

“I object to the convenience of automatically filled prescription medicine delivered to my door.”

The process begins with a sound. A shake of the medicine bottle. It's an aural clue that lets us know where things stand. Shake shake. “You've got some time”. Shake shake. “Prepare thyself”. Shake shake shake. “Time's running out”. And then of course, the final stage. The final shake. “It's too late”.

A stubby index finger inspecting the curvature of the bottom of an empty, blue hued plastic pill bottle. A final confirmation.

Off to the pharmacy we go. Through the automatic door, past old Valentine's Day slash early sunblock displays, and into the line. At the completion of the line, two possible fates await. In one version of this story, I've guessed right. Blue medicine bottles are replenished. I've danced with the devil, I've tempted fate. Lady luck is on my side. Strutting out of the store, down a different aisle, whizzing past jumbo packs of Trident locked away from petty thieves and compulsive chewers alike, I've retrieved my bounty successfully. Two rights, two lefts and I am home and as the industry puts it, refilled.

The other fate, dear friend, that led me down those same carpeted pathways, past the family-sized Twix and the spray-on Banana Boat. The line for the pharmacy window greets me just the same.

But this time, the line but a distant memory, the expectation of being “refilled” merely a couple of confirmation questions away, I realize I've underestimated this foe. I've encountered a situation.

I was under the impression, you see, that upon completion of the line, confirmation of my name and date of birth, the transaction would surely begin. The pharmacist swiftly stepping up on a foot ladder, sifting through bags and bags to retrieve my bounty and handing it over to me. The cost and time, both reasonable.

But the click clack of the woman in the white coat, blue jeans and clogs is not immediately followed by the aforementioned swift turn and ascendance of the foot ladder. “Hm”. She says. “Hm”. I feel panic begin to creep in. Well, just come out and say it, why don't you. I'm fucked! The system has gone awry! I've waited too long! The factory burned down! The doctor died! I'm on a list!

The lack of my prescription in “the system” is, to say the least, a bit concerning. I'm instructed to go over to the right, to line up at a counter that seemingly has no place to form a line in front of, that is not manned by a dedicated representative but merely glanced at by

members of the pharmacy clan, busy refilling bottles, but definitely not my bottle. I dread this “line”.

Tail between my legs, I wander, defeatedly, two yards to my right and to the “line” that more closely resembles a chair-less time out or principal’s office. Their tasks are interrupted, their prescription measurements halted, they are met with me. The insured but unprepared. Make no mistake, they are unhappy to see me.

I explain my conundrum. I’m out of my goods. I was in the line, but now their fellow apothecarian pointed me here, to this abyss to the right of the first line where I have no choice but to ask them to pause their work. I’m sorry. I’ve known this day was coming but felt no compulsion to act. My shake shake system is flawed! Here we are. A face off.

Click clack – pause. Click clack – pause. Is that another “Hm” that I heard? Dear god, I don’t know if I’m strong enough for this.

I’ve over dressed for this occasion, not in the way of formality but to put it bluntly – I’m sweating. I did not anticipate this becoming a multistage interaction. I boldly put a sweatshirt on my bare skin and a jacket on top of that because I thought I was being efficient. How was I to know that thoughtful layering was required for a trip to the CVS? I begin to feel the fibers of my “cotton blend” sweatshirt getting moist. I’ve yet to wash this sweatshirt, and I know that the fibers of my “cotton blend” sweatshirt are slowly removing themselves from the sweatshirt proper and attaching themselves to my stomach. I feel a strong urge to take my palm and delicately remove the sweat and “cotton fibers” from my stomach. I could then simply take my newly glistening, cottony hand and rub it on my sweats, a secret for me, myself and I.

As I begin part one of this sweat-wicking routine, the pharmacist looks up to catch my hand underneath my sweatshirt in a position that I wouldn’t call compromising and that a calmer person who doesn’t write about drug store interactions would likely brush off. But I am, as you can probably tell by now, someone who relies on medication to get me through the interactions of my day and I have locked eyes with the lady in the white lab coat who is unhappy to see me, and I very slowly remove my hand. Down to the side of my thigh it goes. A gentle, but firm wipe of sweaty, cottony fleece. “It’s hot in here”, I say, my voice roughly 3 notes higher than my usual, not caught in the act, pitch.

I explain my situation. I cop to my lack of foresight, perhaps there’s an admission to the potential of a previously refilled prescription languishing behind the pharmacy counter for so long that it was taken out of circulation which is precisely the reason that has us where we are now. Uninterested in my tale and brave acknowledgement that I didn’t pick up my

filled and ready prescription for 17 days, the pharmacist explains that yes, the prescription will be filled and ready in thirty minutes.

Now, I've just been to hell and back here. I've been in a line, then herded over to an area. I've begun to sweat profusely directly on to micro-plastic infused outerwear. I told this stranger my truth about my filled and ready prescription wasting away. And now, after all this, I must figure out what to do with myself for at least thirty minutes. I say at least because upon my return, for my general well-being, I need this blue beauty of a Lexapro bottle to be ready. I cannot risk a premature return. I am not strong enough to endure additional time inside of the CVS. But I need to keep myself honest here. A trip back to the apartment runs the risk of temporary and potentially permanent distraction. An email. My wife. A snack. Maybe a nibble of an edible or puff or two of my vape pen. I'm only human. A thirty-minute walk? What do I look like, an Olympian? I could find a coffee and a bench but it's a bit chilly outside and the coffee shop that has the good coffee has just the worst indoor seating arrangement and the not as good coffee shop makes you sit and order from a server, so these are simply not realistic options for me.