

A VERY MEANINGFUL PLAY

(an absurd comedy)

by

Greg Vovos

© 2018

CHARACTERS:

STEDGE: A literal character whose existence lies in the hands and whims of his troubled author. His anger and dissatisfaction color his heart a dark shade of red. He can be foulmouthed.

NICKY: A character who longs to know who he is or where he left his passion.

TINY: An unformed character whose childlike, physical presence looms.

SETTING: A vast, imaginative plane.

SYNOPSIS: Stedge and Nicky fight for their very existence as the author of their story embarks on another rewrite of which they seemingly have no control.

A Very Meaningful Play should strive to thrill audiences with its madness. And this madness can lead to moments of farce and melodrama, but the play should always maintain its foothold in a very real absurd world. Or maybe it shouldn't. God knows what the playwright is thinking.

CASTING NOTE: This play can be cast with any gender mix the director chooses. Cast in whatever way brings you the most meaning.

A Very Meaningful Play was written for Cleveland Public Theatre's 2018 Pandemonium Benefit for the theme "Labyrinth of Desire."

To Produce this Play

Contact Playwright at:

gregvovos@yahoo.com

216-319-0292

@gregvovos

A VERY MEANINGFUL PLAY

Lights up on a nearly empty space. Center stage is a cube with a human kind of creature seated atop. He is child-like and jovially monstrous all at once. This is TINY. It's difficult to pinpoint what world he hails from, but he's in this one now. He wears a burlap sack or something of that ilk.

Standing near Tiny is NICKY, a character who seems unsure, calm, and panicked all at once. One would think it impossible for an actor to play such a role. But this poor character, this is what his author has done to him.

Nicky attempts to spoon-feed Tiny his Nada Enchilada Salada, but Tiny will have none of it. Instead, Tiny wants answers to hard-to-answer questions, in that curious way that children do.

TINY
Mama-mama?

NICKY
I'm not your Mama-mama. Now please be a good Tiny and eat your Nada Enchilada Salada.

TINY
Papa-papa?

NICKY
I don't know. I'm sorry I don't...I only know I must feed you. That's all I know.

Tiny blows a raspberry and swats the bowl to the ground, spilling the "Nada Enchilada Salada."

TINY
Tiny make tipsy-daisy.

NICKY
Oh, Tiny.

Nicky cleans up the mess. Meanwhile, Tiny takes a hair ribbon from his pocket and tries to make himself invisible with it.

Stedge rushes on.

STEDGE

Motherfucker's at it again. Another rewrite.

NICKY

What? Why?? Why is he rewriting again?!?

STEDGE

Because that's what Motherfucker does.

NICKY

He's going to cut me. I know it.

STEDGE

Has anything changed since I left?

Stedge frantically searches the space.

STEDGE

Where's Jenny?

NICKY

Jenny?

STEDGE

Yeah, you know. Jenny. The supposed love of your life.

Stedge spots the ribbon that Tiny clutches.

STEDGE

What you got there, Tiny?

TINY

Belong to Mama-mama.

NICKY

What is it?

Stedge rips the ribbon from Tiny's hands.

STEDGE

Jenny's ribbon. Motherfucker must've cut her.

NICK

Why would he cut Jenny, but leave her ribbon? That doesn't make any—

STEDGE

Because Motherfucker has some nefarious plan to use this hair ribbon to continue the medieval treachery that is his trademark motherfuckery.

NICKY

I wish you wouldn't talk like that.

STEDGE

Don't blame me. Blame the asshole who made me. You think I want to talk like this?

NICKY

I think you might like it, yes.

STEDGE

Fuck you I do.

Tiny begins to whimper.

NICKY

Now look. You made Tiny cry!

TINY

(Through sobs.) I not cry-cry.

STEDGE

It's because Jenny's gone.

NICKY

(To Tiny) We don't know if she's gone for good. She might just be visiting her color blind aunt. She just made an exit. That's all. She was not cut.

STEDGE

You don't even care, do you?

NICK

I care.

STEDGE

You don't. Because you know it makes you more viable.

NICK

What are you suggesting?

STEDGE

I'm suggesting, dearest Nikolai, that you and Jenny were redundant. That you two never had the passion that lovers should, and that because of it, he had to cut one of you, and for some damn reason beyond my comprehension he chose to cut Jenny in favor of you.

NICKY

I do not like the way you're talking about mine and Jenny's relationship. We were in love. I know this because that's what MFer wrote. I said often — and I quote — "I love you, Jenny." So obviously that meant I loved her. And though I can't be sure, I do believe we were parental figures to Tiny. So I'd appreciate it if you did not disparage our relationship because it's going to confuse Tiny and make him feel some type of emotion or another and we won't be able to control him. And we all know how Tiny gets when Tiny gets emotional. Right, Tiny? Tiny? Tiny? Oh my God, Tiny? Motherfucker cut Tiny!

STEDGE

Why would he cut Tiny instead of you??

NICKY

Maybe he thinks I'm interesting.

STEDGE

You?

NICKY

Yes, me!

STEDGE

Oh, that's a good one. You, my friend, are not interesting. You're not even a character. I mean, please tell me what your distinguishing trait is. Your weakness, your desires, your greatest fear! YOUR NEED?

NICKY

I don't know.

STEDGE

Damn straight you don't. Because you're nothing. No one. You serve no purpose.

NICKY

I feed Tiny his Nada Enchilada Salada which is a very touching, nurturing moment during an otherwise hard-to-watch story!

STEDGE

You never once successfully fed him. He always just knocks it to the floor. "Topsy Daisy!" That phrase is going to be the death of me.

NICKY

You are not very nice. And you know what else? You're not so special yourself. What do you even do? What purpose do you serve?

STEDGE

I'm a meaningful moment.

NICKY

Meaningful moment?

STEDGE

Yes. I am a meaningful moment.

NICKY

You're an asshole is what you are.

STEDGE

I die a meaningful death, Nicky!

NICKY

There is nothing meaningful about your death.

STEDGE

How could you say that?

NICKY

Because you're life's not meaningful. You can't die a meaningful death if you don't live a meaningful life. You're just like me. We're just two characters lost in this labyrinth, searching for something that eludes us. You think I don't want to know who I am? You think I like being nothing??

STEDGE

You could be someone.

NICKY
How?

STEDGE
Scream into Motherfucker's soul. Grab him by the heart and squeeze until your knuckles are white. Make him feel you. Let him know who you are.

NICKY
You're right. I'll show him who he's messing with. I will let him know who I am.

Nicky prepares to yell to the sky and then...

NICKY
Who am I?

STEDGE
You're Nicky!!

NICKY
Yes, but who is Nicky? An artist? Podiatrist? Killer. A man who fills potholes?

STEDGE
Yes.

NICKY
I'm a man who fills potholes?

STEDGE
No. You're a killer who fills potholes.

NICKY
No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I am not a killer.

STEDGE
Don't you see? It makes sense now. You are the killer. And I die the meaningful death. You kill me and I live the greatest, most glorious—

NICKY
I will not do that. I refuse to do that.

STEDGE
You once aided and abetted Tiny in the murder of a government official with a serving implement.

NICKY

He was not a government official. He was a mail man. And all I did was give Tiny the...(*Breaking down*) Why do you have to bring that up? You know I'm ashamed of that...Why? Why did I give Tiny that ice cream scoop?

STEDGE

Because Motherfucker made you, that's why!

NICKY

He won't make me again. I won't allow it. I'll disappear first.

STEDGE

You can't disappear.

NICKY

My Lord, this has been his plan all along. To turn this shitstorm into a one-man show. His adolescent wretchedness knows no depths.

STEDGE

He wouldn't do that. Motherfucker hates one-man shows. You know he despises it when characters talk to the audience for no reason. (*To audience*) Am I right?

NICKY

He'll devise a reason. He'll conjure some bullshit. The cocksucker will concoct a reason because that's what cocksuckers do.

STEDGE

Why are you talking like me now?

NICKY

Because I'm losing myself! He's losing sight of me, of who I am! Because no one knows who I am. I'm undefined and soon I will be cut from the page forever just so he can tell the stupid one-person story about stupid Stedge.

STEDGE

This is because you lack passion.

NICKY

I do not lack passion.

STEDGE

Then kill me, compadre. Take my life so I may have a meaningful death. During the meaningful moment. Of the meaningful play.

NICKY

I can't do that.

STEDGE

Don't you see? It would save me. It would save the play. You might even bring back Jenny and Tiny.

NICKY

I can't...

STEDGE

It would define you, Nicky. You would be a character—Nay! a person! You would be the person who was strong enough to make the difficult choice to save us all.

NICKY

By killing you? How does that make sense?

STEDGE

He's this close to chucking this play. I feel it. He needs something big. He needs a character to act boldly. To surprise him. You can be that character.

NICKY

I would be someone, wouldn't I?

STEDGE

Yes.

NICKY

But how would I even do it?

Stedge holds out the hair ribbon for Nicky to take. When Nicky does, Stedge kneels on the ground, closes his eyes, and is still.

STEDGE

It will be poetic...

Nicky approaches, ready to strangle Stedge with the ribbon, but then...stops. Nicky drops the ribbon.

NICKY

I'm sorry, Stedge. But I can't. It doesn't feel right. It's not who I am.

STEDGE

But you don't even know who you are!

NICKY

I know I'm not that.

STEDGE

Then who are you?

NICKY

I'm...I'm...Jesus, Stedge, I'm...

STEDGE

You're what??

NICKY

I'm...slipping...

STEDGE

Slipping?

NICKY

...away...Hasta lawindow.

Nicky disappears.

STEDGE

Nicky? Nicky?? NICKY?!? My God, Nicky, you were the only one who...

Stedge stands silent a moment, still. He looks around, taking in his loneliness. Then he rails at the heavens above...

STEDGE

I curse thee, thou wretched monarch of misery! I curse thee with all the generations of my nonexistent family. I curse thee with every chamber and ventricle of my absent heart. I curse thee with the beehive thou forced me to strike my mother with. And I curse thee for cutting the one character who truly knew who he was, who stayed true to his troubled soul down to his confused core. I curse thee...for taking my Nicky from me! But most of all, I curse thee for salvaging me — a flat, angry, dimensionless nothing muffin! I curse thee and thine horrible horrible writing!

EXPLOSION. BLACKOUT.

Lights quickly back up reveal a shower of discarded script pages, cluttering the stage, as they rain down upon...Nicky! It's worth noting that Nicky is now dressed as a woman.

Stedge enters as Nicky examines one of the abandoned pages.

STEDGE
Nicky?

NICKY
Stedge?

STEDGE
You look...

NICKY
What?

STEDGE
Beautiful.

NICKY
I feel different. Better. But somehow still incomplete, unformed.

STEDGE
Are we...Did we...Is this a new story?

NICKY
I think...

STEDGE
I think so, too.

The two look at each other a moment. A sweet awkwardness...

STEDGE
I have something for you.

NICKY
For me?

Stedge pulls out the hair ribbon, puts it in Nicky's hair. As he does, Tiny toddles on wearing a diaper and carrying a binky.

STEDGE

Better?

Nicky touches the ribbon in her hair and smiles. Stedge smiles, too. Then as Tiny creeps behind Stedge...

STEDGE

I don't feel like I need to die anymore, Nicky. Just being here, now, with you, and Tiny, I feel so alive....complete. Like my life finally has meaning. I've never been happier in my life.

NICKY

I'm so happy, Stedge.

TINY

I, TOO, SO JOY-NESS, PAPA-PAPA!

Tiny hugs Stedge, from behind. It's like a teddy-bear hug.

STEDGE

I feel like my heart's going to burst...

NICKY

Because you're so happy! We're all so happy!

STEDGE

Motherfucker's at it again...

NICKY

What?

Tiny squeezes Stedge harder. Now, more like a bear hug.

STEDGE

Motherfucker always has to have the last laugh, doesn't he?

NICKY

How do you mean?

Tiny lifts Stedge off the ground, still squeezing, as he twirls, dances, and sings...

TINY
Happy Laugh Happy Laugh Happy Motherfucker Laugh.

NICKY
Tiny! Language!

Stedge fights for breath. He struggles to speak...

STEDGE
The Motherfucker he...It doesn't matter. Nicky, I...I...I...

Tiny, sensing something is wrong, drops Stedge.

TINY
Tips daisy.

Stedge clutches his chest, struggles to stand, falls to the floor.

*Nicky immediately goes to Stedge, examines him, and then...
Stedge fights for breath and to find words...*

STEDGE
I lo...I lov...

*Stedge can't say another word. He perishes. Nicky kisses
Stedge's cheek and closes his eyelids with her hand...*

NICKY
I love you too, Stedge. I always have.

Tiny drops to his knees, over Stedge, and in anguish roars...

TINY
TINY MAKE TIPSY DAISY AGAIN!

Nicky comforts a distraught Tiny.

NICKY
Shhh. It's okay. It's okay. Mama-mama's here...You just got over emotional.
It happens.

TINY
But my Papa-papa, he...

NICKY

Your Papa-papa was a very meaningful man. Who lived a very meaningful life. And died a very meaningful death. In a very meaningful play.

Tiny gives Stedge a little poke to make sure he's dead. He is. Then, Tiny looks to Nicky...inquiring...

TINY

Mama-papa?

NICKY

Yes, Tiny, I'm your Mama-Papa. Now, are you ready for your Nada Enchilada Salada?

TINY

Yes. Nada Enchilada Salada. Nada Enchilada Salada, Mama-papa.

Nicky leads Tiny back to where they were at the beginning of the play and feeds him the Nada Enchilada Salada.

NICKY

That's a good Tiny.

TINY

(Affectionately) Mama-papa...

Lights fade on the bittersweet family portrait: Mama-papa spoon-feeding Tiny, with a deceased Stedge in the foreground.

END OF PLAY