# JUST REGULAR PEOPLE
## By Carl L. Williams

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# JUST REGULAR PEOPLE

*A One Act Comedy*

**By Carl L. Williams**

**SYNOPSIS:** A loopy family visits a psychologist for court-ordered counseling because they created a disturbance in a restaurant. The incensed father, the calm but ditzy mother, and their impulsive 18-year-old daughter bring grief to the put-upon psychologist. They just want him to certify them as normal, but how can he call them rational when it wouldn't be rational to do so?

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 male, 2 female)*

CHARLIE PRESLEY (m) ..... A middle-aged man with little patience, easily exasperated, but demonstrating more bombast than ill will. *(108 lines)*

DEBRA PRESLEY (f)..... Charlie's wife, sweet and calm but rather flighty, who keeps a positive outlook in her own illogical way. *(97 lines)*

KATIE PRESLEY (f) ..... Their daughter, 18, childish and flirtatious, impulsive and not easily restrained. *(87 lines)*

DR. BRIAN RUPERT (m)..... A family psychologist, certainly not the best, who tries to make sense out of the senseless. *(89 lines)*

**SETTING:** Dr. Rupert's office.

**TIME:** Present.

**RUNNING TIME:** Approximately 25 minutes.

## PROP LIST

- □ Desk
- □ Chairs
- □ Couch
- □ Various papers and office supplies on the desk
- □ A case file
- □ A court order

## PRODUCTION NOTES

This play can be produced on a simple set on any kind of stage.

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Upstage Theatre Comedy Festival, Houston, TX, August 6-21, 2010.

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***AT RISE:*** *Psychologist's office. CHARLIE is pacing, DEBRA is sitting, and KATIE is looking through the items on the cluttered desk.*

**CHARLIE:** *(Agitated.)* This is ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous!
**DEBRA:** Now, Charlie.
**CHARLIE:** We do not need to be here.
**KATIE:** Dad's right…for once.
**DEBRA:** Now, Katie.
**CHARLIE:** We are perfectly normal, well-adjusted people.
**KATIE:** I wouldn't go that far.
**CHARLIE:** We certainly don't need a shrink!
**DEBRA:** He's a counselor, Charlie.
**CHARLIE:** Whatever he is, we don't need him.
**DEBRA:** A family counselor.
**CHARLIE:** Fine. A family counselor. We'll get a group rate. But there's still no reason for us to be here.
**KATIE:** It's your fault, anyway.
**CHARLIE:** My fault? Listen here, young lady—
**DEBRA:** It's nobody's fault. Fault is not a healthy term.
**CHARLIE:** Like this has anything to do with health.
**KATIE:** Mental health.
**CHARLIE:** I'm as healthy mentally as I am physically.
**KATIE:** High blood pressure, Dad.
**CHARLIE:** For your information, I've always had high blood pressure. High blood pressure is normal for me. I have a strong heart and very active blood. People with low blood pressure have weak, lazy hearts.
**DEBRA:** Now, Charlie.
**CHARLIE:** *(Exasperated.)* Do you have any idea how many times I've heard you say, "Now, Charlie"? Do you, Debra?
**DEBRA:** Now, Charlie.
**KATIE:** This Dr. Rupert sure has a lot of stuff.
**DEBRA:** Leave the doctor's stuff alone, Katie.
**KATIE:** I'm just looking.
**CHARLIE:** Looking for what?
**KATIE:** Looking for what I'm not finding. Pictures.
**DEBRA:** Pictures of what, dear?
**KATIE:** Pictures of a wife and family.

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**CHARLIE:** Great. Either he's got a family he's ashamed of, or we're gonna get family counseling from a guy who doesn't have one.

**KATIE:** Why don't we just leave before he comes in?

**DEBRA:** You know we can't do that.

**CHARLIE:** I'm with Katie. We should take off fast and not look back.

**DEBRA:** We'd be held in contempt of court.

**CHARLIE:** I don't see how a judge has any right to make us go to counseling.

**KATIE:** I guess it's better than going to jail. Oh, I forgot. You two were married in jail.

**CHARLIE:** Very symbolic, the more I think about it.

**DEBRA:** *(Hurt feelings.)* Oh, Charlie. And you told me that day you were locking me in your heart.

**KATIE:** What a schmaltzy line, Dad.

**CHARLIE:** All right, all right. I'm just on edge. Okay?

*DR. RUPERT enters.*

**RUPERT:** Hello, I'm Dr. Brian Rupert, and you must be the Presleys. No relation to Elvis, I assume?

**CHARLIE***: (Sarcastic.)* Gosh, that's funny. Never heard <u>that</u> one before.

**DEBRA:** Yes, we're the Presleys.

**KATIE:** The court-ordered Presleys.

**RUPERT:** Really? Court-ordered?

**CHARLIE:** A total miscarriage of justice.

**DEBRA:** The judge thought counseling might be advisable.

**KATIE:** Like in mandatory.

**RUPERT:** *(A wary look, moves around behind his desk.)* Nothing related to violence, I trust?

**CHARLIE:** Do I look like a violent man?

**RUPERT:** Well…

**DEBRA:** Charlie isn't violent. Except when he dreams. Then he sometimes kicks me.

**KATIE:** Are you sure he's dreaming?

**RUPERT:** That's interesting. Do you often have violent dreams, Mr. Presley?

**CHARLIE:** Only when I dream about judges. And psychiatrists.

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**DEBRA:** He's a counselor.

**RUPERT:** I'm a psychologist. And a counselor, yes.

**DEBRA:** Family counseling. That's what it said in the Yellow Pages.

**RUPERT:** Glad to hear that ad finally did some good.

**CHARLIE:** Affordable. That's what it said.

**RUPERT:** Comparatively.

**CHARLIE:** What do you mean "comparatively"?

**RUPERT:** Comparative to what others charge.

**CHARLIE:** What I mean is comparative to what I'm able to pay.

**RUPERT:** Perhaps we should talk about why you're here. More specifically, why the judge referred you to counseling.

**KATIE:** He said we were dysfunctional.

**CHARLIE:** Which we aren't. We are fully functional. I've been functional all my life.

**DEBRA:** Just give him the papers, dear.

**RUPERT:** What papers?

**CHARLIE:** *(Takes papers from his pocket, hands them to RUPERT.)* A letter from the judge. You're supposed to fill out this form and sign it, certifying we're normal.

**KATIE:** Good luck with that.

**DEBRA:** I've always considered myself normal.

**KATIE:** It's normal for abnormal people to consider themselves normal.

**DEBRA:** But normal people normally consider themselves normal, too, don't they? If they didn't, they'd be…abnormal.

**RUPERT:** *(Reading the letter.)* It says here you threatened a restaurant owner, threw a birthday cake at a tuba player, and generally created a scene of chaos before being arrested for disorderly conduct and simple assault.

**CHARLIE:** Is that ridiculous or what? How can you assault a tuba player with a cake?

**KATIE:** It had candles on it. They might've poked him in the eye.

**CHARLIE:** They weren't even lit.

**DEBRA:** *(To KATIE.)* You did a good job of blowing them all out, dear. Did you make a wish?

**KATIE:** When you make a wish, you're not allowed to say what it was.

**DEBRA:** I didn't ask what it was. I only asked if you made one.

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**KATIE:** I did. But I'm not telling what it was.

**CHARLIE:** Nobody cares about the stupid wish!

**DEBRA:** How do you know it was stupid if you don't know what it was?

**RUPERT:** Uh, excuse me. I see the judge is referring Mr. and Mrs. Presley…and their child?

**KATIE:** I'm the child.

**RUPERT:** You don't look like a child to me.

**KATIE:** *(Flirty.)* Thank you, doctor.

**CHARLIE:** She's 18. Chronologically, anyway.

**DEBRA:** But much older in many ways.

**CHARLIE:** And much younger in many ways.

**KATIE:** I had 18 candles on my cake.

**RUPERT:** The cake your father threw at the tuba player. Why, Mr. Presley? Didn't you like what he was playing?

**CHARLIE:** Have you ever heard "Happy Birthday" played on a tuba? And he was a soloist.

**DEBRA:** He was very good at the low notes.

**CHARLIE:** You can't even play high notes on a tuba!

**DEBRA:** I can't play a tuba at all, dear.

**KATIE:** Good one, Mom.

**RUPERT:** *(Impatient.)* Okay, so it was a birthday celebration.

**DEBRA:** Katie's birthday.

**KATIE:** I'm Katie.

**RUPERT:** And there was a disturbance of some kind, resulting in the cake being thrown at the tuba player.

**CHARLIE:** It's not like I hit him. The cake went into the tuba.

**DEBRA:** Down that big bell.

**KATIE:** Pretty hard to get the icing out, I bet.

**DEBRA:** Slid right down into the spit valve.

**RUPERT:** What made you do that, Mr. Presley? Besides not liking the music.

**CHARLIE:** We were there for a special occasion, right? A nice family dinner at what was supposed to be a fine restaurant with good food and live music.

**DEBRA:** You can tell it's a fine restaurant when they take your car away at the front door.

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**CHARLIE:** That's another thing! I can park my own car, thank you. I don't need to pay somebody else to do it, especially when he rearranges the seat and the mirror and tunes the radio to some crazy station blaring out the worst noise you ever heard.

**KATIE:** You said the tuba player was the worst noise you ever heard.

**CHARLIE:** That was before I got my car back.

**RUPERT:** The commotion. What about the commotion?

**CHARLIE:** What commotion? Oh. We ordered some kind of special they had going, and they served us all this—this—I don't know what-all it was.

**DEBRA:** Red cabbage, and sauerkraut, and sauerbraten, and knockwurst...

**CHARLIE:** Yeah, knockwurst. Whatever that is.

**KATIE:** Was it the worst knockwurst you ever had?

**CHARLIE:** And what was that other stuff? Wiener schnitzel.

**DEBRA:** *(Correcting his pronunciation.)* Viener schnitzel. We were in a German restaurant, you see, but we didn't know it.

**KATIE:** *(Incredulous at that.)* It was called Reinhold's Rathskeller!

**CHARLIE:** Yeah, well, I knew a guy named Reinhold once, and he was Jewish.

**DEBRA:** If you wanted Jewish food, we could've gone to a deli.

**CHARLIE:** I didn't want to go to a deli! Who ever heard of a deli with valet parking?!

**DEBRA:** But you said you didn't like valet parking.

**CHARLIE:** *(To RUPERT.)* Look…it's very simple. We wanted a nice place to celebrate Katie's becoming an adult.

**KATIE:** *(Exultant.)* I'm an adult! It's official! Not a child anymore! You should've told that to the judge.

**CHARLIE:** There were a lot of things I should've told that judge.

**RUPERT:** Forgive me if I'm too persistent, but what turned a happy occasion into…whatever it was? The fact you didn't like the food?

**DEBRA:** I liked the food. But I didn't like that Charlie didn't like it.

**KATIE:** Over and over and over Dad said he didn't like it. And over and over and over Mom said she was sorry he didn't like it.

**DEBRA:** Well, I was. I like to see everyone have a good time. That's why I told our waiter it was Katie's birthday.

**CHARLIE:** You get a free cake at these fancy places if you tell them it's your birthday.

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**KATIE:** If only you hadn't asked for the candles, Mom.

**RUPERT:** So it was the candles.

**DEBRA:** What was the candles?

**RUPERT:** That set off the commotion, the disturbance, the tuba player…

**CHARLIE:** That tuba player!

**DEBRA:** They usually have an accordion player, too, but he was sick that night.

**CHARLIE:** Sick of hearing the tuba player. Ooom-pah-pah, ooom-pah-pah, all through the meal!

**KATIE:** I thought he was kind of cute.

**DEBRA:** You thought the tuba player was cute, dear?

**KATIE:** The way he puffed out his cheeks when he played. *(Puffs out her cheeks in imitation.)*

**RUPERT:** So when the cake came…

**CHARLIE:** That's when he started playing "Happy Birthday."

**KATIE:** And people applauded.

**CHARLIE:** They were applauding your birthday, not his playing.

**DEBRA:** Still, it was nice of him to play it.

**RUPERT:** And so…?

**CHARLIE:** He winked.

**RUPERT:** I beg your pardon?

**CHARLIE:** He winked at my daughter.

**DEBRA:** Maybe he was winking at me, dear.

**CHARLIE:** He was winking at Katie. A man twice her age, and he had the gall to flirt with her right in front of her parents!

**KATIE:** I'm really the one to blame.

**DEBRA:** Don't be silly, sweetheart. How could anyone blame you?

**KATIE:** I winked at him first.

**CHARLIE:** You what?!

**KATIE:** When he puffed out his cheeks. *(Puffs out her cheeks again.)*

**DEBRA:** You really found that attractive?

**KATIE:** Not attractive, just…

**DEBRA:** Cute.

**KATIE:** That's right.

**RUPERT:** It is kinda cute. *(Gets looks.)* When she does her cheeks that way. All puffed out.

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**KATIE:** *(Pleased.)* Thank you.

**RUPERT:** *(Embarrassed, gets serious.)* But still, Mr. Presley, I don't see how that justifies throwing a cake at the man.

**CHARLIE:** I didn't like the cake, either.

**DEBRA:** Now, Charlie. There was nothing wrong with that cake.

**CHARLIE:** It was too small.

**KATIE:** Only because it was crowded with all those candles.

**CHARLIE:** The whole top of the cake was on fire and the candles were melting down. I couldn't tell if it had white icing or just a layer of wax.

**DEBRA:** So I said, "Blow out the candles quick, Katie."

**KATIE:** And I blew out the candles quick.

**CHARLIE:** *(To RUPERT.)* I always hate that part. Did you ever stop and think about the spit you get on a cake when you blow out the candles?

**RUPERT:** I don't believe I ever did. Think about it, I mean.

**KATIE:** I didn't spit on the cake, Dad.

**DEBRA:** And if she had, it would've only gotten on the wax.

**CHARLIE:** If my daughter spits on the cake, that's one thing. But a waxy cake is unacceptable. I called for the manager and complained about the cake.

**DEBRA:** And the food, and the service, and the parking, and the tuba player, and---

**CHARLIE:** All right, Debra!

**RUPERT:** Was the manager conciliatory?

**CHARLIE:** Conciliatory! I love that word. No, he wasn't conciliatory. He said he had never seen us in his restaurant before, and he hoped he'd never see us there again.

**DEBRA:** By now, people were staring.

**KATIE:** And the tuba player had stopped playing.

**CHARLIE:** Not quite, he hadn't.

**DEBRA:** He blew one last note. A very rude-sounding note, right after Charlie suggested to the manager what he could do with the cake.

**KATIE:** Dad made a pretty good throw. Twenty feet at least. The tuba player ducked, but the tuba didn't.

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**DEBRA:** Oh, and listen! Listen! You know what I said to Charlie? I said, "Charlie, that took a lot of brass!" Brass. You know…the tuba.

**RUPERT:** If you'll forgive me for saying so, all of this sounds very childish.

**CHARLIE:** I don't forgive you for saying so!

**RUPERT:** Then it's lucky for me I don't have any cakes in the office. In spite of your denials, Mr. Presley, you're obviously subject to sudden violent moods. And you, Mrs. Presley, I suspect, are his enabler.

**DEBRA:** His enabler?

**KATIE:** *(Sits on the edge of the desk.)* What about me, Doctor? What am I?

**RUPERT:** You're 18 years old and burdened with a load of adolescence you never left behind.

**DEBRA:** For your information, Dr. Rupert, I don't enable Charlie to do anything.

**CHARLIE:** Whatever I do, I do on my own.

**KATIE:** And I clean up my room without being told, so how dare you call me an adolescent when you don't even clean up your own desk?

**RUPERT:** My desk is perfectly well organized. *(Looks it over.)* At least, organized enough. And we're not talking about me.

**CHARLIE:** Maybe you're not talking about you, but we're talking about you.

**DEBRA:** That's only fair. If you can talk about us, we can certainly talk about you.

**RUPERT:** The point is to have you talk about yourselves.

**KATIE:** Then there's no reason you can't talk about yourself.

**CHARLIE:** Yeah, we don't know anything about you. What kind of experience do you have?

**DEBRA:** With families, specifically.

**KATIE:** More specifically, do you have a wife?

**RUPERT:** I am very experienced, and I don't have a wife.

**KATIE:** The way you put that doesn't sound very nice.

**DEBRA:** At your age, Doctor, you should have an enabler of your own. But at least it explains why you don't have a picture of her on your desk.

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**KATIE:** Not having a picture of her would be thoughtless, but not having a wife at all is simply lazy.

**CHARLIE:** As a guy with no family, what makes you qualified to sit there judging us?

**RUPERT:** I am not judging. I'm just trying to understand you. As for my qualifications, I have a degree in psychology.

**DEBRA:** As long as he has a degree, Charlie.

**CHARLIE:** I don't see any diplomas around here. Where'd you go to school?

**RUPERT:** *(Pause.)* The U of H.

**KATIE:** The University of Houston?

**RUPERT:** No.

**CHARLIE:** The University of Hartford?

**RUPERT:** *(Still evasive.)* No.

**DEBRA:** The University of Hawaii?

**RUPERT:** No.

**CHARLIE:** So where was it?

**RUPERT:** It was…the University of Haiti.

**CHARLIE:** Haiti!

**DEBRA:** That's not even in America, is it?

**KATIE:** It's down where they do all that voodoo.

**CHARLIE:** That's great. We're being counseled by a witch doctor.

**RUPERT:** Hey, hey! I never took any of the classes involving chickens.

**DEBRA:** A little icing on a tuba is one thing, but here in America we don't throw around chicken blood and feathers.

**KATIE:** I wouldn't be surprised if he had a chicken in his desk.

**RUPERT:** You come look in my desk. Any chicken you find in there, you can keep.

**DEBRA:** I don't imagine we'd want any chicken you've kept in your desk.

**CHARLIE:** You know what I think?

**RUPERT:** What you think and how you think it is exactly what I'm trying to ascertain.

**CHARLIE:** I think you should sign our paper and let us get out of here.

**RUPERT:** I'm not signing anything until I'm comfortable signing it.

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