PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THIS
PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this play or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this play, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

1. **DO** take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.

2. **DO** enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.

3. **DO** understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.

4. **DO NOT** attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform the plays or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.

5. **DO NOT** rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!
A BIRD IS NOT A PET

A Tragic Act of Separation or A Comic Act of Desperation

BY REBECCA RYLAND

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED

Performance Rights Available Exclusively through Heartland Plays, Inc. at heartlandplays.com playsnow@heartlandplays.com customer service: 406-431-7680

Copyright © 2000 by Rebecca Ryland
A BIRD IS NOT A PET
A Tragic Act of Separation or A Comic Act of Desperation

By REBECCA RYLAND

3 Women/1 Man

Setting:

The Foyer of a Condo Clubhouse

Characters:

The Woman
The Man
The Secretary
The Blond Woman

Warning: Gunshot
A BIRD IS NOT A PET
A Tragic Act of Separation or A Comic Act of Desperation
by Rebecca Ryland

(AT RISE: The foyer of a Clubhouse; an office indicated. What furnishings seen are tastefully modern, accented with exotic plants and exquisite artwork. A handsome wooden desk separates the waiting area from the office. THE WOMAN enters, apparently frustrated and agitated. THE MAN is seen moving about the office. THE WOMAN waits to be recognized. THE MAN does not come forward. He looks at her then turns away. She waits. No one else approaches. THE MAN looks about. She waits. Finally he speaks.)

THE MAN
Someone will be with you.

(THE WOMAN nods stiffly.)

THE MAN
(Loudly) Some woman in a tizzy over something or other.

(THE SECRETARY approaches.)

THE SECRETARY
May I help you?

THE WOMAN
That all depends on whether you have any authority to do anything.

THE SECRETARY
Why don’t you tell me what the problem is and then I will tell you if I do.

THE WOMAN
I have been to this office four times to ask what I may do with my trash. I have been to this office four times to ask if I may separate my trash and no one I talked to could tell me.

THE SECRETARY
No you may not.

THE WOMAN
The last time I came I was told that I could. My son—this is very important to him. He went to all the bins and gathered the papers lying on the ground. He stacked them together. He put them with ours. He put the glass and the plastics together, and the tin. All separate—to help the old man when he picks up the trash. But while my son waits for the old man to come, they came and threw out our trash. They came and they threw it in
THE WOMAN, Continued

the back of the cart. My son yelled, ‘Hey, where are you taking our trash?!’ A man in
the cart shrugged his shoulders and then they just took it away.

(THE MAN is listening.)

THE SECRETARY

I don’t know who said you could do that. As far as I know you can’t do that here. Who
said you could?

THE WOMAN

The woman with the blond hair. The only person here who ever seems to be able to do
anything.

THE MAN

What woman is that?

THE WOMAN

The woman with the blond hair! The tall woman who works here!

THE MAN

Calm down before you have a stroke. You can talk to here yourself in a minute.

THE WOMAN

My son followed the cart as fast as he could. He saw them throw our trash in the big
dumpster down by the car wash, the one that the City picks up and takes to the County
Dispose-All.

THE BLOND WOMAN

(Entering) May I help you?

THE WOMAN

I have come to this office four times to find out what I may do with my trash. You tell
me the old man who picks up the trash separates what he can and if I would do ours it
would help him. And my son and I did. My son, who cares, even picked up the papers
thrown by the bins and put them with ours and divided the bottles and plastics and tin.
He looked away just for a moment and now they’ve taken our trash and they’ve hauled it
away.

THE BLOND WOMAN

Who are they?

THE WOMAN

The men in the golf cart. In the work cart. The men who work here.
THE BLOND WOMAN
I told you we don’t do that here. I told you the old man who picks up the trash does it on his own.

THE WOMAN
I understand that. And you told me if I separated mine it would help him.

THE BLOND WOMAN
He comes every day.

THE WOMAN
You told me if I separated my trash he would take it.

THE BLOND WOMAN
The old man does not work here. I cannot control what the old man will do.

I understand that.

THE BLOND WOMAN
If you spoke Spanish you could ask him yourself.

THE WOMAN
And now they’ve taken the trash my son and I separated and they’ve thrown it in the garbage!

THE BLOND WOMAN
They! They! Who are They?! What do you want me to do about it?

I want you to give me my trash!

THE MAN
Stop screaming.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Do you own your unit or rent?

I rent.

THE MAN
(Condescendingly.) Of course.

THE WOMAN
That would make a difference? If I owned you would give me my trash?
THE BLOND WOMAN
What do you want me to do? Do you want me to go get your garbage? You want me to climb in the dumpster and go through the trash? I’m not crawling through any dumpster.

THE WOMAN
I do not expect you to crawl in the dumpster. I want the men who took it to give me my trash and I will take it to the old man myself.

THE MAN
This isn’t the end of the world.

THE WOMAN
Yes it is. (THE MAN chuckles. THE WOMAN pulls out a gun and shoots THE MAN.) I take this very seriously.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Yes, it is very important. If it were up to me we would do it. No one has brought it up to the Board.

THE WOMAN
I have been to this office four times.

THE SECRETARY
You must bring it before the Board.

THE WOMAN
And what should I do, write a letter? And bring a copy of Ordinance 2010?

THE SECRETARY
That might help.

THE WOMAN
(Referring to THE MAN bleeding.) I’m sorry about the rug.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Yes, we just finished redecorating.

THE WOMAN
For whom?

THE BLOND WOMAN
For the people who live here.

THE WOMAN
You build a Clubhouse with a sliding glass door that opens onto the deck of a pool but no one can enter in a bathing suit.
THE BLOND WOMAN
Yes, but swimming is not allowed here.

THE WOMAN
You fill the upstairs with game tables and Ping-Pong and cue sticks and marbles but children are not permitted to play here.

THE BLOND WOMAN
They break the paddles and lose the balls.

THE WOMAN
Yesterday a man shoved a gun in a little girl’s face. She told him to shoot.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Yes, there is nothing for children to do here.

THE WOMAN
And today a little boy was dragged across the pavement by his neck because a man said he threw a rock at his window.

THE BLOND WOMAN
We keep a file.

THE WOMAN
He didn’t do it.

THE BLOND WOMAN
(Looking in file.) The boy takes medicine.

THE WOMAN
Someone was fighting downstairs in my building last night. I was afraid to go out in the hall.

THE BLOND WOMAN
This is the first I have heard about it.

THE SECRETARY
No one filed a complaint.

THE WOMAN
I called the police.

THE BLOND WOMAN
This is the first I have heard of it.
A man found six spent gun shells in the second floor laundry room.

No one filed a complaint.

I just want to know what is going on around here?!

This is the first I have heard about it.

I read books. I was once noted ‘Head of My Class.’ I make my bed every morning. I cook leftovers on Mondays and Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I want my trash. I am trying to live.

No one complained.

Men die to protect my right to live and no one complains.

What do you want?

I want to use the Clubhouse.

We require a four thousand-dollar deposit.

I want to celebrate the New Year.

What night would you like to reserve?

New Year’s Eve.

You’re in luck. The Clubhouse is open that day. Sign here that you will be responsible for all damages. Make the check payable to The Board. The Board will have to approve your request. The deposit is non-refundable. The Clubhouse closes at Noon.
THE WOMAN
But I want to celebrate the New Year.

THE BLOND WOMAN
The New Year is over.

THE WOMAN
It was a terrible New Year. Yesterday I mailed in my census. It asked “How many ounces of alcohol are consumed in my home each day? One? Less than ten? Less than fifteen?” I answered, ‘More than fifteen.’ I don’t drink. It asked ‘What is your spouse’s occupation? Professional? Statistical? Bureaucritical?’ I wrote ‘Unavailable.’ It asked if I was married or single and I said ‘Detached’. It asked how many people live in your household and I said ‘Thirteen’ but I live alone.

THE BLOND WOMAN
(Paying no attention. To THE SECRETARY.) Go get the stain remover.

THE SECRETARY
Where will I find it?

THE BLOND WOMAN
Ask the old man who cleans here.

THE SECRETARY
I asked him four times where he keeps it.

THE BLOND WOMAN
If you spoke Spanish he would tell you.

THE WOMAN
I have some in my unit.

THE BLOND WOMAN
What do you want?!

THE WOMAN
I want my trash. My son, who cares, took the time to gather the newspapers blowing in the complex—

THE BLOND WOMAN
Your son. We have a file on your son.

THE WOMAN
There is nothing for children to do here.
(Looking in file.) He slashed several tires.

With what?

With nails.

What kind of nails?

Yellow nails.

My son does not have yellow nails.

The boy in unit 1245 has yellow nails.

The boy in unit 1245 is not my son. They are friends. His father beats him.

You allow your son to play with boys who are beaten by their fathers?

I told him if he ever needs a place to go—

You are irresponsible.

Nothing good will come of this.

He has handcuffs and guns.

His mother is a policeman. His father beats him.

He has yellow nails. Your son was seen with him.
I tell him not to play with him.

We had a complaint.

From whom?!

The man with the little boy.

The one that takes medicine?

No, the one that tears out the water sprinklers. He says no one will play with the boy.

The boy said he was going to kill them.

Them? Them? Who are Them?!

The other children. He told me to get fucked. His father laughed.

(Looking in file.) It isn’t his father.

He carries a gun. He dragged a boy across the pavement who said he didn’t throw the rock that hit his window.

The boy who takes medicine?

Yes. The police came.

This is the first I have heard of it.

My son saw the whole thing.
THE BLOND WOMAN
(To THE SECRETARY.) Get me the file on her son.

THE SECRETARY
I don’t know where it is.

THE BLOND WOMAN
It’s next to the stain remover on the bottom shelf next to the six spent gun shells and the Spanish Dictionary. (Indicating THE MAN.) You’ll need to move him.

THE WOMAN
I know what it says. He found the man’s underwear lying on the hallway floor. He thought it belonged to her. That’s why he hung them on her door.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Her husband is dead. (Taking the file from THE SECRETARY.) He broke two slats out of a utility room door on the third floor.

THE WOMAN
He locked himself in.

THE BLOND WOMAN
He climbs trees.

THE WOMAN
He’s a child.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Children are not allowed in this complex. This Club is for adults only.

THE WOMAN
I have no children. My son is dead.

THE BLOND WOMAN
We allow no pets.

THE WOMAN
The fish drowned and the cat flew away. We flushed the dog down the drain. A bird is not a pet.

THE BLOND WOMAN
You have a car.

THE WOMAN
I have two cars.
THE BLOND WOMAN

Your permit is expired.

THE WOMAN

Which one?

THE BLOND WOMAN

Either or both. Is it important?

THE WOMAN

(To THE SECRETARY.) I need a new sticker.

THE SECRETARY

What building are you in?

THE WOMAN

Four thousand and four.

THE SECRETARY

What unit?

THE WOMAN

Two thousand and ten.

THE SECRETARY

(Checking.) You cannot renew your permit.

THE WOMAN

Which one?

THE SECRETARY

Either one or both. Your lease is expired.

THE WOMAN

The lease is for fifty years and by the decade thereafter.

THE SECRETARY

Fifty years is the minimum.

THE WOMAN

It says fifty years.

THE SECRETARY

And by the decade thereafter. This lease is invalid.

(THE SECRETARY shows the lease to THE BLOND WOMAN.)
THE BLOND WOMAN
You must file a new lease in two days or your car will be towed.

THE WOMAN
Which one?

THE BLOND WOMAN
The blue one and the red one.

THE WOMAN
I paid for two stickers but I have only one parking space.

THE BLOND WOMAN
You are permitted only one.

THE WOMAN
But I have two cars.

THE BLOND WOMAN
You are permitted fifteen. One is expired.

THE WOMAN
The guard at the gate never told me.

THE BLOND WOMAN
You must buy a guest sticker.

THE WOMAN
But I live here.

THE BLOND WOMAN
Do you rent or own?

THE WOMAN
I own.

THE SECRETARY
The lease says the owner lives in Manhattan.

THE WOMAN
I rent from the woman in Manhattan. I am the owner.

THE BLOND WOMAN
She must sign a new lease tomorrow or the guard will turn you away. Now, is there something I can do for you?
THE WOMAN

I want back my trash.

THE BLOND WOMAN

And what do you want me to do? You want me to climb in the dumpster and crawl around in the garbage and—

THE WOMAN

They took it away in the work cart. The little golf cart with the wooden box on back.

THE BLOND WOMAN

They! They! Who are They?!

THE WOMAN

The men who work here. You know who they are. Now, I want you to tell them I separated my trash. I put the papers together and the bottles and the plastics in one container and the tin in another. It isn’t much but it’s important to me. I want my trash back.

THE BLOND WOMAN

(To THE SECRETARY.) Try and reach them on the radio. (Referring to THE MAN.) It’s in his pocket.

THE SECRETARY

I don’t speak Spanish.

THE WOMAN

Tell them I’m going to get my car— the brown one— and I’ll meet them over at the dumpster next to the car wash, the one they use for the garbage they take to the County Dispose-All. I want them to get out my trash and put it in my car and then I will give it to the old man who separates it. Tell them I’m waiting at the dumpster. Tell them it’s our duty to separate our trash so that men will have something to die for.

(THE WOMAN exits.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes