

Nothing to Fear – a 5-minute play for 2 men
by Adam Webster

GEORGE, sits at a desk, alternately fidgeting, smiling, fidgeting, smiling. Across from him is PHIL, mid-50s, who extends his hand and says, with a booming voice:

PHIL:

Well! I'd like to offer you the job!

GEORGE:

Great! Great! I mean, are you sure?

PHIL:

Why wouldn't I be?

GEORGE:

Well, I mean, I just, well, I haven't seen the job description and, I just want to make sure it's a fit, ya know.

PHIL:

Well, it's your basic tech writer job, and with your experience, well, I'm pretty sure it's a fit. I wouldn't have hired you otherwise.

GEORGE:

Yeah. I know, I just want to make sure. No sense in leaping in only to find out, oops, not a fit. That would be embarrassing.

PHIL:

Right. (pause) What are you saying?

GEORGE:

Well... (gets a metaphor) I'm afraid of heights, for instance. But not the getting up part. I can get up. Fun. Exciting. But then I'm up. And I realize I'm up. And I'm afraid to get down.

PHIL:

And you're afraid this job...

GEORGE:

Exactly.

Is the cliff?

PHIL:

That I'll climb.

GEORGE:

And then want to get down.

PHIL:

Are you going to hold my hand?

GEORGE:

I'll get the job description.

PHIL:

And I'll get my list.

GEORGE:

Your list?

PHIL:

Of fears.

GEORGE:

A list of fears? You have a list of fears?

PHIL:

Yes. I have so many, I'm afraid I'll forget them.

GEORGE:

So, you keep – a list?

PHIL:

(nodding) On me.

GEORGE:

So you don't get in the middle of a cliff –

PHIL:

GEORGE:

-- and then remember: "Heights, Oh no!" Yeah.

PHIL:

What would happen if you forgot you were afraid of heights?

GEORGE:

(pause) What do you mean?

PHIL:

If you don't remember, "I'm afraid of heights"; what would happen in the middle of the cliff?

GEORGE:

I'm in the middle of a cliff? I'd panic.

PHIL:

Because you're afraid of heights. But what if you didn't remember you were afraid of heights? You wouldn't remember to panic. If you don't remember you're afraid of heights, you're not afraid of heights!

GEORGE:

That's not true. I often don't remember to turn off the oven, doesn't mean I didn't turn it off.

PHIL:

This is different.

GEORGE:

They won't give me renter's insurance anymore.

PHIL:

This is a state of mind.

GEORGE:

Too high risk they say.

PHIL:

Fears are a state of mind.

GEORGE:

I had a hard time renting an apartment, too!

PHIL:

[blank]

GEORGE:

I lost the job, didn't I?

PHIL:

No.

GEORGE:

It's my competing fear of failure and fear of success.

PHIL:

Fear of failure and success?

GEORGE:

I know, which doesn't make sense, what with my fear of mediocrity, because, really, what's left? I'm paralyzed, ya know? Inside.

PHIL:

Let me see your list.

GEORGE:

I'd rather not. There's some personal issues there. And what with myyyyyyyy (scans list; aha!) fear of intimacy ... you understand.

PHIL:

(waves hand) Fine. I'm just suggesting that keeping that list is what is keeping you afraid. Get rid of the list – get rid of the fears.

GEORGE:

I can't just "get rid" of the list.

PHIL:

Why not?

GEORGE:

Well, ya see, I'm a list person. I need the satisfaction of checking things off.

PHIL:

Of course you are. (boisterous, takes charge) Well, then, let's check them off!

GEORGE:

What do you mean?

PHIL:

Let's give them away!

GEORGE:

(clutches list) I can't just give away my fears!

PHIL:

You don't need them anymore.

GEORGE:

(crumbling) To who? Who would I give them to?

PHIL:

(scans office out of window) Give your fear of intimacy to Mulvaney. He's a little too intimate. He's hooked up with every gal in the mailroom ... twice.

GEORGE:

[blankly] Oh.

PHIL:

My wife works in the mailroom.

GEORGE:

Ooooooh.

PHIL:

Check it off, boy!

[GEORGE checks hesitantly.]

PHIL:

Your fear of mediocrity goes to Johnston. We hired that kid to be a real go-getter and now he just sits at his keyboard plinking away. 72 words per minute, my ass!

GEORGE:

Check?

PHIL:

Check!

GEORGE:

[checks, less hesitant.] Check.

PHIL:

Fear of success goes to Hill, that cocky prick. Fear of failure, let's see, Baroni. Let's light a fire under his lazy ass.

GEORGE:

Check ... and Check!

PHIL:

Excellent! Welcome aboard! Let me go square things up with HR and we can make the introductions.

[PHIL exits. Beat. GEORGE then surveys the list. Eyes widen. Fingers make check marks. Points at one. Panics. Circles it. Panics. Looks around. PHIL re-enters. Sees panic.]

PHIL:

What's wrong?!

[GEORGE points to list, frantic.]

Fear of emptiness?

[GEORGE gulps. Nods.]

PHIL:

What the hell would you be empty about?

GEORGE:

(empty) I don't have any fears left.

PHIL:

Um, um (mind races). Heights! Your fear of heights!

GEORGE:

(shakes head slowly) You talked me out of it.

PHIL:

(coaxing) But you still have your fears of emptiness, right?

GEORGE:

Yeah.

PHIL:

So, you're not empty!

GEORGE:

But it's lonely.

PHIL:

(getting how to handle him) And you have your fear of loneliness to keep it company.

GEORGE:

(brightens) Oh yeah! (suddenly sad) Oh no!

PHIL:

(hesitantly revealing inevitable) Fear – of – happiness?

GEORGE:

(sad. trembles. nods.) Yeah.

PHIL:

(resolved) This job is going to make you miserable.

GEORGE:

(beaming) Great! I'll take it!

[BLACKOUT]