

INTESTATE
A Covid-19 Monologue

by
Donald E. Baker

CHARACTER (1M)

RICHARD A 50-year-old gay man.

PLACE
Cincinnati, Ohio

TIME
April, 2020

SYNOPSIS

7-8-MINUTE MONOLOGUE. Fifty-year-old Richard lived with David and worked in his store, but the two never got around to getting married or doing the necessary legal paperwork. Now David is dead from COVID and his homophobic mother has inherited everything. Richard finds himself unemployed and homeless, angry and bitter--and very afraid he may have given David the virus that killed him.

PRODUCTIONS/PUBLICATION

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RICHARD (Angrily)

God dammit, David. How could you be dead? You did everything right. Ate and drank in moderation, slept eight hours a night, went to the gym every day. Is that where you got it? Someone forget to wipe off the weight machine? ... I hope to God that's where you got it.

It makes no *sense*. You *survived* the AIDS pandemic. Then you end up dying from a virus people kept saying was no worse than the flu? You would never have died from the flu. You got a flu shot every year. Of course you did.

The hospital had those big white triage tents set up outside. Looked like there was some kind of festival going on. A couple of nurses took you in one and told me to go wait in the car. I don't know how long I sat there. Ten minutes? Half an hour?

I had your wallet, so finally somebody came looking for your i.d. and insurance card and she started asking questions. Was I related to you? Were we married? Not officially, I told her, but we did have a commitment ceremony. Doesn't count, she said.

Did I have your power of attorney? Did you have a living will? No. No because we never took the time to get the documents together. We never *took* the time because we thought we had *plenty* of time.

We never had a "real" wedding because you didn't want to do it until your family was willing to attend. Rock-ribbed Kentucky evangelicals. All Leviticus 22 and "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

But somehow you convinced yourself they'd eventually welcome me into the fold. You just couldn't bear the thought they didn't love you enough, enough to be happy for you when you found somebody who did love you—even if that somebody was another man.

The nurse had one last question: "Who *is* the patient's nearest relative?" "The patient" has a name, I said. "It's David. He has a mother. I've never spoken to her."

Now would be a good time, she said.

I asked her, When could I see you? Please, could I see you? No, she said as she turned away. The patient—David—he’s on his way to the ICU.

At our commitment ceremony we used the words from the Book of Ruth. “Whither thou goest I will go. Whither thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people will be my people and thy God my God.” Well, your people never *did* become my people, and where those nurses took you I couldn’t follow. When I obediently went to sit in the car I didn’t know I’d never see you again. Dammit, David! Dammit to hell!

I called your mother on *your* phone so she’d recognize the number. She almost hung up on me when she realized she wasn’t talking to you. I did manage to tell her what happened and where you were. *Then* she hung up on me.

You were on a respirator for four days. Nobody’d tell me anything. I wasn’t family. Not to them. If our best friend Charlie hadn’t been an ICU nurse I wouldn’t even have known when you passed.

I *assume* they gave you the usual small-town funeral. Tears and hugs, kisses and casseroles. Dark suits and black dresses. But no masks. The fashion accessory of the year, but people down there don’t really believe in the virus, do they?

“It’s a big hoax, that’s all it is. Or if it *is* real, Jesus will protect us.” All I can say is, “bless their hearts.”

I haven’t talked to your mother since that one phone call. She communicates through her attorney. That’s how I found out I no longer had a roof over my head. Yeah. Not only did you not have a *living* will, you didn’t have a dead one.

You died “intestate” they said. So guess who inherited everything—the house, the business, the car? That woman who hung up on me when I called to tell her, her son was deathly ill. I’d moved into *your* house. I worked in *your* store. Everything was in *your* name. Now it’s in hers.

The health department “contact traced” me. No surprise the test came back positive. It wasn’t like we’d social-distanced from each other. I had to self-quarantine for 14 days. Soon as they were over your mother sent the lawyer with the eviction notice. He went through the house taking inventory. They wanted to make sure I didn’t steal anything on my way out the door.

Two weeks I was alone in that house. Wallowing in self-pity. Emptying the wine rack. Mad at the world. Mad at the virus. Mad at your mother and her lawyer. Mad at you because you left me. Finally I got around to being mad at myself.

I had the virus but I never showed any signs. A-symp-to-matic. Did I get it from you? Or David oh God did you get it from me? Are you dead because I killed you? How the hell am I supposed to live with that?

END