

Over the Brink

A One Act Play

By James M. Kemp

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2126 Red Oak Dr, S #47

Salem, OR 97302

Cast of Characters

John Tharpe – a Black retired male

James Jack – a Caucasian retired male

Setting

The play takes place in early January of 2022 in a small city in Oregon where a recently built medical center struggles to prevail against the Covid 19 virus.

On Curtain Rise and Lights Up

On lights up, a lightning flash suddenly lights the set, followed by a dimly lighted stage. Center stage, James Jack is seated on a bench to represent the front seat of a vehicle. He steers in an intensely focused manner and appears nervous as he steers.

More lightning is followed by thunder crashes. James applies a foot brake and leans back and lets go of the steering wheel, having arrived at the medical center.

John Tharpe enters stage left and walks toward the car seat/bench. He pantomimes opening the passenger door and slides in and sits on the bench next to James. His coat is wet. He carries a wet paper bag.

JAMES JACK

Hey, BAE (pronounced BAY). What happened? Can't they take any more patients? So, what did they do?

JOHN THARPE

They didn't do nothin'.

JAMES JACK

What do you mean, they didn't do nothin'? Did a doctor examine you?

JOHN

The fuckin' doctor didn't even come close to me. They put me in a little room and every few hours, this Arab dude in a white coat, opened the door and peaked in and asked if I was OK.

JAMES

Who was he? Did he introduce himself?

JOHN

Yeah, he said he was Doctor Pinbobby...Finbody...some such shit.

JAMES

Did anyone take your blood pressure or check your glucose level?

JOHN

Hell no! These young nurses with different kinds of uniforms peaked at me more than Pinbobby did. But I think they were all temps. One girl did say she was from Texas. I axed her where, but she just walked away.

JAMES

So, I put you in an ambulance this morning. You had a fever of 102.

JOHN

Yessir, Jim-jim. Let's get out of here. This place gives me the willies.

JAMES

You had just tested positive for Covid two days ago.

JOHN

Yessir, Jim-jim.

JAMES

Surely they looked at your clinical records. I mean, surely they saw that you had a liver transplant 10 years ago. Surely, they saw that your kidneys are going into failure.

JOHN

I don't know who Shirley is, but the doc had my chart and was readin' at it when I was in Admissions.

JAMES

And yet, eight hours later, they call me and tell me to come and pick you up.

In reality, you checked into the hospital ER by way of an ambulance. I saw the techs putting on plastic gloves and suits.

You got put in a room for eight hours where you received no kind of medical attention whatsoever?

JOHN

That is what I am tellin' you, Baby Boy. They didn't do nothin'.

JAMES

Did they have you sign anything?

JOHN

Hell yes! I signed all sorts of shit.

JAMES

What did the shit say?

JOHN

I don't know, Jim-jim. I left my glasses on the bedside table when the ambulance come this mornin'. I ain't got no idea what I signed. They just kept pushing paper at me. Sometimes, "Quick, throw it through the open door."

JAMES

Did you sign anything when they discharged you?

JOHN

Hell yes! They ain't gonna let you out of that place less they get paid.

JAMES

So you got no treatments, no tests or no medicine?

JOHN

Just this. (John holds up the paper bag.)

JAMES

And just what the fuck is in that bag?

JOHN

I doe know. Some subscription or somethin'. Handed it to me just as you pulled up.

JAMES

Let me see that shit. (Shakes a prescription bottle from the bag and raises it close to his face while he examines the bottle). BAE, do you know what is in this medicine bottle?

JOHN

No, Jim-jim. What?

JAMES

Do you recall the article we read about trying to improve your kidney numbers?

JOHN

Yeah. But I ain't eat no cheese for weeks.

JAMES

Yeah that too, but we read about stuff like CBD pills and other stuff. Do you remember what one of the suggestions was?

JOHN

Besides the pot?

JAMES

It wasn't pot. CBD won't get you high. One thing was baking soda. Do you know what is in this prescription bottle?

JOHN

No. What Jim-jim?

JAMES

Fucking baking soda! We gonna bake us some cookies or something?

JOHN

So, wasn't that one of them things? Baking soda?

JAMES

Yes, BAE. It was. But you don't need a prescription for baking soda. You can get it off the shelf at Safeway.

JOHN

So what do you s'pose they charged me for that?

JAMES

A lot more than Safeway!

The thing is you show up in an ambulance with at least three major medical issues needing some sort of treatment. And they put you in a room for eight hours and send you home with baking soda! Let me feel your head. (He does so.) You feel hot to me. You still have a fever! Did anyone in that place follow pandemic protocols? I know you wore a KN95 mask in the ambulance.

JOHN

Sure. They was all masked and wore gloves. I mean they looked like a real hospital.

JAMES

Dear John-john, they really didn't treat you at all. They just checked every now and then to see whether or not you were dead or alive.

You made it eight hours and they just said, "Now git the fuck outa here! Go home and let your partner worry about you."

JOHN

Let's not talk about it, Jim-jim. All that death stuff.

JAMES

But that's what it's about. You just got screwed by a traveling, temporary doctor and a busload of nursing students from Texas

JOHN

But, Jim-jim, I'm still here ain't I?

JAMES

Yes, you are here, Johnn-john. Yes, you are here. But for how long?

Lights dim. James pantomimes putting car in gear. Lights fade to dark as the sound of a car engine fades to silence.

