The Fourth Wall

By Rebekah M. Ball

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to my dad. This play would have never been possible without his encouragement and support. Thanks, Dad! You're the best!! I would also like to dedicate this play to my playwriting professor, Franklin Ashley; my brother (the llama man); my mom (future Florida girl!); my grandma; Gary "D. Master" T.; Paulette Wendell (C.C.K.Toes); Nancy Combs (my "other mom"); Kim Boyle (a true artist); Wanda Valdes (for tons of encouragement and steak quesadillas!); Stormie ("mhat mever"); and to Damian "Beef-it-up!" Cremisio for encouraging me to write even when I didn't feel like it.

The Playwright, Rebekah M. Ball

STORY OF THE PLAY

Leaping llamas! "The Fourth Wall," a play within a play, begins as a murder mystery, but the murder victim won't keel over. The playwright forgot to give the characters names, and a rude audience member keeps interrupting the show. Even the ending of the play stinks! Everyone is supposed to die and then the character Death is supposed to do an interpretive dance. Thankfully, the audience's agony is cut short halfway through when the actors break character because Death accidentally kills the Host and then leaves the set to move his car. Without Death, how can the play go on? But all is not lost. With such a rotten ending and no director or playwright in sight, ad-libbing can only improve the play. How will the play end? No one is sure — not even the actors!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

2 m, 2 w, 5 flexible

BUTLER: Man in his 30s or 40s. Somewhat arrogant, his speech is slow and deliberate.

MAID: Attractive woman. Sexy but apparently stupid.

HOST: Average man. He hates his wife, the Hostess.

HOSTESS: Average woman. She hates her husband, the Host.

DEAD PERSON: Preferable a man but can be played by a woman. He knows that he is going to die. He is upset by this.

DEATH: Can be a man or a woman. Death dresses in all black and we can't see his face. He is really partied out. We see Death's face whenever he is out of character.

REAL DEATH: Can be a man or a woman. Also dressed in black. We never see Real Death's face.

STAGEHAND: Can be a man or a woman. Also dressed in black.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can be a man or a woman. Dressed casually. Has a cell phone and a cough.

SETTING

Current day rehearsal, but the play is set in the 1950s in the library of a large house. The room has several entrances, a couch with pillows, and huge spike marks near the couch marking the spot where an end table should be. Add other furniture as desired.

PROPS

End table
Pillows
Pad of paper, small
Drinking glass
(2) Clipboards and pens
(2) Pairs of reading glasses
Bag of cough drops
Hand gun, plastic
Grocery list
Bottle of Pepto Bismal
Cell phone

SOUND EFFECTS

Doorbell
Gun shot
Animal noises
Cell phone rings

Scene 1

(AT RISE: DEAD PERSON is seated on a couch while the HOST and the HOSTESS are standing around him. They try to make him as comfortable as possible. They are nervous about the fact that Dead Person is there and isn't dead yet.)

DEAD PERSON: Well, this can't be good for me. I don't even have a name in the play. I'm just known as "Dead Person." I could be a man or a woman or even a child. It doesn't matter. I'll be dead soon, I suppose.
HOST: Can I get something for you?

(HE fluffs the pillows on the couch moving DEAD PERSON out of the way to do so.)

HOSTESS: I'm sure if he wanted something, he would have asked.
HOST: But we're the hosts! We're supposed to ask and make sure he's comfortable.
HOSTESS: WHY?! He's going to die soon.

(HOST tries to shush HER.)

DEAD PERSON: Actually, I'm quite parched. Can I have a cup of tea?
HOST: Oh ... Butler! *(To audience.)* You'll have to forgive the lack of names. Apparently, the playwright didn't care enough to give us names. *(To HIMSELF.)* The loser. *(To audience.)* I mean, my name is Host. The Butler's name is … well, Butler ... the maid's name is ...
DEAD PERSON: *(To HOST.)* At least your name isn't Dead Person! I have to die at some point in time, and I don't even know when! What if I only get two lines and then WHAM! I'm gone. I'm dead. I'm …

(BUTLER ENTERS very casually.)

BUTLER: You called, sir?
HOST: About 20 minutes ago, you half-wit.
BUTLER: You'd know, wouldn't you, sir.
HOST: What was that? I'm not afraid to fire you.
BUTLER: You can't do that, sir.
HOST: Excuse me?
BUTLER: If you fire me, you can't have any lines about how the butler did it.
HOSTESS: He's right, you know.
HOST: You would take his side.
DEAD PERSON: HELLO?! Hot tea … before I DIE!
HOST: *(To BUTLER.)* Well, you heard the man.
BUTLER: With all due respect, sir, I refuse to bring the Dead Person his tea. Let the maid do it. She hasn't even been introduced in the play.
MAID: *(ENTERING.)* Did someone say my name?

(SHE fixes her blouse buttons and checks her breath.)

BUTLER: Go get the dead person some hot tea.
MAID: One lump or two? *(Sticks chest out.)*
DEAD PERSON: Ahhh … *(Staring at MAID'S chest.)* no sugar for me.
MAID: Ohhh. But what about lumps? *(SHE twirls her hair around her finger.)*
DEAD PERSON: Lumps are sugar.
BUTLER: Oh, dear God! Don't even try to explain it to her. Her brain might spontaneously combust.
MAID: *(Laughs.)* I don't get it.
DEAD PERSON: *(To BUTLER.)* I'm sorry. I didn't know. *(To MAID.)* No lumps for me.
MAID: What were we talking about?
DEAD PERSON: Tea … I want tea with no lumps.
MAID: Hot or cold?
DEAD PERSON: Hot.
MAID: *(SHE takes out a pad of paper to write down HIS order.)* Do you want ice cubes with that?
DEAD PERSON: I said I want hot ... no … no ice cubes.
MAID: For here or to go?

End of Freeview

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