

ON DEATH

written by

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Afraid and Not Afraid stand in a line; every few moments they step forward a pace, moving downstage center.

AFRAID

I don't like these things.

NOT AFRAID

Who does? Who *likes* these things? *No one* likes these things.

AFRAID

"He looks good"; that's what they always say; that's what Mom said. "He looks alive."

NOT AFRAID

He's not, so why should we care? How he looks? He's not; he's just laying there in the nothingness of it; why should we care how he *looks*?

AFRAID

I want to look alive... when I'm dead. If there's an open one...like here...I want to at least look alive. Promise me?

NOT AFRAID

I won't even promise you a funeral...not that anyone would come to anyways. Maybe a dance? A dinner? Not that I don't like you...love you...I just wonder what's the point, you know? Why waste the time for someone who doesn't even know it's been wasted?

AFRAID

It's not for you...it's for them...for everyone else. The people left. I don't want to go and be forgotten, do you?

NOT AFRAID

I don't know. I don't know why I should care, to be frank; it's just like before you were born; nothing, but not a nothing you can understand...it's just...

The actor should find a physical gesture of nothingness.

AFRAID

Do you like that? No god, no heaven, no afterlife, no anything...just...blank?

NOT AFRAID

You're afraid of it because you don't know...right? Like the dark...your night light wasn't for the darkness...it was for what might be in the darkness...the thing you don't know...what's not there. Schrodinger's existential dread.

AFRAID

What if it's something...when you go? What if it isn't nothing?

NOT AFRAID

I guess I'll learn when I get there. Why be afraid of it now?

Stepping up to a "casket", looking down at the inhabitant. A few beats of silence.

AFRAID

It's not for him...this isn't **for** him...it's for *us*. He doesn't know we are here, but we know it...we do it for us.

NOT AFRAID

Pay respects? Leave flowers? Drop by the graveside every few years so we don't feel badly about ourselves, convince ourselves we haven't forgotten them? Do you even remember his voice anymore? What he looked like, how he moved? It doesn't matter to him...it won't...years after...hundreds of visits later...thousands of flowers later.

AFRAID

But I want it for me. And I want others to want it when I go.

NOT AFRAID

This is the first thing we do...the first place we start...not a first breath, not a first cry...the moment we're born we start to die. We deteriorate...little by little...day by day..."dust to dust." Why be afraid of the inevitable? Why fight it?

AFRAID

Because of everyone else.

(beat)

You're here for everyone else.