

6-22-2012

## The Energy Pulse

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### Recommended Citation

Terbrack, Erin (2012) "The Energy Pulse," *Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing*: Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 13.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/fishladder/vol10/iss1/13>

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## The Energy Pulse

*Two long, orange, electrical cords lie across the right and left halves of the stage. The positive and negative plugs lay three feet apart.*

*The lighting should be dark and moody. The sound recording of the low, bass like drone should come in whenever DANIEL exits the stage because of the power cords.*

*Soft overhead lights on DANIEL, a man in his middle to lower thirties. He's dressed in a muddied black suit and tie, although the jacket has been misplaced somewhere along the way. The tie was forgotten in the taxi. A belt of electrical tools is around his waist, and DANIEL's wiping oiled hands on his white dress shirt as he approaches the cords.*

DANIEL: *[to the audience]* This is the last connection. The final spark. It'll make sense once we're done.

*[DANIEL gets on his knees. Pause. He takes the right cord in hand.]*

DANIEL: You're lucky. We have more neurons than the Earth has humans, yet it took me a full decade to understand it. You. You just have to watch. But observe closely; your comprehension depends on this visual stimulation.

*[Pause. He finally grabs the left cord.]*

DANIEL: Joyce never understood it. I don't think I explained it to her right...there wasn't enough time. Her family didn't understand either. I tried. But they caught me before I could reach the casket and push the wire into her chest. Joyce wouldn't have felt it; not without any connection between her nerves and her brain. I hoped that there was something left, something to make her understand. *[Beat]* But it'll be different with you. I put everything back together, so I could show you.

[DANIEL *tries to make the connection. The cords pull taut with a foot and a half of separation. Pause. DANIEL tries again. Then a third time. He stares into the audience. Terror. He continues pulling the cord. A low rumbling drone begins to crescendo as DANIEL gets to his feet during his efforts, like the sound of a bass amp echoing through the room at a growing volume. Vibrating. Suddenly, the cord pulls back and the sound cuts out. The motion yanks DANIEL onto the floor. Instantly, lights dim up-front and spotlight on the upper stage right. PROTESTER I and ROBERT carry signs. They read of government hatred. The protesters are dressed in dirty jeans and Carhartts: electricians. JOYCE, a police officer in her forties, guards them.*

PROTESTER I: The government is a socialist bastard. What happened to free market? To innovation? How can you justify our President accepting this bill?

JOYCE: Stay behind the line, gentlemen.

ROBERT : The owner I worked for is losing everything he built. Forty years in the business. A lifetime of running wires through folks' homes and making a revolutionary energy company with his son. Our President is stealing it from him and giving it to some white-collar graduate who hasn't spent a day handling electricity. 'Energy Committee' my ass. No respect for the energy business. No respect for innovation!

JOYCE: Stay behind the line.

ROBERT: It's easy to ignore the hand of government when it's paying your wages. Dirty fucking pig.

[DANIEL *enters wearing a brown Carhartt jacket. He does not have the tool belt.*]

DANIEL: Robert, Jim needs to talk with you.

[ROBERT *and PROTESTER I give JOYCE a look before exiting the stage. ROBERT passes DANIEL his sign and puts a hand on DANIEL's shoulder before leaving. DANIEL and Joyce appraise each other. Silence. He uses the sign as a leaning post and smiles.*]

DANIEL: A normal Saturday for you?

[JOYCE *is unimpressed.*]

DANIEL: This place has a different atmosphere when you're on the other side of the line. Instead of expecting angry electricians to beat you down, you have to watch your back for the police. [*Beat*] I don't think you could throw me down, though. No offense. I'm sure your peers respect you. Just don't think you could. [*looking at JOYCE*] Want me to calculate the probability based on our height and mass differences?

[*JOYCE doesn't respond. DANIEL hesitates and then moves closer.*]

JOYCE: Stay behind the line.

[*DANIEL backs up. Throughout the following scene, there is a clear sense of space between them. When one steps forward, the other backs up.*]

DANIEL: You're quite sassy this morning.

JOYCE: I prefer working within the law.

DANIEL: That's what this is all about, isn't it? Feeling pride in an occupation, connecting to what you do and building up to something that you own and control. There's a tangibility to it.

JOYCE: You find it's worth giving up your integrity to support this protest?

DANIEL: The city council employed me to shut down the electrical sector the Unions were using to hold their rallies. That night, when I went home, I spent an hour staring up at the porch light. Just standing there. The next morning I turned the power back on, as I was paid to do, then approached the Union.

JOYCE: Stay behind the line. [*Beat*] You're the one who set up the electrical in the Union's tent?

DANIEL: Impressed by my work?

JOYCE: It violates city ordinances.

DANIEL: There's not an electrician left in the city who'd take it down.

JOYCE: Under threat of the law, I think they might.

[*DANIEL checks for any onlookers then steps closer. She doesn't back away.*]

DANIEL: [*teasing*] Is that a warning?

[JOYCE *checks the area. It's safe.*]

JOYCE: My feet were cold last night.

DANIEL: By the time Jim was done talking to me, the morning traffic was starting. I figured I'd apologize when I saw you later.

JOYCE: I didn't hear an apology. And you never told me about the little job you pulled.

DANIEL: Spontaneity is the joy of puppy love.

JOYCE: Afraid I'd actually arrest you?

DANIEL: Everyone has a reason for being here; why share mine when there are so many others?

JOYCE: If yours isn't any better, then what keeps you here?

DANIEL: I never said it wasn't better.

[DANIEL *drops the sign. He and JOYCE embrace and kiss. Eventually, JOYCE steps away.*]

JOYCE: [*joking*] Stay behind the line, sir, or I'll arrest you.

[DANIEL *steps closer. They kiss again. This time, he breaks the contact.*]

DANIEL: How long before the judge signs the warrant?

JOYCE: Tonight.

DANIEL: It's going to be hell when the police march Jim out.

JOYCE: We're all aware of that. [*Beat*] I didn't sleep very well last night.

DANIEL: I'm sorry I wasn't there.

JOYCE: I was staring out the window, wondering where you were and if you were here... my eyes started getting heavy, so I stared at the wall under the window instead, still caught between calling you or locking the door. Eventually, my eyes focused on the wall-

socket. [*Beat*] I started thinking about that first night. How you mumbled on about that theory of yours...and lying there, looking at the wall-socket; I think it all made sense.

[DANIEL *looks excited.*]

JOYCE: [*cont'd*] When I was little, I had a fascination with wall-sockets. I knew what they were and how they could kill me...but I wanted to touch the electricity hiding inside. I had stubby fingers, my sister always reminded me, but I was sure I could get one nail in the slot...maybe a finger tip. It got so bad I couldn't look at the sockets anymore. They were little faces, inviting me to try. Begging me to. Around that same time, my grandpa built my sister and me a miniature play-house. He even connected electricity to it later. But during the first few weeks that it sat at my house, the wall-sockets were powerless. So when my obsession got bad, I'd run stick my fingers in the empty power sockets. [*Beat*] It was always...so hollowing. It satisfied my desire to stick my fingers in the sockets, sure...but thinking on what you said about electricity...or was it energy? I was thinking that this must be what your theory meant...Connecting to the electricity. Feeling it jitter through you, pure energy.

DANIEL: ...That's nothing like it.

JOYCE: Oh. [*Beat*] Maybe tomorrow night I'll be awake, thinking about it again...I'll leave the door unlocked.

[DANIEL and JOYCE go to embrace when ROBERT reenters the stage. DANIEL and JOYCE hold back.]

ROBERT: Dan—Jim wants to talk with you. He thinks the pigs are planning something.

[DANIEL shares a look with JOYCE before exiting. ROBERT picks up the sign and waves it obnoxiously in JOYCE's face.]

ROBERT: (*cont'd*) Miss me?

JOYCE: This is your warning, sir. Don't push your luck further.

ROBERT: You still don't get what we're doing here. We're brothers—the men and I. This bill you and your President are protecting won't get in the way of innovation. Guys like Dan and myself should

have the right to build new energy sources. We won't let it stand.

JOYCE: I'm defending the public sir, not the Energy Committee.

ROBERT: The public doesn't want this bill! It'll get repealed. By our efforts we'll get it stripped. You can't stop energy; you can't stop the free market. Anyone who gets in our way will be pushed down! Wait, you'll see. We'll show everyone that you can't stop energy.

JOYCE: Just stay behind the line, sir.

ROBERT: For now...then you'll see things our way.

*[The light on ROBERT and JOYCE goes out. Lights up on DANIEL, entering the stage near the cords. He's not wearing the jacket; the belt is at his waist. He speaks to the audience.]*

DANIEL: ...Maybe I'm moving too fast. I set up the cords for you without thinking. It took me a day the first time, a night just to figure it out. Not this time. It's too rushed. *[Beat]* Energy is a proven thing; that I know. And like Newton's laws of motion, energy transfers from one thing to another. Because objects possess energy, potential or otherwise. Everything. No exceptions. And I believe these energies can have a positive or negative force, and that's what actually connects people in this world. Each of us has the ability to absorb and transfer energy, the choice of whether or not to push that energy onto someone else. And it keeps going—down the line of people in a never ending cycle. Because energy is always flowing. *[Beat]* But then...there's wall-sockets...They house electricity, just like the pulses in our brains. Only more. So shouldn't it be better? Shouldn't that be the key to our longevity? Just sliding our fingers into the sockets... Letting the energy connect. Overriding your nerves. Stealing your control. Faster. Powerful. Magnificent. Forever. *[Beat]* But...that's just energy without intent... *[Beat]* It should be different...energy is empathetic, emotionless. It's humanity that attaches meaning to it. That's we're here, isn't it? To make connections?

*[DANIEL reaches down and picks up the left cord.]*

DANIEL: We're never satisfied without it... We're alone.

*[He tries to connect the cords. There's still a gap, but it's closer. Tantalizingly. The low bass-line drone begins to crescendo as DANIEL follows the*

*right cord off-stage, looking for a way to give the line slack. As he exits, the lights brighten to reveal ROBERT and PROTESTER I charging on JOYCE. The sound continues rising.]*

ROBERT: The police are corrupted! You're paid by the politicians! There's no fair judge left in the state. The government shouldn't have control over energy. The judge has no rights to destroy this rally!

JOYCE: [*commanding*] Stop!

[*JOYCE grabs her gun. PROTESTER I strikes her head with his sign as ROBERT throws his hands up in defense. Silence. PROTESTER I hits her again. Silence. ROBERT kicks her head.*]

ROBERT: They want to take down Dan's electrical, right? [*he looks at PROTESTER I*] Let's give them a reason to take it down.

[*ROBERT and PROTESTER I grab JOYCE and drag her off the stage. The lights flicker. DANIEL reenters, the right cord wrapped around his arm. It's clear he's found enough to finally make the connection. He hesitates, then eventually places the cord on the ground. Pause. DANIEL looks at the audience, dejected.*]

DANIEL: A decade of inquiry...and a single night to challenge it all. [*Beat*] Maybe there is no real connection between us...

[*DANIEL thinks it over. Turns his back to the audience and walks away from the cord. Pause. He looks at it. Pause. Slowly comes back. The bass drone begins to rise as DANIEL kneels in front of the cords. He takes the right one and then reaches for the left. The cord is pulled away, disappearing off-stage. Silence. JOYCE steps on stage; ghostly. The cord is in a noose around her neck. She approaches DANIEL, who slowly struggles to his feet. JOYCE stops beside him. She leans forward, presenting the cord.*]

JOYCE: Take it.

[*Horror. DANIEL eventually lifts the noose off, exposing a red ring around JOYCE'S neck. She smiles.*]

JOYCE: (*cont'd*) No energy left to give...stolen by electricity. Powerful. Magnificent. Forever.

*[She reaches out, fingers close to his face. Tantalizingly. JOYCE steps away, disappearing off-stage. Silence. A prolonged silence. DANIEL carefully begins to unwind the cord, his actions gradually gaining confidence. He speaks to the audience.]*

DANIEL: *[thinking as he speaks]* There is energy in the world...it's a proven thing. And electricity does contain it...but that's not everything. *[Beat]* It flows through us, caught in the electrical sparks in our neurons and nerves. It's there, free flowing energy that's absorbed and transferred from person to person. It never changes, but the motive behind it does. Our energy, our influence, it's always traveling down the line, from the man who yells at his wife, from the wife who scolds the son, to the son that screams at his dog...and maybe...because our actions generate energies on others...we never really die. *[Beat]* We could be a part of someone. Forever. Stored as energy pulses, packaged and waiting behind a neuron in the temporal lobe...or maybe our energy is already being transferred, moving through the world from person to person... and so we are connected. *[Beat]* Your energy is being transferred, Joyce, through the wires. *[Beat]* I just have to find it with this last spark... this final connection.

*[DANIEL stares into the audience. He plugs the cords together. The lights grow in intensity, the audio drone complimenting its strength. The light holds, harsh and uncomfortably bright.]*

BLACKOUT