

THE CURE CONUNDRUM

By Ken Jones

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THE CURE CONUNDRUM

A Ten Minute Comedic Skit

By Ken Jones

SYNOPSIS: Strap yourself in for this fast-paced hilarious absurdist short play! *The Cure Conundrum* is the farcical tale of a young scientist who makes the breakthrough that mankind has been waiting for...he discovers the cure for cancer. However, he's not celebrated, but instead he is attacked and destroyed at every turn. An ensemble of actors play all the other characters from his disbelieving parents to fellow scientists, Board of Health officials and an imaginary wife, to a fraudulent priest and the world's worst lawyer. The conspiracy is all laid out for us, and although the effects of what would happen if cancer were cured ends with an absurd conclusion of what the entire healthcare industry would do to protect their own interests.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 female, 4 male, 3 either; gender flexible)

AVERY (m).....	Kind but nerdy medical researcher. He has dedicated his life to helping others. <i>(71 lines)</i>
SCIENTIST (m).....	Polished, handsome and cold. His goal is to make as much money as possible. <i>(15 lines)</i>
BOARD MEMBER 1 (m/f).....	Head of the Board of Health and Manipulation, this person is inflexible and loud. <i>(14 lines)</i>
BOARD MEMBER 2 (m/f).....	Member of the Health and Manipulation Board, this person is aggressive and angry. <i>(12 lines)</i>
MOTHER (f).....	Avery's mother, always worried and always sad about everything. <i>(5 lines)</i>
FATHER (m).....	Avery's father, perpetually disappointed in his son. <i>(5 lines)</i>

- PRIEST (m) Overly pious and gestures with his Bible. It is possible that he might not be an ordained priest. (12 lines)
- LAWYER (m/f) Fast-talking, outrageous lawyer. (23 lines)
- WOMAN (f)..... Pretending to be Avery's wife, she is sexy and voluptuous. (6 lines)

TIME: The present.

SETTING

The action of the play occurs in a medical lab in some city somewhere in the United States. The stage is bare except for a couple of tall stools and matching lab tables. Each table has a microscope and some lab equipment resting on top surrounded by a few journals and books. Hanging behind these tables are screens or signs with either the projected or the painted logos of drug, hospital, health care, and medical supply corporations from all over the U.S. Each sign should list the words: "This research is partially sponsored by..." followed by the corporations' official logo. Avery Mansley is sitting at one lab table while the Scientist is at the other.

PROPS

- ☐ 2 Tall Stools
- ☐ 2 Lab Tables
- ☐ 1 Microscope
- ☐ Various pieces of lab equipment: petri dishes, beakers, etc.
- ☐ Paper research- papers, files and graph paper
- ☐ Handkerchief
- ☐ Neck Brace
- ☐ Electronic Ankle Bracelet
- ☐ Briefcase filled with Bottles of Pills and Medicine
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Electric Chair: The electric chair should be very simple with armbands, an electric "cap", and a large 'on/off' lever sticking out from the side.

COSTUMES

AVERY – Lab coat, eyeglasses, plain shirt with bow tie, khaki pants and brown shoes.

SCIENTIST – Lab coat, brightly colored shirt with open collar, pants and expensive shoes.

BOARD MEMBER 1 and 2 – Business suit, plain tie and dark shoes.

MOTHER – Plain dress, sensible heels, and a pearl necklace.

FATHER – Plain shirt with tie, eyeglasses, cardigan sweater, pants and brown shoes.

PRIEST – Black shirt with white Clerical collar, black pants, and dark shoes.

LAWYER – Cheap suit and cheap shoes. Wears a neck brace and an electronic ankle bracelet.

WOMAN – Flirtatious dress, heels and big hair.

AT RISE: A small pool of light reveals AVERY, sitting on a stool peering into a microscope. Behind him are 'SPONSORED BY' signs with corporate logos. AVERY sits up.

AVERY: I've done it. I've really done it. I've discovered the cure to cancer.

SCIENTIST: (Looks up from his work.) You've done what?

AVERY: I've done it!

SCIENTIST: "It" referring to...?

AVERY: Cancer!

SCIENTIST: A cure?

AVERY: Yes.

SCIENTIST: You!?

AVERY: Yes!

SCIENTIST: Now?

AVERY: Yes.

SCIENTIST: Impossible.

AVERY: It's true.

SCIENTIST: How?

AVERY: Well...

SCIENTIST: What are the four major food groups?

AVERY: Food groups?

SCIENTIST: You don't know? And yet you discovered a cure to cancer.

AVERY: Wait...I do know—

SCIENTIST: Very little. That's quite obvious.

AVERY: I can show you my results.

SCIENTIST: Unfounded results do me no good.

AVERY: But they're true...real...proven.

SCIENTIST: I am a scientist. You are a simpleton.

AVERY: Actually, I am a...

SCIENTIST: Do not waste my time.

AVERY: But if I am correct, which I am, we could save the world.

SCIENTIST: I am too busy researching my theories to worry about the world.

SCIENTIST exits. BOARD MEMBER 1 and 2 enter. They are identical in appearance.

BOARD MEMBER 1: Hear ye, Hear ye, Hear ye! The State and Regional Board of Health and Manipulation has now convened.

BOARD MEMBER 2: How say ye?

AVERY: What?

BOARD MEMBER 2: How say ye?

AVERY: I say ye, what?

BOARD MEMBER 1: What?

AVERY: Yes. What do you want to know?

BOARD MEMBER 2: What do we want to know and what we wish to hear are two different issues.

BOARD MEMBER 1: Exactly. If you wish to speak what we want to hear, then please continue.

AVERY: I've discovered a cure to cancer.

BOARD MEMBER 1: Wrong. We do not want to hear this. No. Sorry.

AVERY: Cancer. I've discovered a cure.

BOARD MEMBER 2: You're mistaken.

AVERY: No. It's true.

BOARD MEMBER 1: Wrong.

AVERY: How can you say that I'm wrong?

BOARD MEMBER 2: It's a simple matter of breath control and the vibration of the vocal tissue.

BOARD MEMBER 1: It's called speaking.

MOTHER and FATHER enter.

FATHER: Son, how have you been?

AVERY: Mom? Dad?

BOARD MEMBER 2: Shall we hear the explanation for your theories?

MOTHER: Have you been a good boy?

AVERY: Mom...Dad...I'm in the middle of...

BOARD MEMBER 1: No explanation?!!

AVERY: What? I'm sorry. It's my parents.

FATHER: Embarrassed of us, son? That's just great.

BOARD MEMBER 2: We're waiting.

AVERY: Dad... (*Confused, looks back to the board.*) Wait...I have all my documentation.

MOTHER: This place is a mess.

AVERY: I have slides...charts...graphs...

The research and graphs rest on the lab table. MOTHER admires the charts.

MOTHER: Excellent coloring. You stayed within the lines. What a good boy.

BOARD MEMBER 1: If you wish to retract your lies, you may do so at this time.

AVERY: Lies?

FATHER: Not smart enough for you, huh? We just didn't have enough brains for you, son?

AVERY: I never said that.

BOARD MEMBER 1: A lie is like a bullet from a gun. Once it leaves the barrel it just keeps ricocheting around and around hurting anyone in its path.

BOARD MEMBER 2: And there is no way to take it back.

MOTHER: We did the best we could.

MOTHER and FATHER exit.

AVERY: Mom! Dad! Wait!

BOARD MEMBER 2: I move that we ignore everything that he says

AVERY: You're making a mistake.

BOARD MEMBER 1: All in favor...say 'aye.'

BOARD MEMBER 1 and 2: Aye!

BOARD MEMBER 2: All opposed say 'nay.'

Silence.

BOARD MEMBER 1: Meeting adjourned.

BOARD MEMBER 1 and 2 exit as a LAWYER enters.

LAWYER: Mr. Mansley?

AVERY: Yes?

LAWYER: I'm your lawyer. The court has appointed me to represent you.

AVERY: But I haven't done anything wrong.

LAWYER: Then you probably don't want to plead insanity and throw yourself on the mercy of the court?

AVERY: Of course not!

LAWYER: Well, this is going to be a bit more difficult than I had expected.

AVERY: Oh, my...!

LAWYER: First things first, if I am going to keep you out of the chair, then I need to know a couple of things.

AVERY: Chair? Keep me out of the chair?

LAWYER: Your name.

AVERY: Avery Mansley.

LAWYER: Sissy name. Did you get beat up a lot in school?

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