

BARBECUING HAMLET

A Farce

by Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Wouldn't it be great fun to direct William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*? That was what Margo Daley always thought until she is hired to do just that by the Peaceful Glen Memorial Players in their theater, a renovated funeral home.

They DO have a couple of conditions, however. Margo has to make the play a melodrama, so the audience will know when to throw the popcorn. And they can't be too loud because the lady who lives under the theater bangs her cane on the stage. Oh, and Margo has to insert the sponsors' names into the play and, by the way, it has to take place in the Old West.

"And make sure the actors talk real loud because of all the noise the audience makes sucking their fingers," states one of the council members, an occupational hazard brought about by them selling barbecue before the show.

All kinds of eccentric characters come out of the woodwork in this riotous tribute to life on the community theater stage. Even the pizza delivery boy is given parts – several since Margo only has four actors to portray the five-act tragedy.

Fast lines and even faster exits punctuate this farce as Margo and her troupe of unwilling actors find out what it's like when they begin *Barbecuing Hamlet*.

CHARACTERS

(5 to 6m, 7w)

MARGO DALEY: Smart but reluctant director, in her 30s.
SARGE ABBOTT: Handyman with sarcastic wit, in his 50s.
HOPE HALLIDAY: Snappish 40-year-old, a bit overweight.
DUNCAN O'TOOLE: In his 40s, always has a story to tell.
MARY BETH LUMPKIN: Mousy secretary in her late 20s
TAMARA LOGAN: Council chairman, chic woman, mid-30s.
HAL WEBSTER: Handsome leading man type, 30s.
LAMAR BENTORRES: An erratic, inexperienced man, 40s.
ZOEY MARCUS: A no-nonsense type, around 30.
OPAL BELL: A lady with a lot of pent-up energy, 35-ish.
THEODORA VAN HORNE: Theater type, flamboyant, 50s.
BUDGIE SERATT: A young pizza delivery man, early 20s.
HARLEN DORTMUNGER: Fertilizer salesman and critic.
(This part may be eliminated if need be. It is a cameo.)

Time: The present.

Place: The Peaceful Glen Memorial Players theater.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I

Scene 1: First Meeting of the Council.

Scene 2: Auditions.

Scene 3: Second Meeting of the Council.

Scene 4: First Run-Through.

Scene 5: Rehearsals.

Act II

Scene 1: Before the Show.

Scene 2: The Play.

Scene 3: After the Play.

ACT I

Scene 1

First Meeting of the Council

(AT RISE: The stage is empty. After a slight pause, MARGO enters, carrying her clipboard and playbook, from SL.)

MARGO: I'm awfully sorry I'm late, I came over here as soon as I could but the bus was late getting into ... the ... station. *(SHE looks around.)* So don't anybody worry ... about ... me. *(Covers her eyes with a hand and looks out.)* Hello? Is anybody there? *(SHE shrugs and throws her clipboard and notes on the table.)* Some reception. *(Thumbs through her notes.)* I know I was supposed to be here ... yeah, today, there it is. *(Looks up.)* Well, this is ridiculous. SOMEbody must be here, they had to turn on the lights. Hello? *(SARGE enters from SL, carrying two folded chairs, and slowly walks up behind her. SHE doesn't see him.)* Well, I just don't get it. I know our first meeting was for tonight at seven. I KNOW I was late but you'd think they'd be here. I just hope they're not a bunch of hicks. *(SHE turns and sees SARGE. However, this doesn't startle her.)* Figures you'd be there now. Who are you?

SARGE: I'm the main hick. Everybody calls me Sarge.

MARGO: *(A Gomer Pyle impression.)* Well, gaaaawwwlllly, Sarge. *(SHE drops the impression.)* I'm Margo Daley. I'm directing the next show.

SARGE: Ain't no skin off my nose. *(HE sets up the chairs around the table.)*

MARGO: I just thought you'd want to know.

SARGE: You'd have thought so, wouldn't you?

MARGO: Where is everybody?

SARGE: They ain't here.

MARGO: Well, then, I'll stop counting. *(SARGE looks at her.)* Sorry, bus lag. *(HE goes back to setting up the chairs.)* This is the theater, isn't it?

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SARGE: Depends. What's today?

MARGO: Friday.

SARGE: Uuuh, yeah.

MARGO: What do you do?

SARGE: About what?

MARGO: I mean here.

SARGE: I set up chairs. See? Chair? It's set up? You think it's magic?

MARGO: I promised myself I wouldn't get involved.

SARGE: Look, Magoo ...

MARGO: Margo!

SARGE: You sure?

MARGO: I was supposed to meet the Fine Arts Council Board here tonight. Seven o'clock.

SARGE: That's not what they told me.

MARGO: What did they tell you?

SARGE: They told me to ...

SARGE and MARGO: Set up chairs.

MARGO: Somehow I knew that was coming.

SARGE: You ain't from around here, are you?

MARGO: No, but I've had shots.

SARGE: People do things their own ways around here. Tell you what. I'll give you some advice because I like you.

MARGO: Oh, I could feel the chemistry from here.

SARGE: Three things. One, let everyone else do the talking. After awhile they tire out and you can do things your own way.

MARGO: I see.

SARGE: Two, don't be the last one to leave the building. And three, don't believe anybody. And four ...

MARGO: You said three things.

SARGE: Did you hear number three?

MARGO: What was I thinking?

SARGE: And four, don't say we need to build a lot of new scenery.

MARGO: Why not? OH! (*SHE points at him.*) NOW I know what you do.

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SARGE: That's right. I'm the guy they call in at the last minute to build something that's over budget that they needed yesterday to impress people they don't like so they can take credit for something that they didn't do.

MARGO: You don't care much for them, do you?

SARGE: Oh, they's like family.

(HOPE enters carrying her notes from SR.)

MARGO: But not YOUR family.

SARGE: That's right.

(MARGO turns and she and HOPE stare at each other for a medium pause.)

HOPE: *(Finally.)* You're new here, aren't you?

MARGO: Hello.

HOPE: Don't think you can come in here and tell us all how we ought to do things. We got things just like we like them and we don't need any newcomers coming in here trying to change things! *(SARGE nudges her.)* What?

SARGE: This is the lady what they hired to direct the show.

HOPE: Oh. *(SHE turns back to MARGO.)* Don't think you can come in here and tell us how we ought to do things. We got things just like we like them and we don't need any newcomers coming in here trying to change things. *(SHE moves to the table and throws her notes down.)*

MARGO: I guess I shouldn't have mouthed off like that, huh? Who's that?

SARGE: Her name's Hope.

MARGO: Nah UH!

SARGE: She thought SHE was going to direct this show.

MARGO: AH!

SARGE: Yeah, everybody wants to move people, nobody wants to move furniture. *(DUNCAN enters from SR.)* Wait, here's another one.

MARGO: Should I know anything about him?

SARGE: He ain't as friendly as we are.

MARGO: Maybe I should've brought a chair and a whip.

End of Freeview

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