

PITCH-BLACK STAGE

K. Lin

A MAN is on stage, sitting in a chair. He nervously repositions himself, then calls out to the void.

MAN: Can you hear me? Hey! I see shadows.

I've missed you. Do you miss me? Look at me; I'm all alone now.

Come to me, so I can feel you while we pass through each other sifting like thin air –

Let's finish eating the last dinner we didn't get to finish. It's never enough, is it?

We're greedy creatures.

He stands up, then walks to the edge of the stage.

MAN: Give your hand to me. The coldness must be quite funny. Wanna go out with me?

A VOLUNTEER takes his hand and walks onto the stage. They walk in circles, tracing the perimeter of the stage. The man turns to his companion while walking.

The man whips out a phone from his pocket.

MAN: Welcome to the nothingness! Without you, I've been alone for so long.

You know that feeling when you struggle to get out of bed? You decide to slip back into a slumber for another 10 minutes, only to wake up 4 hours later; alone in the room. You're angry. You decide to skip the day entirely, opting to stay in bed.

Scrolling scrolling scrolling scrolling scrolling scrolling

THERE'S BOOZE! You find leftover alcohol by the bed to fuel the scrolling, so you keep scrolling scrolling scrolling until you're too exhausted to continue. You go back to sleep again.

That's how I've lived and continue to exist. I'm sorry I made all these years so miserable for you. You'd always talk to me and try to cheer me up, but I failed your hopes.

I died like this. You tried to take me out and out and out but I could never change.

(To volunteer)

What's that? You don't blame me? I doubt that, but it doesn't matter. I'm on the other side now. Soon you'll have to return to where the lights are, outside the screen. The curtains will fall, and it'll appear as if I was never here.

So let's walk and walk and walk again, trace the edges and corners and reunite. We fish, even when there's no pond. We are still free to swim, even when we're on land with no water. We are free to think. But am I even thinking anymore, at this *stage*?

I've forgotten who you were to me, and I'm nothing to you now that I'm gone.

I was always absent.

It is time for me to go now.

The man turns the chair around and sits back down. VOLUNTEER leaves.

The curtains drop.

Confirm Humanity

K. Lin

We need to confirm you're a human

For there aren't many left
On this barren land. At night
The catfish is on duty,

Playing games of make-believe;
Nighthawks loom over lunar
Cracks of doom, rescinding
Ominous promises of the day.

We have to verify your identity

Since you might as well
Be a thief. Stealing
Souls of sugary drinks, healing

The lack of dopamine. Temporarily

You are the benevolent god
Modifying our psychology,
Manipulating our DNA,

All in vain

For we know you to be a mere digital phantom
With electrolyte trickling out your veins.
The real humans will transcend your boundaries –

Unexpected Error: Overflow;

The overflowing words echo
Last lingering commands:
%whoami?