

Once in an After-Life Time Chance

By: Halli Rider

Synopsis:

What happens when iconic playwrights from the past become your one-act judges? This ten-minute comedy follows four iconic playwrights/actors/artistic concepts, all rooted in either realism or surrealism, as they discuss the plays they just watched for a one-act play competition. This play caters to people with a deep love for theatre history, and a strong hate for the chaos that is one-act play competitions, all while seeing how these playwrights/actors/artistic concepts have changed the theatre world to make it what it is today.

Character List:

- **IBSEN:** Father of realism, he treasures realism above any other art form. Is also a grumpy old man.
- **TENNESSEE WILLIAMS:** A creator of American realism. Much like IBSEN, desires realism above other artistic takes. An old sassy gay queen.
- **SURREALISM:** Believes in making the familiar strange. Inspired Artaud to write “Theatre of Cruelty”. Is basically Anti-realism.
- **JUDITH:** Judith Malina, the co-founder of the Living Theatre, and a player in Paradise Now.

[Lights slowly fade up on a break room. There are various snacks and drinks set up. Enter IBSEN, TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, SURREALISM, and JUDITH. They've just gotten done with the last one-act play for them to judge for a high school one-act competition. There are mixed feelings amongst the 4 artists. It's silent for a few moments.]

IBSEN: Why did we agree to be one-act judges?

TENNESSEE: Because we get a once in an after-lifetime chance to come back down to earth and see how the art of theatre has progressed over the years.

JUDITH: That's all good and well but why at a high school one-act competition? You can't do anything fun in high school. Everything has to be school appropriate. They don't even get to say "fuck"!

SURREALISM: You know? I'm not asking questions. I'm just happy we got to be alive again for a day.

TENNESSEE: Surrealism?

SURREALISM: You called?

TENNESSEE: Were you ever alive? I thought you were just a concept.

SURREALISM: I was alive briefly. I lived through a man called Artaud, one time.

IBSEN: Wasn't he clinically insane?

JUDITH: He was the one that theorized "Theatre of Cruelty" wasn't he?!

IBSEN: Yeah, the guy that was all about art for art's sake, lived through both world wars, contradicted himself all throughout his work because it was biased and essentially was using it for exposure therapy for himself-

SURREALISM: We don't have to get into the details.

IBSEN: I'm not done. Basically thought that if you scare the shit out of people, their instincts would kick in. Not a good mix with theatre. But I rest my case.

TENNESSEE: Yeah, that guy was crazy.

JUDITH: I don't know, I thought it was kind of cool.

IBSEN: You would, Miss Paradise Now.

JUDITH: I'm just saying that it had the potential to invoke change!

TENNESSEE: No, he contradicted himself throughout his entire article.

SURREALISM: How so?

TENNESSEE: Well, he talked all about how he didn't like expressionism and how art should not be personalized, right?

SURREALISM: That is correct.

IBSEN: And didn't he live through both world wars?

SURREALISM: That is also correct.

TENNESSEE: His theoretical idea behind "Theatre of Cruelty" is just exposure therapy so he can fix his own personal trauma through it. That makes it personalized. Contradiction, bitch.

SURREALISM: Now that is outrageous. That is not what he meant by it.

IBSEN: Then what did he mean by it? Was he arguing for realism?

SURREALISM: Oh, God no. More like art for art's sake mixed with anti-realism or ... for lack of better words - surrealism.

TENNESSEE: Oh, come on, that's the only reason you like him.

SURREALISM: Um, yeah.

IBSEN: You are so unrealistic!

SURREALISM: That's the point!

TENNESSEE: Okay! Can we all just chill out for a second? We have a limited amount of time to talk about the shows that we just saw.

JUDITH: Which were all bad.

TENNESSEE: That's not true.

JUDITH: Yes, it is. They were wearing so much clothing.

IBSEN: Yeah. Clothes are normal and realistic. I think even surrealism can agree with me on that one.

SURREALISM: I mean... I'm all for anti-realism, but you do have a weird thing about clothes, dude.

JUDITH: I'm just saying, less clothes is more...

TENNESSEE: Y'all, this bitch is crazy too.

JUDITH: You guys don't get it.

TENNESSEE: Moving on! Okay! First play! What did we think about *Antigone* by Sophocles?

IBSEN: Why was it set during the zombie apocalypse?