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# I of the needle

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# I OF THE NEEDLE (part one)

## CAST a man or woman

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|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Interview   | 2. <i>I do not</i>                    |
| 3. Party       | 4. <i>Subjects I will not discuss</i> |
| 5. Witness     | 6. <i>Names of the famous</i>         |
| 7. Home        | 8. <i>List of occupations</i>         |
| 9. Immigration | 10. <i>Are you watching</i>           |
| 11. Nurse      | 12. <i>Change the unchangeable</i>    |
| 13. Help Group | 14. <i>Various memories</i>           |
| 15. Call       | 16. <i>I ... of the needle</i>        |

Stage directions are kept to basic suggestions only, using a single chair as the set; most scenes require more action and physical interpretation than detailed here. If the performer is male, he could begin by wearing a suit, gradually taking off items during the pre-recorded sections, as detailed in the script. A female performer could do the same, or find a suitable equivalent.

This is the first part of a full-length play; however, this character does not reappear in later sections. Part One was written originally as a stand-alone one-act play, and can still be performed as such.

Punctuation:

- indicates an interruption or break in speech.
- indicates a stuttering or a quick change of idea.
- . . . indicates trailing away, or brief pause.

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1. *A chair. The performer approaches.*

Performer: Hello, yes, that's me. (*The performer comes forward to shake hands, but gets stopped.*) You'd like me to sit *here*? Right. (*does so.*) All right, thank you. I'm sorry, what was the question again? How do I think I am suited to this job? What *part* of me is best suited to this job? What part of me, what part of me . . . well, I'd say I'm a good team player. I feel that it's important to fit in, to adapt to your surroundings. I'm professional, prompt and organised, and that's the appearance I try to present – well, in the way I dress, for instance. Yes, it's true that I have no actual experience in this field. Well, I've been - dabbling, I suppose is the best way of looking at it. Experimenting with various lifestyles. I haven't settled down to a firm career as of yet. It's not that I don't want to, no, no, far from it. It's just a matter of finding what I'm happy with - what I'm best at. But no, no actual experience. My best quality? I'd say my best quality would be a willingness to learn. Yes, it'd have to be with my track record, yes, that's right! No, no, I wouldn't feel tied down by the job, far from it. A job gives a person a focus. And I'd enjoy the learning. Well yes, of course there would come a time when that stage was over, when I'd learnt the job. Would I then move on? Well, I – Do I see myself embarking on this as a lifelong career? Well, let me – Could I express myself through this job? I'm sorry, what do you mean? Express what? My personality, would my personality feel fulfilled by this work? Well, I don't know, I'd have to ask it. I mean, it's - it's difficult to say. I'm not quite sure. I can't say right now that this is what I want to do with my life. I know I need the job, and I know I'll work hard, I can promise you that, but to be honest with you - well there, that's something you could say about me, I'm honest . . . you see, being, being *fulfilled* is . . . Look. I understand the conventions we're dealing with here. I know what you expect from me, what I'm expected to say. I understand how I'm meant to

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perform, how I'm expected to sell myself. Sell myself to you. And it's not that there isn't anything to sell. It's just that I'm not entirely sure how to package it yet. I'm not fixed on any definite goal. So the answer to your question has got to be no. No, I don't think I'd be fulfilled by typing out somebody else's letters, and filing them in a tray for somebody else to sign their name at the bottom, no, I don't think that would fulfil me. But I can't say just yet. I wasn't one of these people who said when they were six, "I want to be a fireman" or "I want to be a nurse" - or "I want to file other people's letters". I'm not exactly sure why I'm here. I don't know why I came. Does that make me unsuitable? Hello? Well, what is it? Am I wrong? Is there something wrong with me?

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2. *The performer unbuttons their jacket while their voice, pre-recorded, plays.*

Voice: I do not love. I do not hate. I do not have a particular passion for anything in particular. Or rather, I do not like to display this passion. It only leads to conflict. Your favourite sport is not the favourite sport of others. Your religion is not their religion. Your ideal partner is not the same partner as that dreamed of by the people around you. I do not subscribe to a newspaper. I will not read a newspaper in public, as a newspaper displays your class and your political beliefs. I do not keep a diary, and I do not take photographs. I do not have a favourite colour. I do not have particular words that I enjoy saying or hearing. There are no words that I enjoy the sound of. I do not prefer the town to the country, nor the country to the town. I remain indifferent to it all. When I greet someone I do not like to kiss either one cheek or two. I feel like I am being tested. To see if I fit in. I do not like to reveal where I was educated or if I was educated at all. I do not like the name I was given. I do not like to hear that name. I do not like the sound of the name and I do not like to be identified by that name. I would prefer to have no name. I would prefer to remain anonymous.

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3. *The performer is looking for someone to talk to. Pause.*

Performer: Hello, yes, hello. Hmm? Oh, I came with Donald. Over there in the corner. With the red shirt and the gin. No, no, just met him a few days ago. I suppose you know everyone here, don't you? Me? Oh, no, no, I'm not following a particular career at the moment. *(feeble laugh)* In between jobs, yes, that's it. Hmm? Oh, down the hall, second door on the left - at least, that's what I was told. *(Pause.)* Came with Donald? Oh, yes, hello. So you're friends of his, are you? Oh. Oh. Oh dear. Oh. Oh well, thank you for the advice, yes, I'll bear that in mind. What do I do? You know, I often ask myself that same question. No, I'm not following a particular career at the moment. *(feeble laugh)* In between jobs, yes, that's it. Hmm? Oh, down the hall, second door on the left. Not at all, no, no, I'll be fine. *(Pause.)* Sorry? Oh, I'm with . . . no one in particular. Donald said that? Well yes, I did *come* with him, yes. Well, I'm working with a company at the moment, quite a big one. Oh, you know, the usual routine - answering the phone, filing the contracts, down the hall and second on the left. You might find there's a queue. *(Pause.)* Oh, no, no more for me, thank you. Yes, it's a lovely place you have here. Yes, I noticed the collection of china ornaments, yes, a nice little army you've got yourself there. Me? Well, I'm working for an international firm at the moment, very demanding, just flew in this morning, actually. Oh, difficult to describe in detail, I've only just joined. Worked my way up from secretary, and now - oh yes, of course, must keep those glasses brimming. *(Pause.)* Hello, good evening. Fine. With Donald. Lovely place. Lovely china. A little bit about myself? Well, let's see. I used to work as a secretary, then progressed onto jet-setting, and now I'm currently on parole for murdering my fiancée by repeated blows to the head. With a rolling pin. Have I got your attention now?

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4. *The performer removes their tie while the voice plays.*

Voice: There are certain subjects I will not discuss. I will not discuss my sleeping habits. I will not tell people my dreams. I will not reveal my salary or my current employment situation. I will not discuss my diet. I will not discuss my age, and this has always been the case as far back as I can remember. I refuse to be labelled by my age. By what other people in my age group are like. I will not discuss the possibility of a God or my possible belief in one. I will not discuss my living arrangements or my choice of decor. In fact, I will not let people see the place where I now live. I will not discuss my zodiac sign. I will not discuss my place of birth. I will not discuss my parents, either my feelings towards them or how I feel my parents have influenced or affected me. I will not tell anecdotes that start with "my friend told me a funny story" as I will not have people passing judgement on what I believe to be humorous. I will not discuss what type of car I drive, my choice of colour, its mileage, how many passengers it seats, whether it has a roof rack, an air bag or a central locking system. I will not talk about any sexual desires or secret longings. I will not be drawn into an analysis of past events, and I refuse to answer questions about my future. My future is mine own and mine only, and I prefer it to remain unknown and untouched. All this leaves little for polite conversation. Only a few topics can be breached in my presence, such as the state of the weather or the time of year. External things that can have little effect on me. That cannot be deemed to reveal a particle of my character. A few safe topics make life much more comfortable. I prefer not to talk.

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5. *The performer stands behind the chair.*

Performer: You want me to tell it to you again? But it's all in the statement, isn't the written statement enough? All right. From when we came out of the club? No, I don't go there often, maybe twice before. They wouldn't remember my face, if that's what you're looking for. We climbed up the steps and started walking towards my place. About ten minutes away. No, he didn't touch me in any way. He made no attempt to touch me. No, we didn't talk. Not at all. After two, three minutes the other man walked by. On the opposite side of the road. No, I couldn't see his face – there were street lights, yes, but it was misty and his hat was angled down – the type detectives wear in old movies. His shoes must have been heavy - I remember hearing them clomp along the pavement. And he had a small dog, a small white one, on a lead. The man I was walking with shouted across to him for a cigarette. No, I can't remember the exact wording. I had no idea somebody would find it important. He was just asking for a cigarette, that's all. The man didn't react, but he must have heard, and then - yes, I'd forgotten this, the dog started barking. At the man I was with. No, it wasn't aggressive. Well, I suppose the dog could have recognised him, but it was pretty dark. I don't know what time. I don't wear a watch. It was definitely late - half past two, maybe later. It was another eight minutes to my place. No, we didn't talk at all. Yes, I'd remember talking. I remember *not* talking. No. No, I didn't know his name. It - well, it didn't seem important. When we got there – no, I didn't look at a clock. We went straight to the bedroom. He didn't ask for a drink, and I didn't offer one, so that was simple. Yes, I live alone. No, he didn't force me in any way. So, anyway, afterwards I – what? Yes. Yes, we did. You need me to say it? We had sexual intercourse. Yes. Twice. *He* did. No, I still hadn't asked for his name. No, I wasn't afraid. No, I didn't see a tattoo. I didn't notice any scars. I wasn't looking for them. Afterwards? Well,

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afterwards, he just left. Yes, straight afterwards. He didn't lie there, he just put his clothes back on piece by piece. It was all - very . . . sterile. He had folded each item in a separate pile. And I watched him put them back on in the same order he'd lain them out. Socks, shirt, pants, trousers, belt, coat, shoes. Mid-thirties, I suppose, maybe older. Yes, he had been drinking, I could smell that. Not that heavily, no. No, he couldn't have phoned anyone. I don't have a phone. No, I keep telling you, we didn't say a thing. From the time we left the club up until he left my rooms we didn't exchange a word. So I didn't find out his name. Well yes, I suppose that's true. He could have been planning to use me as an alibi. He could have been hiding out, just trying to lie low. Yes. Maybe that's all it was after all.

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6. *The performer removes their jacket, places it on the back of the chair, while the voice plays.*

Voice: Tom Cruise, Katherine Hepburn, Yehudi Menuhin, Pablo Picasso, Mikhail Gorbachev, Ronald Reagan, Laurence Olivier, Michael Jackson, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Robert Maxwell, Roland Barthes, Billie Jean King, Amelia Earhart, Nelson Mandela, Walt Disney, Neil Armstrong, Neil Young, Carl Jung, Henry VIII, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Elizabeth I, Florence Nightingale, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, Albert Einstein, William Tell, Nostradamus, Napoleon, Samuel Beckett, Thomas a Beckett, Joan of Arc, John F Kennedy, Jim Henson, Winston Churchill, Babe Ruth, Bruce Springsteen, Johann Sebastian Bach, Frankenstein, Frank Lloyd Wright, Anne Frank, Aristotle, Robin Hood, James Bond, Jesse James, William H Bonney, Cyrano de Bergerac, Batman and Robin, Antony and Cleopatra, Chuck Berry, Oscar Wilde, Alexander Graham Bell, Edgar Allan Poe, George Washington, Dan Rather, Richard III, Julius Caesar, Martha Stewart, James Stewart, Groucho Marx, Karl Marx, The Red Baron, Icarus, D W Griffiths, Arthur Miller, Stanley Kubrick, H G Wells, Orson Welles, Peter Pan, Jay Gatsby, Genghis Khan, Christopher Columbus, Saint Paul, Adolf Hitler, Rumpelstiltskin, David Bowie, Lady Macbeth, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, the prophet Muhammad, John the Baptist, Cary Grant, Gary Cooper, Marlene Deitrich, Greta Garbo, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, George Best, Placido Domingo, Abraham Lincoln, Hercules, Muddy Waters, Louis Armstrong, Maria Callas, Glenn Gould, William Blake, Jesus Christ, Frank Sinatra, and me.

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7. *The performer hears their voice on a home recording.*

Voice: Are things passing me by? As I lie here. Are opportunities passing me by as I lie here? Is the phone ringing, the phone ringing, but my ears are covered by darkness as I lie here? Are the people I should be friends with walking past my door and down the hall as I lie here? Perhaps I should get up. I should get up and take a look. Or perhaps it's better not to notice. Not to let them know you're watching. Perhaps it's best to lie here. What do I want, what do I want? Do I want to lie here? Do I want to be *me*? Mm, but am I like me, like I should be? Like other people, like other people expect me to be? But what *do* they expect? Some work? Some sleep? To sleep. To work. To eat and to drink. To smile occasionally, to be concerned on occasion. To find some fragments and sew them together, to create a person that is confident and content. But I can't. Can't even manage these simple tasks. I try but I just can't. Here. In the dark. Here in the dark as the time is passing me by. Passing by without me. Without me. Me.

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8. *The voice emerges, fading up.*

Voice: . . . veterinarian, solicitor, mortician, carpenter, taxidermist, prostitute, doctor, policeman, bartender, lawyer, actor, writer, bank manager, cook, postman, psychiatrist, pilot, soldier, sailor, pharmacist, stock broker, librarian, plumber, dancer, musician, priest, inventor, philosopher, teacher, farmer, scientist, explorer, gardener, accountant, house cleaner, nurse, secretary, surveyor, architect, artist, journalist, miner, construction worker, conservationist, terrorist, politician, hair dresser, fashion designer, prisoner, thief, monarch, beggar, fortune teller, photographer, dictator, composer, academic, fireman, tailor, entertainer, astronaut, detective, janitor, poet, gambler, electrician, model, hotel manager, vet, computer programmer, web designer, meteorologist, hunter, healer, vandal, travel agent, estate agent, advertising agent, antique dealer, mechanic, bus driver, taxi driver, truck driver, train driver, butler, dry cleaner, funeral director, butcher, baker, dentist, auctioneer, fisherman, student, civil servant, diplomat, social worker, fundraiser, jeweller, car dealer, grocer, insurance agent, masseur, optician, timber merchant, scrap metal dealer, union leader, translator, athlete, welder, exterminator, unemployed –

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9. *The performer addresses the jacketed chair.*

Performer: Yes, that's me. I've come to visit your country. No, never been here before. I have a passport – for *my* country, yes, not yours. No, I don't have relatives living here. All my relatives are dead. No, I never had relatives here, not that I know of. There's no one accompanying me. Nobody's meeting me, no, I'm here alone. Purpose of my visit? Well, to have a look. I saw a picture. A picture of a desert. I've got it here in my bag, I don't know what it was that touched me about it – Hmm? Oh, I see, well, I suppose you'd better tick the box that says tourist, I suppose that's the closest. Oh no, not here on business. Not really. Well, it's only that - if I like it, I might stay. I haven't got a ticket back. Well, I suppose, yes, I'd try to find some work. I don't know where, I don't know anybody here. I'm not sure what type of work. What types have you got? Well, there must be *some*. No, I can't speak the language. I bought a book, though - and I've got a compass. I know I'm not prepared. I just had this feeling, that things will happen if you let them happen. So, do I sign my name now? Well, you've got all the boxes filled. Inoculations? Oh - no, I forgot – well, when – no, I don't think – no, I don't have – well, how long will that take? *What?* But I - you can't send me *back*. I just got here, I haven't been outside yet. Let me sign. I paid to come, I have a right to come. What's wrong with me? Please, just let me in. I won't take anything, I'll fill in the papers you need. I've got documents with all my details, I'm not a terrorist, it's all real. I just came to look! There's nothing in my bags, I swear there's nothing wrong with me, why don't you ever believe - look, I don't want your money, I don't want your jobs, I just - I just - I just want –

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10. *The performer removes their shoes while the voice plays.*

Voice: Are you watching me now as I walk down your street? Do you notice the details? Pick out the clues with your javelin eyes? Do you see me avoid stepping on a beetle in my path? Cross the pavement to evade passers-by? Do you follow me now as I open the door? Do you note I'm not the type to swing open both doors? Are you watching as I check the change from my drink? Watching to see how quickly I drink? Do you spot my arms folding across my chest as I toy with the matches in the ashtray? Are you working out how often I reach for the pistachio nuts? Am I the type that leaves the impenetrable, or am I the type to place the nut in my mouth and crack the shell open with my jaw? Are you watching to see if I glance in the mirror? Is there a crumb in the corner of my mouth? A crumb of toast, so it's toast I have for breakfast then, is it? Are you staring at the nicotine stains on my fingers? Are you making sure there are no rings on my fingers? Making sure no promises have been made? Do you scrutinise my clothes to see if they're faded? Are you searching for stains? Can you find any stains? Have I stained my clothes and yet still worn them? Have I worn dirty clothes in public, knowing they're dirty? Are you inspecting my buttons, have I undone one or two? Are you watching to see if what you heard is true? Are you watching my eyes to catch them straying, catch them straying with longing towards another table? Are you watching my eyes to catch my emotion? Are you watching my eyes to see if they're wet? Are you watching my eyes to see through to the truth, watching my eyes watching you.

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11. *The performer is sitting in the chair.*

Performer: I get pains. It's been a few months now. Since they let me back. They come around here, around the belly. Sometimes straight across - feels like someone's driving a bicycle over my chest. No, I don't smoke. Don't drink - not much, anyway. But recently, recently I've been having other problems too. My heart hurts. When I get stabs in the belly. It's exhausting. No, didn't tell anyone. My urine? It's - well, perhaps this is something else, but - I had some trouble the other day, yesterday. Well, it just happened. I was walking home and all of a sudden whoosh, it just happened, there and then, it spilled out. I went inside a shop, tried to sort myself out. No, never before. Oh yes, did it sting! Sleep is fine, fine most nights. Only a little exercise, a walk every now and then. Not much fruit, but I like rice. I sometimes eat a bowl of rice. Rice is good, isn't it? No, no smoking. No, I never drink. My top? You want me to take my top off? Is that . . . necessary? No, a different doctor isn't required, I'll - no, it's fine, no, I understand . . . *(takes shirt off. Terrified.)* There. There we go. I'm feeling much better these days. Don't smoke, don't drink. It's actually, I don't know why I came, it's - *(tries to put shirt back on, but can't find the right hole for the head)* no, I haven't been admitted to a hospital since I was a child, I'm fine, really, I'm wasting your time, it's just - *(suddenly the pain comes, and the performer clutches stomach in agony)* - no - no, no, I'm fine, yes - no, please don't call - it's - I'm wasting - *(searching for hole)* - who would have thought - who would have thought it could be so difficult, I got it off, I can't get it on - diabetic? No, I'm not diabetic either, I'm none of these things - what? *(looking at arms)* Which - which marks? *(rubbing arms)* These? Oh no, they're scars from chicken pox - that's no, I don't - no, I'm - I don't know what you're talking - what? No, I don't need an injection, I'm not, it's chicken, that's all - absolutely I would never - no no syringe - it's chicken, it's - *(scratching arms feverishly)* no no, it's - *(the pain*

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*comes again, and the performer falls to ground with a cry) – no, don't -  
don't touch - I'm fine - don't touch - please - I'm - I'm - no, it NO!!!  
NO!!! NO!!!! NO!!!!*

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12. *The performer removes their socks while the voice plays.*

Voice: Modern technology has now made it possible to change the unchangeable. My nose, which has had a blemish from birth along the left nostril, can now with a snip snip be made to match the exact image in my mind's eye. I can request for my cheeks to have the same glow and texture as your cheeks. The legs I see in a magazine can now be my legs. My hair can be transformed into any number of styles, and can be red, green, or blue, or even all of them at once. If my partner decides that my lips could be thinner, this can be accommodated within the hour. I can keep exchanging myself for someone else. I can give you now exactly what you want. There's no need to go on looking. No need for someone else. My eyebrows can be permanently altered to make me seem more thoughtful. The corners of my mouth can be raised, so I look forever happy. I can wipe away all scars. All characteristics. All memories. A passing comment is all that I require. You'll never remember what you see now, I promise. Forget right now what you see now. Just tell me what you want. Or what you think you want. I'm tired of looking for myself. And so tired of trying to please you.

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13. *The performer is sitting in the chair.*

Performer: I was told to come here. They said it might help. They say – no, I say, all right, I'll say it. I have recently developed what could be termed - what they have termed an obsession. An obsession with perfection. Perfection. I have recently become aware that there are many factors governing my life over which I have no control. I have realised that things in the past cannot be changed. I was born with this skin and this sex in a certain hospital to certain parents. I had no say in any of this, but this is what makes me, what makes me what I am. But now I - I have difficulty in defining myself. Despite this - *because* of this. I don't know what I want. Don't know how to get it. But everyone around me seems to have managed. *(Pause.)* My - my need for perfection, perfection as they call it, arises out of an inability to position myself. I feel caught. Between wanting a definition and between my fear of being defined. So I - I take refuge in - no, it's somebody else's turn now, isn't it? I've been talking for much too long. I want to stop these - *words.* *(Slight Pause. It's a real struggle.)* I take refuge in - no, that's not it . . . I escape by using - no, that's not it . . . I indulge in - no, that's really not it . . . I seek salvation in - no, that's not it . . . I find perfection in - in - I *avoid* perfection in - in - not, that's *not* –

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14. *Trousers are removed as the voice plays.*

Voice: I remember. Various memories. A host of ghosts, crowding in around me. I remember drinking tea. My first sip of tea as a child. Thought tea meant cookies. So asked for it. I had to leave it, it was too hot. Very embarrassing. I remember my shoes. Forgetting my gym shoes. Had to wear my black ones, I slipped around and bruised my shin. Very embarrassing. I remember a word. Getting a word mixed up. Getting circumcision confused with castration. Said circumcision is what they used to do to men to make them sing higher. In front of all thirty-two in the class. Very embarrassing. A book. Reading a book that wasn't meant for people like me. Being told it was the wrong book. Won't read that book any more. I burnt it. A look. Caught looking at another boy's penis . . . just to see the difference. My voice. My voice was very loud. Then I was told. Told it wasn't quite the same. Didn't sound the same. Didn't pronounce words as they were meant to be pronounced. Didn't feel special. Felt very left out. Felt like not talking. My handwriting. Working at my handwriting on a Sunday afternoon. Practising my signature. Hope I get bigger. Hope I get bigger.

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15. *By now the clothes are arranged on the chair to give the impression of an absent person – a person with no presence: the jacket is placed over the shirt and tie, the tie is around the collar, the trouser legs lead into the shoes, etc. At some distance from the chair, the performer sits on the ground in white underwear, hugging their knees. The performer raises their head.*

Performer: Hel · hello? Hello? I've rung to ask for · I've *come* to ask for · I'd like to be somebody now, please. I'd like to be something, or I'd like to end it all. It's one or the other. Hello? Can you – no, I won't, no I won't hang up · it's · I feel · trapped. I don't know. Trapped by it all. Every little detail. Why won't they leave me alone? No, I'm – no, don't, please, I'm lonely . . . I'm struggling – words spiralling faster, bits breaking off, pinpricks down the plughole, I'm struggling, I'm trapped – no, not trapped by a person, no, there's nobody, there are no persons, I don't know · trapped by everything around me. My time, my place. Like I'm surrounded in mud. Sinking in some mud. No, I – yes, I – no, yes, no, yes · I'm tired, can't go on . . . (*Lowers head. Pause. Raises head.*)

Hel · hel · hello? I've rung · I'd like to be somebody now, please. Something, or end it all. One or the other. No, I won't hang up · too trapped · just leave me alone, please, no, I'm lonely . . . I'm struggling · everything's around me. Time, place, mud. I'm surrounded by mud. No, I – yes, I – no, yes, no, yes · I'm tired, can't go on . . . (*Lowers head. Pause. Raises head.*)

Hello? Somebody now, please. Something now please, or end it all. Just leave me lonely. I'm surrounded by · I'm struggling · I'm – no, I – yes, I – no, yes, no, yes · I'm tired, can't go on . . . (*Lowers head. Pause.*)

Hello? (*Raises head.*) Hello? Don't hang up. An end to it all. Hello? I'm – no, I – yes, I – no, yes, no, yes, I'm tired, can't go on . . . (*Pause.*) Hello? Leave me. I'm – no, I – yes, I · tired . . . so tired · can't go . . .

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. can't - go - . . . . can't - . . . . can't - go - (*Long Pause. Bows head.*)

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16. *The voice emerges; perhaps the first syllables are repeated for a short time as the voice grows, then continues as below.*

Voice: *(rhythmic, at a very quick, frenetic pace)*

I - I am of this - struggling in this - in this time - this - this mud of time, I - I can't quite - no, that isn't it - if I - try I can - can - *can*, yes, yes, good - I can - define - no, that isn't it - in this mud of time, I'm now where I don't want to touch - no that isn't - don't want to *be* touched, yes, good, safer - don't want to touch people, by people be touched . . . I - I am - no, I demand - no, that isn't it - if I - if I - *please*, can't go on -

Performer: Shh.

Voice: Can't I - won't I - won't you - touch - careful now, don't talk so much, you really mustn't talk so - mustn't be so loud - one word wrong and they're watching - one word wrong, they'll know it's you, don't fool yourself . . . javelin eyes . . . piercing my flesh, breaking the skin, boring holes into my - my *self* . . . I'll show them, I'll tell them who I am, I am - I am - careful - one word and they think they know you, they slot you away, they inject, they immunise you, they're working out who you are right now, it's best not to breathe, best not to even breathe -

Performer: Shh.

Voice: Yes, quietly, quietly, quietly now, one word and they're working you out - working out how you work, stitching you together - and you're trapped, oh yes, yes, good, *trapped*, trapped by one foolish word, so it's best, you see - best not to - best not to talk - yes . . . sew your eyelids shut . . . (*chuckles*) Best not to -

Performer: Shh, shh.

Voice: I know, know it's best, but I, I want - no, stop, they're listening, you fool - what? - they're - it's madness, what you're doing - what? - shut up now, curl up and shut it . . . but I'm still here . . . still in this time . . . in this mud - in this, yes, I remember, mud on my boots, my little

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blue rain boots, maybe that's –

Performer: SHH!!

Voice: Oh, look, you've done it now! Little and blue! Little *and* blue! What if they were listening - then you'd be done, they'd yank at your threads, caught in your time, caught in your place, the fox is out and let loose on you –

Performer: SHH!!

Voice: *What?* What is it? I want them to know - what is it I want them to know? I - I want to be, yes, yes, good, I want, I want, I want them to know! That's it! - I know, that's it, I *want* - I *am*, yes, no good in hiding it, I need to place the point, I want them to know - careful now, softly, softly, I'm - lost it now, no, no, careful, that isn't it - it's, it's - what is it? I of - there are things that make me, something that made me - but what is it?

Performer: Shh.

Voice: Please, it's no good hiding, I want to be something - it's time to be something . . . if I - if I could - if I want, oh, what is it? If I - yes, if I, almost touching it now - I can, I wish, I must, I need - I speak, I move, I walk, I breathe - is that it?

Performer: Shh!

Voice: NO, *please* can't go on . . . I . . . I, yes, I of this time . . . I of this place - I - I of this mud, yes, yes - I, I of this land, I . . . of this tongue, yes, I . . . of this body, yes, I . . . of this face, yes, I . . . of this knowledge, yes, I . . . of this . . . I . . . of this . . . I of . . . of the needle –

Performer: (*raising head to the sky, flinging arms back – a loud, extended cry*)  
SHOW!!!!

END.