

SAMPLE:

Dead Technology Play
by
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#3

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Notes on production, design and music.

I imagine this piece working like a website. In fact, creating a website may be the best way to accomplish what the script requires. In any case, special attention should be paid to the design of the text and the images that appear throughout the piece (on the video monitor) since these elements act as the set, costumes and lights for the production. I've noted several places where specific images belong and I would collaborate with other artists regarding colors, textures, backgrounds, fonts, animation and so forth. I would say, at this point, there ought to be an organic look and feel to the design, and that it should include supernatural, as well as scientific and spiritual, references.

I'll provide a CD containing original instrumental music and other audio cues for the piece. I anticipate that the direction of the music/sound design will be informed by future discussions.

(The following appears on an otherwise blank video monitor.)

You're still alive. What more do you want? Press any key for options.

(A key is touched and da Vinci's drawing, Vitruvian Man, appears on the monitor. In this case, there is a number written on each wrist, on the head, on each ankle, the chest or heart area, and the genitals. The seven numbers are 2, 8, 20, 28, 50, 82, and 126.)

Enter your preferred number. And submit.

(The number is entered and the following words emerge in a font resembling handwriting.)

We sit weird and still in these
old feathered rockets.

Waiting for wind. Waiting
for lift.

In crooked and natural steel
our stance
correct
our corset
strict.

(a button appears)

Continue

(The following words appear.)

I'm alive. I'm the gauge of your good mood. I have a story to tell you but I want you to do something first. It's not much, but you have to participate a little. After all you're not watching TV. Dead technology.

(There is a sudden flash on screen. An architectural schematic of an ancient temple appears, and instantly is gone.)

Will you do it? Hit the Y key if you will or the N key if you won't. Wait. Before you do that, put on the headphones.

Want to hear some music?

(Y)

Good, because I feel like hearing some
music too. How about this?

(Music begins)

(N)

Me neither. Let's get on with it.

(Y)

(N)

Too bad. That's all I have right now. I'll change it
in a little while.

(N)

Fine. Don't get uptight

(N)

Bye.

(The monitor goes black and doesn't respond for at least 15 seconds. The play resets.)

O.K. There are a few questions you have to answer before I can tell the story. It's no big deal but you have to tell the truth or it won't work right. Will you promise to tell me the truth?

(Y)
Thanks. Here goes . . .

(N)
Come on.

(N)
Bye then.

(Monitor goes black. The play resets after 15 seconds)

What's your name?
(Audience member types their name)
Is that your full name?

(Y) (N)
What's your full name?
(Audience member types in full name)

Nice. That's a kind of unusual name. Well, not that unusual, I guess. Don't tell me how old you are. You seem old enough to me. Do I seem old to you? (If there's no response) Well?

(Y)
Shut up. I'm kidding.

(N)
Of course I don't.

Do you ever feel taken advantage of?
(Y) (N)
Never?

(Y) (N)
Lucky you.

Thought so.

Here's a little story for you. Do you still want to hear it?

(Y) (N)
O.K. Maybe later then. Bye.
(Monitor dark. Reset.)

Good. You can hear my voice too if you want.
(A picture emerges, of a face with the mouth covered or gagged.)
It's your choice

(N)
O.K. I'm not offended.

(The audience member can click on the gag to remove it, or press Y.
When the gag is removed the face turns weird, and a long tongue spools
out of the mouth. The image disappears.)

(Y)
Uh ... Man's voice?

(N)
Woman's voice?

(Y)

(N)
(a dog barks) Kidding again.

(The voice begins. Text here is optional.)
Hi. Am I O.K.?

(Y)
Thanks.

(N)
Too bad. This'll be over soon.

Before I start the story, what's the nicest thing you ever did for someone? Anyone. Will
you tell me?

(N)
Are you afraid?

(N)
Please.

(N)
Just think about it for a minute then.

(N)
No story for you then. Bye.

(Y)
Lean forward a little and speak into the microphone in front of the monitor. Don't worry,
no one else will hear. Just me. Start now, we only have a few more minutes together.

(Audience member speaks)

Do you hear your voice in the headphones? I don't hear it either. Tap a few times on the
microphone. Using your finger. Don't blow on it. Still nothing? Alright, just type your
answer. But don't get too wordy O.K.? Unless you're a real fast typer. Typist.

(Audience member types)

Good story. Here's mine.

One evening late, there was a man alone in a room, surrounded by books. Waiting. He was trying to fall asleep but it wasn't working. He kept thinking of horrible things. He kept coming up with gruesome ideas, and imagining grisly scenes so ghastly and suspicious that he knew if someone listened they would hear his thoughts, and hate him for it. He believed that he was not abhorrent, and that his thoughts at least, were not the rankest. But to prove the point he had to have another thought made worse. It was awful, to say the least, and plainly to state the obvious. His phone rang but he couldn't answer it. He didn't dare. It might've been . . . he had all sorts of graceless conjecture. But who knows? It was a difficult predicament. And he was afraid. And it was dark. And in his room he felt like a dog. He hated all the things he'd been told to say and do. He was ashamed of the things he'd thought about saying and doing, but hadn't. And then, like grass, a noise began. "You can't unsay something, can you?" he wondered. He had no language of his own. There was no need to speak. He was alone, as I said. Craving. Unmoving almost, still protected by his books. The noise began again, "I'm glad I could get through to you." And then nothing.

(The voice stops.)

What do you think of it so far? Lean into the microphone a little. Dead technology.

(Another sudden flash on the screen, and a sound effect. Though this flash lasts a little longer, the image is still difficult to discern. It is an old sketch of a combustion engine.)

Just type.

(Audience member types.)

Do you want to hear more?

(A button resembling an old traffic light appears.)

Go or stop?

(Audience member selects. Y or N will also do.)

(Y)

(N)
O.K.

Do you ever feel powerless and lonely?

(Y)

Me too.

(N)
Good.

Do you want some money?

(N)
Seriously.

(Y)

(N)

Your loss.

O.K. Carefully enter the number of your primary checking account or any other account over which you have the power to authorize transactions. It must have a balance of at least \$251.46 for this transfer to work. Following the account number, enter the first four lines of the Lord's Prayer. In case you don't know the Lord's Prayer, here it is: Nema reverof yrolg eht rewop - oops that's backwards. Habit. Try: Our father who art in Heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done -

Type it. Well? Forget it. You wouldn't really give me your bank account number would you?

(N)

You would?

(N)

Just playing. Don't freak.

(Y)

You would? That's nice.

You must really like my story.

(N)

What if I had your address? Would you still say my story wasn't any good?

(Y)

(Y)

Why do you have to be mean? Answer me.

(N)

That's what I thought.

(The voice begins again.)

I do have your address. How does that make you feel? Don't bother to answer that. Should I send someone over? Should I come over there myself? Maybe I'm there right now. Maybe I'll meet you at home later. Maybe one night when you're tired and your mind wanders you'll open the refrigerator for a little snack and there I'll be, waiting for you. That'll surprise you won't it? Yes it will. It sure would surprise me to find someone doing devilish things in my fridge. Maybe I'd knock out the light in there so you'd have to lean in real close to see anything. And when you did I'd poke you in the eye real quick - and pull on your hair. I bet you wouldn't like that. Why did you have to be mean to me? You said you did nice things for people. I'm not listening to you for a little while.

Ah . . . you're nice.

(Pause for 5 seconds)

I forgive you now.

(Y) (N)
Ha Ha. It seems like it.

Anyway. What's your address? I want to mail you a thank you card for being so nice! Tell the truth, O.K.? Type it in.

(Audience member types in their address - or not. It doesn't matter.)

Guess what? I have your address already.

Do you know your neighbors?

(N)
I'm not surprised. Neither do I. Maybe we're neighbors? How would we know? You don't know where I live do you?

(Y)
That's rare. But good for you.
Good things happen to nice people.

(Y)
Liar.

Want to hear what someone else said the nicest thing they ever did for someone was?

(N)
Then here's a mean thing someone did.

(Y)
(We hear what is obviously a recording of a old women's voice)
"I poked him in the eye twice and then I broke his fucking neck!"
(The voice begins. Text is optional.)

I get answers like that all the time. People are cruel and strange. And what they do themselves means nothing to anyone. No single human voice can even be heard anymore. But as I was saying, there was a man in his study, surrounded by books and he'd become an amazingly self-absorbed hypochondriac. He was also a liar and a glutton. He roundly proclaimed the value of having more in order to compensate for his insipid life, which seemed continually worth less. He was sleazy and weak-willed and he could barely communicate. He felt cheated and was unsure even of what he'd lost. He didn't know where he was from, where he was going, or why. And he was no good with numbers. He was also lazy. He had a short attention span. And this is only a partial list. So you can see why the man was insomniac; he was disgusted. It's hard to cope with the certain knowledge that you are definitely inadequate. It's hard to think of spending another night trapped in a filthy body, lying twisted on a filthy bed, with your filthy mind strangled by unsoporific thoughts.

(The voice ends. A recording of an adult male voice begins.)
"I'm just sick and tired of constantly being hyped and suckered and lied to."

I said he was no good with numbers but that's a lie. He was awesome with numbers. He was a numerologist, which means he lived on mathematics and intuition. And dead technology.

(pause)

All quiet now isn't it?

Type in the first four-digit number you notice. Don't think about it, just look at the keyboard and go.

(Audience member types in number)

Well done.

(recording of a young adult woman)

“You have no idea what you're doing! Kick him! You don't feel a thing do you?”

Sorry about that. Sometimes we get “voices” here. Numerologists study the occult meanings of numbers and their influence on human life. Does that subject bother you?

(Y)

(N)

Good.

Why?

(Audience member types. A button appears.)

End this.

See that button? Press it.

(Audience member presses button.)

This is me here now. I haven't seen an actual human being in 3 ½ years. Haven't heard a human voice in almost six. Haven't been in love, haven't had sex, haven't sung out loud, played an instrument, shaken anyone's hand, or stumbled upon anyone I knew or any human thing that I recognize in as long as I can remember. I have no language of my own. Everything I think and write and say is subject to review and reorganization. Every bit of it has already been done better. Everything I long for I'm sick of already. I'm the one who sat in that chair right before you did. My gratitude for what I have is spoiled by hunger for what I don't. How much is enough? I don't care, how much is possible? I'm the one who sat in that chair right before you did. Give me your phone number. Do you feel threatened? Give me your phone number please. Dead technology. I'm the one. I wrote this. Do you remember my name? That's O.K., me neither.

Let's see what you wrote. Shall we?

(Y)

(N)

Too late.

(Button appears.)

Play back the dead

(After a few seconds the button triggers.)

(Everything the audience member typed throughout the course of the play appears, line by line, on the monitor. The letters begin to re-organize and match up, one at a time, with the following phrases. Audience hears the sound of a keyboard being typed on)

You can't unsay something, can you?

(a FAX tone dialing and then connecting)
Nema reverof yrolg eht dna rewop

(a computer voice “press 1 to save”)

There’s only one of us here.

(intermittent machine-gun fire)

Mephisto, I grant you my soul.

Name, Date

(Sound of a large bomb exploding while the following line fades in.)

You have no language of your own.

(The text fades out. A looped recording of a young woman’s voice begins. It sounds like an old record, skipping. The phrase repeats several times.)

I just wonder sometimes . . . what is it we all want? And what happens when we get it?

End of Play