

**MARXISM:  
THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO GROUCHO**

*by  
David J. LeMaster*

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## **DEDICATION**

*To my wife, Heather, whose beauty inspires me to write and whose love and companionship keep me writing. I love you.*

*Thank you to my parents. A very special thanks to Dr. Janet Cooper and Dr. George Sorensen for their guidance and support as Marxism was taking shape.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

David Radman, a young journalist, must write a story about The Vaudeville Theatre, which has recently been designated for destruction. He reluctantly arrives at the building for an appointment with the President of the Theatre Rescue Society, but is instead greeted by Charles Grimm, the janitor. Grimm shows Radman the magic of theatre. During a series of theatrical explorations—in which they dance a soft-shoe, eat lunch on the backdrop, explore the props cabinet, and fence—Grimm and Radman peel away years of heartache and anger, discovering that both have hidden their sorrows behind a comedian's mask. By the end, we suspect that Grimm is no janitor ... but perhaps the theatre's ghost. About an hour.

**CAST LIST**

**GRIMM:** an old man or woman

**RADMAN:** a young man or woman

***Casting Note***

*It is possible to cast either Radman or Grimm as a female and to change gender references. In the original production at Texas Tech University, a third actor, playing the spirit of Groucho, was used. This actor appeared at the very end of the play and retrieved a mask left behind by Grimm and Radman.*

**TIME:** The present, the past

**PLACE:** An old theatre

## **MARXISM: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GROUCHO**

*(An empty theatre. LIGHTS are off. Enter DAVE RADMAN from back entrance. An attractive young man in his twenties, he wears disheveled, wet clothing and a scowl. He shines a flashlight through the building.)*

**RADMAN:** Hello! Is anybody here? *(Nothing. He's furious.)* HELLO!!!! HELLOOOOOOO!!!!!! *(Pause.)* Fine. Alright, fine. I'll do the whole thing myself. Fine.

*(He pulls a miniature tape recorder from his coat pocket and speaks into it.)*

**RADMAN:** *(Cont'd.)* The theatre remained dark as I crawled through the tangle of empty seats, dusty curtains, and sticky cobwebs covering what once served as the house in this dilapidated old fortress ... . *(Stops and rewinds.)* No, that's no good ... . Um ... *(Records again.)* The prestigious Theatre Rescue Society failed to show up for our first meeting today, leaving me to crawl through the tangle of empty seats, dusty curtains, and sticky cobwebs that once were part of the ... the ... what's the name of this place? Crap. *(Stops recorder and looks around.)* Lights... .

*(He's reached the stage by now and flips various switches in the wings. HOUSELIGHTS come on. Radman peers into the house.)*

**RADMAN:** *(Cont'd.)* It's horrible.

*(We see the stage in full now. It is, indeed, full of cobwebs and dust. A few old items lie scattered about the floor, including a tragedy mask, a coat, an old scarf, and several gels. A props cabinet sits stage left, locked and rotting. A mirror leans against the vomitorium. Several tarps and old*

*curtains rest against the proscenium. We get the idea that nothing has played here in years. Then into recorder.)*

**RADMAN:** *(Cont'd.)* My first impression is of the implausibility of task the theatre society has set for itself. This old building is beyond hope. Too much effort. Too much money. It's time for anesthesia. Euthanasia. Mercy killing. Dr. Kevorkian! It's dank. It's filthy. Grungy. Dilapidated. Crumbling. Curmudgeony. Vacuous. Vomitus. *(Stops recorder.)* Say ... that's pretty good. Crumbling ... curmudgeony. Vomitus. Yeah ... . *(Records.)* A dinosaur! Vomitus Velociraptorous Vaudevilluptus! So says David Radman.

*(Flicks recorder off and looks about. Pause, then starts recorder again.)*

**RADMAN:** *(Cont'd.)* Well, pal. Looks like the jig is up. You got anything to say for yourself? *(Pause.)* Hello? If you've got a voice, you better start talking. *(Pause.)* Come on, ghosts! Call down Dionysus! *(Pause.)* That, my friends, is all the argument it can make. Silence.

*(HE flicks the recorder off, pleased with himself, and then turns off the lights. Pause, then the LIGHTS come back on. Radman peers out into the empty theatre. Suddenly, Radman takes his moment on stage and performs "New York, New York." He's a bit timid at first—after all, he's a journalist. But, like the rest of us, the empty stage is too much—he gives it his all. At the peak of the song, CHARLES GRIMM, a man as old as the theatre, crawls out from under the grand curtain resting against the proscenium and joins the song, finishing the chorus as an embarrassed Radman stops. Pause.)*

**GRIMM:** Sorry. Couldn't help joining in. Want to sing another chorus?

**RADMAN:** Who the hell are you?

**GRIMM:** Charles Grimm. Who the hell are you?

**RADMAN:** You scared the crap out of me.

**GRIMM:** You scared me, too. Here I was, taking a nap, and all of the sudden I hear Frank Sinatra. Thought I'd died. And I wasn't sure which place I'd ended up.

**RADMAN:** Why weren't you outside? I stood in the rain for a half hour.

**GRIMM:** Didn't want to get wet.

**RADMAN:** I didn't intend to get wet, either.

**GRIMM:** Then why'd you stand in the rain?

**RADMAN:** (*Exasperated.*) I was waiting for you.

**GRIMM:** You were? Well, I was in here the whole time.

**RADMAN:** (*Curses.*)

**GRIMM:** You should've just walked in.

**RADMAN:** (*Looks at watch.*) We're running out of—

**GRIMM:** I've been right here, you know.

**RADMAN:** Time—look. I've been sent by the *Tribune*.

**GRIMM:** No wonder you talk the way you do. Those fancy words ... . What was it again ... Vomitus Vaudevillious?

**RADMAN:** Your organization wants equal time—

**GRIMM:** They're great, you know. Ten-dollar words. I used to know plenty. Picked them right out of a dictionary.

**RADMAN:** I'll ask a few questions ... .

**GRIMM:** My favorite word is obfuscate. It means to cloud the issue, you know. I guess you know that already, don't you? Being a journalist and all?

**RADMAN:** ... just a question or two ... .

**GRIMM:** You got to use a thiserisk to look them words up?

**RADMAN:** I beg your pardon?

**GRIMM:** What do you call it? You know, a dictionary with all kinds of ten-dollar words in it? You got to use one of those when you do a story?

**RADMAN:** Look, Mr. Green—

**GRIMM:** Grimm. You know. Like the Brothers Grimm. The fairy tale guys. My brother and I told stories, too ... .

**RADMAN:** Mr. Grimm.

**GRIMM:** ... nobody ever knew what to believe ... .

**RADMAN:** Mr. Grimm!

**GRIMM:** ... I remember back before the war—

**RADMAN:** MR. GRIMM!!!

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