



HERESY

BY A.R. GURNEY



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Originally Developed and Produced by
The Flea Theater, New York City,
Jim Simpson, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director.

*This play is dedicated to The Flea Theater
and all who sail in it.*

HERESY was presented at The Flea Theater (Jim Simpson, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director; Beth Dembrow, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on October 12, 2012. It was directed by Jim Simpson; the set design was by Kate Foster; the lighting design was by Brian Aldous; the costume design was by Claudia Brown; the sound design was by Jeremy S. Bloom; and the stage manager was Michelle Kelleher.

MARK Tommy Crawford
MARY Annette O'Toole
JOE Steve Mellor
PONTIUS PILATE Reg E. Cathey
PHYLLIS Kathy Najimy
PEDRO Danny Rivera
LENA Ariel Woodiwiss

CAST

(in order of appearance)

MARK, an orderly in the National Guard

MARY, a mother

JOE, a carpenter and contractor

PONTIUS PILATE, the local Prefect

PHYLLIS, his wife

PEDRO, a college student

LENA, a call girl

Casting should be completely color-blind.

PLACE

The “Liberty Lounge,” used for official meetings, conferences, and social functions. It is located on the second floor of a downtown office building in an eastern American city. It is used primarily as a reception room for local branches of various Federal organizations, such as the National Guard and Homeland Security, the offices of which are on the ground floor below. An American flag is prominently situated, along with color photographs of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon. An open door somewhere upstage leads to the stairs down to the offices below. A locked door on one of the walls opens into a “utility closet” which contains a wet bar and other props. The overall look of the space is vaguely official, with conventional furniture.

TIME

The play takes place sometime in the future.

HERESY

At rise: The room looks as if an important conference had recently taken place. A few chairs are in a row facing a large map of a city on an easel with colored stick pins in it. Several paper cups with coffee stains are scattered around ...

Mark enters hurriedly from the hall. He is a young man wearing a crisply ironed uniform with the insignia of an enlisted man. He carries a laptop computer which he sets up at a small desk and moves a chair to prepare to work there. Then he quickly and efficiently prepares the room to look more welcoming. He places chairs more informally. He collects the coffee cups, crumpled papers, and other debris from the meeting, and deposits them in a receptacle. He unlocks the door to the utility closet and brings out a vase with fake flowers which he places on a table. Then he produces a stack of contemporary magazines which he distributes neatly on several tables. He flips over the strategic map of the city to reveal a conventional photo of it. After surveying his handiwork, he takes his cell phone from a clip on his belt and efficiently thumbs a number.

MARK. *(On cell phone.)* Okay. Send 'em on up. *(He goes upstage to his computer, and deftly begins to tap in information. After a moment, Mary and Joe enter nervously from the hall. Mary is wearing something which looks bought for this occasion. It might be blue. Joe wears a scruffy jacket over a denim work shirt and khaki trousers. He tugs at his necktie, since it's been a while since he wore one. Seeing them.)* With you momentarily, folks. Just setting up your file. *(Mary and Joe wait uneasily. Mark finishes.)* There. Now welcome. *(He gets up, shakes hands with them.)*

MARY. *(Glancing around.)* What do we call this place?

MARK. This? We call this our "Liberty Lounge." We use it for visiting dignitaries.

JOE. That ain't us.

MARY. Not by a long shot.

MARK. Yes well the Prefect specifically wanted to meet you here.

MARY. Is that good or bad?

JOE. *(To Mary.)* Good, dear. I'm sure it's good.

MARY. You never can tell these days.

JOE. *(To Mark.)* Did the Prefect recognize our names?

MARK. Immediately.

JOE. *(To Mary.)* See. *(To Mark.)* What did he say?

MARK. He said you rang a few old bells.

JOE. *(To Mary.)* There you are. That's good, sweetheart. We ring old bells.

MARY. Should we stand around and go ding-dong?

JOE. Easy now.

MARY. *(To Mark.)* Did you tell him it was an emergency?

MARK. I did.

MARY. And?

MARK. He just has to tie up a few odds and ends. *(Returns to work on his computer.)* Excuse me while I finish up your preliminaries ...

MARY. *(Low to Joe.)* Don't you love it? We have a major emergency, and our friendly Prefect has to do odds and ends.

MARK. *(From the computer.)* He wants to give you his full attention.

MARY. I'll believe it when I see it.

JOE. Cool it, darling. Calm down.

MARY. I'm trying. Seriously. I am. *(She paces around.)*

JOE. *(To Mark.)* I take it you're on his staff.

MARK. I'm an intern.

JOE. They have interns now? In the National Guard?

MARK. At least it's a job.

JOE. You're lucky to have that these days. Do you get paid?

MARK. No, but I get a title. I'm an Orderly.

MARY. Which means?

MARK. I execute orders.

MARY. Execute? Oh Lord. Even the word scares the pants off me.

JOE. Easy now.

MARK. All I execute is official business, ma'am. *(Indicating his laptop.)* See? The law requires us to keep a record of all meetings, official and unofficial. So I'm simply putting you into the system.

MARY. What are you saying about us?

MARK. Nothing yet. I'm just entering your names. Joseph and

Mary, right? Local citizens?

JOE. Of course.

MARK. I'll put in more, of course, as the scene develops.

MARY. Scene?

JOE. We won't make a scene.

MARY. Who knows? I just might.

MARK. (*Adjusting what he's typed.*) Meeting, then. I'll simply call it a meeting. To tell you the truth, I tend to exaggerate a little. I'm hoping someday I'll find stuff in these meetings that I can pull together into a meaningful story.

JOE. Sounds sort of like what I do.

MARY. Joe here's a carpenter. He puts things together.

JOE. We used to be called joiners. Because we joined together pieces of wood.

MARK. Me, I'm a joiner of words. I'd like to join words together to make a best-selling book.

MARY. What's your name, by the way?

MARK. Mark.

MARY. We may have a story for you, Mark.

JOE. Everybody has a story, sweetheart.

MARY. Not everybody has ours.

JOE. (*To Mark.*) Our son is the story here. Our oldest son.

MARY. He's been arrested.

MARK. Arrested?

MARY. And thrown into jail. How's that for an opener?

MARK. For what crime?

MARY. We don't know.

JOE. We don't even know

MARK. Hey, do me a favor. Don't tell me any more. Keep it on hold for the Prefect. He gets sore if I get too far ahead of him.

JOE. He always liked to be on top of things.

MARK. Oh sure. And he thinks I sometimes doctor the data by putting my own slant on these minutes.

MARY. The Minutes According to Mark.

MARK. That could be a possible title for my book.

MARY. Can we give you the back story, Mark? Before the Prefect arrives? Rather than just standing around.

MARK. Okay.

MARY. Isn't that what writers call it? The "back story"?

MARK. Some do. So give me that.

MARY. Tell him our back story, Joe.

JOE. Okay. (*To Mark.*) The Prefect and I were once good friends. We served together in the National Guard way back when.

MARK. (*Reviewing his work.*) I have that here. He already told me that.

JOE. He had a nickname then.

MARK. The Prefect?

JOE. We called him Ponty.

MARK. Called him what?

MARY. Ponty. For Pontius.

JOE. Ponty Pilate. Do folks still call him that?

MARK. They definitely do not. (*Hands off the keyboard.*) And you'll notice I'm not putting it in.

JOE. Mary here was friends with his wife.

MARY. We were all friends together. Leave it at that ... (*Low to Joe.*) What was her name again? Doris? Alice?

MARK. Mrs. Pilate's name is Phyllis.

MARY. Ah yes. We used to hang out with Ponty and Phyllis Pilate.

JOE. Playing bridge and stuff.

MARY. Trying to. Phyllis was a lousy bridge player ...

JOE. Ssshhh.

MARY. Well she was. She hadn't a clue.

JOE. (*To Mark.*) Don't put that in, please.

MARK. Don't worry.

JOE. My wife's a little wound up.

MARY. At least now you know why. With our son in the clink somewhere.

MARK. Why don't you relax? Have a seat. (*Moves a chair for her.*) Notice this place is multi-functional. Last night we had a special meeting here of the top brass ...

JOE. Of the National Guard?

MARK. And Homeland Security. Combined.

JOE. Expecting trouble?

MARK. Hoping to prevent it ... Please sit.

JOE. Thanks. (*He sits; to Mary.*) Sit, sweetheart.

MARY. (*Pacing around.*) I don't feel like sitting.

JOE. (*To Mark.*) I married a restless woman.

MARY. (*Picking up a magazine from a table, reading the title.*) *The New America* ... Oh boy. They can say that again. (*Tosses it back*

onto the table.) New indeed!

JOE. (*To Mark.*) The Prefect and I were in the front lines during the First Crackdown.

MARK. You were in the First Crackdown?

MARY. Which was not the last, I hasten to add.

MARK. They say the First was especially brutal.

MARY. Much too much so.

JOE. Too brutal for me, I'll say that ...

MARY. (*To Mark.*) That's why Joe got out of the Guard.

JOE. Oh well. Actually my stint was up.

MARY. Thank God.

JOE. The Prefect decided to stay in. He said he felt needed.

MARK. Looks like he was right. They say the Fifth Crackdown was also a real killer.

MARY. One of the worst.

MARK. The Prefect thinks we can expect more ...

MARY. (*Sarcastically.*) Yippee. Can't wait.

JOE. My wife and I have a slight difference of opinion here. I personally believe crackdowns are occasionally necessary.

MARY. I personally believe crackdowns are full of shit.

JOE. Easy, darling. Please.

MARK. (*To Mary.*) Are you the type that goes on protest marches and all that?

MARY. Whenever I can.

JOE. Mention a march and she's there.

MARY. Used to be. Whenever I wasn't working for the WIC program.

MARK. WIC?

MARY. Women, Infants, and Children. A first-rate government aid program. Which they cancelled, of course. Which really pisses me off.

MARK. (*Going back to computer.*) I'm going to put that in.

JOE. You don't need to quote her literally.

MARK. I won't. (*As he types.*) I'll simply say that Mary is concerned about the cut-backs of certain aid programs, and ponders these things in her heart.

MARY. I do more than ponder, kiddo. I protest big time.

JOE. So now have a seat, darling.

MARY. All right, all RIGHT. Everyone keeps telling me to sit. So I'll be a good dog and sit. (*Mary sits defiantly next to Joe.*)

MARK. Oh hey! I got so interested in you guys I forgot to offer

HERESY

by A.R. Gurney

4M, 3W

In a parade of government imprisonment, immaculate conception, religion, politics, cocktails and one articulate working girl, HERESY views the not-so-distant-future through the satiric and hilarious lens of A.R. Gurney.

"HERESY hits the funny bone." —**The New York Daily News**

"The arguments made are compelling — as well as highly critical of the status quo. And Gurney includes just enough humor to make this information easily digestible while not diluting its bite."

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