

der Schrei des Unnatürlichen

A play originally conceived and submitted as a participant in Annexus Theatre Company's TWENTY (20) for 2020 - A Playwriting Challenge and Contest aka "The QuarantENS" during the COVID-19 quarantine in the United States.

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## Cast of Characters

<u>MAN:</u>	20's to 30's. Attractive. Fit.
<u>VOICE 1:</u>	off-stage or pre-recorded
<u>VOICE 2:</u>	off-stage or pre-recorded
<u>VOICE 3:</u>	off-stage or pre-recorded
<u>VOICE 4:</u>	off-stage or pre-recorded
<u>Additional voices:</u>	off-stage or pre-recorded

DER SCHREI DES UNNATÜRLICHENScene 1

LIGHTS FADE UP

A man sits in a dimly lit living room, possibly just a light from over the stove, or maybe there's a gentle slip of light from an offstage room like the bathroom... whatever it is, it's not purposeful illumination... it's coincidence. The brightest light on the stage is in fact a phone the man holds in his hand.

What the man is wearing is unimportant. Not that the playwright, director, or designer doesn't care... but the Man certainly does not. He has passed the point of dressing with importance. He isn't gross... just unimportant. His hair is unmannered. Again, not gross... just unmannered.

He is sitting looking at his phone intently, totally inside the device, the blue light causing obscene shadow obscuring the accurate proportion of his face.

It is silent. Very silent.

The man sits and scrolls thru is phone. From time to time the sound of a facebook like, a news notification, ...unimportant noise. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

After a while, the man puts down the phone, and searches for a remote. He finds it wherever he finds it and he turns on the TV, the light filling the general area of the man. Whether we see what's on the screen is up to you.

The man clicks thru a few options, an almost unending click, click, click, click as if he's scrolling thru options on netflix that will never satisfy... until he slows and stops clicking. Transfixed, clicking ceased, remote in hand, just looking at the screen. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

The man searches, without getting up, the room. There's nothing for him here. Slowly, pulled by some invisible force, he get up and wanders from where he was sitting. Where's he going?... does

he know? He inspects the art on his wall. Picks something up from the floor and pockets it. Eventually he makes as far off stage as he can get and communes with his front door. The door to the apartment hallway. And opens it.

He stands in the doorway. Poking his head into the hallway, looking left and right... peering, scoping. Silence. He looks at his watch as if, by this point in the day, he'd expect some movement in the hallway. A passer by of any kind. But there is not. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

After a while, the man slowly ... gently... like a child sneaking back in after a late night breaking curfew, closes the door not making a sound. He stands there... off as far on the stage as the door is, and takes in his living space. The light from the TV almost static, bright, and focused. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

With no urgency, the man goes to wherever he keeps some trash bags (under the kitchen sink maybe? the the closet by the front door?) and casually starts cleaning up the apartment. Picking up the haphazardly and randomly discarded beer cans, bowls crusted over with dried leftover yogurt, wadded up paper towels, and to-go food containers -- whatever it is, there's a few days worth of meals-for-one (small pizza boxes, small Chinese food containers, etc) in the general area of where he was first sitting -- as if he'd been nesting there for a few days. He places the items in the bag. Just cleaning up. After a while, satisfied he'd done enough. The man takes the half-full sack, ties it up, and leaves the apartment... leaving the front door wide open, the shaft of light perfectly rectangular on the floor. There is a silence.

After a while, the man returns, gently closes the door and stands there... off as far on the stage as the door is, and takes in his living space.

On the other side of the stage is another door. A sliding door to a patio or balcony that faces the inside court yard, surrounded by other

patios and balconies. The man goes to it, crossing thru the light from the TV, passing his phone, and open the door going out on to the terrace and stands there. It is silent. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

The man takes a deep breath, smelling the almost-outside. An almost staleness, but enough freshness to be barely appetizing. He considers the air. The taste of it. He listens to the silence.

He takes in another deep breath. This time holding it deep in his belly. He holds it until his lungs have sucked out all the oxygen and begin to burn from the excreted carbon dioxide. Finally... audibly... he releases it. He considers the carbon. The taste of it. And listens to the silence.

He takes in another deep breath. This one deeper than the last and when he filled to capacity.

MAN

**\*\*scream\*\***

He lets out an excruciatingly loud scream. A mighty roar of a scream. A YOP that travels and echoes around the courtyard for a moment. It is a devastatingly breath of fresh air into the silence.

Again, he takes in another breath.

MAN

**\*\*scream\*\***

Another YOP bleeding into the otherwise inarticulate tranquility.

MAN

**\*\*scream\*\***

The man stands and considers his scream. The taste of it. The iron suddenly in his saliva. The rush of it.

From off stage we hear a sliding door open.

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
... I don't know, it sounds like someone is  
screaming.

MAN  
**\*\*scream\*\***

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
What the fuck, man?

VOICE 2  
(from further off)  
What's going on?

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
There's just a guy on the other side of the building,  
screaming.

VOICE 2  
(from further off)  
What?

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
I know.

MAN  
**\*\*scream\*\***  
  
*A few other doors open*

VOICE 3  
(from off)  
Is someone screaming?

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
Yeah. Over there.

VOICE 2  
(from further off)  
He's just screaming?

VOICE 1  
(from off)  
Yeah, I think so. Come out here.



VOICE 1  
 (from off)  
 Fuck me!

**\*\*scream\*\***

MAN  
**\*\*long scream\*\***

VOICE 1  
 (from off)  
**\*\*scream\*\***

VOICE 3  
**\*\*scream\*\***

VOICE 4  
 What? Why?

VOICE 3  
 I don't know...

**\*\*scream\*\***

MAN  
**\*\*long scream\*\***

VOICE 1,2,3  
**\*\*long screams\*\***

*We hear more sliding door, and general "what's going on"s*

MAN & VOICES 1,2,3,4  
**\*\*long screams\*\***  
 (not in unison, but almost choral)

*Again, over and over (**note to actors, director and stage manager:** protect the actor's instrument(s), but) this goes on for as long as it goes on... more additional voices join.*

ALL  
**\*\*long screams\*\***

*The screams becoming more primal, unrestrained, fully supported by the breath. An ensemble of screams, waxing and waning in a variety of tones, timbres, durations until there is a critical mass and a maximum crescendo in one*



massive and deafening YOP. (**Note to sound designer:** THIS SHOULD SHAKE THE WALLS OF THE THEATRE! Feel free to mix in roars from animals, engines, drums, wind -- YOU MUST HAVE A SUBWOOFER! Ideally the sub is under the seats.)

And then... no active screaming. The screams echo and die. All that's left is the sound of people out of breath. Then silence. Then sliding doors. Then more silence.

The man takes a deep breath, smelling the almost outside. An almost staleness, but enough freshness to be barely satisfying. He considers the air. The taste of it. Listens to the silence.

The man comes back into the living room, closes the sliding door behind him, and takes in the area.

He lays down on the floor, on his belly, face turned downstage.

A gentle smile on his face and tears running down, pooling on the floor beneath him. He laughs and cries. This goes on for as long as it goes on.

MAN

Ich gehe nicht gut damit um

Silence.

The light from the TV.

A notification from the phone.

More silence.

The man does not move from his pronated position.

This goes on for as long as it goes on.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

END OF PLAY