

Because It's Sunny in LA (Especially on Skidrow)

Thaddeus Nagey

ACT II, Scene II

A street lined with tents. Could be underneath an overpass, near a bus stop, park bench, or on a sidewalk. Multiple cinder blocks on stage. Rows of tents, misc. belongings, sleeping bags, a dilapidated couch, and lots of junk.

Dave, Jackie, and James are the ones left on stage. James unzips his tent looks around, steps outside and sits on a cinder block. He starts to read. Dave sprays graffiti art on a large piece of cardboard.

Below poem is re-written in pentameter. Stage is well lit. Must read poem at a slower pace with rhythmic body movement. Can dance or perform with bodily object work or interpretations.

JAMES

To audience and paces up and down the stage, acting the poem out in an artistic way through movement and object work. Instrumental, "America the Beautiful" is playing on the speakers.

Like clockwork, planes landing every half hour.
Hailed from the tower. Two bright lights trailing.
Arms motioning, flailing. The end opens.
An unloader trailing. Thirty of 'em.

DAVE

Looks up from his art, calls out to James
Thirty of them? Thirty of them.
An unloader trailing. Thirty of 'em.

JACKIE

Jackie lays on a cot and gets up.

Dead bodies. Remains. It's a poem. Let me see that!

Grabs piece of paper from James and recites. Meanwhile, James grabs a folded flag from his tent and pushes it on Dave. As she recites, James and Dave unfold the flag similar to a military funeral ceremony. Actors must study how to unfold flag and perform ceremony.

Everyday. The devils deliver them.
A fog of grey. Far and wide, camouflage.
Unloading our sins and entourage.
We'd carefully drape, sins of war and rape.
To cover our mistakes, always too late.
We gently unfold our patriot flag.
For our people from Bagram and Baghdad.

Jackie lays back on cot while James and Dave drape the flag over the body. Dave grabs the poem and recites.

We beg for solace, we are somber and sad.
Carefully placed, our gloved hands on the rails.
Walk them with severance, knocked over by gales.

James stands at attention and salutes.

We salute with reverence, hail to veterans.

They both grab the cot with Jackie on it, drape the flag over her and slowly move her, one step at a time, off stage and through the audience aisle. Meanwhile, James finishes poem and speaks toward audience.

Deliverance from pure benevolence.
Unwrap stars and stripes. Honor archetypes.
Check that the black straps are sturdy.

Account for remains along this journey.
Thoughts and prayers are rarely the right answer
When war spreads like a terminal cancer.
Remains are transferred, one part at a time.
Carefully logged, tedious paradigm.

*At the end of the aisle, just before they reach the door,
James and Dave put down Jackie and Dave and Jackie exit
through the rear of the audience. James yells out, shaken,
nearly crying and walks briskly back toward the stage.*

Their mothers receive them—is there no crime?
Long for peace again. Peace again this time.

Back on stage, sits down on a cinder block.

JAMES
(To audience)

There's not much left when you are stuck in the cracks. I found myself weeping in-between the flights. I would crawl into the closet-where no one could find me. And I would just sit there and weep.

Most were people I didn't know. Air Force, Marines, Army, Navy... sometimes Iraqis, sometimes even Taliban. Sometimes people I knew. All came back in pieces of some sort. We would sort them, bag them, ice them, put them in caskets. Military ceremony, loading them onto the plane. Tradition. Standing at attention. Parade rest. Quiet. Pure quiet. Unload. Ceremony. Tradition. When I came home... (*pause*)... there was no welcoming party. The dead always had a welcoming party. All of them. Not me.

Most of my family didn't want to know me anymore. Were they ashamed? Death infiltrated my spirit. I was saturated.

A dark cloud. Death. But I was still alive. Did I deserve to be alive? DO I deserve to be alive. (*Yells*) Well, do I? I'm not lazy.

I came back to work. To eat. To live. I was rejected. Cast aside. You know what they told me? I was overqualified. I guess I was too skilled. “Thank you for your service,” they’d say. Pretty Stressed, Tense, (and) Depressed. PTSD. They told me I was a disorder. As if the stress and trauma wasn’t a natural thing. DISORDER. PTSD. Pretty Tired of Stress Dumps? Oh, Oh! How about this? Post things sucked, dude.

Then they would send me on my merry way. *(Pause)*...I tried to get help...*(Pause)*.

Stands up.

You know, I once survived off of an apple, an orange, and two slices of bread for TWO WEEKS. I looked up at God...is *(looks up)* there a God? PTSD. Prepare... To... See... Dangers. Am I going to die? *(Looks at audience)* HOMELESSSSSSSSNESSSS. Loneliness. Here I am... *(pause)* ...with no welcoming party. Jobless, hungry, homeless. *(Sarcastic and whiny)* “Thank you for your service.” The good news? They say the only thing certain is death and taxes. Well, since I got no job, I got no taxes. HA!

LIGHTS OUT.

END SCENE