



# HEARTLESS

BY SAM SHEPARD



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



HEARTLESS  
Copyright © 2015, Sam Shepard

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of HEARTLESS is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for HEARTLESS are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to ICM Partners, 65 East 55th Street, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10022. Attn: Patrick Herold.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce HEARTLESS is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS**

For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in these Plays, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*Many thanks to:*

*Santa Fe Institute  
Sylvia Plath  
César Aira  
Matthew Warchus  
Jim Houghton  
and  
Peter Brook*

The world premiere of HEARTLESS was produced by Signature Theatre, New York City (James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director; Beth Whitaker, Associate Artistic Director), and opened on August 27, 2012. It was directed by Daniel Aukin; the set design was by Eugene Lee; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Tyler Micoeau; the sound design was by Eric Shimelonis; and the production stage manager was Donald Fried. The cast was as follows:

SALLY ..... Julianne Nicholson  
ROSCOE ..... Gary Cole  
LUCY ..... Jenny Bacon  
MABLE MURPHY ..... Lois Smith  
ELIZABETH ..... Betty Gilpin

## **CHARACTERS**

SALLY

ROSCOE

LUCY

MABLE MURPHY

ELIZABETH

*What moment in the gradual decay*

*Does resurrection choose? What year? What day?*

— Vladimir Nabokov

*Everything does indeed seem to me to be shadow and  
evanescence. My head spins with anguish. Really, that is  
the world: a desert of fading shadows.*

— Eugène Ionesco

# HEARTLESS

## ACT ONE

*All stage directions are from the actor's POV toward audience. Simple set — black surround — bare-stage feel except for some stark furniture: single bed mid-stage left, placed horizontal, foot of bed facing stage left. Another single bed mid-stage right, placed vertically to audience, head of bed facing upstage. Between the beds, downstage center, is a round glass-topped table with two white metal patio chairs placed opposite each other, on either side of the table, left and right. The sense of the set is that it's essentially an outdoor patio with the two beds receding into nebulous interior territory. The whole visual arrangement is framed by tall palm trees. Extreme downstage left, looming out into the audience like a ship's prow, is a raised "lookout point" that drops off clifflike into a black void. The upstage area sweeps slightly uphill, then drops off radically into another black void. The extreme upstage edge is raised high enough so that actors can leap off it and disappear into some sort of unseen netting or, conversely, make sudden appearances into the playing area.*

*As lights go to black, a woman's (Mable's) piercing voice is heard screaming someone's name.*

**MABLE'S VOICE.** *(Screaming, offstage right.) ELIZABETH!!! (Lights snap up bright. Two figures appear. Roscoe, a man, mid-sixties, sits up fast in the stage right bed, facing the audience. At the same time, in stage left bed, Sally, a woman in her early thirties, rolls over so her back is to audience, wrapping herself tightly in a sheet, mummy-style. Pause. Roscoe gets out of his bed quickly and stands, facing Sally's bed. He wears green boxer shorts, a plain white T-shirt, and white socks.)*

ROSCOE. (*Disoriented.*) Sally? (*Roscoe moves slightly toward her bed, then stops.*)

SALLY. (*Keeping her back to audience.*) I'm sleeping.

ROSCOE. Did you scream?

SALLY. No.

ROSCOE. I thought I heard a scream.

SALLY. Go walk your dog. (*Roscoe turns, moves toward stage right — stops — turns back toward Sally, confused.*)

ROSCOE. When I woke up I couldn't figure out where the windows were. I thought I was still in some motel somewhere —

SALLY. (*Without turning.*) You were mistaken. (*Roscoe turns again and exits stage right. Sally immediately rolls toward audience on Roscoe's exit. She sits up in her bed, naked from the waist up. A long surgical scar snakes down from between her collarbones to her navel — bright pink and very prominent. She looks around the space and toward stage right, then stands, wearing white underwear, grabs a gray linen blouse, throws it on, buttons it partially while crossing downstage to stage left chair at table. She sits in chair, facing audience directly, pulls her legs up, wrapping her arms around her shins, and stares out across audience, as though seeing something in distance. Pause. Then the voice of Roscoe offstage right, speaking to his dog in high-pitched falsetto. No sounds of dog whatever. Sally just listens — looks out over audience.*)

ROSCOE'S VOICE. (*To dog — off right.*) Shall we take a walk? What do you think? A little walk? Piss and poop? Tinkle, tinkle. Yes? Shall we go? Oh — happy dog! Happy, happy, happy dog! Here we go! Poop and piss! Jumping, jumping! Happy, happy, happy, happy dog! Let's go — here we go! Yes — happy, happy, happy, happy — (*Roscoe's voice fades away, off right. Pause. Sally just sits and stares out in the same posture. She speaks calmly to some invisible partner in same direction as audience.*)

SALLY. You should've told me it was going to be like this. You could've warned me. 'Course, how would you know? You were the same as me. Right? Young. Babies, really. What were we then — ten? Eleven? I forget. How could we know what was up ahead? (*Pause.*) I'm glad you're still around, though — some part of you. I'm glad — (*Stops.*) You have to stop visiting me, though, in the middle of the night. I can't — I have to get some sleep. You understand? Some peace. I can't be dealing with — (*Lucy, Sally's older sister, enters from stage left. Lucy is dressed very drably in a dark cardigan sweater, a knee-length skirt, and flat shoes. She carries a metal tray in*



*both hands with syringes, bottles, cotton balls, alcohol, etc. Lucy stops when she sees Sally sitting there. Sally ignores her, keeps staring out.*

LUCY. You're up early. *(Sally holds posture, ignores her.)* Have you taken your pills, "Sunshine"? *(No response from Sally.)* Did you have your orange juice? Vitamin D? *(No response from Sally.)* Sally, what are we going to do with you?

SALLY. *(Holding posture.)* Who's "we"? *(Lucy exhales, crosses to table, sets down medicine tray, and sits in opposite chair, stage right. Sally remains standing still, staring straight ahead. Lucy goes about her daily routine of filling syringes with various serums, medicines — flicking the bottles expertly as she speaks to Sally.)*

LUCY. *(As she works.)* Did you do anything domestic this morning — like make coffee, flip an egg — ? *(Sally shakes her head.)* How 'bout your new friend — what's his name?

SALLY. Roscoe.

LUCY. How 'bout Roscoe. He looks like the "rise and shine" type. Did Roscoe put any coffee on? *(Sally hunches her shoulders.)* I can smell something warm and nutty —

SALLY. Must've, then.

LUCY. We're just sociable as hell this morning, aren't we?

SALLY. Oh — sorry.

LUCY. Don't apologize. *(Long pause. Sally remains in her posture, Lucy continues her work.)* Did you happen to hear a scream, earlier?

SALLY. *(Slowly turns her head toward Lucy and stares at her.)* What?

LUCY. A scream. High-pitched — piercing. Nightmarish.

SALLY. *(Turns away from her, back to original posture.)* Must've been Mable.

LUCY. Mom doesn't scream. She moans.

SALLY. She used to scream.

LUCY. That was way back.

SALLY. Yeah — she's been screaming for decades.

LUCY. I wouldn't say that, exactly.

SALLY. What would you say?

LUCY. Well — of course she screamed back when she fell out of that tree.

SALLY. Yeah.

LUCY. But that was a long time ago when Whitmore left her. You weren't even around.

SALLY. I was here. Right here. When you brought her back in pieces. She was screaming then.

LUCY. Well — she was in terrible pain.  
SALLY. The police came to the door.  
LUCY. I don't remember that.  
SALLY. Of course you don't. (*Long pause where the two of them just sit there in silence.*) What?  
LUCY. Screaming, I mean.  
SALLY. Screaming neighbors.  
LUCY. Domestic dispute or something.  
SALLY. I've never seen the neighbors, have you?  
LUCY. Once.  
SALLY. I've seen their cars. Their gardeners.  
LUCY. Who could've been screaming, then?  
SALLY. This is L.A. People scream all the time. (*Long pause.*)  
LUCY. What happened to your friend? Boscoe, was it?  
SALLY. Roscoe.  
LUCY. Whatever.  
SALLY. No. Not "whatever." That's his name — Roscoe. How would you like it if somebody called you "Juicy" instead of Lucy?  
LUCY. Sally, for Christ's sake! It's so much fun trying to have a conversation with you!  
SALLY. Fun?  
LUCY. (*Short pause.*) Where is your friend — (*Exaggerating name.*) Roscoe?  
SALLY. Walking his — (*Exaggerating "dog."*) dog.  
LUCY. (*Pause.*) Oh — he's got a dog? That changes my opinion of him.  
SALLY. Why's that?  
LUCY. He's the one who just recently left his wife and children, isn't he? Ran off?  
SALLY. So?  
LUCY. Well, he must be looking for a replacement, then.  
SALLY. With the dog?  
LUCY. Yes. Well —  
SALLY. The dog replaces the children?  
LUCY. I'm not —  
SALLY. That's deep, Lucy. That's really deep. Did you just come up with that on your own? (*Sally gets up suddenly, crosses upstage, gets into her bed, and wraps herself up tightly in sheet, as before, then turns her back on Lucy. Lucy stands, gathering her tray together.*)  
LUCY. Well — maybe you just need more rest, Sally. Maybe that's it. Lack of sleep can make a person crabby and irritable. Studies

show — *(She begins to cross stage right, then stops.)* You really ought to take your medicine, though. You want to stay alive, don't you? *(Lucy exits stage right. Sally just lies there with her back to audience for a short while, then suddenly starts singing, a capella — in full voice, while remaining in posture, her back to audience.)*

SALLY. *(Singing.)*

*I want to stay alive*

*I want to stay alive*

*How many times I catch myself*

*I want to stay alive*

*I'm slipping all the time*

*Falling in my mind*

*Ten times a day I catch myself*

*I want to stay alive*

*(She stops. Roscoe's voice dovetails in from off right.)*

ROSCOE'S VOICE. *(Calling from off right.)* Sally! Oh, Sally! You didn't go back to sleep, did you, because I've got something for you! Big gooey surprise!

SALLY. *(Rolls over, facing audience.)* What could that be?

ROSCOE'S VOICE. Jelly donuts!

SALLY. *(Sitting up in bed.)* Jelly donuts?

ROSCOE'S VOICE. Deep-fried!

SALLY. What flavor?

ROSCOE'S VOICE. Raspberry. Mango.

SALLY. Mango? In a donut?

ROSCOE'S VOICE. "California Exotic," they call it. Golden! Oozing!

SALLY. They must inject it or something. How do they get mango in there? *(Roscoe enters from down right, heading toward table, a coffee cup in each hand and a white bakery bag containing donuts dangling between his teeth. He crosses slowly to table, careful not to spill coffee; sets cups down and then bag of donuts. Sally watches closely from bed.)*

You would've made a great husband. Maybe.

ROSCOE. Ooops! Forgot the half-and-half. *(Roscoe turns and darts back off right. Sally leaps out of bed, goes to table, and peeks into bag, sniffing donuts, then crumples it back up again. She sits in stage left chair again, picks up coffee, and slurps it. Roscoe reenters from down right with half-and-half, plates, and napkins, talking as he enters.)* I myself am a huge fan of the jelly donut. Going way back to my junkie days. Avenue D, Fourteenth Street, Dunkin' Donuts, cops, transvestite fistfights, hookers, and faggots — the strung-out and hopeless.

# HEARTLESS

## by Sam Shepard

1 man, 4 women

Sally lives with her mysterious family in a cavernous home overlooking Los Angeles. When a visitor arrives, Sally's dark secrets—and the secrets of those around her—threaten to come to light.

*"This is not a play for people who need answers more than questions. ... we feel the playwright moving into gripping new territory. Just as the professor wants to go somewhere without a name, Shepard, bless him, keeps us searching."*  
—Newsday

*"These characters fit into Shepard's pantheon of damaged, dysfunctional people linked by blood and desperation, but there is something particularly bleak and detached about their circumstances. ... What HEARTLESS reinforces is that we're all lost, in various stages of decay and disrepair. Characteristically, Shepard finds the dark humor in this quandary."*  
—USA Today

*"The heart has always been a vital organ in the plays of Sam Shepard, and never more so than in HEARTLESS, a poetic, enigmatic and often humorous exploration of the human failure to connect with one another that is the playwright's most inspired and imaginative work in years. ... HEARTLESS defies any easy classification or even definition of subject matter. ... Shepard's poetic sense of the absurdities of human congress is pitch perfect and the drama never flags."*  
—The Huffington Post

*"Featuring a contentious family, torrid love, mysterious secrets, imposing guilt, a lust for the frontier of the open road, and a staunch refusal to moor itself to a realist grounding, all dripping with darkly comic lyric poetry, HEARTLESS features all that intrigues and mystifies us about Shepard's work. It is an American master doing what he does best."*  
—Stage Magazine

*"While it declines, firmly but politely, to make certain kinds of literal sense, [HEARTLESS] follows a single, straightforward action through a beginning, middle, and end. The action just happens not to be based in the simple reality we think we perceive on the surface. Shepard has never particularly cared for that surface reality. He is a modernist—these days with a lot of postmodern sauce to his meal—who has found inspiration in painting and poetry as often as in the theater. ... The wonder and charm of HEARTLESS don't come from its trickery, but from the very real passion behind it and poetry within it."*  
—The Village Voice

**Also by Sam Shepard**  
CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS  
KICKING A DEAD HORSE  
A LIE OF THE MIND  
and others

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3222-3

