

Static

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An original concept by Eric Lester

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hands set down a RADIO, turn it on, and tune in through static to a live broadcast.

The hands close and lock the bathroom door, shutting out the hallway's light and leaving the bathroom dark. Only moonlight from the window and a glow from a small nightlight pierce the darkness.

The hands put a plug into a bathtub's drain.

Turn on the faucet.

Water falls.

The water hits the plug and starts to pool.

The hands adjust the radio's volume.

They straighten a tie in front of the mirror.

A toe tentatively pokes at the rising water, testing its temperature.

The hand shuts off the faucet.

The water stops falling. The only sound is the radio.

MICAH, early 20s, stands before the bathtub, dressed to the nines in a gray suit coat, no socks or shoes. He steps into the tub without removing any of his clothing, and slides down into the water.

He closes his eyes and releases a silent breath. The dim light from the window and nightlight dances on the dark water around him. He lets himself relax.

He opens his eyes and turns them slowly to the radio, which is plugged into the wall.

He reaches out to it, and picks it up. The broadcast flickers into static momentarily, then continues.

Micah lifts the radio over the rim of the tub, the chord going almost taut from the outlet to the radio.

He lowers the radio closer to the water.

His hands are shaking a little.

The relaxation on his face is long gone. He takes a deep, ragged breath.

(CONTINUED)

He closes his eyes. He takes another breath, bracing himself.

He brings the radio down towards the water.

Static blasts. He jerks the radio up and clutches it tight, hands trembling. He tries to catch his breath, his eyes pinched tight shut.

Through the static, a faint voice comes through.

RADIO
(distorted)
But hold on a minute, we still have
more to talk about.

Micah steadies his breathing and his hands, eyes still closed.

RADIO
(slightly less distorted)
And it's important that you hear
this.

Micah ignores it, lowers the radio a little closer to the rippling water, and prepares himself.

RADIO
(perfectly clear)
Yeah, you in the suit.

Micah's eyes snap open. The faceless radio stares back at him.

RADIO
Can I ask what you're doing?

Micah looks at it, tilts it slightly, totally confused.

RADIO
It's okay, you can talk to me.

Micah silently half-says the word "what?" He turns the dial to another channel of just static.

Listens.

Silence.

MICAH
Hello?

A voice replaces the static.

RADIO

Oh good, I thought you were going to ignore me.

MICAH

Who--what? What are you?

RADIO

It's okay, I just asked what you were doing.

MICAH

I'm not doing anything.

RADIO

Then why are you in the tub with a radio?

Micah sits up, resting his elbows on his knees and getting a better look at the radio.

MICAH

How do you know where I am?

RADIO

Could you maybe answer my question first? I don't want to be pushy, but I think it's actually more important.

MICAH

I don't really want to talk about it.

Silence.

MICAH

And really, you probably don't want to hear about it.

RADIO

But I do.

Micah looks down at the water.

MICAH

I think you know what I'm doing.

RADIO

Well, could I try to change your mind?

Micah gives a bitter half-laugh.

(CONTINUED)

MICAHA

No, you can't, you really can't.

RADIO

Are you sure?

MICAHA

You think I haven't tried to come up with a single reason not to? I have and you know what I found? Nothing.

The radio looks back at him in silence for a moment. The water ripples from Micah's outburst.

RADIO

You'll leave a hole if you go.

MICAHA

A hole in what? Nothing I ever do even matters.

The radio laughs gently.

RADIO

I'm not talking about what you do. I'm talking about who you are. Without you, there's a hole.

MICAHA

That doesn't mean anything.

Silence.

MICAHA

And honestly, nobody would miss me if I was gone.

RADIO

I would.

Micah smirks bitterly.

MICAHA

Great.

RADIO

If I was your sister, I would.

MICAHA

(quickly)
No you wouldn't.

(CONTINUED)

RADIO
Your grandfather.

MICAH
Not really.

RADIO
Your roommate.

MICAH
He doesn't need me.

RADIO
You really think none of those
people would feel it?

MICAH
Not much.

RADIO
Agree to disagree. And then there's
Jake too.

MICAH
Jake? I haven't talked to him in
years.

RADIO
Every good memory he has from high
school is of the two of you hanging
out. And tied to those memories is
a hope, an expectation that good
things lie ahead for both of you.

MICAH
Well he got that wrong.

He shifts and looks down at the dancing light on the water,
despondent.

RADIO
How do you know?

Micah's face snaps up to the radio again.

MICAH
Because I've wanted to do this for
six months, that's how. And every
time I tell myself, just wait
another day, maybe it will get
better, and never does.

The water laps against the side of the tub, rocking
dangerously close to the bottom of the radio.

(CONTINUED)

RADIO

Maybe rest this radio on the side
of tub. I don't think you want--

MICAHA

You don't get to tell me what I
want.

The water's sloshing slows.

RADIO

Okay.

Silence.

MICAHA

I just don't see the point. In
anything.

Silence.

MICAHA

What's the point?

RADIO

You tell me.

MICAHA

No, I wouldn't be asking if I knew.
I'm asking you.

RADIO

And I'm asking you.

MICAHA

You're going to say that I have so
much to live for, I have all these
people who love me, I mean so much
to them, I'll ruin their lives if I
do this, blah, blah, blah. But you
know what?

He raises the radio closer to his face.

MICAHA

None of that--

Knock, knock. There's a knock at the bathroom's door. Micah
pauses. He looks over his shoulder at it.

DAN (O.S.)

Hey man, you okay in there?

(CONTINUED)

MICAHA

Yeah, I'm fine. Just taking a bath.

DAN (O.S.)

Okay. I just... didn't see a light on.

MICAHA

Yeah, I just need some peace and quiet.

DAN (O.S.)

Okay.

Dan's footsteps fade away.

Micah turns back to the radio.

RADIO

It's okay to let people help you.

MICAHA

Just let me do this. I need to do this. I just... I can't keep putting it off, and putting it off, and going on and on and on.

RADIO

I'm not stopping you. You could have dropped this old radio any time. And yet...

MICAHA

I don't know, you're--it's not that easy. Just leave me alone, I have to just...

He looks from the radio to the water, then back again.

Silence.

RADIO

You have to what?

MICAHA

Just stop it. Just shut up.

RADIO

But you want to say something. Just say it.

(CONTINUED)

MICAHA

Just shut up.

RADIO

I will, I promise. As soon as you say what--

MICAHA

It doesn't matter! Literally nothing matters. You're trying to remind me of all these happy memories and people, but none of that means anything. Nothing means anything to me anymore. It's like, I can't get back there. I'm stuck, and I'm trapped, and all that's way, way back there, and I'll never be able to reach it, and I can't even see it, and I don't even care anymore.

The waves from his motion in the tub rock wildly, terribly close to the radio. He clutches the radio tight, not moving it up or down.

The waves slow. They die down. The water gradually becomes still.

Micah is just sitting there, his forehead pressed into the radio.

RADIO

Maybe... you don't have to see it. Maybe you can't right now, and maybe that's okay. Let someone else do the seeing for you, just... for now.

Micah chokes on his emotion.

RADIO

You don't have to carry this alone.

Another knock at the door. Micah tenses.

DAN (O.S.)

Hey man, are you okay?

Micah holds the radio against him.

He takes a breath, bracing for something.

He could go up or he could go down.

(CONTINUED)

He stands up, cradling the radio. He steps out of the tub, water pouring off of him. He turns to the door.

The plug comes out of the wall.

His hand turns the lock, then the doorknob.

He opens the door and stands soaking, dripping, holding the radio, looking at his roommate: open.

MICAH

I'm not.

CUT TO BLACK