

DEATH BY PUBLIC SPEAKING

By Linda Cooke

Copyright © 2014 by Linda Cooke, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-60003-775-7

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

DEATH BY PUBLIC SPEAKING

A Ten Minute Comedy Skit-Play

By Linda Cooke

SYNOPSIS: Kaley's overdose has landed her in the emergency room. Now her parents have staged an intervention and are sending her off to a rehabilitation clinic for public speaking addicts! In a hilarious ten minute infomercial, the clinic directors present the causes, symptoms and hopefully the cure for oratorical addiction.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(3 female, 1-2 male, 2-4 either, 0-10 extras;
gender flexible, doubling possible)*

NARRATOR (m/f) Infomercial host extraordinaire *(11 lines)*
DR. AUDIE TOREY (f) Psychiatrist and infomercial co-host
(27 lines)
DR. MIKE RAFOANE (m) Psychiatrist and infomercial co-host
(7 lines)
EMT (m/f)..... Intense, no-nonsense saver of lives
(3 lines)
DAD (m)..... Well-meaning but blundering father
(11 lines)
MOM (f) Well-meaning but blundering mother
(14 lines)
KALEY (f)..... High school speech competitor *(14 lines)*
SPEECH COACH (m/f)..... Well-meaning but blundering coach
(8 lines)
PUSHER (m/f)..... Sly type, getting kids hooked on prose
(5 lines)

**The parts of Dr. RaFoane and Dad may be doubled, as can those of Dr. Torey and the EMT, the coach and the pusher. Extras are possible for the hospital scene and the scene between Kaley and the pusher. The opening narration can be split up among characters as the director chooses.*

MINIMAL SETS SUGGESTIONS

- ☐ Psychiatrist's office with desk & chair, 2 visitors chairs
- ☐ Hospital Emergency Room with patient gurney
- ☐ High school exterior with bench

PROPS

- ☐ Script – Pusher
- ☐ Purse – Mom and Coach (if female)
- ☐ Satchel or briefcase – Coach
- ☐ Backpack, textbook or notebook – Kaley

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

NARRATOR – Business attire: jacket and tie for a male.

DOCTORS – Lab coat over professional dress or over scrubs, possibly a stethoscope around the neck.

EMT – Standard professional uniform, jacket and cap.

DAD – Middle-aged outfit, long-sleeved polo shirt, cardigan, polyester pants, loafers, overcoat.

MOM – Middle-aged outfit, a bit frumpy, velour jog set, trench coat.

KALEY – Business attire when coming from a speech meet, then regular teenager school clothes, such as jeans and t-shirt; backpack for scene with Pusher.

COACH – Semi-professional dress, trench coat.

PUSHER – Gangsta style outfit.

DEATH BY PUBLIC SPEAKING

AT RISE: *Lights up on NARRATOR, center stage. The opening narration can take place in front of the curtain if desired.*

NARRATOR: We've all heard the survey results: When asked what their greatest fear is, the number one answer is always public speaking. *Death* comes in somewhere around number three. Are we to conclude then, that most of us would rather die than speak in public? Isn't that a little *backwards*? Many a speech teacher has been heard to assure a new class, "I've haven't lost a student yet." *But why take that chance?* What if people are well-founded in this phobia of speaking in public? What if it really could be lethal? Picture a murder mystery in which the weapon of choice is a script for serious prose. Imagine a WWII movie in which the Allies defeat the Axis powers by *talking* them into submission. Imagine becoming addicted to public speaking...

ALL: *(Except NARRATOR, from off-stage.)* Who? Us?

NARRATOR: ...and lethally overdosing on it. And now imagine an infomercial promoting a treatment center for such addicts, and imagine you're listening to it right now.

Lights up on TOREY and RAFOANE in a doctor's office. They may be seated on or behind an office desk, upstage right.

TOREY: Good evening. I'm Dr. Audie Torey, your host for this evening's program along with my colleague Dr. Mike RaFoane, director of the Public Speaking Youth Center of Holmesville, Ohio, also known as the P.S.Y.C.H.O., or 'Psycho.'

RAFOANE: Throughout tonight's program, you'll see our 800 number at the bottom of your screen. I urge you to call if a public speaking addiction has affected you or a loved one or a stranger whose life you'd like to butt into.

TOREY: Here at PSYCHO, we wage a daily battle against the mysterious phenomenon of death by public speaking, or DPS. In the most common form of DPS, the victim becomes addicted to public speaking, and then overdoses on it. Sadly, it is often the very young who fall victim to DPS, and the following scene is played out far too often in emergency rooms across the country.

Lights down on doctor's office, lights up stage left, a hospital emergency room. EMT rushing in from stage right with KALEY on gurney. COACH follows.

EMT: Make way! Coming through! Doc, you better take a look at this one right away.

TOREY: (*Brusquely.*) What are her symptoms?

EMT: Heart palpitations, cold sweat, rapid pulse.

KALEY: (*Muttering, barely conscious.*) What should be the United Nations' role in middle eastern...

TOREY: (*Examines her, shocked.*) How did this happen?

COACH: (*Stammering.*) Well, you see, we were...we were just at this...this...

TOREY: Out with it, woman!

COACH: (*Blurting out.*) We were at a speech meet!

TOREY: (*Shocked.*) Was she competing?

COACH: Well, yes. You see, she wanted...

TOREY: You're her coach?

COACH: ...yes. (*She looks at the floor.*)

KALEY: (*Still muttering.*)...U.S. News and World Reports states that...

TOREY: (*Impatiently.*) What event was it?

COACH hesitates to answer.

Answer me! What event was she in?

COACH: (*Nearly screaming.*) Extemporaneous! All right? It was extemporaneous.

TOREY: (*Shakes his head.*) Can't you see she's just a kid?

KALEY: (*Muttering.*)...according to www.research.com, last updated...

COACH: I know, I know! (*Near tears.*) She said she could handle it. She said she wanted to try it, just this one time. I didn't think-

TOREY: I'll say you didn't! Do the parents know?

COACH: I called them from the meet. They're on their way.

The PARENTS rush in from stage right.

DEATH BY PUBLIC SPEAKING

MOM: Where's our baby girl? Where is she?

KALEY: *(In a weak voice, her eyes search them out.)* Mom? Dad?

DAD: *(Rushing to her side.)* We're here, baby. We're right here.
Everything's going to be all right.

PARENTS turn to the DOCTOR and speak in hushed tones.

MOM: What's wrong with her? We've never seen her like this!

TOREY: *(Sighs.)* Man, I hate telling parents this, but I've found the best approach is to just come straight out with it.

DAD: Doctor, please tell us!

TOREY: Folks, I'm sorry to inform you that your daughter has been dabbling in...in...public speaking!

MOM: What? No! Not our little girl!

TOREY: I'm afraid it's true.

EMT wheels KALEY off, stage left. COACH follows, avoiding eye contact with PARENTS.

DAD: *(To TORREY.)* How did she get like this?

TOREY: You see, sometimes the intense mental stimulation of public speaking creates an overload on the brain.

MOM: *(Turning on DAD.)* This is *your* fault! I told you we should have let her go out for cheerleading! *(Turning to DOCTOR.)* Oh, doctor, how could this have happened to us?

TOREY, MOM & DAD freeze. NARRATOR enters, downstage left.

NARRATOR: How *do* kids get involved in this seamy underworld in the first place? Sadly, scenes like this one are all too common in American high schools today.

Lights up on high school exterior, center stage. KALEY is seated on a bench, studying. PUSHER enters, upstage right, casting furtive glances to see if the coast is clear before sneaking up behind KALEY

PUSHER: Hey kid, I got a primo script for humorous prose over here. Have a look.

KALEY: (*Nervously.*) Humorous prose? Gee, I don't know...

PUSHER: Just take a little peek. (*He reveals a tiny corner of the script hidden under his jacket.*) Precisely timed satire and clever puns can be a real rush. You're not a chicken, are you?

KALEY: Well, no...I just...well, okay.

She reaches for the script. KALEY and PUSHER freeze. Lights up on NARRATOR.

NARRATOR: And the siren song of competitive forensics claims yet another innocent victim. Imagine what would happen if that same student had been taught to just say no!

PUSHER: Hey kid, I got a primo script for humorous prose over here. Have a look.

KALEY: No way! That stuff's addictive!

PUSHER: You won't get hooked from just one little peek. Give it a try.

KALEY: Stay away from me, you! I'm going home to watch re-runs of "The Brady Bunch!"

She starts to leave, then PUSHER and KALEY freeze. Lights up on NARRATOR.

NARRATOR: If only Kiley's ...

KALEY: (*Unfreezing.*) It's Kaley, actually. (*She exits.*)

NARRATOR: If only Kaley's family had known what to do ahead of time, they wouldn't be going through this right now. It happens to kids from even the best of homes - in fact, *usually* the best of homes. Dr. Torey explains the evolution of public speaking addiction.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from DEATH BY PUBLIC SPEAKING by Linda Cooke. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011
www.brookpub.com**