

In darkness...A clock ticks. The wind is heard. Water sloshes. A tapping sound. One at a time, then all at once. Then it becomes ambient, far enough away not to distract, but never gone. Still in darkness...

ACTOR 4

How did we get on this topic?

ACTOR 1

You asked us if we've achieved lesbian bed death yet.

ACTOR 3

Yes, and it was such a personal question.

ACTOR 4

But you haven't answered.

ACTOR 3

Babe-

ACTOR 4

What? I mean, it's a valid question.

ACTOR 2

Well, let me ask you something, while we're on the topic. Why do gay men place such importance on sex? I mean are you all having as much sex as you seem to be suggesting?

ACTOR 1

Honey, you can't ask them that.

ACTOR 2

Why not?

ACTOR 3

No, no, no, it's a fair question.

ACTOR 4

Sex is an important part of the male homosexual landscape.

Beat. They all snicker.

ACTOR 4

What?

ACTOR 3

The male, homosexual landscape?

ACTOR 4

Fuck you! I was trying to sound diplomatic.

ACTOR 1

Well, I, for one, think it's a fascinating subject.

ACTOR 2

You do?

ACTOR 1

Yes, I mean why are we so afraid to talk about it? We're all friends here, /aren't we?

ACTOR 3

Yes, of course, but why is it that people who identify as queer have to answer these kinds of questions?

ACTOR 4

Oh come on!

ACTOR 2

I agree.

ACTOR 1

You do not!

ACTOR 2

Of course I do. Straight people don't have to go around justifying every time they feel horny, or explain every time they don't want to have sex.

ACTOR 4

Wait, wait, wait! There are times you don't want to have sex?

ACTOR 1

There it is.

ACTOR 3

Don't be such a faggot, darling.

A gasp

ACTOR 2

Oh, I hate that word.

ACTOR 1

It's better than dyke.

ACTOR 3

I don't think it is.

ACTOR 1

Well of course you don't.

ACTOR 2

Maybe we should refrain from using any epithets.

ACTOR 4

Again, why are we so afraid of language. Especially when we're together. I mean, there has to be safety when we're alone together doesn't there?

ACTOR 1

Why does safety automatically have to include course or offensive language?

ACTOR 4

Because, it's part of our cause!

ACTOR 2

Our cause? We don't have the same cause.

ACTOR 1

Yeah, for starters you're men, there's no way you can understand-

ACTOR 4

Oh my god! You are not going to man-shame us! We are not the same as heterosexual men and you know it.

ACTOR 3

Why is it okay to shame heterosexual men?

A gasp.

ACTOR 2

Are you kidding?

ACTOR 3

No.

ACTOR 4

Don't listen to him, she has the radical notion that men have had it no better than women throughout history.

ACTOR 2

Well that's offensive.

ACTOR 1

But isn't that what most men think?

ACTOR 4

Oh, are you generalizing about all men?

ACTOR 2

I think what she meant was-

ACTOR 1

You don't have to speak for me.

ACTOR 3

I just meant that human history is filled with atrocities toward men and women and why does it have to be a contest for who had it the worst?

ACTOR 1

I think your male privilege makes it impossible for you to see history accurately?

ACTOR 2

Oh come on, now-

ACTOR 4

So, only a woman can see history accurately?

ACTOR 1

No! Only a queer woman of color can see history accurately.

ACTOR 3

That's a bit extreme, isn't it? I mean how many queer women of color can there be in the world?

ACTOR 2

Why are we talking about this?

Lights up. All four actors notice the audience, and become terrified and move

as far away from the audience as they can. But they are unable to leave the stage.

Oh my god!
ACTOR 1

/What the hell?
ACTOR 3

/What is this?
ACTOR 4

Jesus Christ!
ACTOR 2

ACTOR 1
Okay, let's stay calm. Let's not do anything rash. Let's just smile and get the fuck out of here.

Actor 3 goes to the edge of the stage.

I can't leave.
ACTOR 3

ACTOR 1
What? What does he mean he can't leave?

ACTOR 2
What is he talking about?

Actor 3 can't move, he turns to the others.

ACTOR 3
I can't. I can't leave.

ACTOR 4
Oh don't be ridiculous.

Actor 4 goes to the edge of the stage and stops.

ACTOR 3
See!

ACTOR 4

Oh my god, he's right.

ACTOR 2

That's ridiculous.

ACTOR 4

No, I can't leave either.

ACTOR 1

Oh please!

*Actor 1 walks to the edge of the stage
and stops.*

ACTOR 1

Well, isn't that odd?

ACTOR 2

You can't leave, either?

ACTOR 1

Well, this is ridiculous! Of course I can leave.

Beat.

ACTOR 2

Why aren't you leaving then?

ACTOR 1

If you think it's so easy you come do it!

ACTOR 2

I'm frightened.

ACTOR 3

Of what?

ACTOR 2

Of them!

They all look to the audience.

ACTOR 3

Yeah, why are they here?

ACTOR 1

Don't you think the better question is why are we here?

ACTOR 4

How is that the better question?

ACTOR 1

They're obviously here to see a show! We, on the other hand, are the show!

ACTOR 2

Make them go away!

ACTOR 3

That's ridiculous! How are we the show?

Actor 1 dramatically motions to the audience and then to the actors on the stage.

ACTOR 4

I wasn't told I was going to be in a show.

ACTOR 2

I don't even like being in the audience of a show! It makes me feel vulnerable somehow. Make them go away! Turn the lights back off.

ACTOR 1

They don't go away when the lights go out. We know they're there.

ACTOR 4

You can't unsee what you've seen.

ACTOR 3

How did we get here? Does anyone remember getting on stage?

Beat

ACTOR 1

No.

ACTOR 2

Look at them! Look at how they're all just staring at us!

ACTOR 1

Oh god, were they there listening to our conversation?

ACTOR 2

Staring like we're supposed to do something to entertain them!
They make me sick.

ACTOR 4

Maybe we should do something.

ACTOR 3

Like what?

ACTOR 2

Grotesque! Look at their hungry faces, all of them.

ACTOR 4

We could perform a scene.

ACTOR 3

A scene?

ACTOR 1

I'm not performing for anybody.

ACTOR 2

What are you looking at!?

Actor 2 goes to the edge of the stage.

ACTOR 4

Yes, yes, we can pretend to be actors.

ACTOR 2

Don't look at us! Look away.

ACTOR 1

It's okay. Maybe if we pretend for them, then they will go away.

ACTOR 2

I don't want them to look at me anymore.

ACTOR 4

We start in one place..

ACTOR 1

We just have to play along.

ACTOR 2

I don't want to.

ACTOR 4

And for no reason, no discernible, clear-headed reason, we wind up in another.

ACTOR 1

Oh come on, we've done this before.

ACTOR 2

No!

ACTOR 4

The link from one to the next as thin as the synapse of one neuron, one cell that holds to the belief that what is real is real and what is imagined...

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our show!

ACTOR 3

What are you doing?

ACTOR 4

It's one synapse! One tiny microscopic variable that tells me that what is happening is in fact real, and for the sake of any remnants of my sanity, I am choosing to control the fucking narrative!

ACTOR 3

Oh. Well that makes sense.

ACTOR 1

We have a very special performance for you tonight!

ACTOR 3

We do?

ACTOR 1

We do.

ACTOR 4

We do!

ACTOR 2

Wait, what's happening?

ACTOR 1

I had this dream once. The word dream isn't all that different from the word wish. I dreamt only in words. There were no images. Mother said it was because I was trying not to see something. I dreamt that I wished. I wished I were a fish. A fish with gills. I wished I could breathe underwater and swim home to my family and we could all swim together in the cold, cold water. How do fish tell each other apart?

ACTOR 4

They all look the same.

ACTOR 1

How does one fish choose a destiny different from the rest of her family?

ACTOR 3

They all do the same things.

ACTOR 1

But this is a metaphor. Language by itself as words, not even a voice. How can something exist just in itself? But the firing of electrons, they only exist in and off themselves. It's we who create the story.

ACTOR 2

I dreamt I was a butterfly.

ACTOR 1

And so you were!

ACTOR 3

The room was enclosed. Like a theater. Like this. But attached to it, another room-

ACTOR 1

How many fish dream of being actors?

ACTOR 4

And there was an electrical current running through everything around us. The light fixtures, the walls, even the plants.

ACTOR 2

I had colorful wings, but my own face. I was hideous.

ACTOR 3

And my mother was there. And she was crying.

ACTOR 1

Words that don't look like anything.

ACTOR 4

There was a clock, ticking somewhere. Incessant. Constant. I could feel it. No one could hear it, but it was there, inside of me. And I wasn't who I used to be.

ACTOR 2

I remember being trapped inside the cocoon. The thick viscous covering my body, inside my mouth, my eyes, my ears- globs of gel suffocating me from every side. And the wind...

ACTOR 3

"Don't be afraid," she said, "It's almost over," she said.

ACTOR 2

Whistling through my temporary shell. My home.

ACTOR 1

If I wake up, I will see words for real. They won't be invisible anymore. Something strange in the mix of things here. The wrong colors blend together, the rooms are too large or too small. There's a dining room in the movie theater. A newsstand in the bathroom. Two versions of who I am exist in one place at the same time! Caterpillar. Butterfly. If you look closely, you can see them both.

ACTOR 4

And all the miles between now and then all laid out and coiled up in front of me. Like a pile of shit. Anomalous and congruent at the same nauseating moment. And all the people I used to know, used to love, used to dream with, lie with, play with, all in their place, all poking out of the shit, in their own immutable place. Immoveable. Their eyes glued to something off, something far off in the distance. And I just wax a kind of grotesquery. Dumpster poetry. And then the dream shifts.

ACTOR 2

Under the pale lavender moon, the honeysuckle midnight of August- All I have to do is move and I'll take flight. Into the wind I hear. Face first. I just have to make the first move. Do butterflies have faces?

ACTOR 1

They must.

ACTOR 4

We call it the face of the clock. Does that mean time has a face?

ACTOR 3

And then I feel the blade. Hot steel. Right here. Piercing all the way down past my heart, into bone. And I feel it stuck inside "It's done now," she says.

ACTOR 1

But these are just words. Sounds meant for something. It's not real. A nocturnal recital. Infected by reason. The subconscious creates a perfectly nuanced disease. And we sit still. Under the moon. Floating adrift. Neither air nor land nor water nor fire. But a space invented for us. By us. And then we're gone...

They all look far off in the distance.

ACTOR 4

Is this what you came to see?

Long pause

Blackout

End of Play