

**THERAPY: A Schizophrenic Nightmare
A Pathetic Monologue, A Bizarre Comedy
In One Act¹**

by Edward K. Brown II

Setting: New York City, a psychologist's office.

[Loudly] Yes, hi. That's right, Ed Washington. That's my name. Sure, have a seat. Yes, this is the first time I have ever been to see a Ph.D.. Last week I had my biannual checkup with my D.D.S.. He said I had a big mouth. I bit his finger. *[Softer]* Last year I saw my M.D.. He told me that I had palpitations of the heart. I explained to him that when I was born my mother saw what came out and screamed; actually, she shrieked. Her scream, shriek, reverberated at such a high frequency that my heart stopped. Her M.D. had to give me electro-cardiac shock treatment. That was how I was brought into the world.

My parents use to say how much of a strain I was on the heart. Self-analytically I would say that I was a troubled child: a child who seemed to get into trouble. Some time ago, eight/nine years ago, I was looking in the family photo-album. There was a picture of me being held by my grandfather. He had a big smile on his face; so did I. I asked my parents why he was smiling. They said he was telling them that he had another fool on his hands-and also a regurgitator.

I always thought of myself as a "good" kid. What? Define "good"? Should I tell you the first thing that comes to mind? Soy it again. This time I'll be ready. This, this isn't the test yet is it? Good. Not fair! All right, let's see. . . good, first thing. Got it! Ingenuity. Like advanced technology, rebates, recalls. Umm. . . inventions. Like, like car phones and counter coffee grinders. Oh yes, fresh fruit. Have you ever eaten spoiled fruit before? What? Never mind? But I was just getting started. As I was saying, I was a "good" kid. I was

good in school. I kept the class entertained. It was easy. I would sit there and pay attention to the teacher. Sometimes I would lapse and the class would start to laugh. The teacher would send me down to the principal's office. The secretaries would look at me and laugh. I didn't understand that; my fly was zipped. I always checked on that. The Principal would call me into his office and say, "Young sir, have you been disrupting the class again. What are we going to do with you?" I said, 'Send me back to class.' What can you expect? I didn't know what a rhetorical question was. I hadn't had fifth grade English yet. So we sat there for ten minutes or so and stared at each other. The next thing I knew, I was suspended.

I explained the situation to my parents, 'We were sitting there and then the principal started to laugh and then he wet his pants. I told him he needed a diaper.' My father sneered. My mother teared. They didn't think that it was funny, yet they burst with emotion and sent me to my room until I decided to stop making people laugh, but as always, my parents were hypocritical. When they had company over, they would let me out of my room and for some reason everyone had a good time. Once the fun was over, back to the room it was.

I had a library of books in my room. Mostly hand-me-down fairy tales of my sisters'. I've read them all-the ones with pictures anyway. Okay, now I have a question. How is it that Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel and all the others have a Prince Charming come and save them? Huh? I don't understand. But it doesn't matter now and it really didn't matter then either because I knew it was rhetorical. So what I did was I let my hair grow, tied it to my bed post, draped myself out the window and in four and three quarters months time, my hair grew long enough for my feet to touch the ground. I cut my hair and ran off to New York City. See, you do learn something from reading: ingenuity, invention.

What did I do to maintain myself while living in New York? I found work at a restaurant. I was a busboy. It wasn't a fun job. Quite boring actually. To make time travel, I use to read in

between cleaning tables. Huh? Cleaning, bussing, there's no difference. There is? Well Mr. PhD, OED, Thesaurious, since you know so much about word choice, tell me, how did the word "bussing" evolve into the restaurant business. Hmm, good answer. So I would read in between clean—*bussing* tables. The book was about self-hypnosis. An easy read. I instructed myself to sleep while working in order to capitalize on my nocturnal activity. My boss thought that I was suffering from narcolepsy. I told him not to worry. I told him that I was suffering from acute *edolepsy*. I was fired on the spot, but I really didn't care. That place was in a dead part of town anyhow. What I wanted was to experience the avant-garde. Luckily I had earned three and one third years worth of tips, so I had enough money to go to A.N.Y.U. Bus fare was only a buck. To maintain my lifestyle I found work at the Hip Joint across from campus. I had eaten there before and the buffalo-hips were my favorite, but the chicken fried-hips ranked right up there. I'll admit that it was the cuisine that interested me in this particular fast food chain, but it was the method of advancement that influenced me to apply. On the entry level I would start off as an Associate Chef. The Regent Supervisor, the one who interviewed me, told me that after two years I could earn my Full *Chefship* and if I lasted five more years, I could earn my tenure. I figured what the hell: if I didn't make it all the way to my tenure, at least it would look good on my resume. Besides, the waitresses thought that I was real cute. It's true. Before I worked there, when I ate there, I would stick one of those red and white straws in each nostril and do my mammalization of *Wally the Walrus*. It always knocked them dead during lunch time when I was in the sixth grade. The waitresses would say, "Oh yeah, real cute." Sounds predictable? How does this sound. Get this, on my first week of working there the waitresses were always hitting on me, "WHERE'S MY ORDER!" [*Slapping himself in the face.*] Hey, I knew they liked me. What? How do I know? I, I remember what my father once told me when I was very young. He said to me, "Son, when you get older and when it concerns women, this is as good as it gets. Believe me. But don't slap the hand that feeds you. Just tell her hair looks

funny." The waitresses had only to take one look at mine...

I decided that I wanted to be a director of film. A.N.Y.U. had this work/study program and there were evening classes. I talked with the instructor and he seemed to have a benign attitude. After a week of class, he was convinced that I should become an actor. He said that I had a lot of energy, a lot of passion, a lot of expression that shouldn't be wasted. I refused immediately. "See your reaction," he said. "You're instantaneously, spontaneously, emphatically dexterous. I will no longer discuss this issue." I pleaded, 'Let me explain. My parents sent my sisters and I off to summer camp. We told them we needed a break. There was a midsummer show and the counselors, the one's who didn't make it into the Peace Corps, decided that they wanted to put on the play *The Wizard of Oz*. I was chosen to play the role of the witless Scarecrow. The only problem I foresaw was that I would have to memorize the lines, but the counselors informed me that a script-in-hand was fine for the moment.

Rehearsals began that week. The first few days the counselors discussed the idea that they all were going to direct the play. The next few days were spent by the counselors bickering *who* was going to direct the play. On the last day they rested and smoked a quarter pound of pot. At the start of the new week, things went smoothly. When the play worked its way up to my first lines, this is what happened. *[Dry.]* 'Dorothy. Will you please take me off this post so that we may go down the yellow brick road to see the Wizard?' "No, no, no! I want to see more energy, more passion, more expression!" *[Accent some syllables.]* 'Dorothy, will you please take me off this post so that we may go down the yellow brick road to see the Wizard?' "NO! MORE! I want to see dexterity! I want, I want you to ham it-bring life to it!" 'But I've seen the *Wizard of Oz* three times and the *Wiz* once. I know how to play the role!' "I don't want to hear it! HAM IT!" *[Sound like a pig.]* 'Dddd...Dorothy, *[snort]* will you pleeeeeeeaaaaazzze take me off this post *[snort]* so that we can go wee, wee, wee, wee, wee down the yellow brick road to see the Wizard?' The director stormed around the campsite, talked to his superiors, and

made phone calls. The next thing I knew, the happy camper van pulled up and I was sent home for insubordination. My parents said to me, "I hope you now understand why we don't let you out of your room: you just don't know how to act."

My instructor disagreed with me by saying, "You can act if you have the right direction." "What you are lacking is experience," he said. "A pathological experience-that is the root to acting. Look, this is what you need to do. Write down on a list your favorite, most expensive habits. Stop doing one of them. Record your activities for that week and on Friday bring them to class for discussion."

An excellent idea! This was going to be real avant-garde! I knew it! I went home to my apartment and wrote down my most expensive habits. Smoking topped the list. I smoked at least a carton a day. My clothes reeked because of it... The first few days of my pathological experience were spent hard at work at the *Hip Joint*. I didn't notice much difference in my patterns until the fourth day. That evening, Thursday evening, I decided to go out for some drinks. I was sitting in and at the bar trying to get the tender's attention. Some smoke wafted my way. I began to crave smoke. I shot down a double kamikaze. I turned to check out the activity behind me-and what I saw, what I saw. She saw what I saw and she saw that I saw. She suggested cigarette. I sat there as she drew in. She exhaled and I took her in. Her date saw what he saw and I saw that he saw. He whipped out his cigar and the next thing I knew, I sucked his down too. The people in and at the bar saw what they saw, and began to chain smoke. Then I realized. I realized that I was second hand smoking and enjoying it. I left from and out the bar in disgust and went down to the corner store and spent my laundry quarters on a carton of filterless cigarettes. I smoked that carton with vigor as I washed my clothes in the bathtub.

I went to class on Friday apprehensive about the pathological experience which I was supposed to report. My instructor called upon me. I sat there sweating, nervous in flight. 'My

experience went well.' The two students sitting beside me started to look at me in a strange way. I told the instructor about my smoking habit, but he said that that was the wrong type of experience. He said that I should have stopped using my credit card or something like that. Drenched with sweat I told him that I didn't possess a credit card. He yelled at me for five minutes. One of his lines was, "How are you going to pay for this class you no good fifth rate bum?" But by that time I was distracted by the foam coming from my armpits. I muttered something back and my instructor bellowed, "What do you mean you forgot to rinse?" I tried to pretend that nothing was happening, but to no avail. The class began to squirm and someone shouted, "Watch out! He's frothing! He's rabid! Run!" The instructor must have been in this situation before because he reached in his back pocket, pulled out a pair of handcuffs and cuffed my hands behind my back. The ambulance came to pick me up and brought me here.

Excuse me? What am I going to do now? I don't know. Have I learned my lesson? I didn't know that I was in class. Oh, was that question rhetorical? Well, I know that I will have to find something to do, find some work. I can't stay in New York due to this misinterpreted mishap. I'll just move on and find some place to settle down. Find something I can handle. Did you say, "What about responsibility?" Hey, I'm not asking for gifts. I don't want to get hooked into doing something I don't want to do. I'll earn my responsibility, my *piece of the pie* and if I can afford it a scoop of ice cream on top. Afraid? What should I be afraid of: fear itself? No, I've been working all my life which is no different than anyone else. I'm just trying to keep my back from up against the wall and off this uncomfortable couch. I'm going to do something. Can't save the world. Not even going to delude myself into trying. Life is hard to cope with even though it is easy to spell: L. I. V. E., life. All I will have to know is one thing. What? No, not hew to spell. If it's easy for me at one point, then I will have to challenge myself to get to the next point. That's hard enough because the metaphors are mixed. I'll have to

prepare myself for when I fail and be prepared for when I succeed and maybe, just maybe I'll be sitting where you are; maybe I will get my PhD.

Come to think of it, maybe there is something I'm afraid of: fifty/sixty years down the line, when my metaphors are clear, I will have settled down, had kids, and my kids will have had kids—and I will be sitting where you are, with a pad and pen in hand (and getting paid for it), and I will have to listen to some adolescent jackass, who refuses to grow up, shoot his mouth off.

PERFORMANCES

October 22, 1994

The Performance Zone (The Field). New York: Vineyard's Dimson Theatre.

June 10-13, 1993

Temple Playwright's Center and Community Outreach Theatre: Short Plays Festival. Philadelphia: Temple University (performed by Amani Gathers, directed by Autumn Johns).

May 5, 1993

The Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New York.

May 9, 1992

The Jack Tilton Gallery, New York.

March 6, 1992

Dada Again Festival. Philadelphia: The Painted Bride Art Center.

¹ While this play is inspired by my experiences in New York City, Texas and Philadelphia, PA, all characters represented are fictional. Any character's likeness of living or dead persons is merely coincidental.