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Dramatic Publishing

Cucarachas



Comedy
by
Rosemary Frisino Toohey

Cucarachas

Comedy. By Rosemary Frisino Toohey. Cast: 2m., 3 either gender. How have the oldest life forms on the planet managed to survive all these years? Do they have a carefully plotted plan? Or is it just dumb luck? A trio of cockroaches is living a life of ease. Ensnconced in a research lab, they're well fed and cared for. They just have to do their thing and run from a perceived threat when the lights go on, simple as that. But what happens when the researchers find out all they need to know? Will the guys in the lab coats just let these bugs scurry out the door? Then, a new player appears on the scene and this cockroach—bred aboard a spaceship—upsets all the rules. He's independent, he moves differently, he even thinks! Try something new, he says. Rules, schmules, is his motto. If the roaches change their pattern, will it be the dawn of a new day? Or will it mean curtains for cucarachas? *Simple set. Approximate running time: 20 minutes. Code: CN5.*

Cover: Produced in "Summer Shorties," by Turtle Shell Productions, The Shell Theater, New York, N.Y.

(l-r) Sophia Zorzanello, Oryan Cardoso and Noah Guzman.

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By
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Cucarachas was produced in “Summer Shorties” by Turtle Shell Productions, July-August 2011, The Shell Theater, Times Square Arts Center, New York, N.Y., Mikaela Kafka, Director, John W. Cooper, Producer/Artistic Director.

CAST

Bernie Noah Guzman
Mike Joseph Cardoso
Jeff Oryan Cardoso
Reggie Sophia Zorzanello

The role of Researcher was cut for the initial production in New York.

CUCARACHAS

CHARACTERS:

RESEARCHER (m or w) wearing a lab coat

Order Dictyoptera, suborder Blattaria (cockroaches):

BERNIE (m or w) small in stature

REGGIE (m or w) spectacled, bookish

MIKE (m) big in size

JEFF (m) the rebel

TIME: The present.

SETTING: Dual space: The researcher's space, which could be defined simply by a spotlight. The cockroaches' space in the lab.

SYNOPSIS: How have the oldest life forms on the planet managed to survive all these years? And if they change their pattern will it mean curtains for cockroaches?

CUCARACHAS

(Lights up on RESEARCHER.)

RESEARCHER. Here at the Institute of Behavioral Biology we have bent all of our work toward the study of the insect Orthoptera, order Dictyoptera, suborder Blattaria. This group embraces more than 3500 species, but our focus here is solely on *Periplaneta americana*.

(Lights down on RESEARCHER.)

Lights up on REGGIE, MIKE and BERNIE, lounging.)

BERNIE. Gee, this is the life. Are we lucky or what?

REGGIE. You're right, Bernie, it is stress free.

BERNIE. And the food. You got to admit we're eatin' pretty good.

MIKE. Yeah. You know, I've been here so long I don't even know if I'd remember how to do it.

REGGIE. What? Forage?

MIKE. You got it. I have to admit there's not a lot of thrills and chills here, but, on the other hand...

BERNIE. Right. No worry about where the next meal's comin' from.

REGGIE. Precisely.

(Lights down on BERNIE, REGGIE and MIKE.)

Lights up on RESEARCHER.)

RESEARCHER. Our most exciting discovery to date is that, when stimulated, our study subjects respond in a fairly consistent fashion. They travel in straight lines but at almost precise angles, angles approaching ninety degrees, a hundred and twenty degrees, and a hundred and fifty degrees. And so far, we've seen no deviation in that pattern.

(Lights down on RESEARCHER.)

Lights up on BERNIE, REGGIE and MIKE.)

REGGIE. I wonder when they're going to figure it out?

BERNIE. It?

REGGIE. When they're going to lose interest in us.

BERNIE. You sure that's going to happen?

MIKE. Like I told you guys when you got here, when they find out what they want to know, we're done.

REGGIE. But the question is, what's the guarantee they're going to say, "Nice job, folks" and let us stroll out the door?

BERNIE. You mean—oh. I never thought of that.

MIKE. Well, that just goes with the territory. Not much we can do about it one way or the other.

(Lights down on BERNIE, REGGIE and MIKE.)

Lights up on RESEARCHER.)

RESEARCHER. The question is, what happens in the nervous system of *Paraplaneta americana* to spark this sort of activity? We believe the answer will be a real breakthrough in our efforts to understand the American cockroach.

(Lights down on RESEARCHER.)

Lights up on BERNIE, REGGIE and MIKE.)

MIKE. All right, guys, it's showtime.

(MIKE, BERNIE and REGGIE stand, form a line, and move back and forth on the diagonal. After a moment, JEFF enters, moving at the same pace, but in a circle. The others stop their action and stare. JEFF continues.)

BERNIE. Hey, where did he come from?

MIKE. More to the point, what's he doing?

REGGIE. He seems to be on a completely different wavelength.

MIKE. I don't know about the lengths of any waves. All I can tell you is, it's gotta stop. Hey, bud, what's the story?

(JEFF stops moving.)

JEFF. Story?

MIKE. What's with the...you know?

JEFF. You mean this? *(He moves in a circle for a moment.)* It's the way I travel.

BERNIE. I don't think so, buddy.

MIKE. Look, when we run, there's a pattern, see?

JEFF. Sure, but—

REGGIE. Oh, there's no buts. It's clearly defined. It's in the handbook.

JEFF. The...?

REGGIE. Rules and Regulations for Roaches. Chapter six.

BERNIE. It's chapter eight, Reggie.

REGGIE. I beg to differ, Bernie. It's clearly chapter six.

BERNIE. No way. It's—

MIKE. Hey, who cares what chapter it's in? The thing is, it looks like you're moving in a circle.

JEFF. I am.

MIKE. Well...roaches don't run in circles. We never move in circles.

JEFF. I didn't know that.

BERNIE. Yeah, we get that. Who are you?

JEFF. Geoffrey. But I go by Jeff.

MIKE. Well, Geoffrey or Jeff or whatever you go by, you want to be part of the gang here, you go the way we go, see? Or you don't go at all. Reggie, give him the drill on how we get around.

REGGIE. Certainly. We proceed, change position, and are propelled in a linear measure that is free from bends and curves.

JEFF. And that means...?

REGGIE. We move in straight lines.

JEFF. Always in straight lines?

REGGIE. Only in straight lines.

JEFF. But what if—

MIKE. There is no "what if." There's this and that's that.

JEFF. Sorry, but I don't see why—

MIKE. Do you believe this guy? Geez.

REGGIE. Easy, Mike. Look, it's clear you're new in the neighborhood, but you see, we've been around for a very long time.

(COCKROACHES freeze.

Spotlight up on RESEARCHER.)

RESEARCHER. Cockroaches are an amazing species. They've been on the planet at least two hundred eighty million years, possibly as long as three hundred forty-five million. They range in size from tiny, flightless roaches less than an eighth of an inch long to a South American species with a wingspan of more than half a foot.

(Spotlight down on RESEARCHER.

COCKROACHES reanimate.)

REGGIE. And, since we are possibly the oldest life form around, the question one might ask is, why have we lasted this long?

JEFF. You're going to tell me it's because of the straight lines?

REGGIE. That's part of it. It's because we do things in a pattern. There's a plan, a schema that was worked out long ago. It's all mapped out.

JEFF. Okay, I get that I'm treading on sacred ground here, but—

MIKE. You're treading our way, bud, or you're not treadin' at all.