



Dwayne Yancey

Big Dog Publishing

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Buzzards was first produced April 25-27, 1979 at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

BO: Phoef Sutton

COTTON: Steve Snyder

Lemmings was first produced January 23, 2004 at the No Shame Theatre, Mill Mountain Theatre, Roanoke, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

OLGA: Laura Tuggle Anderson

HELGA: Marycatherine Smith

INGRID: Kris Sorensen

Praying Mantis was first produced May 3-7, 2005 by Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, VA: Kristi Marie Morgan, director; Lauren Grace Jones, stage manager.

AMY: Misty Critzer

MICHAEL/JONATHAN: Justino Palacios

MOLLY: Christina Sayer

LEXIE: Jennifer L. Hall

Chicken was first produced April 25-27, 1979 at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA. Directed by Dwayne Yancey.

ONE: Steve Clark

TWO: Steve Snyder

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BLACK COMEDY/THEATRE OF THE ABSURD. Macabre, zany, sardonic, this collection of five short plays offers a unique look at death and all its horrifically comical trappings. In "Lemmings," three lemmings perched on a cliff off the coast of Norway discuss how to jump off—cannonball, head first, or swan dive. In "Chicken," two hungry people stare into an empty chicken coop and debate whether to cook and eat a nonexistent chicken. In "Praying Mantis," Amy bites the head off of her boyfriend and then seeks solace from her friends to assuage her guilt. In "Spiders," a group of arachnids plot revenge against humans and their most deadly spider-killing weapon—the daily newspaper. And in "Buzzards," two cowboys stranded in the desert watch as hungry buzzards circle above. The men must find a way to kill the birds before the buzzards make a quick meal of them.

Performance Time: Approximately 60-75 minutes.

Lemmings (3 w)

OLGA: Nervous rebel.

HELGA: Upholder of traditional values.

INGRID: Nerdy, concerned with technique.

Chicken (2 flexible)

ONE: The dumb one; dressed in rags.

TWO: The smarter one; dressed in rags.

Note: Can be played by same actors as in "Buzzards."

Praying Mantis (2 m, 3 f, 1 flexible, extras)

AMY: Has bitten off her boyfriend's head and feels very bad about it.

MOLLY: Amy's detail-obsessed friend; wears a bathrobe, curlers, and slippers; has a mess of kids.

LEXIE: Cool, calm, collected punkish sort who wears black, has lots of piercings and tattoos (specifically a red and yellow barbell on her stomach, plus spider web, heart, roses, barbed wire and Chinese symbols elsewhere on her body).

MICHAEL: Amy's boyfriend; non-speaking.

JONATHAN: Amy's new boyfriend.

BARTENDER: Non-speaking.

EXTRAS: As party-goers.

Spiders

(4 m, 4 f)

TABITHA: Assertive.

ARIEL: Emotional.

REGINALD: Elder of the group; proper, reminiscent of a retired British army officer.

IAN: Rugged, a builder who admires architecture.

SOPHIE: Tabitha's teenage daughter.

NATASHA: Black widow spider; sexy, cool, and resolute, with a hint of exotic evil; dressed in black but slinky and sexy. She's also wearing something bright red on her front—either part of her costume, or a piece of jewelry.

GORDON: Natasha's boyfriend.

NIGEL: Non-speaking

Buzzards

(2 m)

BO: Cowboy.

COTTON: Cowboy.

Note: Can be played by same actors as in "Chicken."

Setting

Lemmings: On a cliff off the coast of Norway.

Chicken: Bare room except for a small table, two chairs, and an empty chicken coop.

Praying Mantis: Evening. Stage is split in half. Amy's living room is SL; Molly's living room is SR. Amy's living room has a sofa and end table; Molly's living room has a sofa and end table; party.

Spiders: Inside a house.

Buzzards: A desert.

Props/Special Effects

Chicken

Chicken coop
Table

2 Chairs

Praying Mantis

Sofa
End table
Headless corpse
3 Cell phones
Glass
Fake blood
Loud chomp

Loud chewing sounds
Gulp
Phone ringing
Kids fighting and screaming
Call-waiting beep
Dance music

Spiders

Ropes
Crumpled body
Tape measure
Pad of paper
Pencil
Cigarette

Black fingernail polish
Scream
Loud sound of swatting newspaper
Music
Loud thud

Praying Mantis

"My boyfriend is laying there dead-
with his head eaten off-
and now I've got to clean it up,
and all you can think to ask
is whether he was crunchy?"

---Amy

Praying Mantis

(AT RISE: The stage is dark. Amy and Michael are giggling and kissing on a couch.)

AMY: Oh, baby.

MICHAEL: How do you—? Oh, that tickles.

AMY: Uh-huh.

MICHAEL: Oh yeah... Ow! Oh, your teeth are sharp.

AMY: Uh-huh. *(We hear Michael scream, followed immediately by a loud chomp. Loud chewing sounds are heard and then a gulp. Lights up. Amy is on the couch. The form of a headless body can be seen beside her.)* Darn! I did it again. I hate it when I do that. Every time, too! I'm going to regret this in the morning. I can just tell, I'm going to regret this. Darn! *(She sighs, and leans over to the nightstand and begins searching for something.)* Where's the...? What's the...? Where did I put those...? Wait, a minute. I gave up smoking. What a time to give up smoking! Why'd I have to go and give up smoking? *(She opens a drawer and searches.)* Darn, and I'm out of chewing gum, too. Now what? I need more vices. No, fewer vices. No, more. Wait. Well, whatever...I need something. Well, may as well get up and fix some coffee. Caffeine. Caffeine will settle my nerves. *(She gets out of bed.)* Oh, geez. Oh, geez. Look at the mess. Oh, yuck. Now I'm going to have to Rug Doctor the couch. Why do I always do this? Why, oh why? I need to talk to somebody. I need to talk to Molly. *(She yells at the body.)* I sure can't talk to you, now can I? Yuck! *(Pause.)* Molly. I need to talk to Molly. She'll know what to do.

(Amy picks up the phone and dials. Sound of phone ringing. The lights come up on Molly, who looks at the caller ID and then answers the phone. She's wearing a bathrobe and curlers.)

MOLLY: *(Into phone.)* So, how was he?

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AMY: What do you mean, how was he?

MOLLY: You know what I mean, Amy. How was he?

AMY: You don't mean—?

MOLLY: Of course, I mean! What are girlfriends for if we can't share naughty little secrets?

AMY: I don't know. That's awfully personal.

MOLLY: Come on, it's not like it's something you haven't done before...once or twice, or 20 dozen. (*Molly giggles.*)

AMY: I know. It's just that, I don't know—

MOLLY: Oh come on, just spit it out. Was he crunchy, or not?

AMY: Crunchy?

MOLLY: Yeah, you know. Crunchy.

AMY: I can't believe you said that.

MOLLY: Why not? (*Sound of kids screaming and crying. She yells offstage.*) Will you kids hold it down in there? I'm on the phone! (*Into phone.*) Yeah, you know. Crunchy. Some girls like the crunchy ones.

AMY: Molly! I bit his head off!

MOLLY: Well, duh! Of course you did. That's the best part.

AMY: And you're asking me if he was crunchy?!

MOLLY: Well, yeah! I always thought Michael would be kind of crunchy. He just had that look about him, you know? Not that I ever had a chance to find out, of course.

AMY: My boyfriend is laying there dead—with his head eaten off—and now I've got to clean it up, and all you can think to ask is whether he was crunchy?

MOLLY: Yeah. What should I ask? Was he a screamer?

AMY: Molly!

MOLLY: Yeah, you know, did you take his head off in one clean bite or did you have to chew on it awhile?

AMY: I can't believe you.

MOLLY: You know, some girls like to tease a bit, make them suffer. I was never into that, mind you. Not that I haven't tried it, oh, once, or twice, or—

AMY: Molly!

MOLLY: You know, my last boyfriend screamed a lot, too.

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AMY: Look, I really don't want to know this!

MOLLY: He was one of the crunchy ones. But Victor—you remember Victor, don't you? Victor, bless his soul, he was just all mushy and gooey inside. No crunch to him at all, hardly.

AMY: Molly! I didn't call you to talk about crunchy or gooey!

MOLLY: All right, I know. Well, look at it this way, Amy. You won't go hungry for awhile. I hear the heads are full of protein.

AMY: Oh!

MOLLY: And, you know, it'll probably help clear up any zits you have, too.

AMY: I don't have zits!

MOLLY: (*Giggles.*) Neither do I, have you noticed?

AMY: Molly, it's not funny! I do this to every boyfriend! It just seems like when things get to a certain stage, when things are going really well, and we're like, you know—

MOLLY: Oh, I know!

AMY: Well, we get to that stage, and we're really into it, you know—

MOLLY: Uh-huh!

AMY: And it's like something in me just snaps, and I don't know...I just bite his head off!

MOLLY: Yeah, so?

AMY: Oh! You don't understand! I don't mean that I've done this a few times. I mean, I've done this to *every* boyfriend I've ever had.

MOLLY: Hey, boyfriends come, boyfriends go. You'll find another one.

AMY: But I don't want to find another one.

MOLLY: Give it time. You'll get over it.

AMY: But I liked the one I had!

MOLLY: So, tell me, was he crunchy?

AMY: Molly! You're not being very supportive!

MOLLY: Sorry. I just don't see the point of getting all hot and bothered about it. Speaking of hot and bothered, tell me again about how you did it...how you took his head off, I mean.

AMY: I guess we just see this in very different ways.

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MOLLY: So do you see it from the top? Or from the bottom?

AMY: I'm not going to answer that!

MOLLY: Well, you were the one who brought it up.

AMY: See, I'm not like you. I worry about my reputation.

MOLLY: Oh, I worry about my reputation too, Amy.

AMY: You do?

MOLLY: But who's going to tell? Certainly not what's-his-name, right?

AMY: Well, I—

(Sound of kids screaming and fighting.)

MOLLY: *(Yells offstage.)* Hey, I said, keep it down in there! Can't you tell I'm on the phone? *(Into phone.)* Now what was that? I missed the last thing you were saying.

AMY: Oh, you're no help! I've got to go.

MOLLY: All right, catch you later.

(Molly hangs up the phone and exits. Lights down SR. Amy hangs up the phone. She sits and frets. She looks over at the body.)

AMY: *(To headless corpse.)* And you're still there! Oh! What am I going to do? What am I going to do? Oh, why do I always do this? I'm going to hate myself in the morning. *(Pause. Thinking.)* Lexie, I'll call Lexie. She's always so cool and calm about everything.

(Lights down on Amy SL. Lights up on Lexie SR. She is on the phone with a male.)

LEXIE: *(Into phone, flirtatious.)* So yeah, I got another tattoo. No, I'm not going to tell you where. Let's put it this way: If I told you, I'd have to kill you. Just joking. I think my favorite is still the one on my tummy, though. Don't you think? *(She shows off the red and yellow tattoo on her tummy.)* I think that's my favorite. Sort of my own personal symbol. I mean, lots of people have

spider webs and hearts and barbed wire and roses and those little Chinese symbols. *(She shows off one of each.)* I probably have a whole alphabet, if I knew how to read Chinese. *(Pause.)* Piercings? What about them? Well, you're just going to have to find out the hard way, now aren't you? Do you remember that girl Claudette? The one with the really short hair? She told me one time she had nine below the neck. Nine! I've tried counting...two, three...four! There's no way I can get to nine. Do you know how she got nine? I thought I was wild sometimes, but that Claudette, she's crazy! *(Pause.)* What? Me? No, I don't have anywhere close to nine. Well, not there anyway. The ears don't count, okay? We're just talking below the neck. Well, what do you think? All right, go ahead, try me. Okay...uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, that's an easy one. Ummm, maybe. Umm, I'm not telling. No, I told you, I'm not telling. You'll just have to figure it out sometime. If you dare. Uh-huh. Speaking of dare...you gonna let me tie you up sometime? No, I mean really tie you up. Oh, I've got plenty of things to tie you up with. Some silk thread. Nice and tight. Oh, you'll be surprised how strong it is. I could wrap you up so tight in it you wouldn't be able to move. Do you think you'd like that? Oh, you say that now, but what about when I've teased you and let you lay there for, oh, a few hours. *(She giggles.)* Or a few days. *(She giggles.)* Until I'm good and ready to deal with you properly. *(Loud call-waiting beep is heard.)* Hang on, I've got another call coming in, but I'll get rid of it quick, I promise. *(She puts the caller on hold.)* Hello, you've reached Lexie's machine but Lexie's all tied up right now...

AMY: Lexie! This is Amy!

LEXIE: ...and can't come to the phone, so...

AMY: Lexie! I know that's you!

LEXIE: ...please leave your name and number...

AMY: I really need to talk to you!

LEXIE: ...at the sound of the tone...

AMY: It's important!

LEXIE: ...and I'll call you back if I feel like it.

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AMY: It's a crisis! *(Lexie makes the sound of an answering machine tone.)* Lexie! Don't do this to me! *(Lexie makes the sound of an answering machine tone. Exasperated.)* Oh, good grief! This is Amy. Talk to me, Lexie!

LEXIE: Your message has been left.

AMY: *(Screams.)* Lexie!

LEXIE: Oh, all right. Hang on just a second. Let me get rid of this guy I'm talking to. I left him hanging by a thread. *(She puts Amy on hold, returns to her original caller.)* Look, I've got to go. No, no, it's not you. I've just got to go. Come hang with me sometime, okay? I won't bite...too much. Bye. *(She returns to Amy.)* All right, I'm back. What's up?

AMY: Do you have to do that every time? That is, like, so annoying!

LEXIE: For you maybe. It's fun for me.

AMY: Look, I'm not in a mood to be toyed with tonight.

LEXIE: Neither was Jeremy. That's when I like to do it the most.

AMY: This is serious.

LEXIE: Oh, I'm deadly serious.

AMY: I wasn't interrupting anything, was I?

LEXIE: Nah, let him twist for awhile. It'll do him good. So what's the problem?

AMY: It's my latest boyfriend.

LEXIE: Oh, I don't do boyfriend troubles. You should know that. No boyfriends for me...too much hassle.

AMY: I ate him!

LEXIE: Well then, doesn't sound like he's a problem anymore.

AMY: But you don't understand! I didn't want to!

LEXIE: Sounds like an eating disorder to me. You might be a compulsive eater, Amy. Have you ever thought about that?

AMY: It's not about eating.

LEXIE: No? So what is it about then? Hmmm. Because if it's not about eating, then it must be about sex, right?

AMY: It's not about sex!

LEXIE: Well, what's it about then? Power, maybe? Maybe you're subconsciously asserting your dominance over the weaker of the

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species? That's what they taught us in psychology class anyway.
That whole dominance and submission thing.

AMY: I just don't want to do it anymore! But I do it every time!

LEXIE: Do what?

AMY: Eat my boyfriend's head off!

LEXIE: Well, then don't.

AMY: But it's like I can't help myself!

LEXIE: Then you need help, Amy.

AMY: I know. That's why I called you.

LEXIE: No, really, I mean you need help.

AMY: But how do you, I mean, you don't seem to have a problem
with it. Me, I just feel so guilty.

LEXIE: Guilty about what?

AMY: About, you know, doing it. Well, not it, but the other
it...about eating his head off. Don't you ever have any regrets
about what you do to guys...the whole stinging them to death
thing?

LEXIE: Why would I have any regrets?

AMY: Don't you ever miss 'em?

LEXIE: Nah. Plenty more where they came from. Why should I
feel regret over something so natural?

AMY: I guess that's the difference between us. It just doesn't feel
so natural to me.

LEXIE: Exactly. That's why you need help. Personally, I think it's
your upbringing.

AMY: My upbringing?

LEXIE: Yeah. You feel repressed. So when you let go, and do
what comes natural, you feel, well, dirty about it.

AMY: I guess you're right.

LEXIE: It's not dirty... *(She smiles.)* ...unless you want it to be.

AMY: Oh!

LEXIE: See, there's your problem right there.

AMY: I am not repressed! I just want my boyfriend back! I want
all my boyfriends back!

LEXIE: A little too late for that, I'd say. That's why I like to keep mine around awhile. Sorta toy with 'em, you know. You know what they say about paybacks...

AMY: Look, I've had enough of this.

LEXIE: That's what Derek told me, too.

AMY: Listen, Lexie, I've got to go. I don't think this is helping.

LEXIE: If you say so.

AMY: Sorry to have bothered you.

LEXIE: Oh, no bother. See you 'round, Amy. *(They hang up.)*
She's a strange one. *(Lights down on Lexie SR.)*

AMY: Ice cream. I need some ice cream. Ice cream always makes me feel better. What? No ice cream?! That's it. That does it. I'm going out. That's all there is to it. I'm going out. I'm hungry. I'm thirsty. I'm just not myself tonight. I just need to get this off my mind. *(She looks at the corpse.)* I'll deal with you in the morning.

[End of Freeview]

Buzzards

'Ain't doin' ya no good
waggin' your tongue 'bout dyin'."

---Bo

Buzzards

(AT RISE: Bo and Cotton sit back to back. Neither moves.)

BO: Won't be too much longer now.

COTTON: How ya figger?

BO: Look up there. *(Points.)*

COTTON: Yeah, I'm lookin'. What 'bout it?

BO: They ain't flyin' as fast. They're slowin' down. Watch 'em close.

COTTON: So's?

BO: They's dyin'.

COTTON: Yep. Same as us. Poor devils gonna die out here in the desert. 'Ceptin' they belong out here, and we don't. Gonna die out here without nobody knowin'.

BO: Aw, come on, Cotton.

COTTON: No funerals. No newspaper notices. No nothing. They just gonna find our bones, all dried and broken up where them buzzards done picked us clean.

BO: Now don't go talkin' like that, Cotton. Ain't doin' ya no good waggin' your tongue 'bout dyin'.

COTTON: It's true, though. We're out here dyin'.

BO: Sure it's true. But they is too.

COTTON: Only were goin' faster. They's used to it. They gonna wait us out and then pick us clean, if there's anything left to us then. We're out here starvin' away part of us and sweatin' away the rest of us.

BO: Naw. If we can hold on just a little bit longer, we're gonna have ourselves a feast fit for a king. How's that sound to ya, Cotton? How's that sound?

COTTON: How ya figger, Bo?

BO: They's gots to die sooner or later, and it's lookin' to me like it's gonna be sooner. And when one of 'em dies, and plops down right here beside us, we're gonna eat him!

COTTON: Bet they's sayin' the same thing up there.

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BO: Probably is. Ceptin' we're smarter. Ain't we, Cotton?

COTTON: I reckon.

BO: Course we is. Gots to be.

COTTON: I dunno. Seems they's about as dumb as we are. Both out here waitin' on the other to die so's they can eat the other. Don't sound too smart to me... Say, Bo, how ya know they're gonna die anyway?

BO: Just look at 'em?

COTTON: Yup?

BO: They're slowin' down.

COTTON: We ain't exactly runnin' 'round like jackrabbits either.

BO: And don't they look awful scrawny to ya?

COTTON: Look pretty darn big to me. Bigger'n' I is.

BO: They's normally big. They grows that way. Some of them mothers got 9-foot wingspans.

COTTON: Dang!

BO: That's why we're gonna have ourselves a feast, buckaroo! How'd you like to chow down on nine feet of buzzard wing? Ummm, ummm, ummm! Lotta eatin' there. Mind you, I didn't say good eatin', just lots of eatin' — but still, it's more than we've done lately.

COTTON: That's for sure.

BO: Now I grant you, though, they's still gettin' awful scrawny, for a buzzard.

COTTON: How come?

BO: (*Impatiently.*) I told ya! Cause they're dyin'!

COTTON: I don't wanna eat no sick ones.

BO: Naw. They ain't sick. They're just starvin'.

COTTON: Same as us. Poor devils. So why ya figger they're dyin'?

BO: Just look 'round ya. Ya seen anything movin'?

COTTON: Nope. Ain't seen nothin'. Seen a lizard 'bout three days ago. That was it. Or was it four?

BO: Ain't nothin' out here. Everything's dead. 'Cept us and them. That means there ain't nothin' left to die, so them fellas up there

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ain't got nothin' to eat, 'cept us. That's why they been circlin' us all this time.

COTTON: Waitin' on us to die.

BO: Only we're gonna outsmart 'em.

COTTON: Oughtta die first so we ain't gotta eat them things.

BO: Willpower, Cotton, willpower! All's we gotta do is hold out for a few days and one of them bastards is bound to die. Got to. He'll just drop dead right here in front of us, without us even havin' to move. Then we're gonna cook him up and eat him. Yeah, boy, won't that be good—eatin' again?

COTTON: They taste any good?

BO: Oh, you bet! Taste tangy, real strong and tangy. Kinda tough to chew on, though.

COTTON: Won't make ya sick, will it?

BO: Naw. Eaten plenty of 'em before.

COTTON: Ya have?

BO: Sure. They ain't the best tastin' critters in the world, but they'll do in a pinch. They'll do.

COTTON: Well, Bo, I'd say we certainly have ourselves in a pinch here.

BO: Yup, could say that. I'm countin' on them up there to pull us through.

COTTON: What if it don't work?

BO: It'll work.

COTTON: But how can ya be positive one of them critters is gonna die—just fall right outta the sky and land in our laps? Like magic or something?

BO: May not.

COTTON: Huh? But you said—

BO: That's just what I *hope's* gonna happen. May not, but then it ain't gotta. Gots me a plan B.

COTTON: What's your plan B?

BO: Well, all's we really needs is for one of them suckers to think we're goners. I mean already dead and gone and fit for buryin', and they'll come down here sniffin' us and all.

COTTON: Then what?

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BO: Then we grab him! Let him think yer deader n' a doornail, and he'll get right up on ya. Then ya grab him round the neck, so's he can't get away, and we beat the livin' daylights out of him.

COTTON: Smack him to smithereens!

BO: You bet! Then we—

COTTON: But won't he fight back?

BO: That's why we gotta surprise him! Otherwise, he might try to do us in. Peck us to death or something.

COTTON: Oww!

BO: But once we get 'im, we wring his neck like this...
(*Demonstrates.*) ...see?

COTTON: Uh-huh.

BO: Then we cook him and eat him. Eatin' sounds good, don't it?

COTTON: Yeah, boy. Can't wait to grab me a drumstick. They got drumsticks, don't they?

BO: Oh, yeah! Ones bigger'n you ever seen. Then we eat, yes sirree, eat better'n we have for a long time. Whatcha say?

COTTON: Say it sounds all right.

BO: Good!

COTTON: 'Ceptin' there's one thing that bothers me, Bo.

BO: What's that, Cotton?

COTTON: How we gonna cook him?

BO: I dunno. Fry him. Boil him. Whatever.

COTTON: What I mean is, how we gonna start a fire?

BO: I dunno. Rub something together, I reckon. Bound to be something we can use.

COTTON: Don't see no sticks...

BO: Got yourself a point there. Reckon we eat him raw, huh?

COTTON: Reckon so.

[End of Freeview]