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No Room for a Picture on the Blank Wall

By

DAVID R. REMSCHEL

Dramatic Publishing Company

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DAVID R. REMSCHEL

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No Room for a Picture on the Blank Wall is dedicated to
the man of music, happiness and laughter.
This is for you, Dad.

No Room for a Picture on the Blank Wall was first performed at McMurry University on Nov. 14, 2014.

Cast:

PETER BUNTHER Jake Wade
ROSEMARY BUNTHER.....Ashleigh Davis
WILLIAM FITZGIVINGS..... Joshua Wilson
MOVER MAC..... Damek Salazar
MOVER BENNYDerek Salazar
HANK (a voice)..... Charles Hughes
SIMON BUNTHER..... Karl Taylor
AMY BUNTHERLacey Reece

Production Staff:

Director Charles Hukill
Set DesignerEric Hansen
Costume Designer..... David Ainsworth

No Room for a Picture on the Blank Wall

CHARACTERS

PETER BUNTHER (m): mid-60s, photographer.

ROSEMARY BUNTHER (w): early 60s, his wife.

DR. WILLIAM FITZGIVINGS (m): late 50s, their friend, a geropsychologist.

MOVER MAC (m): age is flexible, member of the Memory Removal Company.

MOVER BENNY (m): age is flexible, member of the Memory Removal Company.

HANK (m): a voice (can be doubled).

SIMON BUNTHER (m): early 30s, Peter and Rosemary's son.

AMY BUNTHER (w): late 20s, Simon's wife.

THE SET

The dismantling of the set plays a hugely important part in the symbolism of the play, representing the deterioration of Peter's mind. There are several ways that one can achieve this in a timely fashion and have it tie in with the Mover characters' jobs.

The Movers can, as the show progresses, go about taking down the wall sections during the scene breaks, until eventually the set has been removed completely. Improvised banter can be exchanged to avoid long moments of silence.

Another way that has worked quite well is for the Movers, along with any crew hands, to remove the set during intermission. An appropriate touch to this method would be having each of the tech members dress as a member of the M.R.C.

Again, both of these methods worked extremely well and serve as simply ideas and suggestions.

COSTUMING

While it is a relative "given" that the Movers should be dressed to match, the costuming of Peter can be done in a very symbolic way. In Act I, he starts in the fine dress suit. As each scene passes, he loses a different piece of clothing, until in Act II, he is down to a white undershirt and black pants and socks. It also saves quite a bit of time as opposed to having the actor change into a different costume after every scene.

SCENE 2

(All is the same as before. The single picture is still gone. Nothing else is out of the ordinary. PETER sits at the dining room table, not appearing to be in the best of spirits. He looks back at the spot. Never taking his eyes away from it. ROSEMARY enters from the hallway and sits on the L side of the sofa.)

ROSEMARY. He'll be here any minute.

PETER. Terrific.

ROSEMARY. You will not ignore him, Peter.

PETER. Muddles into everyone's business ...

ROSEMARY. He is being gracious enough to come here at this hour and ...

PETER. He is wasting his time!

ROSEMARY. Peter ... !

PETER. This is ridiculous, Rosie!

ROSEMARY. He is our friend. All he wants to do is help.

(PETER begins a retort, but ROSEMARY cuts him off.)

ROSEMARY *(cont'd)*. Just talk with him! Will you?
(Silence.) Come here and sit beside your Rosie.

(A long moment then PETER shuffles over to the opposite side of the sofa and sits.)

ROSEMARY *(cont'd)*. Atta boy. Now let's do try to be hospitable.

(Beat. PETER stares down at his watch.)

PETER. What time is he planning on getting here anyway ...

(No sooner has he asked this ... there come a couple of very loud knocks on the door.)

PETER *(cont'd)*. Oh no.

ROSEMARY. Stand up. It's him.

(They rise up, together. He grumbles.)

ROSEMARY *(cont'd)*. Maybe you should sit. Sit back down.

(She "helps" him back down onto the sofa. The knocking continues. She goes to the door.)

PETER. Pointless. Tell him that. You'll be the one that sees him first. You ...

ROSEMARY. I'm opening the door.

PETER. I'm not going to say a word. Did you hear? Not one word.

ROSEMARY. I will hurt you if you don't. Behave!

(She opens the door. DR. WILLIAM FITZGIVINGS bursts in. A large, lively man. Roughly their age.)

BILL. I have arrived!

PETER. Not one word ...

BILL. Hello, Rosie. Still with the old fossil, I see?

ROSEMARY. So it would seem.

(The two embrace. Old friends. He makes his way to the sofa. She follows close behind.)

PETER. Hello, William. *(Stands with an outstretched hand.)*

BILL. Oh, aside with the formalities. We're all friends here, aren't we?

PETER. I did not do the inviting.

BILL. Hm. Well then, I suppose William it will have to be.

PETER. Sit down, I guess.

BILL. Thank you, I guess.

(They sit down. Awkward. ROSEMARY sits directly beside PETER. Almost on top of him.)

PETER. Stop it, will you, Rosie? You're crowding me.

(She releases him.)

BILL. Ever the charmer, Peter?

PETER. I'm about as charming as a mad rhino in *(Interrupted by ROSEMARY.)* heat!

ROSEMARY. Peter! *(Beat.)* Thank you so much for coming, Billy.

BILL. My pleasure.

ROSEMARY. Could we get you ...

PETER. She, Bill. She.

ROSEMARY. Could we get you anything?

BILL. Oh, no thank you, Rosie. I'm a peach. *(Another silence. Longer than before.)* Well then ... *(Pause.)* Is there anything you would like to talk about ... Peter?

PETER. Nothing comes to mind at the moment.

(A third “eternal” silence.

BILL and ROSEMARY exchange a long look with each other.)

ROSEMARY. Why ... don't you tell Bill about the exhibit, Peter?

BILL. Yes! Yes! Why don't we talk about it? Tell me about your big night. I want every detail!

(Beat.)

PETER *(easing into the conversation)*. Well, it ...

ROSEMARY. Oh it was fantastic, Billy. Everything went just the way that he had wanted. Isn't that what you said, Peter? It went just the way you wanted it to? *(Beat.)* Of course he does tend to get a bit nervous before a public presentation, as you know.

BILL. Thank you, Rosie. Now, Pete ...

ROSEMARY. So he walks up to the microphone, ten different shades of red ...

PETER. I think he gets the idea ...

ROSEMARY. Don't interrupt me, Peter. It's important that he hears this. *(Beat.)* And he gave the most impassioned presentation of his whole career. Completely blew them away. It was wonderful. “They were all bright, young minds delving into the crevices of mine.” Isn't that what you said?

PETER. Sure, honey. Sure.

ROSEMARY. Well, he did say it.

PETER. If she says it's what I said, then it must be what I said.

BILL. That's fine, Pete. I'm glad to hear it.

(Beat.)

ROSEMARY *(treading lightly.)* Our time before we left the house was a different story, however. See ... we were running late and he couldn't see the picture ...

PETER. And there she goes!

ROSEMARY. I'm just ...

PETER. You don't have to tell him every little thing, you know!

ROSEMARY. This is important, Peter.

PETER. It's really nothing worth getting into, Bill.

BILL. It's fine, Peter. I don't mind at all.

ROSEMARY. There we are. Thank you, Billy.

PETER. Fine. The two of you can talk about me and I will just mind my own business!

BILL. Steady on there, champ. *(Pause.)* Say, Rosie, do you think that you could give your boys a minute or two to ... catch up on old things?

ROSEMARY. You mean ... leave you two ... ?

BILL. Just for a minute or two. Would you do that for us?

ROSEMARY. All right, Billy. If that's what you want.

(ROSEMARY stands and makes her way to the kitchen, slightly put off, trying to remain in earshot of the two of them.)

PETER. I'm sorry you had to come out here for this. Kind of silly, don't you think?

BILL. Rosie didn't think so. *(Pause.)* She called me and ...

PETER. I know she did.

BILL. She seemed quite concerned. It really is not like her, Peter.

PETER. I'm fine, Bill.

ROSEMARY (*from the kitchen*). You see, Bill, as I was saying, we were rushing to get to the exhibit and he couldn't see (*Interrupted by BILL.*) the picture.

BILL. Maybe the bedroom would be a more ideal spot to wait, Rosie.

ROSEMARY. All right. Fine. I'll wait in the bedroom.

(She exits into the hallway. A moment passes.)

BILL. There are a couple of little things I would like to ask ...

PETER. One moment, Bill. (*To the hallway.*) Rosie, outside!

(ROSEMARY tiptoes out of the hallway and then out of the house. Another moment passes.)

BILL. Here we are. (*Long pause.*) Talk to me, will you?

PETER. About what?

BILL. She's worried about you.

PETER. She doesn't need to be.

BILL. Peter, she's your wife.

PETER. That's not what I meant. This is all one big joke!

(Pause.)

BILL. What is your name?

PETER. Oh give me a break!

BILL. Come on! Humor me ...

PETER. Ridiculous!

BILL. Just play along, Pete. For me.

PETER. You have got to be kidding me.

BILL. Your name.

PETER. No.

BILL. Your name.

PETER. No!

BILL. Come on, Peter. What is your ... ?

PETER. Dudley Dorigth! *(Beat.)* One of the Seven Dwarves!
Dopey! Stupid! I don't care! *(Pause.)* How's that?!

BILL. Fine. All right. *(Pause.)* You won't do it for me ...

PETER. You've got that right!

BILL. Then why not do it for Rosemary?! *(Long pause.)* Do it for her, Peter. So we can, maybe, get to the bottom of ... whatever this is and ... put her mind to rest. *(Pause.)* What do you say?

(Pause.)

PETER. Fine.

BILL. Wonderful! Now, these are just simple questions.
Trivial. Nothing to worry about.

PETER. I'm not worried. I'm waiting.

BILL. Fine. Let's start with ... your wife's name. Bear with me on these first couple, now. What is your wife's name?

PETER. I can't believe ... !

BILL. Peter, you agreed.

PETER. Rosemary.

BILL. Her full name.

PETER. Rosemary Bunther.

BILL. What is your son's name?

PETER. Simon Bunther!

BILL. When did the two of you get married? Rosemary and you, I mean.

PETER. Nine of October. Seventy-eight.

BILL. Is Simon married?

PETER. You know he ... Sorry. Yes. Yes, he is.

BILL. To whom?

PETER. Amy Thompson.

BILL. Fine. That's just fine, Pete.

PETER. Are we finished? Will you get out of my house now?

(Pause.)

BILL. What was the photograph of?

(Almost overlapping BILL's line comes the loud orchestra of construction. PETER is instantly on his feet.)

PETER. What ... ? *(The noise is gone.)* Did you say? What did you say?

BILL. Is something the matter?

PETER. I thought I heard something. A noise.

BILL. A noise. What noise?

PETER. Forget about it.

BILL. You're sure?

PETER. Yeah. Yeah. Just ... Forget about it. Sorry. What did you ask, again?

BILL. The picture. Rosie told me that you couldn't see a picture.

PETER. We were rushing. I was beside myself. I mean it was just one picture ... Stress. Yeah. There was a lot of stress. You know what that's like. *(Glancing at the spot.)* It looks good.

(Pause.)

BILL. She took it down, Peter.

PETER. Then it looked good, damn it! *(Beat.)* Come on, Bill. What is all of this?

(Pause.)

BILL. Again ... what was the photograph of?

(A jackhammer explodes with ear splitting intensity. More construction follows. Louder than before.)

PETER. I can't think in here!

BILL *(oblivious to the noise)*. Just take your time.

PETER. Do you not hear that?! Can you not ... ?!

BILL. Sit down, won't you?

PETER. It's hard to think.

BILL. I understand. Come sit down.

(PETER makes his way to the sofa. The noise is deafening.)

PETER. The noise. *(Sitting down.)* Like there is a jackhammer splitting open my head!

(Pause.)

BILL. Are you playing games with me?

PETER. What?

BILL. With Rosie?

PETER. No!

BILL. Peter, it hurt her.

PETER. Don't patronize me, Bill!

BILL. I'm not ...

PETER. This is all your doing! You put me on the spot. You ...

(The door opens. Two workers enter carrying tool chests and lunch pails. Locked in conversation and speaking in very thick New York accents. PETER stands amazed upon their entrance.

Note: When the MOVERS and PETER are speaking with each other, BILL and any other character present remains frozen.)

MAC. An' that's why I tell ya, ya gotta go to the sandwich joint on Lenner. They got the best tuna on white I ever had. That an' them real chips straight from the potato. Not from the bag. But from the potato.

PETER. What the ... ?

BENNY. Don't that sound like the thing to turn on the water works? Jenny put me on that Slim Fit diet.

MAC. No!

BENNY. It is a fact.

MAC. A sad day. A tragedy amongst all sandwich lovers around.

BENNY. Tell me about it. So, where we start, ya think?

(They look at the wall of pictures then back to each other.)

PETER. Bill ... Bill ...

MAC. Afta' you.

BENNY. Such class. A gentleman.

MAC. You are too kind, my friend, Benny.

(They proceed to take each photograph off of the wall. As they do this, PETER slowly steps to them. Transfixed.)

MAC. Say, these are pretty good, huh?

PETER. Bill ...

BENNY. D'you do these, chief?

BILL. You need time to rest.

PETER. You don't see this?!

MAC. He don't seem right, huh?

BENNY. Yo, chief! You the taker of these photographs?

PETER. Those are mine!

MAC. Oh, these are the most beautiful pictures I eva saw in my life!

PETER. Put them down! Bill!

BENNY. You are a master.

MAC. A true pioneer.

BENNY. That's good. Yeah. Yeah. Pioneer.

PETER. Bill, help me would you?

BILL. You can come by the office, tomorrow. We'll continue this when you feel more like yourself ...

PETER. What are you saying?

BILL. I'm sure this is all just the big evening catching up to you ...

MAC. Give him the contract.

BENNY. Paper. Paper. Pap ... Here we are! Here ya go, chief!

(BENNY hands PETER a crumpled piece of paper.)

PETER. What is this?!

MAC. Your contract.

PETER. Contract? What ... ?

MAC. Yeah, right here. Sign on the dotted line.

PETER. I ... No ... !

BENNY. He don't have a pen.

MAC. No pen? No pen??

PETER. You haven't answered me. What's going on here?

MAC (*handing PETER a pen*). On the dotted line. Right here.

(PETER signs the document without so much as glancing at it.)

BENNY. OK. Now for the intro. Mac, if ya would be so kind.

MAC. Upon signing on the dotted line ...

BENNY. Which you just did ...

MAC. You waive all rights to your designated members of the M.R.C.

PETER. M.R ... what?

BENNY. M.R.C. That's Memory Removal Company.

PETER. I don't ...

MAC. In other words, boss ...

BENNY & MAC. We're yours.

(Pause.)

PETER. This is trespassing. You ... You are trespassing. You are taking my personal possessions and ... I think I should call the police. Right away, in fact, before you thieves touch anything else!

BENNY. That ain't such a hot idea, you know?

PETER. And why is that?

MAC. See, we're on a tight schedule here, boss.

PETER. Don't call me that!

BENNY. We're gonna make this as easy for you as we can.

You don't have ta lift a finger, chief.

PETER. Don't call me that, either!

BILL. I'll be leaving now.

PETER. No, Bill. Wait.

BILL. It's best that we wait and talk more tomorrow.

MAC. We could come by tomorrow.

BENNY. Yeah. Tomorrow would work.

PETER. I won't be here!

BENNY. Don't worry. We know where you'll be. We'll just come right on in.

PETER. You can't do this!

BILL. You just stay seated. I'll show myself out.

PETER. Billy. Please. Just let me think ...

MAC. We're gonna leave an' let you think about all this.

BENNY. We gotta get started tomorrow, though.

MAC. At the latest, boss.

PETER. I told you not to call me that!

BENNY. Hang onto that contract, chief.

(BILL stands and begins to walk to the door.)

MAC. Gimme a hand will ya, Benny?

(They pick up the photographs that they have collected and carry them to the door.)

BENNY. We'll see ya tomorrow, chief. How can we ... ?

(He has trouble opening the door but, after a couple of rather sad attempts, finds success. They exit. PETER is "pulled" back to the sofa. It's as though he's never left the conversation. BILL catches the door knob in his hand. There passes a long moment of dead silence.)

BILL. I wouldn't be too worried about all of this business, Pete. *(Turns back into the house.)* Just the same ... you get some sleep. Relax. You've had one hell of a day.

PETER *(at a loss for words)*. I don't know. Yeah. Yeah. I feel real tired.

BILL. See you tomorrow?

PETER. What? Oh, sure. Sure. I'll ... I'll see you tomorrow.

(BILL opens the door. ROSEMARY has pressed herself against the door. She stands.)

ROSEMARY. You're leaving?

(PETER exits into the hallway. They watch him go.)

ROSEMARY *(cont'd)*. What is it, Billy? Tell me. Did he remember the picture?

BILL. He's coming by my office tomorrow. Listen, Rosie ... I'd like it if he came alone. Just this once. I ... I just have to be sure of some things. I'll call you after I've finished and then we can talk. OK?

(Silence.)

ROSEMARY. Goodbye, William.

(Pause. BILL exits without a word. ROSEMARY enters the house and shuts the door.)

ROSEMARY *(cont'd)*. Peter Bunther! I need to speak with my husband right now! Oh. Oh! *(Exits into the hallway.)*
Where are you?

(PETER sneaks back in. He is carrying a large piece of chalk. ROSEMARY's calls continue. He waits for a long while then

goes to inspect the wall. He looks to the hallway again then proceeds to trace the outline of the center photograph. A bright red. ROSEMARY's calls get closer.)

PETER. Rosie, I'm in here. *(Puts the piece of chalk back into his pocket.)* If that's how we're going to have to do things around here, then so be it. *(Starts into the hallway.)* Nice of Bill to stop by, wasn't it? We should have him over more often.

(As before, a single light shines upon the spot, now outlined in red.)