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Dramatic Publishing

The Temperamental Artist ...



or
A



Bucket
of Blood



by Mitch Brion

The Temperamental Artist ... or A Bucket of Blood

Comedy. By Mitch Brian. Adapted from the screenplay by Charles B. Griffith. Cast: 8m., 5w., 1 either gender. In this dark



comedy based on the classic cult movie *A Bucket of Blood*, Walter Paisley is a put-upon bus boy at a beatnik café whose greatest dream is to be an artist.

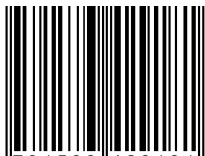
When he accidentally kills his landlady's cat, he covers it in clay and passes it off as sculpture. Finding himself an overnight artistic success, Walter feels the pressure to produce

more work ... and a deadly accident with an undercover cop provides him with a human sculpture and even greater fame. As the police close in and the murders escalate, Walter zeroes in on the girl he loves, determined to make her his wife ... or his next sculpture. *Two int. sets. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: TT8.*

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The Temperamental Artist ... or A Bucket of Blood

Comedy by
MITCH BRIAN

Adapted from the screenplay *A Bucket of Blood* by
CHARLES B. GRIFFITH



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MITCH BRIAN

Adapted from the screenplay *A Bucket of Blood* by Charles B. Griffith

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(THE TEMPERAMENTAL ARTIST ... OR A BUCKET OF BLOOD)

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The Temperamental Artist ... or A Bucket of Blood received its world premiere in March 2012 with 17 sold-out performances. It was originally produced from March 19 to April 1, 2012, by The Living Room Theatre, Kansas City, Mo., with Rusty Sneary as the artistic director.

Cast

Walter Paisley	Matt Weiss
Carla.....	Kimberely Queen
Leonard	Damian Blake
Maxwell H. Brock.....	Forrest Attaway
Sylvia	Emma Taylor
Mrs. Swikert.....	Kelly Main
Alice.....	Meredith Wolfe
Lou Raby.....	Coleman Crenshaw
Al Lacroix	Rick Williamson
Will.....	Brian Stubler
Buddy.....	Matt Anderson
Mr. Hughes.....	Dana Joel Nicholson
Mrs. Hughes.....	Shawwna Journagan
Art Critic	Mitch Brian

Production

Director	Cody Wyoming
Assistant Director.....	Matt Weiss
Stage manager	Alex Murphy
Set/Scenic Design and Construction.....	Matt Weiss
Technical Director.....	Matt Weiss
Costume Design	Kimberely Queen
Lighting Design	Moose Kimball
Sculptures.....	Regina Weller, Tabitha Terry-Trembl
Props/Set Dressing	Matt Weiss, Shawwna Journagan
Poster/Cover Art.....	Tyson Schroeder
Press Poster Art.....	Paul and Sonya Andrews
Promotional Video	Mitch Brian, Todd Norris
Video Trailer	Daniel Myers

Music and Musicians

Victor California (Guitar)	Jeff Freling
Jimmy “the Screw” Golconda (Bass)	Johnny Hamil
Tortuga Dientes (Drums)	Kent Burnam
Nick “Nick” Howl (Trumpet)	Nick Howell
Karen Heritage (Vocals).....	Katie Gilchrist
Additional Trumpet work.....	Kyle Dahlquist

Songs

“These Hands”

Music and lyrics by Christian Hankel

“Purgatory and Vine”

Music by Johnny Hamil and lyrics by Cody Wyoming

“Beat of the Blood” music

Traditional lyrics by Cody Wyoming

All other original music composed by Johnny Hamil and Jeff Freling.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Walter's Kitchen

The keys to staging the murders in Walter's kitchen are the curtain (on a rod) across the kitchen entrance and the wall above the entrance. The curtain allows for all the action going on behind it to be played out in silhouette. Action going on in silhouette is underlined in the text.

The death of the cat and removal from the wall, Lou and Alice's murders and Mrs. Swikert's dismemberment all take place in silhouette, as well as the concealing of Lou's body and the preparation for the hanging.

The second part of these kitchen illusions is the wall that is above the curtain, which conceals action going on above the kitchen entrance. This allows for the illusion of the body being stuffed into the ceiling and the arm that flops into view. Walter lifts a dummy of Lou (in silhouette) and pretends to stuff it into the ceiling while actually handing it off to somebody on a ladder behind the rear kitchen flat. The comic bit with Lou's arm flopping down into view was done live by the actor standing on the ladder behind the rear kitchen wall flat. He simply leaned over the back flat, concealed by the wall above the kitchen entrance, and dropped his arm into sight.

The same elements were used for Walter's hanging. All that is visible when Walter hangs himself is his lower torso and legs. The actor is safely hanging on a bar, concealed by the wall over the kitchen entrance.

The Temperamental Artist ... or A Bucket of Blood

CHARACTERS

Walter Paisley	busboy-artist
Leonard de Santos.....	owner of the Yellow Door
Carla.....	artist and Leonard's business partner
Maxwell H. Brock.....	poet
Al LaCroix	undercover cop
Lou Raby.....	undercover cop
Will.....	beatnik
Buddy.....	beatnik
Alice.....	model
Mrs. Swikert.....	landlady
Sylvia	waitress, wannabe artiste
Mr. Hughes.....	wealthy art collector
Mrs. Hughes	his beautiful trophy wife
Art Critic	voice of society
The Band.....	awe-inspiring hep cats
The Singer.....	elegant chanteuse

The Temperamental Artist ... or A Bucket of Blood

1. The Yellow Door Cafe

AT RISE: *Greenwich Village, 1959.*

This is The Yellow Door Cafe. A beatnik coffee house. Its walls are adorned with art. The BAND plays jazz. They never leave the club, providing underscoring for the whole show.

SYLVIA waits tables. The SINGER (who could be CARLA) joins the BAND and sings a number. The crowd doesn't applaud. They snap fingers.

Beret-wearing, mustached LEONARD DE SANTOS ad libs a few words about the BAND and asks the audience to give a warm Yellow Door welcome to MAXWELL H. BROCK, a bearded poet, who takes C and speaks:

MAXWELL. I will talk to you of art for there is nothing else to talk about. For there is nothing else. Life is an obscure hobo bumming a ride on the omnibus of art. Burn gas buggies, and whip your sour cream of circumstance and hope. Go ahead and sleep your bloody heads off. Creation is. All else is not. What is not creation is graham crackers. Let them crumble to feed the creator. The artist is. All others are not. A canvas is a canvas or a painting. A rock is a rock or a statue. A sound is a sound or is music. A creature is a creature or an artist. Where are John, Joe, Jake, Jim, Jerk? Dead, dead, dead. They were not born before they were born they were not born. Where are Leonardo, Rembrandt, Ludwig? Alive, alive, alive. They were born. Bring on the multitude with the multitude of fishes. Feed them to the fishes for liver oil to nourish the artist. Stretch their skins on the easel to give

him canvas. Crush their bones into a paste so he might mold them. Let them die and by their miserable deaths become the clay within his hands so he might form an ashtray or an arc. For all that is comes through the eye of the artist. The rest are blind fish swimming in a cave of aloneness. Swim on, you maudlin, muddling, maddened fools, and dream that one bright and sunny night some artist might bait a hook and you might bite on it. Bite hard and die. In his stomach you are very close to immortality.

(The audience snaps as MAXWELL sits by CARLA, a cool beatnik chick with a sketch pad. Busboy WALTER PAISLEY stands nearby. LEONARD approaches.)

LEONARD. Walter. Walter, what are you doing?

WALTER. I was just looking at Carla's pictures.

LEONARD. Do I pay you to look at pictures? Now get to work.

WALTER. I was just looking.

LEONARD. There are empty cups all over the place. Clear them up.

(WALTER does as he's told. CARLA watches him go and then looks up at LEONARD.)

CARLA. You shouldn't be so rough on him, Leonard.

(LEONARD shrugs it off, fingering CARLA's hair. She tolerates it.)

Across the cafe, WALTER, still stung, passes a good looking guy sauntering into the joint. This is LOU RABY.)

LOU. Whaddya say, Walter?

WALTER *(barely responding)*. Hi.

(LOU sizes up the place, ambling past AL LACROIX, a dude in scruffy clothes having coffee.)

AL. I think I'll cut.

(AL heads out of the club, passing WILL and BUDDY, a couple of beatniks.)

WILL. Hey man, how you making it?

AL. Fine, man, how 'bout you?

BUDDY. Getting enough.

(AL drifts out of the cafe ...)

2. Outside The Yellow Door

(... and to a phone booth somewhere outside.)

AL. This is LaCroix. Gimme Valdes in Vice. *(Beat.)* Hey, boss. Just checkin' in. Lou took over a couple minutes ago. *(Beat.)* Naw, nothing you can pound nails in. Thought I caught a whiff of something a little earlier. Chatted up a couple hustlers. One's short, fat. Named Skinny. The other was tall and bleached, didn't get her name. Probably "Fat." Didn't see any pushers around the place. As for the heads, Buddy Sacks was there. He looked pretty straight, but I'm sure he's on it. Lou'll sound him out if he gets any higher. I guess that's about it. *(Beat.)* Yeah, I'm bushed. Tough work bein' a fink. *(Chuckles.)* Night. *(Hangs up and takes off.)*

3. In The Yellow Door

(MAXWELL and CARLA have been joined by ALICE, a feline model with a predatory vibe.)

MAXWELL. Everybody listened to my new poem, but do you think they really heard it?

(WALTER, bussing the next table, speaks up.)

WALTER. I heard it, Mr. Brock.

MAXWELL. Thank you, Walter, I'm sure you did.

(As WALTER comes closer, ALICE draws back, her contempt obvious.)

ALICE. You must be thrilled, Maxwell, you're a hit with the help.

WALTER. "Bring on the multitude with the multitude of fishes. Feed them to the fishes for liver oil to nourish the artist."

CARLA. That was word for word.

MAXWELL. Is it? I've forgotten.

CARLA. You mean you don't remember your own poem?

MAXWELL. I refuse to say anything twice. Repetition is death.

ALICE. I don't get it.

MAXWELL. When you repeat something you are reliving a moment, wasting it, severing it from the other moments of your life. I believe only in new impressions, new stimuli, new life.

WALTER. I thought you believed that life was "an obscure hobo, bumming a ride on—"

MAXWELL. I do believe that, Walter, but I also believe in creative living. To be uncreative you might as well be in your grave. Or in the army.

(ALICE laughs, playing up to MAXWELL.)

WALTER. They tried to draft me once. I couldn't pass the test.

ALICE. There's a shocker. I'd feel so much safer with you in uniform.

(CARLA doesn't approve of the dig, but before she can defend WALTER, she spots LEONARD glaring at him.)

CARLA. Walter, Leonard's looking at you.

(WALTER leaves. ALICE shudders.)

ALICE. He makes my skin crawl.

MAXWELL. Walter has a clear mind. One day something will enter it, feel lonely and leave again.

CARLA. Oh, Max, don't be cruel ...

ALICE. Well, Leonard always did want a porch monkey. I guess the pet shop was fresh out.

MAXWELL. Ow, and you call me cruel. Alice, your bourgeois slip is showing.

(Across the club WALTER, WILL and BUDDY are chatting up MR. HUGHES and MRS. HUGHES, a wealthy couple slumming in the beatnik world.)

BUDDY. Yes, cats, yes! If you want to know how beatniks live, William and me will show you. We will introduce you to some wild ones. You may even discover an artist of your own.

MR. HUGHES. And how much is that going to cost us?

WILL. What cost? You want to meet some beatniks, yes?

MRS. HUGHES. Oh no, it's the artists, I'm just crazy about artists!

WALTER. "All that there is comes through the eye of the artist. The rest are just blind fish swimming in a cave of aloneness."

MRS. Hughes. Oh, you must be an artist. And working as a busboy, too.

WALTER. "Feed them that they will be satisfied. The artist is. All others are not."

MR. HUGHES. That's most intriguing. Are you a painter?

WALTER. Well, no, I—I work ... I'm workin' on something, it's not ready yet.

BUDDY *(mocking)*. What is it, man? Finger painting?

WILL *(joining in)*. Hey, draw me a picture of a house, Walter. Make some smoke comin' out of the chimney.

(They laugh. MR. and MRS. HUGHES instinctively join in. WALTER shouts at them.)

WALTER. I am working on something! (*Points at MRS. HUGHES.*) I'll show you soon! I'll show you!

(*MRS. HUGHES draws back, frightened at the outburst. LEONARD hurries up, intervening.*)

LEONARD. Walter, your shift's over. You can go on home now. Go on.

WALTER. Yes, Mr. de Santos.

MRS. HUGHES (*piqued*). Well, I have never been spoken to by—

LEONARD (*trying to smooth things*). Let me offer you something? Perhaps an organic apple cake? On the house.

(*WILL jumps in before she can even answer.*)

WILL. Did you feel that, sister? You just got the riot act from a temperamental artist. That was a wild one!

BUDDY. Yeah, that was real gone, man!

MRS. HUGHES (*suddenly thrilled*). Oh, I feel so ... (*To MR. HUGHES.*) It was all so exciting, wasn't it, dear?

MR. HUGHES. Why, now that you mention it, yes, it was! That was a kick! Find us some more of those!

4. Outside The Yellow Door

(*WALTER leaves the club, lights dimming behind him as he walks to his regular route to his apartment.*)

WALTER. "Burn gas buggies and whip your sour cream of circumstance and hope. Go ahead and sleep your bloody heads off. Creation is. All else is not."

5. Walter's Apartment ...

(*WALTER unlocks his door and enters, but before he can close the door, his landlady, MRS. SWIKERT, appears.*)

MRS. SWIKERT. Walter?

WALTER. Oh, hello, Mrs. Swikert.

MRS. SWIKERT. Walter, you look awfully pale. What'd you have to eat tonight?

WALTER. I had a salami sandwich, Mrs. Swikert.

MRS. SWIKERT. Oh, if you were my son. Why don't you let me make you a nice bowl of soup? Won't take me but a minute.

WALTER. No, it's OK, I can fix myself something. Besides, I got something important to do.

MRS. SWIKERT. Did you see anything of Frankie Delight when you came in?

WALTER. I didn't see him at all.

MRS. SWIKERT. Well, if you do, will you tell him I've got a nice piece of halibut for him?

WALTER. Tell him that? I mean, do you think he'll understand? He's only a cat.

MRS. SWIKERT. Oh, good night, Walter ...

(WALTER opens the curtain separating his kitchen from the rest of his one room apartment. He puts tea on the stove. Then goes to his table and unwraps a lump of clay, positions a picture of CARLA nearby and tries to sculpt her. A cat wails from somewhere.)

WALTER. Frankie? *(Working the clay.)* "A canvas is a canvas or a painting. A rock is a rock or a statue. A sound is a sound or it's music." *(Tries to sculpt, but can't make the clay work.)* Come on. Be a nose. Be a nose.

(The cat wails again. The tea kettle whistles. WALTER hurries into the kitchen ... now seen only in silhouette behind the curtain.

The cat wails. Walter shouts, frustrated.)

WALTER (*cont'd*). Frankie, shut up! What's a matter, Frankie? How'd you get yourself stuck in the wall? Wait a minute, I'll get you out.

(WALTER grabs a butcher knife. Jams it into the wall hoping to free the cat. It yowls. Then goes silent.)

WALTER (*cont'd*). Frankie? (*Nothing.*) Frankie? You all right, Frankie?

(WALTER breaks through the wall and finds the dead cat he stabbed. Removes it.)

WALTER (*cont'd*). Oh, Frankie. Oh, Frankie, I'm sorry.

(WALTER emerges from behind the curtain with the stiff, dead cat. The knife is still stuck in it. He places it on his table.)

MRS. SWIKERT (*outside*). Frankie? Frankie?

(WALTER freezes. Now afraid. Ashamed. After a long moment her footsteps fade away.)

WALTER (*to the dead cat*). Poor, Mrs. Swikert. She had a nice piece of halibut for you. I'll give you to her in the morning. (*Sits back at the table, the clay in front of him.*) Repetition is death, Frankie.

(WALTER breaks down in grief. Then MAXWELL'S VOICE comes into his brain.)

MAXWELL'S VOICE. Let them die and by their miserable deaths become the clay within his hands so he might form an ashtray or an arc.

(WALTER clutches the clay, fingers digging into it.)

WALTER. "Where are John, Joe, Jim, Jake, Jerk? Dead. Dead. Dead!"

(And then an idea seizes WALTER. He grabs the clay and starts to cover the cat.

Black out.)

6. Outside The Yellow Door

(Music plays. CARLA arrives to prepare the cafe for business. WALTER arrives, carrying something covered by a cloth.)

WALTER. Hi, Carla.

CARLA. Hello, Walter. You know, your shift doesn't start for another hour.

WALTER. I brought something for you. I think you'll like it

(LEONARD enters.)

LEONARD. Oh, you're here. Good. The tables inside need scrubbing.

WALTER. Huh?

CARLA. Oh, don't mind him. What have you got?

WALTER. It's this thing I made.

(He reveals a clay "sculpture" of a cat with a butcher knife stuck in it. CARLA is impressed.)

CARLA. Oh, Walter ...

WALTER. You like it?

LEONARD. Where'd you get that, an auction?

WALTER. No, I made it.

LEONARD. You made that?

WALTER. I said I did, didn't I?

CARLA. Oh, this is really good.

LEONARD. What's it called?

WALTER. *Dead Cat.*

LEONARD. *Dead Cat.* That's its name?

WALTER. Sure.

LEONARD. Well, it certainly looks dead enough.

WALTER. You ... you wanna buy it?

LEONARD. Buy it? That thing? It'd scare people out of the place.

CARLA. Don't be silly, its tremendous. Look at the detail.

The anatomy is perfect. Look at the expression on its face.

LEONARD. Why'd you put a knife in it?

WALTER. I didn't mean to.

LEONARD. Just got carried away, huh? Well, all right, I'll tell ya what I'll do. I'll put it on the counter, and if anybody buys it, we'll split 50/50. OK?

WALTER. Sure. Does this mean I'm an artist?

CARLA. Maybe so. You should do some other pieces. After all, one work does not an artist make.

WALTER. All that there is comes through the eye of the artist.

LEONARD. Yeah, you're a real artist. Now, go on and scrub down those tables. March now.

(WALTER starts for the tables. Stops and turns.)

WALTER. You really like it?

LEONARD. We like it. Now go on.