

# THE BEAR

by Jon Jory

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# THE BEAR

*An Extremely Curious One Act*

**by Jon Jory**

**SYNOPSIS:** James is an outsider. People pretty much like him, but does anyone *know* him? James has disappeared and the police are involved. Everyone is frightened. Nobody knows that James just decided to hike the woods to get away from it all. In the woods he discovers much about life, including a hungry bear. An extremely curious one-act comedy about life.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(5 females, 3 males)*

BETTS (f) .....	Cane's friend. (22 lines)
CANE (f).....	James' on and off again girlfriend. (75 lines)
DELAY (f).....	James's sister. (19 lines)
JAKE (m).....	James' brother. (19 lines)
MISS CRENDENCE (f) .....	Teacher. (21 lines)
JAMES (m).....	A teen. (69 lines)
BEAR (m).....	A bear. (53 lines)
OFFICER KAZANTZAKIS (f).....	A policewoman. (20 lines)

**DURATION:** 25 minutes.

**TIME:** Present day.

**SETTING:** An empty stage representing various locations.

## PROPS

- Baseball Bat
- Gym Bag
- Burger and Fries
- 2 Chairs
- Log
- Backpack with 3 Power Bars
- Desk with Papers
- Pocket Knife

**COSTUMES**

BETTS, CANE, DELAY, and JAKE – Typical teen attire.

BEAR – Dressed entirely in brown. Brown shoes, socks, pants and shirt that are all one shade. Face painted as a bear.

JAMES – Typical teen attire. Costume change to: jeans, a plaid work shirt, work boots, and a baseball cap.

MISS CREDENCE – Business casual attire.

OFFICER KAZANTZAKIS – Police officer uniform with badge.

**SOUND EFFECTS**

- Forest sounds
- Rustling

**AT RISE:** *CANE enters, carrying a baseball bat and a gym bag and walks across the stage. BETTS enters and pursues CANE.*

**BETTS:** Cane, hey Cane wait up. Cane?

**CANE:** *(Stops.)* What's up?

**BETTS:** You were at practice, right?

**CANE:** Looks like it.

**BETTS:** Did you talk to any of the guys over on field two?

**CANE:** No, saw them out there, but coach kept us busy.

**BETTS:** You didn't see James then?

**CANE:** Didn't look.

**BETTS:** Did you have plans to see him later?

**CANE:** *(Smiling.)* Who wants to know?

**BETTS:** Look, ummmm, he's not home, uh, I ran into his mom and she asked if I had seen him because he was maybe going to skip practice because he has family visiting just for tonight but he, uh, I don't know, his mom was looking for him because he didn't come home.

**CANE:** Yeah, as I know from personal experience, he's not exactly reliable. He'll show up, he always does.

**BETTS:** I saw his car in the parking lot.

**CANE:** So?

**BETTS:** So, he's still around, but nobody's seen him.

**CANE:** Did you check the gym?

**BETTS:** It's locked up.

**CANE:** Can't help you. *(Turns to exit.)*

**BETTS:** The weird thing...

**CANE:** "The weird thing" what?

**BETTS:** The trunk of his car was wide open.

**CANE:** You're kidding?

**BETTS:** There was some of his baseball stuff – I don't know, shoes, a bat, other stuff, but the trunk was open.

**CANE:** Just like up?

**BETTS:** Yeah.

**CANE:** Okay, that's weird. He would never just leave it like that.

**BETTS:** I know, right?

**CANE:** So, he's probably home by now. Give him a call.

**BETTS:** He's not answering.

**CANE:** Look, it's not on between James and me anymore you know, and it's sure not on between you and James, so this actually isn't like, our business, right? The guy has moods. His mother, she's a piece of work, she gets nutty if he doesn't breathe in a regular rhythm, let it lie, Betts. *(Starts to exit.)*

**BETTS:** He left me a note.

**CANE:** *(Turns.)* Yeah?

**BETTS:** In my locker.

**CANE:** Yeah? *(Pause.)* I actually don't need to know about some note.

**BETTS:** It said, "Bye."

**CANE:** *(An outburst.)* Why do I have to deal with this guy? Why?

**BETTS:** I don't know Cane, you cared about him.

**CANE:** Yeah. I cared about him and out of that I started having depression and out of the depression I lost almost a whole season of ball. And out of losing the season the colleges who were interested in me backed off and now I'm looking at community college instead of Auburn or UCLA. So that's what I got out of caring for him.

**BETTS:** I'm sorry.

**CANE:** I didn't mean to go off on you. Look, give me a call if he turns up – or I guess, if he doesn't.

**BETTS:** I'll text.

*CANE stands looking at her for a second and then exits. BETTS exits the way she came in. Lights change. JAKE enters and sits center, he has a burger and fries. DELAY enters and sits next to him.*

**JAKE:** Fries?

**DELAY:** Yeah.

**JAKE:** How's mom doing?

**DELAY:** Climbing the walls. I think I talked her out of calling the police.

**JAKE:** I don't know. I don't know. He's my brother and I love him but I could cheerfully kill him. He's probably sitting under a bush across the street watching us and enjoying the mess.

**DELAY:** Do you think anything's really wrong? *(A pause.)*

**JAKE:** No. Yeah.

**DELAY:** What?

**JAKE:** Don't freak out on me.

**DELAY:** Come on. What?

**JAKE:** Forget it.

**DELAY:** Please. He's my brother too in case you forget.

**JAKE:** You're a baby, Delay.

**DELAY:** Give me a break. C'mon. It's past my bedtime, I have tests tomorrow, you want me crying all over you?

**JAKE:** He took that pistol dad left after the divorce.

**DELAY:** What!?

**JAKE:** Just calm down, Delay. I mean it. You want the info – you calm down.

**DELAY:** Where did he leave a pistol?

**JAKE:** He told mom it was up in that old suitcase in the attic. I think she's forgotten about it. He told me in case she forgot. I went up and looked for it.

**DELAY:** It's really not there?

**JAKE:** It's not.

**DELAY:** Jake!

**JAKE:** Shhhh. Jeez, Delay. No, it's gone, but don't get your underwear in a twist, okay? Hey, he's not going to shoot up the school with a rusty old police 38 that he has no ammunition for. It'll put out six shots in like a half hour. Plus, come on, he's not crazy. He just wants all the attention.

**DELAY:** You can't make that look like a good thing, Jake. None of this is a good thing. If he came back in fifteen minutes, it still wouldn't be a good thing. Mom won't come down off the ceiling for a month.

**JAKE:** Just don't let her call the police.

**DELAY:** Come back in the house and help me.

**JAKE:** I'm going to walk the neighborhood. Maybe he's just at somebodies house or down at the 7-Eleven [or current convenience store] or in the kid's playground or some stupid place. Of all of us, you can calm her down. C'mon, sis, this is just more drama from the drama queen and I'm not talking about mom. (*Kisses DELAY on the forehead.*) Take the fries.

**DELAY:** Don't be gone a long time.

**JAKE:** Pinkie swear.

**DELAY:** Idiot.

**JAKE:** I'll be back.

**DELAY:** Hey, Jake?

**JAKE:** Yeah?

**DELAY:** The pistol, that's not for himself, right?

**JAKE:** Are you kidding, he would never off himself unless he could read the obit and hear all the nice stuff we said about him.

**DELAY:** Really?

**JAKE:** Really. There are bears out there, that's what it's for. He's not big on wild life.

*JAKE and DELAY exit, lights change. CANE enters and crosses downstage. Upstage MISS CREDENCE, sits and grades papers.*

**CANE:** *(To audience.)* Listen, ummm, I just thought I'd calm everybody down. Yeah, he's been gone for twenty-four hours – or almost, and he's kind of a drama queen – a guy can be a drama queen, right? But James, I don't know, he's not going to – you know – or anything like that. He's just, like, an outsider guy people pretty much like. Pretty much, I don't know, does what he feels like even if it's not in the rulebook. As a boyfriend or whatever, he's like a Rubik's cube you want to solve. Plus, he's cute, has some style. On the other hand, you would have to dig him out of himself with a backhoe. You want a lot of attention though, want to be spoiled and made much of, big-time wrong guy. Me, for instance, you might have noticed I'm pretty into myself. I am definitely "all that". Top of the line, at least for around here. I'm going to a name college and then to New York or LA, do fashion, maybe hook on to a tech startup, be somebody. I'm pretty over what's available around here, for sure. I can pretty much have what I want, jobs, guys, parts in the musical, homecoming queen, all that. James was the only guy I never caught looking at me. So, hey, I went out and got him. Mistake number one. You get James, but you don't get James, you know what I mean? A lot of the time I say stuff, I bet you do this too, that's framed so what you get back is a compliment. I need a lot of compliments. Sort of like a car needs gas. So I would, you know, lay out the line to James to get a compliment and get zero back. And what I figured out is that James is so in his head he doesn't recognize the simplest stuff somebody needs from him. So we split and Betts, the Oscar winner for being Miss Goody Two Shoes puts the nice girl vibe on him and

he did that for a while 'til he didn't and after that he was just around like a rock or an old tree. And now's he's gone off. He probably just forgot to stay put.

*CANE moves upstage to MISS CREDENCE.*

**MISS CREDENCE:** Oh, Cane, I'm glad you got my note and came in.

**CANE:** What's up, Miss Credence?

**MISS CREDENCE:** I must say you look very nice. That color suits you.

**CANE:** I know.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Sit down, Cane, I just wanted a minute of your time. I have diet Pepsi in my little fridge, would you like one?

**CANE:** I don't do soft drinks, but thanks. I'm sorry, do I sound snarky? My New Year's resolution is to cut fifty percent of my snark.

**MISS CREDENCE:** You're fine just the way you are.

**CANE:** You'll have to tell that to my dad.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Cane, I believe you're friends with James Cristobal, is that true?

**CANE:** Was. Now it's more of a truce.

**MISS CREDENCE:** I don't know if you've heard that...

**CANE:** I've heard.

**MISS CREDENCE:** I'm sure it's nothing serious but it's been forty-eight hours since his family has heard from him and they're...

**CANE:** Concerned.

**MISS CREDENCE:** So I wondered if...

**CANE:** I don't have a clue.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Any thoughts?

**CANE:** With Jimmy you never know, y'know?

**MISS CREDENCE:** Would you feel there was any chance he might...

**CANE:** No. No way.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Do harm to others or himself?

**CANE:** No. No, no, no. First of all, he barely notices anyone else is out there. One time I asked him if he had it in for this one particular guy and he said, "It would be way too much trouble."

**MISS CREDENCE:** I see.

**CANE:** Then he said the guy wasn't worth an emotion.

**MISS CREDENCE:** I think it would come as no surprise to you that people don't always say what they mean.

**CANE:** *(Laughs.)* You don't know Jimmy very well, huh?

**MISS CREDENCE:** You're quite right, I don't. If he decided to, well, leave his family, the school, his friends, where would he go, Cane?

**CANE:** Ummm. China. He said they knew how to live once even if they've screwed it up now.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Well...

**CANE:** Then he was hooked on the bayou in Louisiana.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Well...

**CANE:** Then he said Peru because the brain needs high altitudes to work at capacity.

**MISS CREDENCE:** He must...

**CANE:** Then he got interested in space travel. He liked that movie where the guy got marooned on Mars and raised tomatoes.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Thank you, Cane, you've been very helpful.

**CANE:** No, I haven't. See, Miss Credence, I always felt like Jimmy had his hand out, you know, waiting for you to take it. But if you did, he right away worried you'd let it go, so he wouldn't get into it. He'd go it alone.

**MISS CREDENCE:** *(Rising.)* Well, we'd better get out there and take his hand, huh?

**CANE:** He's pretty picky about who he'd let do that. I don't think you and I are on the list.

**MISS CREDENCE:** I just have this sixth sense you might know something.

**CANE:** Well, if I did I probably wouldn't tell you, would I? He's okay, Miss Credence. He's probably out there, cranky about not being someplace else.

**MISS CREDENCE:** Thanks for the help, Cane.

**CANE:** *(Starts to exit.)* No sweat. *(Exits.)*

*MISS CREDENCE stands looking after CANE and then turns and exits. DELAY enters and crosses downstage.*

**DELAY:** *(To audience.)* She did, yes. Mom went down to the police place, the office I guess. And she talked to some policeman who said they would be on alert or something like that but they were swamped with runaway kids and anyway most of them came home within a week and then she told them about the gun and that got

their attention and now he's on an "active list" or something and mom is afraid he'll get shot so she clammed up and wouldn't give any more information and now she says they are treating her like she killed him and buried him in our yard or something, so it's a big mess and everyone in town is talking about it like it's a big deal and it turns out he cleaned out his bank account which probably was pretty flush because of his lawnmower business, so between you and me, he probably flew down to the Caribbean 'cause he's always watching those ads on TV that feature waterslides which seems crazy to me because when you have the whole ocean what's the point of a waterslide? Mainly I worry about him and I'm scared and I can't think about anything else, so I wish he would just come home and then I would stop crying, because I'm doing way too much crying and frankly I think it's bad for my allergies but thanks for asking but I wondered where in the store you had snoring aids because mom says when I'm emotionally upset I snore like a buzz saw and she can't get any sleep and then she stays up all night watching jewelry television whatever that is, and the sound of the TV keeps me awake which I guess cuts down on the snoring. Aisle 14, toward the back, on the lowest shelf, thanks. Life really sucks.

*DELAY exits. JAMES enters, wearing jeans, a plaid work shirt, work boots, and a baseball cap. He has a backpack on. SFX: Forest sounds. JAMES looks around, dumps the backpack and crosses downstage.*

**JAMES:** *(To audience.)* Ouch. This pack is taking the skin off my left shoulder, and the rain is a pain and I'm a definite wuss. I'm doing eight to ten miles a day and I wanted to do fifteen. Oh well. Where am I, right? *(Calling.)* Where are you, Jimmy? *(To audience.)* How many times a day you think they're saying that back home? Oh man. You ever want to be nowhere? Some nowhere they can't get at you? Man, I hurt from my neck to my ankles but at least all that stuff is off my back. "Jimmy, you got mom the wrong spring water, Jimmy, why didn't you call? Jimmy, you have to bring up that grade average. Jimmy, pick up your room. Jimmy you didn't shower. Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. So anyway, this is a really sick nowhere. The Appalachian Trail, right? A nice quiet two thousand mile walk. I figure I can do it in six months if I've got the grit. You're looking at me like, "What?"

“Say what?” C’mon. I know, I know, some people need five minutes alone if that. My mom? She keeps the TV and the radio on when she’s alone in the house. Not my style, brother. Not my style. I’m sorry, y’know, I just can’t take all the blah, blah, blah. You know when you’re cranked, when everything gets your goat, when you are this close to going off like a rocket? See, that’s my illness, if it’s an illness. You know the “adults-in-charge”? They have it figured out that I have... *(Imitates a stuffy adult.)* “Something of an anger problem.” Well, I don’t know, but I’d guess it’s an anger problem. “It’s possible the lad should get professional help. He was such a cheery toddler.” Man, you ever get that? I don’t get angry by the way. Seriously, go find the person who says I went off on her. What I get is quiet. Because what I need is quiet. And now what I’ve got is quiet. Listen. *(Pause.)* That’s beautiful, right? *(Sits down.)* Now, can I get this boot off, that’s the question. *(Works on it.)* Of course, to be honest, this is a little creepy when it gets dark. *(Takes boot off.)* There.

*SFX: Rustling.*

**JAMES:** What’s that?

*SFX: Rustling.*

**JAMES:** Hello? *(Silence.)* Great. Boy goes to forest to experience the healing powers of Mother Nature and is eaten by a pack of velociraptors leaving only his flashlight. *(Silence.)* Right Jimmy, now it is super-duper quiet just like you like it but now the quiet is making me sweat. Hello?

*Silence, beat, SFX: Rustling.*

**JAMES:** Who’s out there? *(Silence.)* I can obviously hear you and I would have my father’s old pistol but it creeped me out so I threw it in the river. I am, however, on the wrestling team and it is generally acknowledged that I have an anger problem. *(Silence.)* Hello?

*BEAR, offstage, gives a very unsettling growl.*

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