addressing happiness and gratitude, “Stop. Look. Go.” asks its audience, “What would you dream if you realized it was your last moment in existence?” The following describes the process of creating a narrative consisting of interchangeable pieces in hopes to be adapted for future audiences.

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Gratitude: A Completely Incomplete Solo Show

This is not a finished work; it is an idea. One that changed when Covid-19 thrust a new reality upon us, one that saw many permutations during the months of quarantine, and one that will continue to form should it be given the opportunity. The Corona Virus brought about mass cancellations of performances of any kind across the globe. My class's thesis solo performances were no different and suffered the same fate. However, in light of the cancellation, all that stood in the way of earning my MFA was satisfying the writing requirement, and it was here I saw opportunity. No longer constrained by limitations of time or capability of the space, my script could be as elaborate as my imagination would allow. In my desire to develop a project with longevity, I sought to write a script that welcomed growth and adaptation for a future audience while honoring the material I'd created specific to the time and place the show would've initially been performed.

Months before quarantine, the writing process began with a series of questions: "Why this show? Why now? Who is my audience? What do I want them to walk away with? What am I saying and why am I saying it?" Touchstones I would repeatedly turn to throughout the duration of the script's inception. But before I could write a word, I needed to address the most paramount question first and foremost, "What is resonating with me right now?" I subsequently dumped out my "idea box", a cardboard box filled with any concept, philosophy, study, event, article, or piece of art I found moving written on color coded notecards. I started keeping the box in Spring of 2019 per the cogent

recommendation of Valerie Curtis-Newton in her Solo Performance Class and by now, it was nearly full... or it was before I dumped it on the floor of my apartment.

I sorted through the rainbow menagerie of ideas strewn across the taupe Berber carpet, stacking the cards that made the second cut of my interest. Of course, not all the ideas from the “callback” would be included in this iteration of the script, but the notecards that did read: “technology and dating”, “Thom Yorke’s song ‘Dawn Chorus’”, “depression”, “substance abuse”, “the *LOYALTY* of Trump supporters!”, and “giving up your dreams”. All are key players in the story, however there were two other notecards that proved most influential in shaping the premise and intent.

The first card read, “Death Delta Waves” in reference to an article I stumbled upon years ago entitled, “Our Brains May Live Up to 10 Minutes After Death”. The 2017 NOVA publication written by Tim De Chant describes a study conducted by doctoral students at the University of Western Ontario. Loretta Norton and her colleagues used electroencephalographic, or EEG, imaging to record electrical activity in the brains of four terminal patients before and after cessation. The EEG measures Delta waves associated with deep sleep, also known as slow-wave sleep, and though three of the four patient’s brain activity ceased before their hearts stopped, one patient experienced bursts of Delta waves for up to ten minutes after they were pronounced deceased. The study demonstrates how much medical science still has to learn regarding the process of death in the brain and raises questions of reported “out of body” experiences after resuscitation from death. This troublingly provocative concept led to a query that formed the structure of my story, “What would I dream if I realized it was my last moment of existence?”

I had an idea, but I still needed to pinpoint what I wanted to say. For this, I found inspiration on the second notecard that read, “TED talk: “Want to be happy? Be grateful”. The speech is delivered with

humble eloquence by Brother David Steindl-Rast, an American Catholic Benedictine Monk and interfaith scholar. He states in the video:

If you think it's happiness that makes you grateful, think again. It's gratefulness that makes you happy. ...we have this saying, "Opportunity knocks only once." Well, think again. Every moment is a new gift, over and over again, and if you miss the opportunity of this moment, another moment is given to us... Moment by moment, we can be grateful for this gift. ... But I didn't say we can be grateful for everything. I said we can be grateful in every given moment for the opportunity... (Steindl-Rast, 00:02:17-00:06:28).

Steindl-Rast asserts seizing the chance to be grateful in every moment, even in the face of adversity, is the key to happiness. I considered the younger members of my audience, the many success and failures ahead of them, thought about my own sense of gratitude, and knew this was the message I wished to impart. I set out to write a story of confronting death in a dream and taking the opportunity to be grateful instead of wishing for what could have been. A message I could have never predicted would become so relevant in a world halted by a pandemic.

I was interested in transformation, especially after gaining so many tools from my professors while developing four characters in the production of "The Best of Everything". I specified the psychological gestures and physical history of each character with Cathy Madden, Valerie Cutis-Newton helped identify their centers and motivations, and Bridget Connors guided the points of resonance in their voices and splashed color on their personalities. I knew the fantastic nature of my show presented ample opportunities for dramatic shifts in tone, and I utilized this conceit to develop the "dream" monologues. The "Trump cowboy" stemmed from the notecard with "the *LOYALTY* of Trump

supporters!” written on it, a notion inspired by President Trump’s impeachment hearings. My aim was to write political satire the likes of Trevor Noah or John Oliver, though the tone seems more akin to SNL.

The character of the second “dream” within a dream is an amalgamation of myself and someone in my personal life struggling with alcoholism and depression. While the content is very much my voice, the cynicism, destructive behavior, circumstance and tone are directly lifted from a very close friend. The piece aims to serve as a meditation on the struggle to let go of a lifelong ambition when it is no longer viable, and the notecards, “depression”, “substance abuse”, “technology and dating”, and “giving up your dreams” all make an appearance. It was intended the character be picking up a cluttered and disorganized stage while becoming increasingly more intoxicated, the activity growing devolved and labored, acting as a physical representation of addiction impeding his effort to “clean up his act”. The monologue ends with him placing his guitar out of sight while singing acapella The Rolling Stone lyric, “Don’t stop”, a symbol of his will to find a new path.

I sought to create a piece that was thought provoking, personal, possessed spectacle and magic, discovery and revelation, and sudden shifts in tone. There is content specific to events and people at the University of Washington that will no longer be applicable in a future setting and the “cowboy monologue”, a modest attempt at political satire, grows less relevant by the day. But I believe there is success in the structure of the script that gives the idea longevity. The main character’s fixation with visualizing different versions of his life affords adaptability as the dreams can be and say anything they want while the narrative structure remains: Being grateful is what leads to happiness, seldom a preoccupation with what could’ve been.

Works Cited

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Stop. Look. Go.

Scene 1

Lights up. A mostly bare stage in the Penthouse Theatre at The University of Washington with the exception of two black flats upstage left and upstage right. The upstage vomitorium and door is framed and visible between the flats. Dramatic music flares as the Master of Ceremonies (MC) is heard from overhead, he is never seen. BP interacts with MC from offstage.

MC: And now, the moment you've all been waiting for. The solo show by Brandon Pascal is about to begin! The performance will commence when Brandon enters the stage from the ceiling... via bungee cord. That's right ladies and gentlemen! We've provided a bungee and harness, and the brave actor will be attempting a feat that has surely never been seen in The Penthouse Theatre before. Are you ready up there, Brandon!?

BP: Yeah... all set. But I gotta say, this bungee seems a little long...

MC: It's *always* better to have too much rather than too little, wouldn't you agree?

BP: Not in this case, no-

MC: Fantastic! Let's give our daring performer some applause! Drum roll, please. (*Drumroll ensues.*) He's stepping up to the ledge. Checking his harnesses one last time. Looking apprehensively to the coiled bungee cord behind him. He turns, looks down, takes a deep breath and... he jumps! (*The drumroll ceases with a symbol crash and a dummy dressed as BP, strapped to a loose bungee cord, smashes the floor. Note: the more twisted and contorted the dummy upon landing, the better. The dummy is slowly dragged offstage as MC speaks and lights slowly dim.*) Brandon! Brandon? Brandon Pascal? Ladies and gentlemen, tonight's performance has been cancelled due to absolutely unforeseeable technical difficulties. Refunds will be offered at the door. We apologize for any inconvenience. Please, get home safely, be with your loved ones, (*Sudden shift.*) and have a wonderful evening! (*Blackout.*)

Scene 2

Lights up. An upside down, cardboard box now appears downstage center, its flaps splayed outward. BP is sitting in the audience, slumped in his seat looking incredibly bored. LORIEN is heard overhead; she, like MC, is also never seen.

LORIEN: Now serving number 1... Now serving number 1...

BP: (*To audience.*) Is that any of you? Huh... wonder who's first on the chopping block?

LORIEN: I repeat, now serving number one. Number *one*. Please check your tickets, thank you.

BP: (*To audience member, as LORIEN beckons him.*) Hey so, do you know what this is all about or...? Cause honestly, I can't even remember how I got here. Or where here is...

LORIEN: (*Overlapping previous line.*) Brandon. Brandon? Brandon Pascal!

BP: Yes!?! Yeah? Wh-What can I... uh... what's up?

LORIEN: You have been summoned.

BP: Me? No... I'm number... (*Takes out a large ticket with a bold number "1" visibly printed.*) Oh, damn! Yeah, that's me. (*To audience, making his way to center stage.*) Sorry! Sorry to hold you all up...

LORIEN: Always just a little late, aren't you Brandon?

BP: (*Nervous, confused.*) Uh, yeah, I guess that's... true? Um, listen, I don't mean to be forward or anything but... who are you?

LORIEN: My name is Lorien.

BP: Lorien, huh? That's pretty. What is that, like Irish or something?

LORIEN: It's Elvish actually!

BP: Of course, it is. I should've known that. Lorien, where are we?

LORIEN: We are in a realm that is and is not outside yourself; a waiting room of your design.

BP: What the hell does that mean? Waiting room? Waiting for what?

LORIEN: Your life to end.

BP: My life to WHAT!?! (*It hits him.*) Oh... the bungee thing. I botched the bungee thing, didn't I?

LORIEN: You *completely* botched the bungee thing.

BP: (*Gasp!*) Does that mean I don't get my MFA!?

LORIEN: (*Dryly.*) Yes. That means you don't get your MFA.

BP: (*Emits an agonizing groan as he falls to his knees, utterly defeated, on the brink of tears.*) Damn it! I paid so much for that! And not just with money...

LORIEN: There, there... Guess you shouldn't have bungee jumped inside a building, huh?

BP: (*Suddenly defiant.*) Look it, I've wanted to fly in from the ceiling since Angels in America. It's my final show and I thought it would be like Mission Impossible, right? I was gonna be all... (*Begins to strike "midair" espionage poses while humming the Mission Impossible theme.*) Welcome to the show...

LORIEN: Tom Cruise was *lowered* from the ceiling in Mission Impossible. He didn't bungee jump. Probably because it's a little impractical to bungee jump inside a building, wouldn't you agree? I mean, where were you gonna go? If you hadn't hit the floor, you'd have smacked the ceiling on the rebound.

BP: Yeah, you're right... I knew the bungee was too long.

LORIEN: That wasn't at all what I said.

BP: Well, it could've been worse.

LORIEN: It couldn't have been any worse. You're dying.

BP: Dying. Not dead. See? It could've been worse.

LORIEN: True... (*Optimistic.*) I guess you could always pull out of this.

BP: (*Beat.*) Naaaaaaahhhh.

LORIEN: Yeah, not likely.

BP: Not likely, right? Did you see how far I fell?

LORIEN: Well, you were *inside a building*, so not far. But the landing... It's actually impressive how badly you landed considering how short of a distance you fell.

BP: (*Nodding.*) Yeah, I've always fallen face first. It's like my head is made of iron and the floor is a magnet. (*Looks around.*) So, this is a waiting room and I'm dying... Does that make you some kind of angel?

LORIEN: (*Amused.*) An angel? No! I'm more like a receptionist.

BP: Are you gonna like... check me in?

LORIEN: Oh, no. Nothing like that. I just facilitate your transition.

BP: My transition? Oh, to... (*Makes "death" gesture.*) Croakesville. Got it.

LORIEN: Don't look so glum. This is your time! You can dream about whatever you wish!

BP: Dream? I don't...

LORIEN: Allow me to explain. In this place, I have the ability to make visions, reality. Life questions of what was or what could have been, alternate universes, premonitions... it's all at your fingertips. Just ask and so it will be.

BP: Oh... I see. Kind of like a dying wish type thing.

LORIEN: Sort of.

BP: "Just ask and so it will be..." Man, I don't know where to start... Where do you start!?

LORIEN: Or, if you're not feeling particularly curious, you could also choose (*Dramatically.*) The Box of Mnemosyne!

BP: (*Noticing the cardboard box.*) Uh... the box of Mnemo-what?

LORIEN: (*Doubling down.*) THE BOX OF MNEMOSYNE!!

BP: Mnemosyne... why does that sound familiar? What do you do with it?

LORIEN: You pick it up and you think about your life!

BP: That's it?

LORIEN: That's it! It's kind of like meditation but not at all.

BP: (*Slight pause.*) No, thanks. But I can ask you questions about my life and you'll *show* me the answers?

LORIEN: Precisely.

BP: Even stuff that didn't happen?

LORIEN: Of course.

BP: (*Skeptically.*) Really. Like... you can show me what life would've been like as an astronaut or a cowboy?

LORIEN: Which would you like? Astronaut or cowboy?

BP: (*Hiding excitement.*) You can show me what my life would've been like as a cowboy?

LORIEN: (*Trying her patience a bit.*) Yes. Just ask.

BP: Okay! (*Motioning to the audience.*) W-Wait! What about them? Are they gonna see?

LORIEN: Yes!

BP: Seems a little personal, don't you think?

LORIEN: (*Slightly loosing composure.*) You're dying, Brandon. Who cares?

BP: Well yeah, okay, when you put it that way... jeeze. (*To audience.*) Hope you all don't mind cause I gotta see this. Lorien! What would my life have been like as a cowboy!?

LORIEN: And so, it will be. (*Blackout.*)

Scene 3

Transition. Instrumental country music plays and is sustained throughout the scene. Lights up on BP dressed as a cowboy, roasting a stuffed squirrel over an obviously fake fire. During the course of the monologue, BP is seen hunting, lassoing, hogtying, milking, working out, galloping, manipulating the fake fire, playing a guitar solo, and other activities. All the while, he makes the stage more and more of a disorganized wreck. He speaks with a gritty, midwestern accent, is unapologetic, and bumptiously moves about the stage, striking power poses suddenly as he addresses the audience.

BP: So, America, it's the year 2024 and we have yet another election on our chaps. But ask yourself frankly, why're we trying to change course midstream? President Trump not only deserves to serve a *third term* but frankly, the man should serve till he can serve no more. Don't fix it if it ain't broken, mister! I look around me today and I can say frankly, America looks very different than it did 8 years ago... Greater.

Now, there's no denying it's been a strange 4 years. 2020 seemed like an odd time to gut Medicare, especially a week after ending Quarantine and all. Frankly, no health benefits may have lead to the mass extinction of the elderly, or what they're now calling "The Elderpocolypse." But Trump knew those people were dead weight... Help, I've fallen and have flu-like symptoms? Sorry Ma, that's just nature tellin' you it's time to hit that ole dusty trail... so I don't have to pay for you anymore.

Trump knows the future is our youth and we have a lot of youth now! 'Bout 200% uptick after overturning Roe V. Wade. No more abortions means enough little ones to open the Stephen Miller Academy of Trump Youth. Just thinking about those youngsters marching in formation just warms my heart. (*Puts his hand over his heart and releases a heavy exhale while extending his arm to a "subtle" Nazi Salute before quickly dropping it. Should look almost accidental.*) Thanks to Trump, our streets are safer too. It was a brilliant idea to reopen Alcatraz and the internment camps from WW2. Where else were we gonna put all the "Raghead", "Osama", "Oriental", "Beaner", "Colored", and "Jewboy" domestic terrorists? Wouldn't you have done the same?

Frankly, I like Trump. He looks out for the working man. He made the fossil fuel industry viable again. Now, I know all the environmentalists were little perturbed on account of them polar ice caps melting. And frankly, millions of people on the coasts did drown under enormous tidal waves of ocean. But you know? I'm a make lemonade kind of guy... The East and West were the worst parts of the country, if you ask me. Had you ever been to Seattle? That city had the worst kind of 4th wave, post-modern, liberal scum I'd ever seen! I have to say, frankly Trump was the perfect example during that

completely natural disaster. When Florida sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic, who wouldn't have been disheartened to lose their private resort? But Trump held his head high in the face of adversity and renamed Puerto Rico, "Mar-a-Lago 2"! He's a problem solver.

Trump's made us a scrappier nation that don't take guff from no one. Frankly, nothing made me prouder of my country than the 2022 State of the Union, when Trump straight up sucker punched Nancy Pelosi in the face. But it wasn't Nancy's first rodeo... She gave him a stiletto straight to his Donald Jr.! Maybe Trump went a little far when he body slammed her into that podium, but anyone would get worked up with Dennis Rodman and Kim Jung Un by your side. Boys will be boys.

So, come on America, or what's left of it, are we really gonna give the boot to the best President this country's ever seen? It may seem like authoritarianism but sometimes you just gotta ignore the facts and say, "Fuck it... I'm goin' with my gut." Vote Trump 2024 and beyond, and let's keep getting greater, America. (*Blackout.*)

Scene 4

Lights up on B, dressed as before, looking around in amazement at the messy Waiting Room.

BP: (*Aghast.*) What the fuck was that!?

LORIEN: You, as a cowboy.

BP: Was that like, an ad for Trump? In the future!?

LORIEN: Yes. Evidently, you really like Trump.

BP: (*Disgusted.*) No way! How on earth did that happen? There's no way!

LORIEN: You grew up in Wichita. *Very* republican there.

BP: Okay, sure. But I mean... "cowboy me" supported Trump even though he "Hulk Hoganed" Nancy Pelosi. Parts of the country were washed into the sea, and I *still* supported him. Even wanted him to serve a third term! Trump supporters are so damn *loyal!!!*

LORIEN: Till death do them part.

BP: If only they were that dedicated to checking facts... (*To audience.*) I'm truly sorry about that, you guys. Not what I expected... Let's change the subject. Do I still have time? I mean, can I do it again? Not the racist cowboy thing. The dream thing?

LORIEN: Of course! Have you another question? Or would you like to hold The Box of Mnemosyne!?

BP: No... Still not into the box thing. I want to ask something real this time. Like... Oo! What would my life have been like if I pursued my dream of being in a touring band!? I always wondered about that.

LORIEN: And so, it will be!

Scene 5

Lights up. An alcoholic BP sits in his disorganized, dirtied living room, a guitar amongst the disarray, looking tired and disheveled. He is mid-conversation with a fellow hungover, partygoer from the night before. He drinks from a newly opened bottle of liquor while he speaks. During the course of the scene, BP cleans the space and returns it to its state at the top of Scene 2. He is drinking to fight his hangover and gradually becomes more intoxicated, making the cleaning process arduous and labored.

BP: I don't play anymore because bands aren't cool! Nobody wants to be in a band, man! It's all electronic now. It's all about some derpy kid sitting in his room, looping the same crappy beat, throwing it up on Soundcloud and boom! Instant famous? That's not music, man. I'm sorry but pressing spacebar will never be the same as watching a group of people make sound together, live in the moment, you know? Chaotic and organized all at once. You can't do that on a laptop. Laptop will always be perfect. Right on cue. No sense that there could be a mistake at any moment. With a band, every second there isn't a mistake is a moment to party, you know? Even if you do mess up, the song's not gonna stop for you. *You have to keep going. (Noticing the room.)* Damn... we really did a number on this place. Nah man, I'll pick up. No! It's my place and you look like shit. Relax. What were you saying? *(Begins organizing the space.)*

Yeah, I get there's a lot of stuff electronic music can do that instruments can't. I get that, I do. But it's kind of like... it's like online dating or using an app or whatever. You see the pretty pictures and the interesting bio *on a screen*, but the date is *the show*, right? That's the exciting part! Can't press play there! Even if you feel like you're having the same conversation you've had a million times before, the answers are slightly different and that nuance is the magic, you know? For better or for worse. Now, imagine dating someone as perfect as their profile says they are. Sounds nice in theory, but is it? ...That's it!? There's no more to see, no ugliness, no imperfection? How fucking safe! And I've never liked safe. Believe me, if I did, I wouldn't have tried to make the band work. Oh, yeah dude! It could be rough. Living off merch money, running out of gas on the way to the venue, playing shows for beer, meeting people and sleeping on their floors... *(Pause.)* but getting through it all with your brothers. Those were good times... Make solo music? *(Laughs.)* Yeah. I tried but... I never really wanted to do that. That wasn't what it was about for me, you know? It was about coming together to make something that you couldn't make on your own. Something bigger than yourself... Cause look what happens when I'm on my own! Fuck... *(Dark laughter, shaking his head. He is very drunk.)*

It's just... I always thought if I held on and pursued something with everything I had, stayed true to it... it would all come my way eventually. But that's not how it all works, man. Nope... If you keep holding onto something everyone else is forgetting, you'll be forgotten too. That's how it works. Move with it or be left behind. Pick the poison. And *obvious* answer is you should move on, right? Right, but... but then what? *(Beat.)* Take selfies at the beach and show everyone how good you're doing? *(Scoffs.)* Anyway, enough of that. I don't know what I'm talking about... Make you a drink? Heh... guess it is a little early, huh? *(Raising the bottle to cheers.)* Hair of the dog that bit me! *(Takes a large pull from bottle. Picks up guitar.)* Well, what should we do? Nah, I told you man, I don't really play anymore. Remember playing in high school? We were so bad... we used to play that song... The Rolling Stones one? Remember? Alright, alright... *(Puts guitar on, feeling the alcohol.)* I'll try... I think it went like...

(Begins to play The Rolling Stones, "Don't Stop", remembering it as he goes, it is bliss for him.)

Well you bit my lip and drew first blood
And warmed my cold, cold heart
And you wrote your name right on my back
Boy, your nails were sharp

Don't stop
Honey, don't stop
Don't stop
Baby, don't stop

Well, I'm losing you
I know your heart is miles away
There's a whisper there where once there was a storm
And all left is that image that I've filed away
And some memories have tattered as they're torn

(He stops playing and sings acapella as he places the guitar behind a flat, out of sight.)

Don't stop
Baby, don't stop
Oh, baby, don't stop
Honey, honey, don't stop
Baby, don't stop...

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

Lights up on BP, center stage, disturbed.

BP: Wow, that was sad. I mean, that was so SAD! *(To audience.)* I'm sorry again, everybody! Damn... Why didn't you tell me how sad that was gonna be? I'm dying here!

LORIEN: Don't look at me, it's your dream! You must have needed to feel sad.

BP: What do you mean, my dream? I didn't ask for that. You're the one that conjures up alternate realities and premonitions or whatever. Not me, I didn't do that!

LORIEN: Well... the dreams aren't so much actual realities as they are reflections of your own subconscious. You invent them, and I show them to you! You invented everything here for that matter. Everything you're experiencing is your own creation!

BP: Wait, what? No, I'm confused... I didn't invent anything. I was sent here, and you called me up, and now your job is to show me stuff about my life before I pass on, right? This is like, what is called... limbo! That's what this is, isn't it?

LORIEN: No... You weren't sent, you brought yourself. You brought all of us here! Or brought us to you... not really sure which. My primary function is to facilitate your transition by showing you your dreams, just as you intended me to. I guess I'm more of a projector than a receptionist. (*Considers.*) Huh... But, hey! You're the one that made me tell you I'm a receptionist, so that's on you!

BP: How is it that I invented this place and have no idea where I am?

LORIEN: You are in a realm that is and is not outside yourself. A product of bursting delta waves in your brain as the rest of your body shuts down. All of this is and isn't real. It's what you created to achieve submission.

BP: Submission... So, *all of this*... those visions... they're...

LORIEN: Manifestations of your innermost thoughts and emotions... everything cognitive in you.

BP: They weren't answers to anything...

LORIES: There are never answers in "what-ifs".

BP: (*Gesturing to audience.*) And them? Why did I make them?

LORIEN: I'm not sure... Unfortunately, the subconscious doesn't always operate in logic. My guess is you need them. Or needed them for a reason you've forgotten.

BP: So, what comes after this?

LORIEN: Come on, Brandon... you know the answer to that.

BP: (*Slight pause before it coldly sets in.*) There's nothing after this... is there?

LORIEN: You'll never know, not here anyway. But most likely, this is it. (*Pause.*) You have a little time left. Would you like to see any other dreams?

BP: What's the point? None of it's real and I know how it ends...

LORIEN: Maybe it's time to pick up the box.

BP: The Box of Mnemosyne.

LORIEN: After all, you put it there...

BP: I must need it then. (*Walks over to the box.*) I just pick it up, Lorien?

LORIEN: And so, it will be. (*BP grabs the box, Blackout.*)

Scene 7

Cue a cut version of Thom Yorke's "Dawn Chorus". BP lifts the box to reveal a projector, it lights his face and body with images: friends, family, car rides, picnics, park swings, traumas, funerals, fear, arguments, reconciliations, etc. He walks upstage, turns the flats revealing white panels on their backsides, and brings them together to make a "screen" to which the images are projected against. He takes a moment to absorb them. He begins to relive these moments, triumph and suffering, through a series of movement in front of the projector, creating shadows and distorting the projections, as if he were dancing through them. The song draws to a close, he rotates the flats and returns them to their original position, then puts the box back over the projector, leaving us in darkness. The box and projector are moved out of sight and the lights slowly fade up with "bird chirps" at the end of the track.

Scene 8

Lights up. BP center stage, mystified.

BP: That was... wow. So, that's... that's how I'll be remembered.

LORIEN: That's how you remember it. Was it what you needed?

BP: I'm- I'm not sure. It was like I-I... lived it all over again. All those years... in minutes. I felt all of it. All the hurt, and the joy, and fear, and scabs, orgasms, ice cream, funerals, sunrises, job interviews, music, and... and lies... How could I *not* hate the burning pile of mistakes I've left in my wake? Hindsight can be so unforgiving... It was never simple. Lines get blurred and churned, rules and exceptions, and you lose track, swerving out of lane, floating in pools of color, swept up, covered in it, stolen away... And you wake up, look around and suddenly you're somewhere you never intended to be, somewhere you didn't even know could possibly exist. Like here... like now... this is not how I expected to spend my last moment on earth. The last moment... and all I can think about is what I would've done different. Why? None of it matters! Or maybe it matters more than it ever did. Maybe the only thing to regret... is regret itself. Because the good moments were worth all of it, all the... turbulence in between. Just now, when I picked up the box and I saw my mistakes... I saw life wasted. But I was so wrong, cause out of all my terrible mistakes, spending so much time wishing for what could never be might be the biggest! Man... looking back always had this terrible way of making what was right in front of me look like total shit. And that... was the secret all along. Hah! At least I figured it out eventually? You were right, Lorien... I'm always just a little late.

LORIEN: (*The upstage vomitorium door opens, light pouring onto the stage.*) That's your cue, Brandon.

BP: I... I don't want to.

LORIEN: I know. You'll feel better when you do.

BP: You're just saying that because I want to believe it. *(Turns upstage to face door.)* Alright, let's face the music. *(Takes a few steps upstage before pausing.)* Actually! One more thing. *(Moves downstage center to address audience.)* Hi, everybody. So, I know none of this is really... *real* or logical, and it's just my brain dying or whatever, but I'm starting to put some things together and *I think* it's making sense but I still can't... why the hell I would think up some "waiting room" audience for myself? I mean, I am, or was, an undeniable ham, *(Aside.)* Hope they put that on my gravestone. *(Crosses fingers.)*, but I don't think it's as simple as that. I think... I think it's because you're human... or resemble humans, or something. Hear me out. This is it for me, right? And I can't- I won't walk through that door with a load of "what-ifs" on my back. I have to leave here changed, reformed... developed. Not like I was. When I picked up the box, I saw it, clear as day... The best moments were the ones where I wasn't so focused on myself... on all my shortcomings. When I opened my eyes to see, to *really* see, what was right in front of me... that was it. That's all there ever was. The moments that made it all worth it. So, I need you, all of you because right now, you are in front of me and... I'm really happy about that. So... thank you. Thank you for listening... it feels really good to be heard. Thank you for giving me a platform to speak. Thank you for giving me permission and countless chances. Thanks for never letting me off the hook, either. Thank you for investing in me, teaching me, trying to make me better, expecting more of me, becoming an integral part of who I am. Thank you for confiding in me, for raising me up, making me laugh and bringing me to tears... and thank you for giving me an arena to do all of that. It was such a joy and I wouldn't trade... any of it, really...

LORIEN: Ready?

BP: Yeah, I think that's it. Hey Lorien, thanks... *(Pause. No Response.)* Lorien? ... Oh... well, thanks and... goodbye. *(He turns towards the door and takes a few steps upstage when suddenly, it slams shut. Blackout.)*

Scene 9

Lights fade up on BP, lying on the floor with the Bungee cord attached to him; the same position we saw the dummy before it was dragged off stage in Scene 1. He stirs awake as MC is heard overhead, calling for him.

MC: Brandon. Brandon? Brandon Pascal!

BP: *(Waking.)* Yeah! Wh-what can I... uh, what's up?

MC: He's awake ladies and gentlemen! Our performer is okay!

BP: *(Looks around in a daze.)* What the... I'm alive? WHAT!?! I thought I was goner for sure!

MC: Nah, do you see how far you fell? Not very far! Still, seems like you landed pretty hard.

BP: *(Gasps!)* Can I still get my MFA!?

MC: That depends! Can you still perform?

BP: Of course, I can! Let's get this party... (*Runs hand through hair, then looks down at his hand to see it covered in blood.*) AHHH! (*Runs offstage in a panic.*)

MC: Ladies and gentlemen, tonight's performance has been cancelled due to absolutely unforeseeable technical difficulties. We apologize for any inconvenience. Have a wonderful evening! (*Blackout.*)

END OF PLAY