

Warren's Peace

By
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DEDICATION

*To the late, great Preston Sturges
Credo quia absurdum I believe it is absurd*

Playwrights' Notes and Story of the Play

Preston Sturges, a favorite filmmaker of ours, made a career of showing the world the humor and ingenuity of regular, everyday folks who lived in small towns across America. Having made the acquaintance of such people all our lives, we'd like to introduce you to the characters that inhabit our latest effort, *Warren's Peace*.

Set in the fictional town of Crickwater, located in the thumb of southeastern Michigan, a cast of six (three men, three women, ages 30-60) struggle through a day at the combination City Hall/Library/DPW (Department of Public Works) building. Faced with a "Peace On Earth Day" mandated by the United Nations after a year free from armed conflict around the globe, a National Guardsman sent to kick off the celebration finds the city's fathers and mothers ready for anything but peace. He quickly sees it will take more than just a banner and a sheet cake to end the conflict in this eccentric burg.

There's the town's widowed volunteer librarian who has had an adversarial relationship with her sister for so long, she no longer knows how to do anything but fling sarcastic zingers at anyone who comes close to her. The mayor married the town's most eligible bachelorette, but after twenty years, signs of stress are showing, which emboldens the high school sweetheart who loved her first...and perhaps best. And what will become of the National Guardsman...he's something of a slacker, but with a good heart. Can there be a happy ending?

Heck yes, we say. Just the way Preston Sturges would have wanted it.

CAST

(3 m, 3 w, ages 30 -- 60)

TOM PRITCHARD: *40, a well-built man in coveralls.*

WARREN BAYLOR: *30, National Guardsman sent to Crickwater to oversee a peace day ceremony.*

SHIRLEY COLLINS: *60s, town librarian, down-to-earth.*

GWENDOLYN KELLEY: *Close in age to Shirley but very different in bearing.*

CHARLES THOMPSON: *39, the town mayor, officious but always seems seconds away from breaking out in a sweat.*

ANDIE THOMPSON: *40, a radiant beauty who smiles easily.*

Setting

Current day in the small, fictional town of Crickwater, Michigan. All the action takes place in one large room which serves as Crickwater's combination City Hall / Library / Department of Public Works building. The library area has a circulation desk at center stage holding a phone. DSR is a long reading table with several chairs. USR of it is a short bookcase and behind that are the doors to the DPW and "men's room" or mop closet.

USL is the exterior door and SL are additional bookcases, a small card catalogue; and a rolling cart for holding books.

UPS of the circulation desk is a hallway leading to the (unseen) Sheriff and Mayor's offices.

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(AT RISE: The library area of the multi-purpose building. Standing off to the right, polishing socket wrenches that are arrayed on top of a bookcase, is TOM PRITCHARD, 40, a well-built man in coveralls. Entering from left is WARREN BAYLOR, 30, who is loaded down with a duffle bag full of gear, not all of which is contained by the zipper. He is wearing a wrinkled National Guard uniform and carrying a rifle. WARREN looks up the hall behind the circulation desk before spotting TOM and crossing to him.)

WARREN: Excuse me, sir?

TOM: Yup?

WARREN: Could you help me? I'm looking for City Hall.

TOM: Oh, you're a ways off.

WARREN: Dammit, I knew it! The cabdriver that dropped me said this is the address, but there must be another Main Street in this town.

TOM: Nope, can't say that there is.

WARREN: Well...this is the address I was given...121 S. Main...Crickwater, Michigan?

TOM: Yep. That's the address.

WARREN: Well...then how can this not be --

TOM: That's 'cause you're standing in the library. City Hall starts, oh... *(Walks a few steps.)* I don't know... *(Few more steps.)* about here. *(As HE walks back to his tools.)* See, now, you go through that door there, you're in the Department of Public Works building. Around the corner and down the hall, you're in the sheriff's office.

WARREN: Everything all in one building. Must be pretty tight.

TOM: *(Without emotion.)* Yeah, well, we're close. Like the frickin' Waltons, or something. What do you need?

WARREN: I was given orders by the National Guard to be here this morning at 8 am, where I would meet the mayor for a ceremonial --

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TOM: Mayor don't usually get here until 8:15. He has bathroom troubles.

WARREN: Oh, well, I'm sure that's more than I needed to know.

TOM: You're going to have to trust me on this. If you're going to spend any time with the mayor, that's *definitely* something you need to know.

WARREN: Speaking of which, is there a men's room around here?

TOM: (*Looks a bit agitated.*) Yes, there is. We've had indoor plumbin' for near fifty years now. We even got us one of them newfangled computers we're gonna hook up as soon as we figure out where the antenna goes.

WARREN: Look, I didn't mean to offend you --

TOM: Offend me? Lawd, no. We's just simple folk what loves meetin' strangers. You a missionary, come to save our souls and put clothes on the womenfolk?

WARREN: Look, pal, I think you got me all wrong.

TOM: Ooo, good line. But say it out of the corner of your mouth. Like Bogie, real tough. (*Doing Humphrey Bogart imitation.*) Look pal, I think you got me all wrong.

WARREN: (*Not sure what to make of him.*) Hey, that's...really, pretty good. Um...men's room?

TOM: (*Indicating over shoulder to door by DPW door.*) Sure. That door right there.

(*TOM goes back to polishing his sockets. WARREN crosses to door, opens it, and then turns back to TOM.*)

WARREN: There's nothing in here but a sink.

TOM: And...

WARREN: And I was hoping for...never mind. I'll just wait. Any idea what time it is?

TOM: Not carrying a timepiece? What kind of soldier are you?

WARREN: Oh, I'm no soldier, believe me. I manage a grocery store.

TOM: Sweet gig. First dibs on day-old donuts?

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WARREN: And over-ripe tomatoes. Or am I making it sound too glamorous? *(TOM laughs, eases up for the first time.)* Hey, I think we might have gotten off on the wrong foot. I'm Warren Baylor.

TOM: *(Extends hand, THEY shake.)* Tom Pritchard. Good to know ya. What brings you here?

WARREN: Well, I'm kind of surprised you weren't expecting me. It's been all over the news.

TOM: Don't get many outside papers. We listen to the Pistons' games on the radio when they're winnin'. So we don't listen to many Pistons games.

WARREN: You seriously have no idea why I'm here? This is like a PR bonanza!

TOM: Is it...always a PR bonanza when you visit a town for the first time?

WARREN: No, no, it's not about me, it's Peace on Earth Day today!

TOM: Hmm. Do we drink green beer on Peace on Earth Day?

WARREN: Not...not to my knowledge.

TOM: *(Considers, nods.)* Not interested. *(Walks away towards DPW door.)*

WARREN: But I have a proclamation from the president! *(TOM stops briefly, but continues.)* I have commemorative pins! *(TOM shakes his head keeps walking, putting his hand on the door and begins to open it.)* I have...one of those guns that shoots T-shirts! *(TOM freezes for a beat, then turns with a smile.)*

TOM: Well, why didn't you say so? Peace on Earth Day, huh? Tell me of its origins. Tell me of its central tenets. Tell me what I must do to get my hands on that T-shirt cannon.

WARREN: It should be here already; they were shipped in advance.

(Enter SHIRLEY COLLINS, a sixty-ish woman utterly without pretensions. She moves to circulation desk at center stage.)

SHIRLEY: What should be here already?

End of Freeview

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