

# 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.

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**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.)*

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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?

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DEAD PERSON: For here.

MAID: I'll be right back with your ... um ... your ... umm ...

DEAD PERSON: Tea.

MAID: Right! I knew that.

*(SHE wanders around the room confused until BUTLER leads her to the door.)*

HOST: So ... what should we do while we wait for the maid?

HOSTESS: We could look at Dead Person for awhile.

*(HOST, HOSTESS, and BUTLER all stop and stare at HIM. They all try to make him comfortable by doing things that are in fact uncomfortable. They move him around and move his arms and legs, etc. Host grabs a pillow and fluffs it up a few times. While trying to get the pillow back under Dead Person, Host accidentally smothers Dead Person. Dead Person fights off Host and is okay.)*

HOST: Are you okay? How are you feeling?

DEAD PERSON: Great. Couldn't be better. *(Stares suspiciously at HOST.)*

HOST: You don't feel like you're ... um ...

DEAD PERSON: Dying? No! I really feel great!

*(THEY all stare at HIM again.)*

BUTLER: Do you have any last words?

DEAD PERSON: You mean like "Rosebud"?

BUTLER: That's a bit overdone.

DEAD PERSON: Sorry.

BUTLER: Are you sure you don't have any last words? Do you know what you'd like on your tombstone?

DEAD PERSON: Hold on ... I'm thinking ...

HOST: You want that on your tombstone?! That's sad.

HOSTESS: Why not something else? Why not something about your life and accomplishments?

HOST: Or, "Here lies a dead person." *(Laughs at his own joke.)*

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