

HELLISH DELIGHTS

By

Scott C. Sickles

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HELLISH DELIGHTS

*Dedicated to the memory of Shetler Studios
and all small arts organizations felled
by the Covid-19 pandemic.*

HELLISH DELIGHTS

HELLISH DELIGHTS was presented by Reign or Shine Productions (Matthew Klein & Kelly Monroe Johnston, producers) at Shetler Studios in New York City, NY, in March 2020. It was directed by Jesse Edward Rosbrow. The lighting consultant was Richard Kent Green, set design by Patrick Harman, costume design by Amanda Paz, sound design and music for the song in *O, For a Muse of Fire* by Chris Chappell, puppetry design for *Somewhere South of Bethlehem* by Sharon Epperson, fight/intimacy direction by Emily Edwards. Stanford Vogel was the stage manager. The cast was as follows:

BULLETPROOF LOVE

Ramona	Amanda LaPergola
Ambrose	Brian Silliman

THE FALLOW GARDEN

Glynnis	Alyssa Simon
Marie-France	Amanda LaPergola

O, FOR A MUSE OF FIRE

Vaughn	Brian Silliman
Lane	Alyssa Simon

SOMEWHERE SOUTH OF BETHLEHEM

Nicky/Joseph	Brian Silliman
Lucy/Mary	Alyssa Simon
Aimee	Amanda LaPergola

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HELLISH DELIGHTS

Bulletproof Love

Cast of Characters

AMBROSE: A big man with big meaty hands, built like a fucking wall. Not a talker.

RAMONA: A loud, angry woman in a wedding dress. Her makeup is a disaster from crying. She has a bouquet and is not afraid to use it.

Playwright's Notes

The actors do not have to be close in age.

Diversity in casting is encouraged. They are not necessarily white or Italian.

They are not necessarily from New York.

They should have thick regional accents. They do not need to have the same thick regional accent.

Dialogue in parentheses is for context and must not be spoken.

*For Bob Manus.
Your muse is whispering to me.*

Scene: Maximum Security Visiting Room.

Time: Visiting Day. When the fuck else?

BULLETPROOF LOVE

Maximum Security Visiting Room.

AMBROSE and RAMONA are on their respective phones, the bulletproof glass window between them. [They can both be facing out in separate spots; however you want to do it, it doesn't have to be literal.] Ambrose is a big man with big meaty hands – the phone should look tiny in them – built like a brick wall. He has a scar on his face and love in his heart. Ramona is in her wedding dress. Her makeup is wrecked from crying. She wields her bouquet like a weapon.

RAMONA. If you didn't want to get married, you could have just said so!
(Pause.)

There I was! Standing at the altar with this bouquet in my hand, love in my heart, and my thumb up my ass! AND WHERE THE FUCK WERE YOU???

Getting yourself arrested! And for what? Murder!

You couldn't wait one more day to kill that son of a bitch?

One... fucking... day?!

And SPEAKING OF OUR FUCKING HONEYMOON–! *(SPOTLIGHT ON Ambrose. He rises and addresses the audience.)*

AMBROSE. I want nothing more than to marry Ramona. She fills the spaces between my atoms, the infinitely vast and infinitesimally tiny chasms between electrons and nuclei.

I had a vision of our wedding.

She wanted six bridesmaids, six groomsmen, and a cathedral. Something with a basilica.

As for me...

I wanted to stand at the altar, watch her walk into the room, and feel time stop.

I wanted her to write down her vows so I could read them later.
I knew I wouldn't be able to listen while I was looking into the eyes of the woman who would soon be mine forever.
I wanted to be able to get through mine without shedding a tear. I haven't cried since I was eight years old. If I cried at the altar, I would flood the chapel.

I had a vision of our life.
I would carry her across the threshold right to the bedroom.
She would forgive me for tearing off the dress because I was clever enough to rip it along the seams.
We would make love.
We would fill our house with kids. I would tell them lies about how I made a living until I made a living I didn't have to lie about.
Then, Ramona and I would stand around looking at all those empty rooms filled with pictures of vacations and grandchildren... (and the) trophies and books they didn't care about anymore.

But I could not marry her.

I could not marry her because she deserves better.
A man who doesn't have fists like wrecking balls and a brain made of meat.

I am a man of violence.

I could squeeze a man's head in my hands and crush it like a melon.
I never have. But I could.
One time I held a man's head in the palms of my hands and pressed. He screamed for a second and then the scream got caught in his throat. The pain in his head was too profound to allow noise to leave it. I let him go and he did as he was told. My hands haunt him just like the scream in his throat haunts me because I could have easily closed my palms and crumpled his skull like a bad draft of a letter.

I haunt people.

I have also committed violence for love.
For my love of Ramona.

A man looked at her. A powerful man. A man my own boss will never admit he fears, even though he does. And my boss doesn't even fear me. That powerful.

He took one look at Ramona, took one look at me, and he knew. He knew she was too good for me, which is true... that I was an amusement.

A big strong man but an ugly one. A big strong man who did what he was told.

A big strong man who could be stopped by the snap of a smaller, weaker, more powerful man's fingers.

Snap. Snap. Snap.
Twist that arm. Break his legs. Shut her up.
Snap. Snap. Snap.

He was a big strong man too, but a handsome one; the kind of handsome that can take another big strong man's punch and then smile.
A big strong man who snaps his fingers and other big men do what's expected of them.

He heard we were about to be married... and he decided he would take her.

He knew that she didn't love me. That she couldn't possibly care for me. That she would want him more than she could ever want me. All of this, he knew.
He was wrong.
But he did not know that he was wrong.

She told him once. I didn't know he had asked.

She told him twice. I didn't know he had demanded.
She told him a third time. I didn't know he had taken.
I didn't know any of this.

Then, she told me.

And here I am.

His head still intact. Mostly.
His body is not.
His arms... His hands... His lips...
They are smoke, wind, and ash.
They have the rest of him.

And they have me.

But Ramona cannot. She is a creature of elegance. Her roughness is
passion.
She is the reason the profane is eternally tied to the sacred.

I am brutality and mess. I can crumple skulls in my hands. I make origami
of bones.
I dismantle.

Ramona needs a fortress, not a wrecking ball.
She deserves a poet.
One who knows how to take a punch. Just in case. (*Ambrose sits as the
LIGHTS COME UP FULL ON him and Ramona, mid-rant:*)

RAMONA. All I wanted was to return to the town where my mother
lives... on the arm of the man I love, a man she never accepted! To paint
the town blood red!
To dance with you at the places she loved to dance but where she no
longer *can* because judgment and sorrow have made her decrepit.
To live the joyous life she forbade me and rub her nose in it until all that

was left was a snotty bleeding hole in the middle of her snooty-ass face.
But I couldn't.
Because YOU FUCKED IT ALL UP—

AMBROSE. RAMONA! (*Ramona stands defiantly. Pause as they stare each other down like titans. CROSS FADE TO: SPOTLIGHT ON Ramona. She turns to the audience.*)

RAMONA. The chambers of my heart are made of delicate crystal.
Crystal so thin, so fragile, they cannot contain the blood of my soul.
The only thing keeping my heart together is him. His strength. His love
and kindness.
It encases my heart in amber: shiny, impenetrable, golden.
Were it not there, my heart would shatter, and a tsunami of crimson would
drown the world.
But it is there. It will not be moved.

To think, I once saw him as ugly, a scar-faced brute.
An ape in a cheap suit who changed his ties on Tuesdays and Fridays.

And I told him so. To his face.
And I would laugh.
My laugh is a sword samurais weep to have. And I would cut him with it, a
thousand times a night if I could.
Until I got bored.
Swords, no matter how sharp or strong, don't do much to mountains.

His eyes were stones. Igneous and dead.
They were impervious to my contempt, so I had to spit my venom
elsewhere.

I had a man before Ambrose. Zeke. He was a diamond: refined, precious...
sharp.

One time, Zeke slapped me in front of a crowd of people. Hard.
My head spun around and I saw actual stars. But I was still standing. So I

turned to him and smiled. His sapphire eyes told me that he saw my fangs. And they scared him.

I started easy. My tongue became a cobra and he raised his hand. I loosed a black mamba and he grabbed me by the hair, his eyes turning from sapphires to rubies.

The most venomous snake in the world is the Inland Taipan. One bite can kill a thousand people. A thousand.* Or something like that.

That snake uncoiled within me and I belched it into his face. The rubies turned to fire. His hand closed to a fist, and I stuck out my jaw to greet it. He could break my jaw but he would not win.

But he didn't break my jaw.
Ambrose caught Zeke's fist in his hand, enveloping it the way a father's hand surrounds his infant son's.

Zeke was... surprised.
He looked up at Ambrose. So did I.
And Ambrose's granite eyes became obsidian.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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* It's actually more like a hundred but Ramona does not care.