

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 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 or any play or excerpt, 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 this play 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!

Product Code A1000-SP

# CAGE FREE

A short dystopian play by

**Rebecca Ryland**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through  
Heartland Plays, Inc. at [heartlandplays.com](http://heartlandplays.com)  
[playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com)  
customer service: 406-431-7680**

**Copyright © 2020 by Rebecca Ryland**

Cage Free  
by Rebecca Ryland

**CHARACTERS**

ONE: *Male, 50-60*

TWO: *Female, 40-45*

THREE: *Female; 30-40*

FOUR: *Female, 18*

**SETTING**

*Inside a 4' x 8' cage in a human warehouse in what may have been,  
and may still be, rural America*

**CASTING NOTE**

*Diverse casting is preferred although not required. Suggestions include:*

*ONE: of Hispanic descent*

*TWO: of Asian descent*

*THREE: of European descent*

*FOUR: of African descent*

**PRODUCTION NOTE**

*Although CAGE FREE is set inside a cage, it is intended to be played on a bare  
stage with only a 4' x 8' outline on the floor or on a 4' x 8' platform.*

*Action is confined within this space until the end of the play.*

Cage Free  
by Rebecca Ryland

SETTING: *Inside a 4' x 8' cage in a human warehouse in what may have been, and may still be, rural America*

BACK STORY: *People born in 1987 experienced a doubling of the world population through their lifetimes. As the population grew, a number of increasingly radical solutions were employed to address the growing housing crisis. By 2050 Earth reached its maximum sustainable population of 10 billion people. By that time human warehouses, artificially lit buildings filled with cages resembling those once used in factory farming, were implemented to address the housing crises, manage food and water distributions and control methane gas. At first they were optional, but over time the Cage Free population made human warehousing mandatory along with forced sterilization. But something happened. One morning, mysteriously, the locks on the doors to the cages released, leaving the inhabitants to determine what to do next as their food supplies vanished and water spigots slowed to a drip.*

AT RISE: *ONE, TWO, THREE and FOUR in their 4' x 8' cage. FOUR's foot grazes ONE's groin as she maneuvers toward the water spigot.*

ONE

*(Pushing away FOUR's foot)*

Would you watch it! There might not be much there but it's still mine and you are seriously encroaching on my space.

*ONE holds his crotch as TWO  
attempts to make room for FOUR.*

FOUR

Get over it old man. I don't care what you've got shriveled up down there as long as you keep it out of my face. *(Crawling over ONE)* I didn't ask to be put in here with you assholes, you know. I need a drink.

ONE

*(Grabbing FOUR by the foot)*

There's barely a drip. You had the last drop, the next belongs to Two

TWO

I never said I wanted it. *(To FOUR)* You can have it.

THREE

*(Huddling in a corner)*

We're all doomed anyway.

FOUR

*(To TWO)*

Thanks. I'll make it up to you when I take a piss.

*FOUR punches ONE, crawls over  
TWO and sits on her knees with her  
head raised, lapping at the spout.*

THREE

*(Standing)*

It's so hot. *(Yelling out)* Please! Turn on the ventilation system!

ONE

What do you expect? *(Turning towards FOUR)* Hey! That's enough!

FOUR

Nothing came out yet, dip shit.

ONE

Then leave it be. We don't need your spit clogging up the spout.

FOUR

My mouth is bone dry. If I had spit it would be in your eye.

TWO

Would you two stop? *(To THREE)* No one is going to turn on the ventilation system. *(To ONE)* And don't expect the lights to stay on much longer. I'm thinking we need to leave now.

THREE

Forget the lights. There is no food! There is no water! Don't you get it?—we're going to die if someone doesn't come soon to help us!

ONE

I thought we worked this out already. We stay one more night and then we break out. Like everyone else.

TWO

Why another night?

ONE

So they forget about us. Think we're already gone.

THREE

But if they forget us, who is going to take care of us?

ONE

*(Sarcastically)*

Oh, they'll take care of us, alright. You can count on that.

TWO

*(Sympathetically)*

They could. We're not starving. It used to be worse.

FOUR

When was that, you skinny hag?

ONE

Watch your mouth. You may have been the last to come, but you are not in charge here. You are just one more person to crowd our space. Back when I first got here I had it all to myself. *(To TWO)* And then you came. Which wasn't all that bad. And then Three *(To THREE)* who makes my life miserable. And now they turn it into a four-person suite. Some suite. I used to be able to stretch out my legs. I used to be able to roll over in my sleep. I used to have—

FOUR

—balls. I am full up to here *(As makes motion with her hand, her elbow knocks THREE in the chest)* with your list of worthless “used to haves.” *(Turns on THREE)* Get out of my way.

*THREE does her best to get out of the way as FOUR works her way over by TWO.*

ONE

Yeah, well if you spent more time listening, you'd understand the gravity of the situation. If we're going to break out—

THREE

Break out?! We don't have to break out. The door is unlocked. They must want us to go. They have plans for us. I'm sure of it. We just need to do what they say. They're our only hope, our only chance to survive.

ONE

So you think Cage Free people want to help us? Listen up, all of you. I've been here since I was your age – (*Meaning THREE*) – and other than pass a couple of worthless regs to protect our rights, as if we had any, the people out there haven't done squat to *help* us. The law says they can't kill us. But they keep us here indefinitely. That's why it doesn't make sense now, without telling us what's happening, to want us to leave. To unlock the door without so much as a rumor as to why makes no sense. No sense at all. (*Questioning*) What is it they want us to do now that we're free?

FOUR

Free? What the hell does that mean?

TWO

He told you. Fourteen lights out ago. The first night you came. He told each of us, one by one as we joined him here. So we wouldn't forget that it wasn't always this way. (*Reflecting*) I remember that it wasn't always this way.

THREE

Don't believe them. I didn't then and I don't now! I remember nothing but starvation, no clean water and no place to live, so there is nothing else. (*To FOUR*) You know I'm right. You know.

FOUR

What do you know what I know? (*Turning to ONE*) And you, ass wipe, I tuned you out the moment I stepped into this shit hole. I had a place out there. Twice as big as this. Bigger than you can possibly imagine. Bigger than you ever had. Then you've ever seen.

*FOUR begins to cry. TWO works her way to her and tries to comfort her.*

TWO

I'm sorry, Four. We don't know what you've been through. Why, I've been in this space since I was, oh, my, I don't even know how long it's been.

ONE

A long time.

TWO

A long time. I'd like to know what it's like out there now. When I came to live in this warehouse, humans still had some choices, I think. I think I remember they did.

ONE

We did. When there wasn't enough housing, I was given the choice to come here where I would have food and water and a place of my own to live. Or to a farm further south of here. The farms were a solution to managing resources and controlling gas. Methane gas, actually. It was getting so much hotter, then, and I thought that a farm up north would be nice. I didn't realize that once you were inside, that's where you stayed. Forever. No more running across hills. No swimming in lakes. No sunshine. No rain.

FOUR

Hills? Lakes? Sunshine? Rain? What the hell are those? You're making up shit.

TWO

I knew sunshine. It was light in the sky that went away sometimes. I remember. (*Turning to ONE*) One remembers. He can explain it better than me.

*The OTHERS shift positions as ONE makes his way closer to FOUR.*

ONE

You see, when I was young, I lived with my parents. They were two people who loved me and cared for me. We lived in a house. A house, not a cage. A house with walls and rooms and beds and screens that showed images that moved and told stories. Oh, my. I don't expect you to know these things, but they existed in my world. In our world before so many people...

TWO

*(Laying her hand on ONE)*

...So many people that water became scarce. And food. The world needed all the land to grow food. And reservoirs to hold desalinated water from places called oceans where you could take off your shoes and wade in the surf. And little fish would nibble at your feet. Desalinated water? (*Looks at ONE*) How can I remember such a thing?

ONE

Because when you came we talked about things endlessly because all we had was time. (*Looking at FOUR*) You're right. I have no balls, literally. No children for me. (*Looks at TWO*) For us. We could never have a life like the one I had as a child. What else could we do but talk?

TWO

When I was your age, they brought me here. I never lived in a house. We lived in honey combs. That's what they called them. Made of this thing called plastic. And each family had a little cubicle in the honey comb. (*Excited/remembering*) And the honey comb reached to the stars! I saw stars. (*To ONE*) Oh, my, if we leave, could we see stars again?

*TWO is lost in the moment. FOUR begins to open up, slowly but deliberately. It is a painful memory.*

FOUR

I was born in a place just like this. (*Gestures about the cage*) Bigger, I remember, but like this. I had parents, too. But I wasn't supposed to be born. Something went wrong in the sterilization process. My mother hid that she was pregnant. And no Cage Free humans ever came inside our warehouse. Everything was automated. And when AI came in, Mother hid me behind my father. It went on and on and on until one day, AI sensed I was there and more AI came and I was removed. And sterilized, too. They can do that, you know. That's legal.

THREE

That's necessary! You like food, don't you? And water? Do you think there would be any for us if everyone broke the law and had kids like you?

ONE

People have babies. Still. Just not people like us.

THREE

How do you know?

ONE

How do you think we get fed? People are doing something out there that keeps us alive.

TWO

I suppose. I don't know what happens out there anymore. I don't know what it means to be Cage Free.

THREE

But we can still vote. They didn't take away our rights. They have to take care of us. That's the law!

FOUR

(*To ONE and TWO*)

What kind of crazy shit-head woman is she?

ONE

She only knows what she's been told. What we've all been told. She doesn't remember anything else and she never listens to me.

THREE

If I'd listened to you I'd be dead by now.

ONE

How so?

THREE

You asked AI for more food rations when I moved in.

ONE

More slop.

THREE

But I told them we'd get by. That you took up too much room as it is and needed to lose weight.

ONE

I should have known.

THREE

But they sometimes slipped me extra rations after that. Without that, I surely would have starved by now.

ONE

I can only wish.

THREE

That's why I know they'll look out for us. I play by the rules. I never complain.

TWO

You always complain.

THREE

To you, maybe. Never to them. I know where my bread is buttered.

ONE

You remember bread?

THREE

*(Hesitating)*  
Of course not.

ONE

You're lying.

THREE

It's just an expression.

TWO

You've been lying all along.

THREE

No.

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