

WE'RE NOT MAKING THIS PLAY UP AS WE GO- HONEST!

A ONE ACT PLAY

By Bradley Walton

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SYNOPSIS: The curtain opens on a performance of the drama “Tragic Love”. Problem is, most of the cast is sick and have been replaced by the stage crew, who barely know the plot, much less the lines. They stumble through the show as best they can, until one of them finally decides to take matters into his own hands, launching the play in a completely unexpected direction!

CHARACTERS

(2 MEN, 2 WOMEN, 3-12 Either

RALPH (m).....Stage crew guy playing “Bobby”, the
boyfriend character in the play “Tragic
love”

STU (m)Props guy playing “Peter”, Bobby’s
friend

LYNETTE (f).....Makeup person playing “Laura”,
Bobby’s girlfriend

CARRIE (f).....Actual actress playing “Samantha”, a
friend of Bobby and Peter

STAGE MANAGER (m or f

AUDIENCE MEMBER (m or f

“PARTYGOERS” (m or f) 1-10 extras in “Tragic Love”

STAGING

A hastily-assembled set for the fictional play-within-the-play, “Tragic Love”: 2-14 chairs (folding chairs are fine), a table (a folding table or card table is fine), and a large bowl full of “gravy.”

COSTUMES

RALPH, STU, and the STAGE MANAGER are dressed in black. Everyone else is dressed in normal street clothing.

AT RISE:

RALPH and STU, sitting in chairs. Beside them is a card table with a bowl of gravy. Behind or around them are one or more "PARTYGOERS", also seated or standing. RALPH and STU are wearing black, as if THEY are dressed for backstage work, which THEY are. The PARTYGOERS are wearing normal clothing. RALPH, STU, and the PARTYGOERS look out at the audience in wide-eyed terror. RALPH looks expectantly at STU, clearly waiting for him to say something. STU continues to look at the audience in terror. RALPH clears his throat. STU finally looks at RALPH and makes a high-pitched noise of panic. RALPH leans expectantly towards STU. STU shrugs his shoulders and shakes his head helplessly. BOTH look offstage, clearly expecting a line cue from the STAGE MANAGER. THEY crane their necks. Something is wrong — the STAGE MANAGER isn't there. THEY look at each other again. More panic. Finally, RALPH breaks the silence.

RALPH: *(pointing at the gravy)* Nice bowl of gravy.

STU: Thanks. Made it myself.

RALPH: So. How you doing?

STU: Good. Good. I'm great. You?

RALPH: I'm good. Just sitting here. Enjoying the chair.

STU: Yeah. I love chairs.

RALPH: Chairs are great.

STU: *(to PARTYGOER 1)* Don't you love chairs?

PARTYGOER 1: Yup.

STU: The day they invented chairs ... that was a pretty great day.

PARTYGOER 2: Yup.

STU: Otherwise we could be sitting here on rocks.

PARTYGOER 3: Yup.

RALPH: Or the floor.

PARTYGOER 4: Yup.

STU: You guys like the word "yup," don'tcha? *(adjust dialogue as necessary if there is only one PARTYGOER.)*

PARTYGOER 1: Yup.

RALPH: None of you were on the original cast — I mean — guest list for the party, were you?

PARTYGOER 5: We were, I guess. But um ... we were told we didn't have to prepare anything. Just show up and hang out ... sort of fill out the room ... pretend to say "rhubarb" a lot ... and somebody else would do the actual work, y'know?

RALPH: Yeah. And then they got sick. Bummer, huh? Me and Stu here --

STU: Peter. My name's Peter.

RALPH: Me and Peter here were just supposed to help with um, party favors and setting up for the play. I mean, party. And all of a sudden, bang, we get put right in the thick of things.

Pause.

PARTYGOER 6: Rhubarb.

RALPH: Boy, these are great chairs.

STU: The most comfortable chair I ever sat on ...

RALPH: Yeah?

STU: It was a ... um ... a chair.

RALPH: Yeah? Wow. (To **PARTYGOER 7**) Pretty sweet, huh?

PARTYGOER 7: Yup.

STU: (to **RALPH**) You?

RALPH: Me?

STU: How about you?

RALPH: What about me?

STU: You hang out on chairs? Much?

RALPH: Um. Yeah. Lots.

STU: That's great.

RALPH: I've lived my life sitting on chairs.

STU: Yeah?

RALPH: Yeah. I'll probably die on one.

STU: That would be really cool.

RALPH: Especially if it was right now.

STU: Now would be good.

RALPH: Some days you're just ready to go, you know?

STU: Some days are pretty much "take me now" days. Definitely.

RALPH: You think about people who are home in bed throwing up and you go, "Wow. Why can't that be me?"

STU: It's funny how some people get sick and other people don't, isn't it?

RALPH: Yeah. It's hysterical.

LYNETTE: *(offstage)* Whatta you mean Janet's sick, too?

STAGE MANAGER: *(offstage)* I mean she's puking her lungs out.

LYNETTE: *(offstage)* So whatta we gonna do?

STAGE MANAGER: *(offstage)* You've got to do it, Lynette.

LYNETTE: *(offstage)* I'm in charge of makeup!

STAGE MANAGER: *(offstage)* You've been watching the rehearsals all week. You know the play!

The STAGE MANAGER backs LYNETTE onto the stage. LYNETTE's back is to the audience and SHE does not realize SHE is onstage.

LYNETTE: I know the name of the play is "Tragic Love" and it's about a woman at a party trying to break up with her boyfriend, and then she meets another guy and the boyfriend gets jealous and kills them both.

STAGE MANAGER: There you go!

LYNETTE: But that's all I know! And that was when I was watching the play with the actual cast that was supposed to be in it.

STAGE MANAGER: Just wing it!

LYNETTE: I don't know how to wing it! I don't even know which member of the crew is filling in for which part!

STAGE MANAGER: The audience hasn't seen the play! They won't know the difference. Trust me.

LYNETTE: I can't do this!

STAGE MANAGER: Yes you can!

The STAGE MANAGER nods in the direction of the audience. LYNETTE turns and realizes that SHE is onstage. The STAGE MANAGER bolts offstage.

RALPH: Hi.

LYNETTE: Hi.

PARTYGOER 8: Rhubarb.

STU: Funny how things work out, isn't it?

LYNETTE: Yeah. It's hysterical.

RALPH: We were just talking about death.

LYNETTE: I could use some of that right now.

STU: The feeling's mutual.

PARTYGOER 9: Yup.

LYNETTE: *(to STU)* Are you my boyfriend?

STU: Um. I don't think so. *(quietly, to RALPH)* That's you, right?

RALPH: Yeah. Um. Hey, baby.

LYNETTE: *(awkwardly)* Hey. Baby.

RALPH: So. What do you wanna do?

LYNETTE: Die.

RALPH: That just doesn't seem to be happening for any of us.

STU: I guess sometimes you have to make the most of a bad situation.

LYNETTE: I guess so.

RALPH: Wanna sit on my lap and make out?

LYNETTE: What?

RALPH: I mean, you are my girlfriend.

LYNETTE: Um. Yeah. About that ... I don't love you anymore and I want to break up.

RALPH: Bummer.

LYNETTE: Sorry.

RALPH: Ah, don't worry about it.

LYNETTE: I thought you'd be more upset.

RALPH: Wait, I guess I am. Yeah. I'm livid with rage. You want some gravy?

LYNETTE: Sure.

RALPH: It's there on the table.

LYNETTE crosses to the table. SHE looks at the bowl, then around it.

LYNETTE: Is there anything to go with the gravy?

RALPH: No, not really.

LYNETTE: Nothing to put it on? Dip in it?

STU: Your fingers.

LYNETTE: That's kind of gross.

PARTYGOER 10: Yup.

RALPH: I've got some hand sanitizer in my pocket.

LYNETTE: Is there a ladle? Or some cups?

STU: It's a small miracle there's even a bowl. Be grateful for it.

LYNETTE: I am. I just — this is a party, right?

RALPH: Yeah.

LYNETTE: Shouldn't there be chips or something?

STU: There was supposed to be a lot more stuff.

LYNETTE: Did somebody forget something?

STU: Actually, "somebody" would have been me. I was in charge of props — I mean, food. I got a little sidetracked. Had to do some quick reading.

LYNETTE: How'd that go?

STU: Forgot it all. Completely blanked out.

LYNETTE: Gotcha.

STU: You could just lick it out of the bowl.

LYNETTE: Like a dog?

STU: I was thinking more like bobbing for apples. Except without the apples. And y'know ... in gravy.

LYNETTE: I don't think I'm all that hungry right now.

STU: That's fine.

Pause. EVERYONE stares awkwardly at each other.

PARTYGOER 1: Rhubarb.

RALPH: It would be a shame for the gravy to go to waste.

STU: Yeah.

RALPH: We could just sit here and stare at it.

LYNETTE: Yeah. Then we'd be doing something with it. Without actually, y'know, eating it.

STU: Sounds like a plan.

EVERYONE gathers around the gravy. THEY stare intently at it for a few moments.

LYNETTE: Wow. This is great.

STU: It's very brown.

RALPH: It is.

PARTYGOER 2: Yup.

STU: I don't normally like brown very much, but this is such a rich shade.

RALPH: Yeah. The way it catches the light, there's kind of a shimmery quality to it.

STU: When I get home, I'm going to throw away my TV and whip up a big bowl of gravy to stick in the corner.

LYNETTE: When I get home, I'm going curl up in a fetal position and cry.

RALPH: I think I might do that, too.

PARTYGOER 3: Yup.

CARRIE enters.

CARRIE: Hey, guys.

PARTYGOER 4: Rhubarb.

LYNETTE: Hey ... um ... um ... Carrie?

CARRIE: Samantha.

LYNETTE: Samantha.

RALPH: Boy, are we glad to see you.

STU: Yeah. It's nice to see somebody who's ... y'know ... on the original guest list for the party.

CARRIE: Um. Right.

RALPH: Lotta people got sick.

STU: But not you.

LYNETTE: You *stay* healthy, okay?

CARRIE: Okay.

RALPH: Make yourself comfortable.

CARRIE: Wow, this is some party.

LYNETTE: It sure is.

PARTYGOER 5: Yup.

CARRIE: Whatcha doing?

STU: We're watching the gravy.

CARRIE: That's great. What's new?

LYNETTE: Quite possibly everything.

CARRIE: Any major developments in anybody's life?

STU: You could say that.

RALPH: We're not dead.

CARRIE: I can tell. Is anybody feeling any homicidal tendencies?

STU: No. We just wish we were dead.

CARRIE: (to RALPH) Are you upset?

RALPH: No. Although I am feeling kind of stressed.

CARRIE: How come?

RALPH looks at CARRIE as if SHE's an imbecile and nods his head in the direction of the audience.

CARRIE: Did your girlfriend break up with you or something?

RALPH: No — oh. Yeah. She did.

CARRIE: Did that make you angry?

RALPH: Very angry. Yeah. Big rage.

CARRIE: Don't do something you'll regret, okay?

RALPH: I won't.

CARRIE: Don't kill anybody, okay?

RALPH: Right.

CARRIE: So, Laura. I heard you broke up with Bobby.

LYNETTE: Yeah.

CARRIE: How come?

LYNETTE: I have no idea. It just — felt like something I was supposed to do.

CARRIE: I guess that's a minor point. Maybe it was destiny. What are you going to do now?

LYNETTE: Um. Go to Disney World?

CARRIE: Are you going to find yourself another guy?

LYNETTE: Should I?

CARRIE: You have a big, gaping void in your life right now.

LYNETTE: I guess I should, then.

CARRIE: Hey, we're at a party. How lucky is that?

LYNETTE: Don't talk to me about luck.

CARRIE: I think Bobby's friend Peter is kind of cute. You should talk to him.

LYNETTE: I have been talking to him.

CARRIE: You should talk some more.

LYNETTE: About what?

CARRIE: Don't expect me to know everything.

LYNETTE: You know more than me.

CARRIE: Just go talk, okay?

LYNETTE: Okay. (to STU) Hey.

STU: Hey.

LYNETTE: Nice gravy.

STU: I cooked it myself.

LYNETTE: I like guys who can cook. Wanna go on a date?

STU: Sure.

LYNETTE: Hey, Ralph?

RALPH: Yeah?

CARRIE: Bobby.

LYNETTE: What?

CARRIE: He's Bobby.

LYNETTE: Oh. Right. I should know that. I just broke up with you and stuff.

RALPH: S'okay.

LYNETTE: Peter and I are going to go on a date.

RALPH: Okay.

CARRIE: Bobby, you shouldn't let her jerk you around like that.

RALPH: But I don't care if she —

CARRIE: You're not a doormat. This should upset you.

RALPH: It really doesn't.

CARRIE: Get in touch with your rage, Bobby.

RALPH: Rage.

CARRIE: Rage!

RALPH: Right. Um. I am totally raging right now.

CARRIE: Rage harder.

RALPH: Grr.

CARRIE: Look. That's your girlfriend. She just broke up with you. She hasn't even left the room and she's already hooking up with another guy.

RALPH: If she's gonna act like that, then I'm probably better off not dating her.

CARRIE: She abused your pathetic heart.

RALPH: Pathetic?

CARRIE: Yes, pathetic. You're pathetic!

RALPH: No, I'm not.

CARRIE: You're like a bald chinchilla in traction! You're like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without the bread! You're like a ham and bacon super buffet in an orthodox Jewish neighborhood!

RALPH: What?

CARRIE: You're useless.

RALPH: I'm doing the best I can!

CARRIE: It's not good enough.

RALPH: Do you want me to leave?

CARRIE: I want you to act like a man! Avenge your shattered male pride!

RALPH: All right! Fine! (*RALPH sticks his fingers in the gravy and flicks some on CARRIE.*) Try and wash that out of your shirt!

CARRIE: That's not what I had in mind.

RALPH: Well then, just come out and say it!

PARTYGOER 6: Rhubarb.

CARRIE: Kill her!

RALPH: Seriously?

CARRIE: (*indicating STU*) Him, too.

RALPH: But you told me not to —

CARRIE: Forget that!

RALPH: I know we were all kind of talking about dying, but that was in a divine intervention sort of way. I don't think any of us would actually —

CARRIE: It would be tragic! And beautiful! And poignant!

RALPH: Remind me never to date you.

CARRIE: Just do it!

RALPH: With what?

CARRIE: I'll bet he's got a gun!

STU looks surprised and shakes his head no.

RALPH: If he's got a gun, wouldn't he kill me if I tried to kill him?

CARRIE: No, because you take the gun from him. It's his, but you kill him with it. It's ironic.

RALPH: Oh. Okay. Hey, man. Can I borrow your gun?

STU: Sorry, dude. (*digging in his pockets*) All I got is a quarter and a used tissue.

RALPH: Who used the tissue?

STU: Me.

RALPH: Do you have any communicable life-threatening diseases that you could give back to yourself if you blew your nose on the tissue again?

STU: (*looking confused*) I don't think so.

RALPH: (*to CARRIE*) All he has is a quarter. If I threw it at him hard enough, I might be able to put his eye out. Would that work?

CARRIE: No. You have to kill him.

RALPH: You're really set on this aren't you?

PARTYGOER 7: Rhubarb.

CARRIE: It's ... it's your destiny!

RALPH: Is it written somewhere?

CARRIE: As a matter of fact, yes!

RALPH: Where?

CARRIE: (*stage whisper through clenched teeth*) In the script!

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) I never actually saw one of those.

CARRIE: (*stage whisper*) What?

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) I'm stage crew. I just do what the stage manager tells me.

CARRIE: (*stage whisper*) Haven't you watched the rehearsals?

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) No. I just hang out backstage and play with my cell phone until the stage manager tells me to do stuff.

CARRIE: (*stage whisper*) I don't believe this.

RALPH: So I'm thinking eye damage is the best we can hope for with what we've got on hand, unless ... hey, Stu!

CARRIE: Peter.

RALPH: What?

CARRIE: He's Peter.

RALPH: Right. Hey, Peter!

STU: Yeah?

RALPH: You're not a hemophiliac, are you?

STU: I hope not.

RALPH: Nuts. (*to CARRIE*) He's not a hemophiliac.

STU: What's a hemophiliac?

RALPH: Somebody that bleeds easily.

STU: Is that something I can give myself by re-using the same tissue?

RALPH: No. Doesn't work like that.

STU: Good to know. (*stage whisper*) But — if I was a real hemophiliac, you wouldn't really throw the quarter at my eye, would you?

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) No, I'd just pretend to.

STU: (*stage whisper*) Then what difference does it make if I'm a real hemophiliac or not?

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) Are you a pretend hemophiliac?

STU: (*stage whisper*) No.

RALPH: (*stage whisper*) Then we still have a problem. I think. This is so totally not my thing. (*returns to normal voice*) Are you sure you don't have a gun?

STU: Positive.

LYNETTE: There's gravy.

RALPH: I guess that could work if it had to. But a gun really would be a lot more dynamic. Nuts. Okay. Wait a minute. Can we do a ... (*holding up his hands towards the audience in a "T" shape to indicate a time out*) can we have a time out for just a second, please? Sorry. I'll make this quick. (*to CARRIE, who is looking mortified*) This is a play. So if Stu, who is ... (*looks at STU*) Peter?

STU: Peter.

RALPH: Right, Peter. So if Stu did actually have a gun, it wouldn't be a real gun. It would be a prop gun. Which means that it would be a pretend gun standing in for a real gun. So as long as we're using pretend guns that obviously aren't real, how about I just use my hand? (*holds up his hand with index finger and thumb extended to form a gun shape*) Would that be okay? (*to audience*) You guys would get that, right?

CARRIE: Why can't I be dead right now?

RALPH: Welcome to the club. (*to himself*) I guess we actually could've done pretend hemophilia. Oh well. (*to audience*) Okay. Time out's over. Thanks. (*to STU*) Hey, guess what? I got a gun.

STU: That was easy.

RALPH: So. Who wants to die first?

LYNETTE: Aren't you supposed to take the gun from him?

RALPH: Oh, yeah. I guess I am. Here.

RALPH “hands” over the gun by extending his gun-shaped hand to STU, who holds up his hand to RALPH’s and makes a gun shape as RALPH’s hand returns to normal.

STU: Thanks.

RALPH: Sure. No problem. Now gimme that back, you worthless piece of girlfriend-stealing trash!

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