An Ostrich in the Pear Tree

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DEDICATION

To "The Cousins," whose commitment and great acting skills first brought these characters to life.

STORY OF THE PLAY

The lives and struggles of several individuals come together in this lighthearted story when popular radio psychologist, Dr. Terri, decides to hide out at the Pear Tree Inn. Facing burnout and questioning the value of her career, she longs to be a normal person again. At the inn she meets Beverly, a retired school teacher who feels unappreciated and useless and who spends her days reading the newspaper and listening to her favorite talk show host — Dr. Terri. Beverly's daughter Lisa and husband David, owners of the inn, have problems of their own since competition has opened in the downtown historic district. Younger daughter, Kelly, is ready to move closer to campus for her final semester of college but has no money to make it happen. Although unrecognized, Dr. Terri can't control the urge to offer suggestions and fix everyone's problems. But the best advice comes from Tony, the electrician-philosopher, who reminds Dr. Terri where to turn for direction and the importance of being who the Lord made her to be. During a last-minute live Nativity, Dr. Terri remembers that life's true meaning comes from God's gift, His Son, who has promised that if we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct our paths. Approximately 45 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 men, 5 women, 2 flexible, 1 young child)

TERESA BRADLEY: Dr. Terri, tired of her role and burned out from listening to other people's problems, she seeks refuge at the inn.

BEVERLY WEBBER: Retired school teacher who spends her days reading the newspaper and listening to Dr. Terri; Lisa and Kelly's mother; feels restless and unneeded.

DAVID RIDLEY: He and his wife own the Pear Tree Inn; concerned about their loss of revenue and afraid they'll have to close the inn.

LISA RIDLEY: Co-owner of the inn; working with her husband David to boost income while trying to protect her mother from a mysterious obituary.

KELLY WEBBER: Lisa's sister who also lives at the inn. Senior in college.

TONY: The electrician, called on to create the star for the Nativity. Speaks with heavy Brooklyn accent.

PERKINS: Owner of Perkins' Animal Rental who brings the ostrich. Speaks with a slow, country drawl.

ANDREW/AMANDA: Youngster, age 10-12, who brings newspaper to Beverly.

MAIL CARRIER (flex): Delivers mail to the inn.

TRACEY ST. CLAIR: News reporter who arrives to report on the place Dr. Terri is vacationing.

CHRIS (flex): Cameraperson with Tracey; Nonspeaking.

COSTUMES

All characters dress nicely but casually as they would at home, but at a home where guests can show up without notice. Exceptions are Tony, who dresses like an electrician, Perkins who dresses like a farmer, and Tracey who dresses like a TV reporter.

SCENES and SETS

The play requires one cozy set with desk and chair, lamps, chairs, sofa and area rug to resemble the parlor of a Victorian-style inn. Other accessories can be added as desired. The outside entrance is SR and the back entrance and kitchen are off SL.

PROPS

Pear Tree Inn sign, prominent
Several newspapers
Car keys with remote lock
Cell phone
Rag and water pipe
Inn contract
Papers and pens
Pear Tree Inn brochure
Textbooks
Accounting books
Calculator
Gloves, hat, coat
Phone and phone book
Book *(Covered.)* with brochure inside
Radio with feature for audio recordings
Recording of Dr. Terri and theme music
Ad for nativity
Letter-writing supplies
Clipboard with invoice
Change purse
Dollar bills or loose change
Two mail pouches or canvas bags
Cards and letters to fill two pouches
Video camera
Microphone
Bright spotlight

Suggested SFX

Car lock chirp, phone ringing, pre-recorded voiceover, theme music, motorcycle approaching, rickety truck approaching, bleating sheep, ostrich *(or large bird.)* squawking, electrical short sound.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Morning of December 19th. BEVERLY is sitting reading a newspaper in the parlor of the Pear Tree Inn. TERESA approaches from DSR, turns back toward the direction of her car, and presses her remote lock. SFX: Car lock chirp. She stops and removes a cell phone from her pocket, hesitates and then dials, pacing as she talks.)

TERESA: I just wanted to tell you I'm taking a Christmas vacation, starting now. *(Pause.)* Some little town off the interstate. Doesn't matter. *(Pause.)* I've been trying to tell you this for months, and I know you don't want to hear it, but I'm gonna make some changes. I need a few days to think. *(Pause.)* Tell them to find another psychologist. This doctor is OUT. *(Pause.)* Play reruns or something. All the calls are the same anyway. Same problems…same advice…even you could do it. *(Pause.)* What exactly is "back to normal"? And don't call me Doctor Terri. I'm Teresa Bradley. I'm a real person, not just some voice on the radio who gives out cheap advice. *(Pause.)* Wanna bet? For the next week I'm not telling anybody what to do. *(Pause.)* Yeah, well, I'm sure nobody's ever heard of me in this town. *(Pause.)* Go ahead. Call as often as you want. I'm turning my phone off. *(Pause.)* You're right, it isn't the kind of thing I usually do. But maybe it's time I did something different. *(Cheerily.)* Good-bye.

(TERESA ends the call and tucks the phone into her pocket. She enters the inn, looks around, and spots BEVERLY behind the newspaper.)

TERESA: *(Cont'd.)* Hello?
BEVERLY: *(Startled, jumps and jerks the paper from her face.)* Oh!
TERESA: I'm sorry. The sign said you're open.
BEVERLY: *(Lays paper aside and stands.)* Yes, we certainly are. Come in. *(Calls toward SL.)* David! Lisa! You have a guest. *(Beat.)* They'll be right with you.

TERESA: Thank you.
BEVERLY: *(Motions SL.)* I'm just visiting my daughter and son-in-law. They own this place. *(Offers HER hand.)* I'm Beverly Webber.
TERESA: *(Shakes BEVERLY'S hand.)* Teresa Bradley.
BEVERLY: Sit down. Make yourself at home.
TERESA: I'm fine.
BEVERLY: David!

(DAVID enters SL in work clothes, carrying a rag and a water pipe of some sort, left cheek smudged with grease.)

DAVID: I was under the sink.
BEVERLY: *(Smiles too brightly.)* You have a guest…and a little… *(Points to her cheek.)*
DAVID: *(Lays pipe down and wipes his face and hands on the rag.)* Oh, I'm sorry. Just doing a little repair.
LISA: *(Enters following and grumbling.)* You're dripping water all over the floor.
BEVERLY: *(Still smiling broadly.)* Lisa? You have a guest.
LISA: *(Notices TERESA and smiles.)* Hello. And welcome.
TERESA: I realize it's the holiday season and I don't have a reservation, but could I possibly get a room for a few days?
DAVID: Huh. No chance of your being sent to the stable at this inn.
LISA: Certainly. December isn't one of our busy months.
DAVID: *(Aside.)* Neither is January or February, March…

(BEVERLY winces, sits, and goes back to reading her paper, occasionally peeking out.)

TERESA: Good, then. *(Beat.)* I'm not sure how long I'll be staying. Maybe through Christmas?
LISA: *(Goes to sit behind desk and takes out paper.)* Stay as long as you like. We'll just need you to register.

(TERESA sits to fill out the paper.)

End of Freeview

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