

DARK AGES

by

Heath Houseman

This play would not be what it has become without Danny Slavens, Paul Andy Smith, Heather van Wolf, Laura Heidinger, Ross Hotchkiss, Brad Williamson and Theresa Widner Hicks. Thank you all.

General Production Note

A generous amount of stage blood is used in this play, the end result being a slick stage and saturated costumes. Follow recommended safety guidelines.

SETTING

The lobby of The Beverly Means Talent Agency, Hollywood, California.

Art-deco silver metal trees stand in the corners of the lobby. The branches rise from the tree trunks and form a shiny halo of branches all around the office, like metallic ceiling trim. The branches have dramatic thorns on them so that the halo of branches also looks like a crown of thorns. Two branches will be broken/pulled off the artwork and used for the crucifixion at the end of the Second Act.

Two plant stands adorn the lobby. Three Art-deco bird of paradise silver metal flowers are placed in each stand. The base of each flower comes to a sharp and lethal point. They will be used to impale the victim's hands and side during the crucifixion.

A 20 gallon fish tank has one big, dead goldfish floating in it.

A print of the Mona Lisa hangs Upstage Center, a second-rate imitation Andy Warhol: Blue face, neon-yellow hair, blood-red background and reflective eyes.

The hallway door is Left.

Near the hallway door is a chair and a reception desk with laptop, telephone, etc.

Opposite the hallway door, Right, is a sofa with pillows and a coffee table with magazines scattered on it. The back of the sofa is close to a wall. There is a space between the wall and the sofa.

The entrance door to Beverly Means' office is Downstage Right. It appears to be made of lead. It has no doorknob. It stands alone, a solid, heavy and impenetrable leaden wall. The name *Beverly Means* is painted on both sides in bold, black lettering.

The floor is painted hospital-white.

TIME

The present.

CAST

ANDY DEVINE AGES: 30s, an actor. He radiates enormous energy, like an overheated blast furnace leaking molten pig iron.

DEBORAH FLOWERING: Late 20s, an actor. She wears a battered harmonica tied with string around her neck.

BEVERLY MEANS: 50s, an agent. Her hair is colored neon-yellow and she wears a leopard print jumpsuit.

RALPH TOURAND/CHAVEZ: 30s, an actor. Dressed in black, a Canadian.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 and 2: A romantic couple pre-set in the audience, "killed" near the end of the Second Act.

ACT 1

Setting:

In darkness, the Bee Gee's song *Staying Alive* is playing, reworked as Muzak (easy listening instrumental).

Lights up: The lobby of the Beverly Means Talent Agency, bathed in a gentle golden light.

At rise:

(DEBORAH sits on the sofa hunched over her smartphone, texting.

She wears a blood-red Little Red Riding Hood cape cloak, lined in black with pockets on the inside.

She digs through the cloak's pockets and pulls out a pack of clove cigarettes, puts one in her mouth but does not light up. Sets the purse on her lap and continues to text.

RALPH works the reception desk, taking calls.

BEVERLY shouts, offstage. Her shouts turn into screams.

ANDY enters through the hallway door, semi-automatic pistol in hand.

He has Beverly in a headlock.

He kicks the door shut and gives Beverly a noogie.)

ANDY

Noogie, noogie, noogie!

(Beverly tries to escape. They wrestle.)

RALPH

Hey!

DEBORAH

Oh my god.

RALPH

What the... what the hell are you doing?

(Deborah remains seated, recording the fight between Andy and Beverly on her smartphone.)

RALPH (CONT'D)

Stop it! Stop!

(Andy overpowers Beverly and throws her behind the sofa.

He fires rapid gunshots into Beverly's body, blam, blam, blam!

Deborah leaps from the sofa, hurtling her smartphone and purse far from reach. She curls into a ball.

Ralph ducks behind the desk.

Beverly is dead, her body hidden from the audience behind the couch.

Andy lowers the gun, takes a beat to think, catch his breath.)

ANDY

What...? What did I forget...?

(Removes the clip, replaces it with a new one, fires into Beverly's body, blam, blam, blam!)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Nope. That wasn't it... What was it?

(Another beat. As he thinks it through, he unconsciously dances the Hustle to *Staying Alive*.

Then he goes into a rampage, howling like an injured animal, hunting for the stereo. Once he locates it, he smashes the device and the music cuts off.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Better. So much better. Can think. Now. What did I forget...?
Eyes!

(Crosses to the sofa, steps behind it, kicks hard and then stomps - knocking out Beverly's eyes and crushing them like cockroaches.)

Takes a beat to survey his handiwork.

A large amount of blood is seeping out from beneath the sofa, flowing Downstage, underneath the coffee table, to Center.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Yeah. That was it. I really feel much better now, really very happy. I am special. Life is fun and rewarding. I accept and love myself because learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.

DEBORAH

Thank you.

ANDY

Oh, you're welcome.

(Beat.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Oh my god!

(Points the gun at Deborah.)

RALPH

Don't!

ANDY

Oh my god!

(Points the gun at Ralph, then it's back to Deborah.)

RALPH

Stop!

ANDY

Oh! My! God!

DEBORAH

No, no, no! You can't! You can't do this! You can not do this! Not now! I think I've got the role of a lifetime! Your timing couldn't be worse! I said thank you, didn't I?

ANDY

Yes! Yes, you... yes, you did...

(Beat. Andy stands in the forming puddle of blood.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

That's your smartphone. You sat there and recorded me on your smartphone. While I gave your agent a noogie and then riddled her body full of bullets. You just sat there and recorded it. You're sick. There's something wrong with you.

(He crosses to the phone, picks it up, takes a Selfie.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

This it? Do I need to worry about what's in that purse?

DEBORAH

Open it if you like. You won't find anything but what a woman needs.

ANDY

Tampons, condoms, pepper spray? Ralph? Gimme what you got. On the table.

(Ralph puts his smartphone, smartwatch and headset on the coffee table.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

You're a duelly, I can tell. Come on, come on, come on. Empty your pockets.

(Ralph puts his second smartphone on the table.)

Andy picks up the devices, crosses to the fish tank and drops them into the tank, one at a time.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

I know this is hard for you to watch... Laptop. Hurry up, come on.

(Ralph gives the laptop to Andy. He dumps it into the tank.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

There. Now we don't have to worry about anybody watching us. Awww. Look at that. Charlie is dead. Bev's goldfish.

DEBORAH

Maybe you shot him.

ANDY

Bummer.

DEBORAH

Maybe the sound of your gun gave him a heart attack.

ANDY

So long, Charlie.

DEBORAH

Maybe you killed him because you didn't want any witnesses!

ANDY

Shut up! Calm down! Calm way the fuck down! I'm calm! Look how calm I am! I'm not gonna shoot you! I overreacted! I didn't... think!

(beat)

Maybe didn't think this through enough. Maybe I... I planned for you not to be here. You're not supposed to be here. I didn't even see you! Oh boy, do I feel stupid. Like Hamlet. Now I understand: "A bloody deed!--almost as bad, good mother, As kill a king and marry with his brother!" What are you doing here, Ralph? Hm? You told me you had some great, big audition today - which would make you not here if you went to it. Lunchtime, as I recall. And you. Miss Nomophobia. Beverly never schedules an appointment during lunch. She goes down the hall, sluts it up with the Marie Callender's guy, buys a pie and comes back. Just her, a pie, and then she shoves that pie into her fucking pie hole. Every damn day.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

For an hour. At lunchtime. Predictable as clockwork. So. Would one of you like to explain just what the hell you're doing here, when nobody today, at this particular hour - except for Beverly! - was supposed to be here...? Hell-oooo?

RALPH

My audition got canceled, Andy. So Bev told me to work through lunch.

DEBORAH

She told me to come early to make a good impression.

ANDY

Bitch! No matter how well I plan, she compromises me. Not anymore, though, huh? Ha, ha, ha. Nope, no sir, no siree bob. Crazy knuckle-head.

(beat)

Well, you being here changes everything, you understand that, don't you? And Charlie's dead. But that's not my fault. He was a goldfish in the wrong place at the wrong time. If circumstances had been different, swimming in tank in a loving home, he might still be alive. And I guarantee, he is the only innocent victim here.

(beat)

There was one more thing I planned to do, but... don't see... why... why you couldn't join me?

(Taps his shoes in the puddle of blood.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

A little impromptu, but nothing wrong with that. Good to be able to adapt, you never know... A little soft shoe anyone? Tap, tap?

DEBORAH

I can't tap.

ANDY

Ralph? Get your ass over here, next to me. You - what's your name...? Hey, tall-dark-and-dreadful-coffeehouse-yak, I'm talking to you.

DEBORAH

Deborah. Deborah Flowering.

ANDY

That your stage name or real name?

DEBORAH

Real.

ANDY

Riiight. And I'm Howdy Doody with a hand up my ass.

DEBORAH

Howdy Doody didn't have a hand up his ass.

ANDY

What?

DEBORAH

Howdy Doody was a marionette. He had strings that tied him down. Like Pinocchio. The Muppets have hands up their asses.

(Beat.)

ANDY

Get up! Both of you! Get up and stand next to me!

(Deborah and Ralph cross to Andy.

They stand side by side in the puddle of blood, Andy in the middle.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

You know *Walking In A Winter Wonderland*? Yes? No? Yeah, sure you do. OK. I'll hum a few bars, then, when I say, "Go!" start tapping. Got it?

DEBORAH

I can't tap.

ANDY

Then hop up and down. What about you, Ralphy-boy? And don't tell me you can't tap.

RALPH

No. I'm sorry, Andy, I can't.

ANDY

And you call yourself an actor? Huh. So sad. Can you stomp your feet at least?

(Ralph nods.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

OK. That's OK. The stomping is OK. But just one foot. Like this: Stomp, stomp, right? And try to keep up, or if you can't do that, in the very least, keep time. Keep the beat. Got it?

(Deborah and Ralph nod.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Good. You hop up and down, Deborah. You stomp your feet - foot - Ralph. I'll dance. I'll hum. Here we go. A one, and a two, and a one, two, three!

(Andy hums the chorus from *Walking In A Winter Wonderland*.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Go!

(They dance in Beverly's blood as Andy hums - Andy tap dancing, Deborah hopping up and down and Ralph stomping one foot.

Andy ends the dance with a big knee-dropping finish.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Yeaah!

RALPH

I'm gonna be sick.

ANDY

No, you're not. You're gonna sit. Suck it up, buttercup, and sit.

(Deborah and Ralph cross to the sofa.

Deborah pulls out her pack of clove cigarettes.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, hey! What are you doing? This is a non-smoking, Southern Californian, semi-New Age/vegetarian Green Environment. Beverly always insisted. Terrified of lung cancer. Thought it might kill her. Wroooooong.

(laughs)

So, yes, go ahead. Go. I give you the freedom you smokers wish you had. Smoke away, smoke like a brick shithouse chimney. Smokesmokesmokesmoke!

DEBORAH

My... my lighter's in my purse.

ANDY

Smoooke!

(Deborah pulls out a cigarette. Andy strikes a match, lights her clove.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Cloves. I was right. You are a coffeehouse-yak.

DEBORAH

(whispered)

And you're an asshole.

ANDY

What? I'm a what?

DEBORAH

Nothing.

ANDY

Wait a minute. You just got to dance in your agent's blood. That doesn't happen every damn day, for one, and for two, you know how many people in this town would pay to do what you just did. They'd give me a medal on *America's Funniest Videos*. I gave you a gift. And you call me asshole...?

(Andy points the gun at Deborah.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

My name's not asshole. It's Andy. Andy Devine Ages.

DEBORAH

Andy Ages? The Hemorrhoid Man? The No More Itch Hemorrhoid Man?

ANDY

You've seen my commercials.

DEBORAH

Your commercials? I had that part. It was mine, written for a woman, the No More Itch Hemorrhoid Woman. After months of auditions, lunches, dinners, whatever it took - I had it right there, in the palm of my hand - and then some man came along and stole it from me. You. Thief.

ANDY

Do you think I like being recognized for a hemorrhoid commercial? You should be grateful you didn't get the part. You have no idea how hard it is. Guess how many asses I've had to sign with a Sharpie because of it - the struggle is real. Guess.

DEBORAH

I don't know.

ANDY

Guess!

DEBORAH

Fifty?

ANDY

Guess!

RALPH

A hundred?

ANDY

Guess again.

RALPH

A hundred and fifty?

ANDY

Thousands, you morons! Thousands of people have pulled their pants down, bent over and asked me for an ass-o-graph. "Sign my ass, Mr. Hemorrhoid Man, sign my ass!" Do you know what that does to you?

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Do you know what signing thousands of big, fat, furry asses does to a person's psyche? And the irony is, of course, I don't even have hemorrhoids!

DEBORAH

After all the bending over I'm sure you've done, I should think you would.

ANDY

Huuullo? I have a gun in my hand. A big bang-bang gun! See? Point it at your head and pull the trigger and gee whiz, kids, look at all the pretty circus colors! You wanna ass-o-graph? I'll give you an ass-o-graph.

(Andy grabs Deborah's ass.

She pulls away and blows into her harmonica - it sounds like a scream. She blows and blows.

Beat. She sobs.)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Wow. That's was weird.

RALPH

Andy?

ANDY

Andy Devine Ages.

RALPH

Sorry. Andy Devine Ages. Listen, we all work for the Beverly Means Talent Agency in one way or another, right? We've all put up with her destructive behavior, just like you. I get it, man. I didn't like her very much either, OK? So, so, come on. You've done what you wanted. Let Deborah and me -

DEBORAH

I hated her. Yeah, hated. No pussywhipped "didn't like her much." Real, pure, undiluted hatred. Probably about as much as Mr. Hemorrhoid here. But. That doesn't mean I would'a killed her.

ANDY

What else was I supposed to do, huh? She broke me. She promised, promised, promised but never put out - oh, well, she put out in other ways, yeah, sure: "Touch me here, Andy.

(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Harder, harder, Andy. Faster, faster, Andy. Give me candy, Andy." Behind that damned lead door, in the park, the beach, the freeway, Kentucky Fried Chicken! And all I got out of it was the No More Itch Hemorrhoid Man.

(screams)

Oooooo jeepers creepers, Bev ain't got no peepers! Pow! Pow! Pow! Knocked 'em right outta her head and stomped on them like cockroaches... Oh my god... Oh my god. Is that true? Did I just do that to her? Did I really kick her eyes out and stomp on them? God. Help me.

(sobs)

To be or not to be, that definitely is the question now, boys and girls.

(Andy puts the gun to his head.)

RALPH

Andy!