



LAST MAN CLUB

BY RANDALL SHARP



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Originally produced by Axis Theatre Company, New York City.

LAST MAN CLUB was originally produced by Axis Theatre Company in New York City, opening on October 4, 2012. It was directed by Randall Sharp; the costume design was by Karl Ruckdeschel; the lighting design was by David Zeffren; the sound design was by Steve Fontaine; and the dramaturgy was by Marc Palmieri. The cast was as follows:

WISHFUL HI Lynn Mancinelli
MAJOR David Crabb
SAROMYBRIDE Britt Genelin
MIDDLE PINTS George Demas
HENRY TAPER Brian Barnhart
POGORD Spencer Aste

CHARACTERS

WISHFUL HI

MAJOR

SAROMYBRIDE

MIDDLE PINTS

HENRY TAPER

POGORD

LAST MAN CLUB

The day is clear and fine. No one is outside the house. Far away a bird sings in the brush. Nothing happens. Wishful Hi sits at a table writing in a book. The table is littered with busted up detritus including a rusted metal box. Nearby a figure moves beneath a filthy sheet on a cot. Faintly on the wind that has picked up, a radio plays. In and out of stations Roosevelt is addressing the nation. Songs float past. Major, carrying his buckets, walks around and then stops dead, lost in thought. Then he passes close by Wishful.

WISHFUL HI. Major! Over Hagar's there's nothing but bugs. And —

MAJOR. I told you to stay off Hagar's land. And don't tell any more tales.

WISHFUL HI. There's nobody there ... It's empty and full a bugs. Did you know, even when they're dead, those bugs have glue inside?

MAJOR. It's not glue. What're you *doing* over there anyways?

WISHFUL HI. (*Possibly teasing.*) Maybe we could *make* glue from them and sell it and make money and go to California.

MAJOR. Huh. (*Wishful Hi is thoughtful ... then:*)

WISHFUL HI. Oh ... right. I wanna make some glue though. Glue is fine.

MAJOR. You got to stay off Hagar's, even if it *is* empty. Don't tell tales neither. Stay outside *here!*

WISHFUL HI. I hate it outside. What if I get hit?

MAJOR. Shut up. Don't touch nothing. Don't go in my shed. Stay outside *here.* (*Major leaves. The inside of the house is not distinguishable from the exterior. Wishful is now within. Birds sing without. Saromy appears carrying dirty wet sheets.*)

WISHFUL HI. He said I HAD TO COME IN.

SAROMY. Take these here sheets and go out and wait for the tank truck. (*She throws the sheets down.*)

WISHFUL HI. Can I see your magazine? I don't want to go outside.

SAROMY. Wait for the tank truck OUTSIDE. Stay out the way of everyone. Don't talk to the people on the road. Don't touch anybody. I can't use that barrel water every time.

WISHFUL HI. All those people going away.

SAROMY. (*Distracted.*) ... right. See anymore ghosts, Hi?

WISHFUL HI. (*Writing in her book.*) "Wait for the tank truck OUTSIDE. Stay out the way of everyone. Don't talk to the people on the road. Don't touch anybody." (*The figure in the cot wakes up and kicks off his filthy sheet. Pogord is awake.*)

SAROMY. It's alright Pogord. No more wind.

POGORD. Small miracle we know ... but that damn bird keeps singing and singing something terrible and it's just the most terrible thing I ever heard.

SAROMY. Oh come on now, Pogord. Not so bad to hear a bird.

POGORD. Where's that tank truck!? I need my sheets wet!

SAROMY. Hi went out to wait. We can use the barrel water.

POGORD. I need my SHEETS WET!!!

SAROMY. Hi went to the road. (*Hi wanders away.*)

POGORD. (*He screams her name.*) WISHFUL HI! Waste of space. Dumb. Stupid name. (*Saromy sighs.*) What ever happened to that tank truck? That barrel water's just squeezed out a old sheets! If she stands out by those pipes too long the dust'll come up and she'll get hit. (*He makes an electrical noise.*) Used to be it'd ... oh, forget it! (*Major is inside again.*)

SAROMY. Major, you're out there climbing on your old stack a pipes and pumps?

MAJOR. Yeah, that's right. No use for them now, right, Saromy? I may as well climb all over them like a monkey.

POGORD. Careful on all that metal, Major ... you might get hit.

SAROMY. Hi's out by the road looking for a tank truck.

MAJOR. Big waste of space.

SAROMY. But *you're* so little *you* don't waste no space, Major. Not so major, Major anyways. (*Major stalks off. Shouting.*) Tell Hi NOT to talk to no one. (*Pogord rolls back in his cot.*) Brat. She didn't see no ghost.

MAJOR. (*From the outside.*) Don't worry! She's not your responsibility.

SAROMY. (*Very quiet.*) I wish you was six feet under, Major. Six feet under and in the ground — dead. (*She sits absently thumbing through a magazine.*) Kind of boring here now the neighbors and kinfolk took off. Don't you think?

POGORD. Kind of loud in here for someone who's sleeping.

SAROMY. I wonder if they made it to California already, him and all those dirty kids and people.

POGORD. He couldn't be there yet. *Just snuck away.*

SAROMY. (*Won't bear.*) I bet they're sitting under an orange tree living with all those high society folks.

POGORD. What do you think the club woulda thought of a dandy coward leaving his kin for the end of the world.

SAROMY. Brother *was* nice looking enough to be in the pictures. They were too busy with all those crazy ideas down there.

POGORD. Those ideas might a been the *end* of "the end of the world," you don't know NOTHING because you're just a stupid girl. You don't even know it's the end of the world, do you?

SAROMY. End of the world here's the same in California. Maybe out there we'd all be movie stars. What's the matter with you, anyways? (*Far away the club's siren wails. Another storm approaches.*)

POGORD. SOMEONE'S trying to SLEEP in here! (*The storm is almost routine at this point.*) My sheet's not wet! I'm going to drown in that dust! (*He makes the sound of the static electricity.*) That electricity'll hit me and I'll be DEAD! I can't DO another storm!! I can't DO IT! (*Formally.*) I'm getting back in my bed here and waiting for the end. I only wished one thing: that I had a wet sheet to make it go a little easier. Cover me. Cover me. (*He ceremoniously gets back in his cot and waits to die. Dead silence descends. The birds stop singing. No one does anything. The worst storm in the history of the Dust Bowl years arrives. 200 miles wide and 8,000 feet high, it is black as night in a matter of a few seconds. The sound is deafening. When it passes everything is coated in black dust-like snowdrifts. The house is empty. The sound of Major's buckets is heard, back and forth, back and forth. A clothesline whines through its winch, someone throws an old, busted piece of metal on a truck, no birds sing. Slowly the doorway is filled with the shadow of a man. He stiffly takes a look inside the room and then enters. He sits in a chair and slowly regards the place. He realizes that the house is inhabited, stands and goes back to the door. Then he turns as if arriving for the first time.*)

PINTS. (*Gathering strength.*) Anyone home? (*He looks over his*

shoulder then enters the house.) ANYONE HOME? Just looking for ... for — *(He listens for a moment.)* Just ... Checking on ... houses. *(Major comes round, throws his bucket on the ground and points a gun at Pints. He is not used to using a gun and it's not his.)*

MAJOR. I knew somebody was in here.

PINTS. Awful sorry. Didn't mean to.

MAJOR. How can I help you? *(Pints looks at the bucket. Major remembers to cock the gun.)*

PINTS. What're you doing with those buckets? *(No response.)* I hope you're not trying to lift that dust off your farm, Mister. That ain't going to fly. I'm just here to see everyone made it through that crazy storm. I'm ... I'm uh ... supposed to take down anything I hear and report back. Just being neighborly. *(Nothing happens. Pints looks quickly at the door.)*

MAJOR. Report back to who?

PINTS. Oh ... Whoever'll listen, I guess.

MAJOR. You don't look like no neighbor a mine.

PINTS. I'm from up north. Came down to see if I could help in this time of need. They don't know WHAT'S going on up there in them cities.

MAJOR. Uh huh. You work for the government?

PINTS. No how, no way. Sorry to be standing in your home, Mister, with no explanation. I'm taking down what people say and checking on the houses. Car broke down far way back. Shorted out ... you know. You got a lot of people who *stayed* here around here?

MAJOR. Not many. Most is gone.

PINTS. Get a lot of drifters?

MAJOR. Some. On the road, passing through or leaving. You better watch your car, Mister, if you want to run away.

PINTS. Oh that old hunk of junk shorted out. Nothing to steal on her.

MAJOR. She moves, don't she?

PINTS. Not any more ...

MAJOR. I don't got a car no more.

PINTS. You got a club here?

MAJOR. We do.

PINTS. *(Carefully.)* I heard about these clubs up north. Impressed us up there. I work in that kind of thing you see, Mister. I got something you might be interested in but I'm no good at present-ing. I want to help. Think you could take me to your club then?

MAJOR. You work in that kind of thing?

PINTS. I'd like to! To help in the clubs, for the people who stayed. For you! I'm a Last Man's man! *(Major forgets to keep the gun pointed up. It slowly falls.)*

MAJOR. I got plenty a money. I don't need no club.

PINTS. So many I seen folded up and broke. Taking care of neighbors, lending a little in a pinch, dollar here, dollar there — just till all this passes ... right? I'd sure like to talk to them!

MAJOR. What's your name?

PINTS. My name is Middle Pints. I'm the middle child. So, they called me that. My brother, he's the fifth child so they called him Quintus. Quintus Pints is quite a name to have. He died in the war. *(Pogord emerges from his blankets staring at Pints.)*

MAJOR. Huh. Long time ago.

PINTS. He was older. Lost a few to the Spanish flu also ... uh — you got a glass a water? I'm a little parched.

MAJOR. Had a lot of kids in your family, huh? For you to be in the middle of a family where the fifth one died in the war?

PINTS. Sure. *(They stare at each other. Nothing happens.)*

MAJOR. Where'd you come from, Pints?

PINTS. Up north. They don't know WHAT'S going on.

MAJOR. Uh huh.

PINTS. Car broke down bout five mile back. *(Hi wanders in.)*

WISHFUL HI. Major, there's a tank truck out there. *(She is startled by Pints and wary, scared.)* You drive that busted up truck? I'd sure like to have my cousin draw a picture a that real quick? She draws all kinds a cars and trucks. Looked pretty dinged up ... engine looks done. Were you out in that storm?

MAJOR. Shut up, Hi.

PINTS. Name's Middle Pints, young lady.

WISHFUL HI. You weren't out in that storm? Where'd you come from?

PINTS. My car broke down bout five mile back. Shorted out. Not my busted truck, miss.

MAJOR. Lots a stuff blows in on a wind like that. Go get your cousin.

WISHFUL HI. Don't boss me. *(Hi goes to sit and write in her book. Nothing happens. Pogord mutters to himself. Major is embarrassed by them. Pints looks at Major.)*

PINTS. Everybody's just running wild.

LAST MAN CLUB

by Randall Sharp

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The Dust Bowl: 1930–1939. With no one else around for a hundred miles, Major's busted family lives in a one room dugout as Major tries to reconcile himself to the fact that his own brother has betrayed him. Out of an enormous storm — 200 miles wide, 15,000 feet high — come two desperate men promising a way out. Their visit is a welcome break in the grinding routine of storm and quiet that Wishful Hi, Saromybride and Uncle Pogord have endured under Major's iron, heartbroken hand. But did his brother really get out and away? Who are these people? Where'd that money come from? Will the machine work? Are there lights in the sky?

"... an atmospheric, expertly structured one-act drama ... something of a companion piece to The Grapes of Wrath ... the Dust Bowl illusion is masterly ... a story of deception, despair and some surprising aspects of persistent hope."

—**The New York Times**

"... a deeply unsettling sensory overload in [this] dark and disturbing play about die-hard survivors in the Dust Bowl ... a twentieth-century Mother Courage and Her Children."

—**TheaterMania.com**

"Sharp's unpredictable dialogue and subtle plot shifts bring a compelling elegance to the proceedings while also making the play relevant to such twenty-first-century concerns as poverty, unemployment, climate change, the housing crisis, war, and a lack of faith in government ... LAST MAN CLUB might be set in the past and hint at the future, but it is, sadly, also firmly rooted in the here and now."

—**TWI-NY.com**

Also by Randall Sharp

SEVEN IN ONE BLOW, OR THE
BRAVE LITTLE KID

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