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*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE GREAT PANDEMONIUM

A Comedy in One Act

by

PAT COOK



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(THE GREAT PANDEMONIUM)

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# THE GREAT PANDEMONIUM

A Comedy in One Act  
For 4 Men and 5 Women

## CHARACTERS

JARRED NUSTHORP . . . . . head of a high school drama department, in his late 30s, at the end of his rope

OZ . . . . . technician in charge of lights and sound.  
His part is spoken totally into an offstage microphone  
(May be played by a woman)

JANET . . . . . assistant director, a student who considers herself a top sergeant

RICHARD . . “Richard III,” a very over-prepared senior, who reads something into everything

BABS . . . . . a cheerleader who’s standing in for her boyfriend

CLARENCE . . . . . the typical character actor who’s playing eight parts in the same play, takes what he can get

Mrs. DINSMORE . . . . . principal of the high school, late 40s. Thinks she always knows what’s going on

ANNE . . . . . “Anne” in the play, she is overly-emotional and somewhat insecure

URLA . . . . . head of props, a student who knows her business but will not be put upon

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A high school auditorium stage.

# THE GREAT PANDEMONIUM

SCENE: *A bare stage furnished with a few grey platforms, differing in heights, and odds and ends of step units, blocks and doorways, also painted in grey. There are two folding chairs, DR. While the stage is still bathed in blessed darkness, a FANFARE sounds. Then, as if modulated by the very canyons of heaven, OZ's voice booms out.*

OZ (*offstage*). In the beginning...all was dark. And all around there was no creation, no literature, no art, not even a mime in Central Park. And it was decided that there should be live theater! Dramas, tragedies and comedies then abounded, free formed and unashamed. And the directors of these stage shows were sore afraid. For before there could be enlightenment there had to come upon the land a blight so fierce and foreboding that it shook the very foundations of theater itself. And that blight was called the dreaded technical rehearsal. And so, it was first brought about and the call came down...let there be light!

*(LIGHTS come up onstage. JARRED is standing C holding an ice bag on his head. He is looking up at the booth.)*

JARRED. Oz?

OZ (*still in full voice*). Yeah?

JARRED. Knock it off!

OZ. Right.

JARRED (*speaks to the wings and the audience, pacing and wincing with each step*). Okay, boys and girls, tomorrow night we are going to try our best to present William Shakespeare's greatest and probably most brutal tragedy, "Richard the Third." And may God have mercy on us all.

OZ. Isn't the whole title "The Life and Death of King Richard the Third"?

JARRED (*without stopping*). What kind of grade do you want, Oz?

OZ. That's kinda like an unveiled threat, isn't it?

JARRED. Just like.

OZ. It's not too late to do "Grease" you know.

JARRED (*puts the ice bag on a chair*). Shut up. Now. I know some of you have never been involved in a tech rehearsal. Some of you haven't even seen a tech rehearsal. Simply put, it is the dirty end of the stick, a time of utter confusion or, as it's better known, the great pandemonium. Now, for those aforementioned, a tech rehearsal means you simply come on stage, hit your marks, begin your scene and stop when I say stop. We are only trying to set light and sound cues. And we WILL set the entire show tonight. And everyone will do their best to help us along and if you don't, I've given my assistant director permission to shoot to kill. I have a feeling when Shakespeare wrote "Now is the winter of our discontent," it was probably because he had to direct this show himself. JANET!

*(JANET sprints onstage from L, carrying a clipboard.)*

JANET. Yes sir, everybody is in place, sir. Everyone is standing by, sir, waiting for you to begin, sir.

JARRED (*after a slight pause*). At ease, Janet.

JANET. Yes sir. (*She takes the standard soldier "At ease" stance.*)

JARRED. This isn't a close-order drill, Janet.

JANET. Yes sir! (*She doesn't move a muscle.*)

JARRED. That's better. Look, I know you just joined our show two days ago when we lost Shirley but I'm sure you'll do just fine.

JANET. I promise to do my best to fill her shoes, sir. Still think she could've carried out her responsibilities, though.

JARRED. She had an inflamed appendix.

JANET. Still something of a slacker, if you ask me. Not complaining, sir. I will do my best to do my duty.

JARRED (*smiles at her*). Your dad's in the service, I'll bet.

JANET. Retired, sir.

JARRED. Right. Now. Has the whole cast arrived? (*He moves R.*)

JANET. All present or accounted for.

JARRED. Good, now does...wait. What do you mean, accounted for?

JANET (*looks at her clipboard*). Either here, somewhere near here, in the bathrooms or have sent in their condolences.

JARRED. How nice. Are you trying to tell me some of them AREN'T here?

JANET. Trying NOT to tell you that, sir.

JARRED. Like I didn't see that one coming. Who's not here?

JANET. Well, two actors were grounded for teepeeing the principal's house.

JARRED. There's something I bet they never had to deal with at the Old Vic. (*He looks around.*) I need to talk with Clarence. (*He yells.*) Clarence?!

(*CLARENCE enters L.*)

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