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*Dramatic Publishing*

# RIDICULOSIS BY PROXY



**ABSURD COMEDY**  
**BY B. DWAYNE CRAFT**

# RIDICULOSIS BY PROXY

*Absurd comedy. By B. Dwayne Craft. Cast: 6 to 15m., 12 to 19w., 4 to 12 either gender. Doubling encouraged. Ridiculous by Proxy takes on society's innate fear of the unknown through vignettes that illustrate the lengths to which people will go in order to avoid the latest threat to their health, whether it is real or imagined. Led by the politician, the characters attempt to find solutions to their problems through increasingly ridiculous measures. Each vignette ratchets up the comedic tempo with novel and absurd ways of avoiding "the disease of the day." Audiences will laugh recognizing a little of themselves in the citizens of our imagined state as they grow ever more desperate to avoid a disease with no name, no symptoms and no known treatment. The media reports every detail of the plague lurking around the corner even while they have to guess at the identity, the effects and the real importance of this new infection. Meanwhile, the politician continues with assurances that every precaution has been taken and a cure is on its way—as soon as they figure out what to call the new virus. The concept of a manufactured health crisis is the perfect vehicle to illustrate our cultural gullibility when it comes to medicine and disease and our predisposition for panic and irrational reaction when it comes to our well-being. The audience will ultimately decide whether the cure we find is for the disease or for the ridiculous responses by the citizens. Simple set. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: RD4.*

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# **Ridiculous by Proxy**

By

**B. DWAYNE CRAFT**



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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Dedicated to Arthur L. Craft  
who was the best father ever.

Special thanks to Mary Butgereit  
for her suggestions and input!

*Ridiculis by Proxy* was premiered by the Bob Jones High School Patriot Players Drama Troupe at the Bob Jones High School Edward Zompa Auditorium in Madison, Ala., on Nov. 5, 2009.

Directors..... B. Dwayne Craft and Mary Davis  
Student Director ..... Rose Lewter  
Senior Student Tech Director, Student Producer,  
Sound Board Operator ..... Kaleah Foley  
Senior Student Tech Director, Lights..... Stephen Garber  
Senior Student Tech Director,  
Stage Right Manager..... Colby Williamson  
Senior Student Tech Director,  
Stage Left Manager..... Lacey Hughes  
Junior Student Tech Director ..... Stephen Mercier  
Props Master, Set Construction..... Ethan Jones  
Lead Scenic Carpenter ..... Ben Rimkus  
Set and Costume Crew Leaders ..... Kim Hooper,  
Ashleigh Horowitz

Advanced Technical Theatre  
(set construction and moving)..... Michael Breitbach,  
Benjamin Melvin, Frank Milliken,  
Brandy Vo, V. Leon Greene,  
Mary Lake, Strider Williams

Technical Theatre  
(scenic construction and Moving)..... Stephanie Alf,  
Jody Aweau, James Berens, Tarik Bey,  
Eric Brower, John Cobb, J.P. Coddling,  
Brittany Cox, Taylor Grenier,  
Griffin Grogan-Herod, Will Kent,  
Morgan Morozko, Alexander Morton,  
Cydney Nichols, Lauren Parker,  
Ethan Prueitt, Laura Sheffield, Seth Stephens,  
Marissa Walker, Ariel War

Cast:

Silent Newspaper Reader, Beginning to Feel a Little Unwell,  
Doubting Wife.....Lane Burchfield  
Silent Newspaper Reader, Ensemble .....Brian Jones  
News Girl, Mommy’s Little Girl ..... Elizabeth Towner  
Second Classy Woman,  
Refined Consumption..... Lauren Tucker  
First Classy Woman,  
Refined Consumption..... Rachel Gosnell  
My Goodness Man, Scenic Coffins,  
Strychnine Will Do ..... Joshua Coats  
Terrible News, Cough/Gasp/Shudder ..... Nick Mecikalski  
Gossiping Ditzzy Girl,  
President of the Committee for Family Values,  
Canaries and Poison Gas..... Emily Krym  
Gossiping Glamorous Girl, Actress ..... Amanda Gantt  
Outraged Man, Gravity Is the Law ..... Chad Muirhead  
Angry Mother, Mommy Dearest,  
Gravity Is the Law .....Leah Brown  
Newspaper Reader, Gravity Is the Law ..... Darien R. Harris  
Newspaper Reader, Glue and Kisses ..... Roderick Traylor  
Reassuring the First, Gravity Is the Law,  
Doesn’t Want to Be First, Glue and Kisses....Jasmine Woods  
Harassed Husband, Harassed Husband Reprise,  
Canaries and Poison Gas..... Zachary Fitzgibbon  
Shrew of a Wife, Shrewed to Death..... Cara Green  
Voting Twice, Scenic Coffins.....Kaitlyn McClellan  
Politics as Usual, Assistant to the Star,  
Strychnine Will Do .....Nicole Murphy  
Politicians Are Puppets ..... Theodore Wong  
Ensemble, Gravity Is the Law..... McAllister Lemley



# Ridiculosis by Proxy

## CHARACTERS

Last to Hear	Acting Is Believing
First in Line	Assistant to the Star
Beginning to Feel a Little Unwell	Outraged Man
Mommy's Little Girl	Outraged Woman
Second Classy Woman	Mommy Dearest
Refined Consumption 1	Gravity Is the Law 1-4
Refined Consumption 2	Glue and Kisses Man
Picky as Well	Glue and Kisses Woman
Picky About My Illnesses	Harassed Husband
First Classy Woman	Shrew of a Wife
Strychnine Will Do 1, 2, 3	Voting Twice
Terrible News Man	Voting Twice Friend
Terrible News Friend	Scenic Coffins
Cough/Gasp/Shudder	Scenic Coffins 2
Doubting Wife	*Politicians Are Puppets
President of the Committee for Family Values	Dying Rich
Canaries in Coal Mines 1, 2, 3	Dying Poor
Paperboy	Corners and Algebra
	Corners and Algebra Friend

The ensemble is the heart of this play. They can double as named characters and play multiple roles. The play has been successfully staged with as few as 18 players and as many as 40 in the ensemble.

\*Politicians Are Puppets: As the name implies, the character should appear as puppet-like as possible. If desired, additional ensemble members can act as puppeteers.

## SETTING

Simple exterior or blank stage with puppeteer stand. The only fixed set requirement is somewhere for the politician to appear and disappear. A puppeteer stand would work fine if simplicity is desired. One production used primarily blocks and cubes with a puppeteer stand to great effect. Be as creative as you wish.

## COSTUMES

Any time period, although stylized costumes seem to work better.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

This is a very absurdist comedy, and, as such, it is open to interpretation, the only caveat being that it will not work played realistically. Any interpretation is valid, but the more extreme the choices, the more entertaining it tends to be. Actors should be encouraged to develop extremes in physicality in the vignettes. Ensemble scenes should be highly choreographed and synchronized.

Each vignette is designed to highlight the ridiculous responses to an imagined danger that people construct out of fear and ignorance ... but they are supposed to be funny, so have fun with them!

## Ridiculis by Proxy

AT RISE: *Creepy children's voices sing: "Ring Around the Rosie."*

*As the music fades, lights come up to tableau scene in a city square. Townspeople are frozen UR in a group, all reading newspapers. After each of the following conversations, actors join the group upstage, reading their newspapers, while all other characters hum "Ring Around the Rosie." Humming ceases when each conversation starts. Newspapers "pop" up and down with each conversation. Ensemble work must be extremely tight in this section.*

PAPERBOY. Extra, extra! Read all about it!

*(PAPERBOY transitions each vignette by handing papers to the next couple entering onstage.)*

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. Did you hear the news, Beatrice?

SECOND CLASSY WOMAN. What news, Evelyn?

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. The scientists say they've cured a new disease.

SECOND CLASSY WOMAN. How clever of them! What was it called?

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. Oh, they haven't named it yet. They thought they would get ahead if they cured it before they named it.

SECOND CLASSY WOMAN. How clever of them, to do such a thing ... curing a disease before it's named!

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. They even cured it before anyone got sick.

SECOND CLASSY WOMAN. How clever of them, to cure a thing before it made you ill!

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. Oh, they expect someone to get sick soon—of course someone will have to get ill first, it's only logical.

SECOND CLASSY WOMAN. How clever of them, to use logic in such cases!

FIRST CLASSY WOMAN. Yes. Logic and disease go hand in hand.

*(Actors hum "Ring Around the Rosie" and shuffle their newspapers in turns of surprise and disgust.)*

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. My dear friend, I have some terrible news!

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness, dear fellow. Do tell me.

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. The doctors are talking about a new disease—one that has horrible symptoms!

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness! What are the symptoms?

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. Oh, they haven't decided on the symptoms yet. They just know they are horrible.

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness! How long before they decide what the symptoms will be?

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. As soon as they name it. You know naming things takes a lot of thought.

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness. Do you think the disease will have a lot of syllables? I am so very frightened by diseases with a lot of syllables in their names. They are generally the worst.

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. I think they may name it after a plant, or more likely an animal. They do that now, you know; now that they use etymological anthropomorphy.

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness. That is better than using epistemological zoology to name such a thing.

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. I much prefer it to the old way of using *tautological repetition*.

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. Well, in any case, I hope they don't name it after dogs; I wouldn't like that very much since dogs are so very friendly. I would hate to dislike them over such a trivial thing as oncological pathology.

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. Either way, once it's named and the symptoms decided, then they can move on to deciding how it gets to be transmitted. I hear that is the fun part. Deciding how it is transmitted is so much more fun than, say, describing its symptoms, especially if they are not fatal.

TERRIBLE NEWS FRIEND. My goodness! I hope for their sakes they can find a few fatal symptoms, just to prevent boredom on their part!

TERRIBLE NEWS MAN. Leave it to the experts, I say, but for their sakes, I hope they can. Scientists who get bored are such dangerous creatures.

*(Humming "Ring Around the Rosie," the characters move about their day and take position for the next conversation.)*

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. Did you hear the news? There's a new disease running rampant in the city!

PICKY AS WELL. Heavens, a new disease! What's it called?

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. It's unnamed, but I hear it's from Africa.

PICKY AS WELL. I heard it was from Australia!

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. I thought it was from Amsterdam. All the deadliest diseases come from Amsterdam.

PICKY AS WELL. I would have rather it came from somewhere less frightening, somewhere like France. I am picky about my illnesses.

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. French diseases are so terribly rude! I prefer German diseases; they get the job done.

PICKY AS WELL. Or Antarctica, I hear their diseases are the easiest to name.

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. Still, an unnamed disease! It really is a wonder.

PICKY AS WELL. The things scientists do these days ...

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. I heard it is fatal in 20% of cases!

PICKY AS WELL. You don't say! Well, that doesn't seem like a very high percentage for a brand new disease. They really should do better when they come up with these things.

PICKY ABOUT MY ILLNESSES. Well, you would think, wouldn't you? They just don't do the quality of work they used to.

*(Humming, transition.)*

VOTING TWICE. I heard that the other party has already come out against the disease!

VOTING TWICE FRIEND. You don't say! Our party would never do such a thing. They are always in favor of scientific progress.

VOTING TWICE. That's why I always vote twice when I vote for our party, always twice on the same day.

*(Humming, transition.)*

OUTRAGED MAN. Outrage!

OUTRAGED WOMAN. Such a scandal, and how embarrassing for our country to just now get our own disease!

OUTRAGED MAN. Scandal!

OUTRAGED WOMAN. And all the other civilized countries have had their own for years!

OUTRAGED MAN. Travesty!

OUTRAGED WOMAN. And in such an important area indeed, when even the poorest nations have theirs already named, symptoms decided, and a way for it to be transmitted already picked out ...

OUTRAGED MAN. Outrage! Scandal! Travesty!

*(Humming, transition.)*

DYING RICH. First they announce a new cure, then they forget to inform us of the disease. I would have liked to have known what I was supposed to contract before I found out if it was fatal or not.

DYING POOR. Don't worry, they won't let you catch anything until it is completely ready.

DYING RICH. But even announcing it before it is ready is reckless. What if someone were to get the wrong idea? Mistakes about such things lead one to question their own mortality.

DYING POOR. There is always one way to confirm your mortality.

DYING RICH. I know, I know ... I could simply die. But I prefer to do it in steps, like the rich do. A little piece at a time instead of all at once. Only poor people die all at once.

*(Humming, transition.)*

FIRST IN LINE. Well, I heard that they are just waiting on someone to be first before they name it.

LAST TO HEAR. I don't want to be the first to catch it, being the first is always worst in cases like these.

FIRST IN LINE. Only in some cases. In others, being last means you have to clean up after the ones who went before you.

LAST TO HEAR. Being first in most things means you have to make all the mistakes for everyone else. What if I didn't get it right?

FIRST IN LINE. I should think they would make you do it again. It's important that they get a good start on it, or the disease will never properly be appreciated.

*(Louder humming, transition.)*

HARASSED HUSBAND *(reading the paper)*. A new disease, and they don't even have a volunteer for first. They will have to pick someone if no one steps forward.

SHREW OF A WIFE. What if they choose by lottery? Then what will we do? We often win lotteries.

HARASSED HUSBAND. I simply won't purchase a ticket. That's the way you fix that.

SHREW OF A WIFE. But dear, I hate to lose at things. You lose twice as often when you don't play the game.

*(Louder humming, transition.)*

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA. Do you know what I heard about the disease? I heard it is fatal in 100% of cases now.

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA FRIEND. Well, to get to 100% so early, they must have cut corners.

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA. You can't expect a proper outcome if you cut corners.

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA FRIEND. Corners are the only things that separate us from all the other animals. Corners, algebra, thumbs, and a proper respect for fatality.

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA. You certainly can't rush a thing like fatality and hope to be successful.

CORNERS AND ALGEBRA FRIEND. I wish they had taken their time. Rushing about with things like this only leads to disaster!



*(Louder humming. “Ring Around the Rosie” continues and grows under the following conversations until reaching its crescendo with the entrance of the politician, at which point all characters assume a tableau of rapt attention.)*

POLITICIANS ARE PUPPETS. My fellow citizens, I call on you to listen. I have come from a meeting with our best doctors, most knowledgeable scientists, most gifted zoologists, and the most thorough researchers to announce to you something of great importance. I regret to say that a new disease has been introduced and has begun to infect our population, even before the symptoms have been decided upon.

ENSEMBLE 4 *(aside)*. I thought they came up with the cure first in cases such as this.

POLITICIANS ARE PUPPETS. I ask of you that you remain calm. Of course, it would have been better if a name could have been agreed upon before the sickness had arrived, but in any case, the disease is already among us. Waiting. Lurking. Ready to pounce with 100% fatality. We are confident that the first victims are ready to begin suffering once a name has been selected. Until then, look both ways before crossing the street. An apple a day keeps the doctor away ...

*(The first line after each of the politician’s speeches should be overlapped by the next line in the scene.)*

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. Well, I won’t be the first.

ENSEMBLE 4. Well, don’t look at me!

ENSEMBLE 5. If the symptoms are as bad as they say ...

ENSEMBLE 2. If they had named it first, I might feel more comfortable.

ENSEMBLE 6. As it stands, I don't think I want to be the one to test it out.

ENSEMBLE 7. My husband would never let me do something 100% fatal. He draws the line at 70%.

ENSEMBLE 3. Who said 100%? I heard it was 200% fatal!

ENSEMBLE 8. They really have overdone it now!

ENSEMBLE 2. Just like them to go too far!

ENSEMBLE 9. It just makes me want to cry thinking about how such a thing starts and then gets ruined in the end!

ENSEMBLE 10. What if it's true? What if it is impossible to cure until it gets named?

ENSEMBLE 3. Then we'll have to be on the lookout!

ENSEMBLE 11. Nameless things do like to sneak up on you.

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. Do you think it will be disguised?

ENSEMBLE 10. It's much easier to sneak up on someone when wearing a disguise.

ENSEMBLE 3. It could be right here with us now, disguised as a sniffle, an itch or a thought!

ENSEMBLE 4. That's why I try to avoid thoughts. They always make things more confusing.

ENSEMBLE 9. It's best to rely on feelings. They are always the best measure.

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. Oh! I am beginning to feel a little unwell!

ENSEMBLE 9. You see, she has already got it!

ENSEMBLE 6. At least I didn't have to be the first.

ENSEMBLE 12. Are you sure you have it?

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. Wait... *(Thinks it over.)* No, I don't. *(Laughs.)* It was just a little panic.

ENSEMBLE 4. She's panicking at the thought!

ENSEMBLE 8. That's a bad sign.

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. Let me try again!

ENSEMBLE 7. Oh, help us! We are doomed now!

ENSEMBLE 6. It will be a plague!

BEGINNING TO FEEL A LITTLE UNWELL. A pandemic ...

ENSEMBLE 11. A curse!

ENSEMBLE 5. It's incurable!

ENSEMBLE 9. It causes horrible pain!

ENSEMBLE 12. What will we do?

ENSEMBLE 9. I hear it is already spreading in the slums.

ENSEMBLE 13. It will spread from them to the ignorant.

ENSEMBLE 14. And then to the dirty.

PAPERBOY. And then the meek!

ENSEMBLE 14. They always get it in the end.

ENSEMBLE 8. The thought of it...

ENSEMBLE 13. It's already a plague!

ENSEMBLE 10. An epidemic!

ENSEMBLE 14. A contagion!

ENSEMBLE 4. A scourge!

ENSEMBLE 2. A terror!

*(Everyone onstage is running about, very hysterical, shouting, clawing at each other, clutching each other in fearful embraces shouting, "What will we do?" "We'll all die!" "Mercy, mercy!")*

*They are interrupted by the POLITICIANS.)*

POLITICIANS ARE PUPPETS. Fellow citizens, do not panic yet. Be patient and wait to panic until we have provided a name for this new threat. It is only after a threat is named that the symptoms should begin to arrive. Then you may panic. Panicking early only accelerates its incubation!

ENSEMBLE 1 (*aside*). I heard the symptoms are horrible!

POLITICIANS ARE PUPPETS. You should report symptoms immediately so that we may record them properly. This makes the naming process so much easier. Once we have named it, then, and only then, should you report to the nearest undertaker immediately. Do not waste time with the hospitals, for the disease is 300% fatal in most cases and 400% in others. As a precaution, all gatherings are hereby forbidden. The gates to our city have been locked to keep other nations from taking credit for our discovery. You are all urged to remain indoors until the disease has at least been named ... or cured entirely, whichever comes first. In times like this, we must plan for success, don't put the horse before the cart, don't count your chickens before they come home to roost ...

*(The crowd disperses alternately coughing, sneezing, itching, and sniffing.*

*New scene.)*

GLUE AND KISSES MAN. Terrified. I am terrified.

GLUE AND KISSES WOMAN. Hush darling. Why are you terrified?

GLUE AND KISSES MAN. They say it is carried in the air.

GLUE AND KISSES WOMAN. Who says that?

GLUE AND KISSES MAN. They say it.

GLUE AND KISSES WOMAN. Well, if they say it, then it must be true. They are always right, especially when it comes to the really important things like plagues and volcanoes and asteroids and termites.

GLUE AND KISSES MAN. I am really, really terrified.

GLUE AND KISSES WOMAN. What should we do?