

Exhausted By You  
by Zack Peercy

WHO: Elliot (15), Man (older)

WHERE: Liverpool, or anywhere

WHEN: april 20, 2022. every day. always.

ELLIOT, 15, walks on stage with crutches. He moves at a steady pace.

MAN (O.S.)

Oi!

ELLIOT doesn't look back, doesn't think someone is shouting at him.

ELLIOT

It's 2022.

MAN appears, staring ELLIOT down.

MAN

You havin' a laugh?

ELLIOT

It's 2022 and I am 15 years old.

MAN

For Fuck's Sake!

ELLIOT

I don't know that you're shouting at me yet. I'm just trying to mind my own business and get to class. People yell, it's a busy street. But then you touch me.

MAN grabs ELLIOT by the shoulder and pulls him around.

MAN

What the hell do you think you're doing?

ELLIOT

It is 2022 and I'm 15 years old and you've just grabbed me. I feel the indent your fingers make in my shoulder; burning, firm. You glare at me. I don't understand. "What?" I say, "What?" because I don't understand. A burst of adrenaline.

MAN

ZHI DA TRINK FEH TRIM?

ELLIOT

My brain won't process the words that you're saying, my whole body is tense. I won't remember the details of your face, but I'll always remember how I felt. I will feel this tension all through my class. I will feel it later tonight when I tell my mum what happened. I will feel it in bed when I think about you forty years from now.

ELLIOT turns and tries to walk away.

MAN grabs him by the shoulder and spins him around again.

MAN

ESS TOROHI GALLEH.

ELLIOT

It is 2031 and I'm 24 years old. I tell my flatmates about this like a joke because I've made it a joke. This is a joke. Nobody else thinks it's funny. I still have the crutches. My flatmates laugh at the joke about how our place is so small, I don't even get winded walking from one end to the other. They think that's funny. But when I tell them about you, about what you did, they ask if I'm serious and if I'm okay.

MAN

KLAG QUILKIN!

ELLIOT turns around again and gets a few steps away.

MAN

QUILKIN!!

## ELLIOT

It's 2022 and when I tell my mum what happens, she cries. It was her idea that I walk today instead of taking the taxi that the school provides.

It's 2031 and my mum doesn't ask about my M.E. anymore. Sometimes I feel her watching me on visits when I get up to use the toilet.

It's 2055 and my mum starts using a cane. We exchange tips and tricks once and then never speak of our mobility devices again.

MAN comes up and kicks the crutch out of ELLIOT'S hand.

The crutch floats in the air.

## ELLIOT

It is 2021 and I am 14 years old. The doctors diagnose me with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. It's the latest in a long list of diagnoses. I am so tired.

It is 2022 and I am disabled. Though, I don't call myself that. Yet. Family. Friends. Doctors. They've all, at some point, assumed I was exaggerating. Called me lazy. Out of shape. But you were the first stranger to accuse me of faking. You won't be the last.

In 2025, a gym teacher tries to "build up my endurance" by having me run the track. I collapse.

In 2028, a university professor scolds my repeated tardiness. I fail.

In 2051, I am shamed by a parent in the park when she sees my partner carrying both of our children. We go to a different park.

The crutch clatters to the floor. ELLIOT slowly lowers himself to pick it up. He adjusts and keeps walking.

## MAN

DOSSUR RUNLET ICK

MAN kicks the crutch again and again it floats in the air.

## ELLIOT

It is 2022 and I hate you.

It is 2031 and I make you a punchline.

It is 2035 and I hate you again.

It is 2048 and I forget about you.

It is 2062 and I am 55 years old. My partner sleeps next to me. My children have gone off to university. I am at peace. And you rush into my life again.

My head doesn't flood with rage or pain. The tension you caused is a memory of a ghost. I'm just curious now. Curious about what you said, the one thing I remember you saying after kicking my crutch the second time.

The crutch clatters to the ground.

MAN

I'm going to kill you! I'm going to murder you if I see you again!

ELLIOT stares at MAN, doesn't pick up the crutch yet.

ELLIOT

I will never understand why you said that. From the moment you say it to the moment I die in 2097, I won't come up with a satisfying answer to why you said that to me.

MAN exits.

ELLIOT watches him go.

ELLIOT

It is 2007. I am born. I take my first deep breath.  
My life will be full of wonder and joy and love and disappointment and fear and hope and excitement and sadness and beauty, so much beauty.

ELLIOT picks up the crutch, slowly.

ELLIOT

And you will be part of it. You will be part of my life.  
And I will carry you. At times, you will exhaust me, but I will carry you.  
Because I am strong enough.

ELLIOT takes a deep breath. The lights rise with his inhale and begin to fade with his exhale.

He continues walking until he is off stage as the lights dim.

Once he is fully off...

BLACK OUT.

Inspiration:

<https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/boy-15-accused-faking-disability-237491>  
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Bio: Zack Peercy is a disabled playwright and screenwriter based in Chicago. He is a resident playwright at Three Brothers Theatre, where his play THAT'S FUCKED UP premiered in 2019. Other plays include ESSENTIAL STARLITE (2021 O'Neill Finalist, Blue Ink Semi-Finalist), IN AN INSTANT (Unheard Of Company), HARD-BOILED EGGNOG: A CHRISTMAS NOIR (Possibilities Theater Company), MUTED. (Bottlecap Press), KUBRICKIAN, and others. This Fall, he will be developing a new TYA play with Filament Theater as part of their SPARK Residency. Plays: New Play Exchange. Social: @zackpeercy