

A Scattering of Dust – A One Act Play by James M. Kemp

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Cast

Jeremy Taub – in the present, a very elderly male, dressed in a fashionable but comfortable men’s hospital gown.

Tom – the much younger male nurse sent from a hospice group to make Jeremy's final hours comfortable and pain free. Tom is dressed casually with a sporty affect.

Ricky Stone – a young male nurse at the acute care facility.

Setting –

The entire scene takes place in a private room at an acute care and rehabilitation center.

Curtain rise/ Lights up

As lights come up gradually, Jeremy Taub is reclining in his hospital bed. His cellphone is propped up on his bedside table. He naps but his face shows an animated, worried expression.

Tom from hospice enters, sees that Jeremy naps, puts down his shoulder bag and stands to the side of Jeremy's bed and watches Jeremy sleep.

Momentarily, Jeremy shows signs of awakening, opens his eyes and looks at Tom.

Jeremy

Well, hello gorgeous!

Tom

Hello. I assume you are Jeremy Taub.

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Jeremy

I am and have been for the past 96 years. Some were good. Some were bad.

Tom

My name is Tom. I am your hospice nurse.

Jeremy

OK. Sounds good. What's the plan.

Tom

Well, first we have some preliminary stuff to take care of.

Jeremy

And then, I get to die?

Tom

And then, I take over your care and make you comfortable and pain free.

Jeremy

Yes. I am familiar with the hospice situation. We called you folks 20 years ago when my Johnjohn passed. Our nurse was named Ed, as I recall.

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Tom

Probably Ed Martin.

Jeremy

Sounds right.

Tom

Ed was the head of our Salt Lake City office for about 15 years. Ed is retired now. Anyway, let's take a look at your file.

Jeremy

Does it say I have been trying to die for the past 20 years?

Tom

No. But you mentioned religion. It says here you are not a member of any organized religion.

Jeremy

No organized religion would have me as a member. My John-john was Baptist. John-john the Baptist.

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Tom

This means you consider yourself to be spiritual but not religious.

Jeremy

Yes. In fact, I talk to spirits all the time when I write plays. Michael Jackson was very happy with my musical. But we need to pray for Michael.

Tom

Why is that?

Jeremy

Still in purgatory. All those young boys.

Tom

So, Jeremy, I take it your sexual orientation is Gay?

Jeremy

Since conception.

Tom

That's probably why they sent me. I am married to Stephen. We have two children. After Trump's second term, we were able to do IVF with a surrogate.

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Jeremy

Girl, you are already making me feel more comfortable.

Tom

Good. So, can we start with a little cognitive probe?

Jeremy

Please Tom. You are a married man. And I am too old for much probing. Can't we use Cologuard?

Tom

No. I mean a probe of your brain.

Jeremy

Like in Hannibal Lecter? Trump was a big fan of a serial killer. That should have told us something.

Tom

Jeremy, this circle is the face of a clock.

(Tom hands a clipboard to Jeremy and a pencil.)

Jeremy

Yes, Tom. I know what it is. You want me to draw in all the numbers on a clock, right?

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Tom

Have you done this before?

Jeremy

Sweetheart, before and before and before. Should I draw a backwards clock? My parents had one in their bar back in the 90s.

Tom

Nope. Just a regular old clock.

Jeremy

(draws and holds up clipboard)

How's this?

Tom

Very good. You pass. Now let's take another look at the stuff in your file.

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Jeremy

I'm ready when you are, Tom. Did you catch a glimpse of that blond twinkie nurse? His name is Ricky. Too bad you're married. You could be Tom and Ricky.

Tom

We could be cocktails.

Jeremy

I was thinking of the old cartoon series. Looney Tunes. Tom was a cat. Ricky was really named Jerry. Jerry was a mouse.

Tom

And they were partners?

Jeremy

Far from it. Kind of like Road Runner and Wiley Coyote.

Tom

Lost me again.

Jeremy

Another set of cartoon characters. Warner Brothers, I think. In either cartoon, one character was always trying to capture the other. Anyway, what have we got going here? When do I drink hemlock?

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Tom

Now that one I know. Socrates. Right? The Jesus Christ of Athens. I had to write a paper in my freshman comp class.

Jeremy

As yes. Freshman comp. That hasn't changed much. It was a flunk out class when I was at the U of I in Chicago.

Tom

How was it a flunk out class?

Jeremy

Vietnam. The war. Fodder for the cannons and all. There was this place named Parsons College over in Iowa. They had a tee-shirt students used to wear. It had a check list printed on the front – Harvard, Yale, Parsons, U.S. Army. If you flunked Freshman comp even at Parsons, off you went to a rice field filled with blood-thirsty Communists.

Tom

Fortunately, we have an all-volunteer military now.

Jeremy

There were lots of volunteers back then. I had a friend named Jim who volunteered. His name is carved in the Vietnam War Memorial in D.C. And he wasn't alone.

Tom

We had Iran under Trump. It was all technical. A couple of atom bombs and it was over.

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Jeremy

OK. Enough about the good old days. When do I get to die?

Tom

When do you want to die? How soon?

Jeremy

Shit. I have wanted to die ever since I lost my partner.

Tom

Well, I am here to speed things up. I looked at your Advance Directive. Looks like your daughter will be receiving your cremation remains.

Jeremy

She would if she hadn't passed away seven years ago.

Tom

I'm sorry, Jeremy. Did you want to appoint a new person on your directive?

Jeremy

Got anybody in mind?

Tom

Not really. Any friends or neighbors?

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Jeremy

Those old folks in assisted living? Hell no. I outlived the ones I knew. The hearse from the funeral home, made daily stops at that place. Sometimes, two or three times a day.

Tom

Well, the state has some limited storage space, but it keeps getting fuller as you Boomers pass on.

Jeremy

So, I wait in line to do everything my entire life. I wait in line for assisted living. I wait in line to die. And now I wait in line for a shelf in a state warehouse where my ashes can be stored. For how long?

Tom

The statutory limit is one year. After that, the ashes are distributed to various work crews to be incorporated into construction projects, such as highway construction. Normally, your ashes would be scattered in some sort of ceremony...but you know that from your partner's passing.

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Jeremy

Can I pay someone to scatter them?

Tom

I think that was outlawed by the last Trump administration.

Jeremy

I am most certain that would have been the case. So, tell me, Tom, who in the hell is going to

Scatter my ashes?

(Ricky Stone, a young male nurse enters the room carrying a tray containing ampules filled with a clear liquid.)

Ricky

I could do that for you, Mr. Taub. It would be an honor. I know how active you were in the human rights movement. I read the old newspaper stories that were scanned into the Gay database. Me and my partner enjoy what you made possible for us, Sir.

Tom

Well, Jeremy, what do you think of that?

Jeremy *(beginning to cry)*

I think it is damned nice to find some decent people in this world. Come here Ricky and give this old queen a hug.

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Ricky

(beginning to cry, leans over the bed to hug Jeremy)

Thank you so much, Mr. Taub. Tom here is an old pro, and he is now in charge.

Tom

Jeremy, Ricky has some ampules of morphine on that tray. You and I are going to make this thing legal. The hospital has a notary. We can have you sign a new directive naming Ricky as the person who will receive your cremated remains.

Ricky

Let's allow Tom time to do his job. He can then discuss the procedure with you, and I will administer the morphine in whatever manner Tom orders me to do.

Jeremy *(openly weeping)*

Girls, I am not a religious person. But I suspect Providence or Fate or whatever force is behind this universe, has determined to send both of you to me. And yes, somehow, I suspect my John-john was involved in that too.

Tom

OK. I will get the ball rolling. Ricky, I will bring the final paperwork to you along with the procedure Jeremy and I design. Jeremy, you relax. I am here to grant your every desire.

Jeremy *(still weeping)*

Death. Death with dignity is all I desire, and to join my John-john in whatever the hereafter involves. And to have this beautiful young Gay man scatter my ashes.

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Tom

And just out of curiosity, and out of concern over legal matters, Jeremy, is there any special place where you want Ricky to do the scattering?

Jeremy *(to Ricky)*

Yes. I want to join my John-john's ashes. Ricky, go down to the Willamette River and dump me in. I will flow into the Columbia. I will flow into the Pacific. And somewhere on this planet, I will be reunited with my John-john.

(Lights down.)

(During lights down, Tom exits leaving Ricky on stage. In half lighting, Ricky picks up his tray of ampules and offers one to Jeremy. Ricky exits with tray. Lights up with Jeremy examining the ampule left by Ricky. Jeremy opens his mouth and reluctantly empties the ampule in one swallow. Jeremy slides down into bed with the head of the bed raised to audience view level.

Jeremy relaxes and slowly falls unconscious. Lights down to half-light. After a few moments of silence, Jeremy opens his eyes and gazes into space. A slow grin appears on Jeremy's face.)

Jeremy

(smiling and looking up and out to the audience)

There you are, Baby! There you are. I have waited so long, Baby! Let's go now. Let's go, Ba...

(Jeremy falls unconscious and slowly breathes his final breaths. Lights fade to dark.)

(Curtain)