Twice as Bright

A One Act Play

By

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(Mathew Huested is a local small business owner. He owns Prelude Photography (yes, that Prelude Photography), has a wife and three kids. Writing has been a hobby for years for him.

His only professional writing credentials are selling his children's play, ADVENTURES IN GAMBERLAND a few years back.)

Cast of Characters

ANNE SMITH: A woman in her mid 30's

JOHN HANNAH: A man in his mid 30's

DR SCOTT BEERS: A man in his mid 50's

CATHY MEACHAM: A woman in her mid 40's

Scene

An office room with a table and several chairs. Papers and books and binders across the table. A few water bottles also.

Time

Very near future

Act I

Scene I

Setting: We are inside a small office in a large hospital. Interviews are being held here today. There is a table toward the center of the room with three chairs on one side and a single chair on the other. A stack of papers, binder, books and water bottles are on the table.

At Rise: Our interview panel is DR. BEERS, JOHN HANNH and CATHY MEACHAM and they are seated waiting for the first interview. ANNE SMITH walks in and our panel all get up to greet her.

ANNE
Hi, Dr. Beers? I'm Anne Smith. I have Buffalo Insurance.

DR. BEERS
Yes. Nice to meet you, thank you for coming up to see me.

ANNE
I've heard good things about this hospital (shaking hands with DR. BEERS).

DR. BEERS
We are the . . . cream of the crop.

ANNE
Remains to be seen . . . but still, nice to meet you.

DR. BEERS
This is Cathy Meacham, in charge of the nursing staff. And John Hannah, in charge of marketing and advertising.

ANNE
Nice to meet all of you

(Shaking hands with them).

(They all take their seats, which is followed by an awkward pause)

DR. BEERS
Yes, good. Good. (Pause) Why are we here?

ANNE
I'm here for the interview. I understand there is an interview process for this hospital.

DR. BEERS
Yes, for, well, employment. Yes. You are . . . And forgive me if I am in error . . . aren't you a . . .

ANNE
Patient?

DR. BEERS
Patient, yes!

ANNE
No.

DR. BEERS
No?

ANNE
Not a patient. Not yet. We'll see how the interview goes.

DR. BEERS
We don't interview patients. Not typically.

JOHN
Not ever.

ANNE
You, are not interviewing, me.

JOHN
(To DR. BEERS) She's interviewing us.

ANNE

I am interviewing you.

DR. BEERS
Oh. Okay. (Takes this in) Good day. Thank you for coming up. That's not how we-

JOHN
The board decided to adopt a new policy to adapt to the growing demand for patients. Essentially, we had so much money, we just kept building hospitals. And now, well, we need patients. So we are at the vanguard of change. We will sit down and, frankly Mrs. Smith, try to get your business.

DR. BEERS
Why am I here? That doesn't sound like my job. I'm an audiologist.

JOHN
Yesterday it wasn't your job. Today it is. Mrs. Smith is our first of today. There's a line of prospective patients.

DR. BEERS
A line?

JOHN
The line is out the door. We have five minutes to get her business. It's time to talk. So may I ask, what are you and Buffalo Insurance looking for in a good hospital? What affliction brings you in? And how can we help?

ANNE
Well, to start, I have cancer.

CATHY
We're great at cancer! Do you want a hug?
(The panel all rise almost reflexively to give her a hug)

ANNE

No, no. I’m all hugged out. Thank you. It’s ovarian cancer.

CATHY
That's our favorite kind! We deal with that all the time. Honey, we will be here for you every step. Especially on the bad days. Now, if I may ask, what stage are you in?

ANNE
Real quick, I don't have bad days. As far as my stage, I am stage four. So I'm no rookie at this. I've been at some of the best hospitals in the nation. But I want the best of the best. The cream of the crop, as you say. I want to take my illness to South Beach Hospital.

CATHY
(Confused) But this is Northwood Hospital.

ANNE
Right, well, clearly you are a stepping stone.

JOHN
(Jumping in) Can I say, can I say before you begin? I want you to know we are a caring hospital. Our Mission Statement is simple for our guests: . . . We Give (raising his hand up to make the pause more dramatic) . . . Hugs and Drugs.

CATHY
Hugs and drugs.

ANNE
Hopefully not in that order, but still a nice sentiment. We can start with that. (Everyone stands up to give her a hug) No, no. We can start with the drugs. Tell me about your chemo drugs

DR. BEERS'

We have several to choose from for you. Feeling a little under the weather? We have our the nighttime, sniffling, sneezing, aching, coughing, stuffy-head, fever, so you can rest Alkylating agent.

CATHY
We have a buy one dose of Topotecan and get a free dose of Irinotecan.

DR. BEERS
My personal recommendation for you would be our Gemzar which you can get in Strawberry-Watermelon or our new Sweet Chili.

ANNE
I'm allergic to Gemzar. I get Pneumonitis. And aren't you an audiologist?

JOHN

Pneumonitis? Not new to us. We have some fantastic steroids. With a wide range of side effects that you can choose from.

ANNE
  Let's talk the Chemo room. I expect to spend a lot of time there, and a lot of Buffalo insurance’s money. (The panel all lean in a bit closer) What's the view like?

CATHY
Amazing

JOHN
Gorgeous.

DR. BEERS
Breathtaking - (everyone gives him a look) - ah, very pretty.

ANNE
What's the view of?

(Everyone shifts around shrugging shoulders, clearly not knowing)

CATHY
Our vomit bags all come in fun, day-glo colors. The neon green usually blends (slows down, gets quieter) very well with . . . (trails off)

ANNE
Ok, what’s your morality rate?

DR. BEERS
Our mortality rate I would have to look up. I think it is 4%. The lowest it has ever been. We had a big decline May of last year.

ANNE
No. Morality rates. How many Doctors practice medicine with good morals here?

DR. BEERS
Oh, 42% for Doctors.

CATHY
Nurses are 93%

ANNE
How's your availability? Will I have access to my doctors 24/7

DR. BEERS
Oh no.

JOHN
Of course.

ANNE
When coming up with my latest treatment plan, will they include my suggestions in the plan?

DR. BEERS
Why?

JOHN
Of course.

ANNE
When I tell them that my friend from high school has a sister who's brother in law's mother is convinced I should be eating frozen peels of lemons with cayenne pepper, will they support that or ridicule that?

DR. BEERS
I honestly don't think they would still be in the room when you finished explaining-

JOHN
(Cutting him off) Of course they would consider every viable option!

ANNE
I get bored at hospitals easy.

CATHY
We have TVs in every room. We have local magicians that come on Saturdays, and they're not even that good, you can totally see how they do their tricks. You can use the therapy pool if you like. Wheelchair races are frowned upon, but sometimes we let that go. We even have room service now.

JOHN
Your room service fees can come directly from your GoFund Me account.

ANNE
Do you have good communication between doctors and patients?

DR. BEERS
Why?

JOHN
Text Tweets. IMs. Emails. All taken care of.

ANNE
What about phones?

JOHN

I said texting.

ANNE
No, what about talking?

JOHN
I'm sure we probably do.

CATHY
(Looking down at her phone, reading) I found it! Ovarian Cancer for a woman. Stage 4. We have an app for that! It's only 99 cents. Your insurance will cover 83 cents of that.

JOHN
That is very modern. We are on the cutting edge.

CATHY
You get: Diet suggestions. Exercises. Your favorite celebrities that have Ovarian Cancer. Push notifications for your meds and appointments. Also, share your labs, scans and test results to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and your Buffalo Insurance agent with one click. You can even live stream your exams if you wish.

ANNE
(Fake enthusiasm) Great! (Disgust) No.

JOHN
When you hire us, you hire our whole marketing team. We personally design business cards, t shirts and what not. We will sample the color scheme from your support website. Our most popular is the “fuck you I have cancer” business card. (CATHY gets up, picks a small stack off the desk and walks to ANNE) See a woman in the store complaining about how long the line is,

CATHY
(Sternly handing the card to ANNE) Fuck you I have cancer.

JOHN

You see someone at a restaurant getting upset their food hasn't come yet.

CATHY
(Sternly handing the card to ANNE) Fuck you I have cancer.

JOHN
Plus we set up an Instagram account for you to upload anyone that wrongs you. Complains you are moving too slow, takes your parking spot, like that. Take a quick pick, hashtag cancer prick and let the internet be the judge. I came up with that. In three years we've had two patients go viral (everyone cringes at that). Ah, also, we have T-shirts (holding one up) that say my CA125 number can kick your CA125 number's ass.

ANNE
Okay. Good to know. Uh, what else, any zombie issues (she says obviously joking)

Everyone gets quiet and doesn't make eye contact.

ANNE

(Concerned) Has there been zombie issue?

DR. BEERS
Nonsense.

JOHN
Of course not.

CATHY
Once.

DR. BEERS
It wasn't a zombie in the classic form. We were having the sleep study rooms repainted and moved them to a room next to the morgue. There was confusion in the middle of the night. And an incident.

CATHY

We have Magnesium Mondays! Free bag of Magnesium to anyone testing low on Mondays.

ANNE
What if they test low on Tuesday?

CATHY
Tacos.

JOHN
We give them tacos.

DR. BEERS
We have Taco Tuesdays?

JOHN
I think time is about up. I must say we are very excited about you. You've got great insurance. You've got a very nice personality. A good solid cancer. Great insurance. Lots of treatment options. And we will be there for you on the good days and the bad. I promise you that.

ANNE
I don't have bad days, thank you. And thank you very much for meeting with me.

DR. BEERS
Well, I don't mean to be impatient. Or impolite. But can I ask if you're going to hire us? We would love to work with you and your disease and of course, Buffalo Insurance.

CATHY
The sooner the better. Time is ticking away.

ANNE
I want to be sure this is the hospital that wants to cure me.

DR. BEERS
Anne, I must say, we absolutely want to keep you alive.
(ANNE turns to walk out the door)

CATHY

Absolutely. We'll be here for you. Good days and bad.

DR. BEERS
And we'll come up with a clear plan of attack.

ANNE
(Pausing, collecting her thoughts, ANNE turns to face the panel one last time)
A clear plan of attack? Does that exist? That's not me. I have a slipping grip on life. So I believe in the shotgun approach to a cure. I am on 1000 milligrams of Vitamin C a day. 2000 milligrams of Shark Cartilage. I drink red wine, black coffee, eat raw garlic. I'm on ginger and blueberries in the morning. I grasp at straws. I do yoga, reiki and meditations. I'm even considering leeches during the next blood moon while sacrificing a small frog. I say these crazy phrases like "my port is leaking" or "please not the same vein" or "I think I want a wig." I get excited about warm socks and cold caps. I have holistic mystics with their own herbals, I have holy rollers with prayer circles. I could practically be a Dr Seuss book of cancer. (playfully) Have you seen my scan? Can you make a plan? I think I can. But the drug is banned. It is something we haven't got. What? Not another shot? It's ok, just smoke some pot. That's my new life. Cancer with no answer. I'm done with sushi. I'm done with raw vegetables. I'm done with crowds. I stock up on mouthwash and hand sanitizers. I wear surgical masks at the movies and the mall. I read on, blog on, move on, dance on and fight on. I have Death himself wanting to take me to dinner and every time he knocks, I keep telling him "JUST A MINUTE!" Because I will not go quietly. Because I am alive to live. To live for me. For my kids. For my husband. For all those that love me. I don't miss a moment. I don't waste my time. As I get weaker I get stronger. And my family's fear only feeds my courage. Because Goddammit, if I am going to burn half as long I will burn twice as bright! I go skydiving, I go rocky mountain climbing and even on the worst days, I don't have a bad day. I

decided that long ago. That's the third time I've told you. Did you hear me that time?

JOHN
Of course, I'm sorry. And that's great you don't have bad days. Admirable. But what are you going to do? Are you with us?

ANNE
Do I have time for one more question?

JOHN
Of course.

ANNE
It's the most important one. This is the deal breaker.

CATHY
Ask us honey.

ANNE
How old are my kids? And don't you dare look down at your papers.

JOHN
(After a tense moment of no one knowing) Aw crap. (Giving up) Is there anything I can do or say that will change your mind?

ANNE
Nothing comes to mind. But can I give you something?
(ANNE picks up three business cards off the table and hands it to each of the panel members.)

ANNE
(Very politely) Fuck you I have cancer. Oh, actually, I'll take one more for my insurance company, thank you.

CATHY
A hug before you go?
(The panel stands and comes around the table to give her a hug)

ANNE

No . . . (scurrying out of there)
Weirdos . . .

JOHN
(Calling after her) It's our mission statement.

(BLACKOUT)