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Dead Man's Cell Phone



Synopsis

Dramatic Comedy / 2m, 4f / Unit Set An incessantly ringing cell phone in a quiet café. A stranger at the next table who has had enough. And a dead man-with a lot of loose ends. So begins *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, a wildly imaginative new comedy by MacArthur "Genius" Grant recipient and Pulitzer Prize finalist, Sarah Ruhl, author of *The Clean House* and *Eurydice*. A work about how we memorialize the dead-and how that remembering changes us-it is the odyssey of a woman forced to confront her own assumptions about morality, redemption, and the need to connect in a technologically obsessed world. "Satire is her oxygen. . . . In her new oddball comedy, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, Sarah Ruhl is forever vital in her lyrical and biting takes on how we behave." - *The Washington Post* "Ruhl's zany probe of the razor-thin line between life and death delivers a fresh and humorous look at the times we live in." - *Variety* "[Ruhl] tackles big ideas with a voice that entertains" - *NPR* "...beguiling new comedy...Ms. Ruhl's work blends the mundane and the metaphysical, the blunt and the obscure, the patently bizarre and the bizarrely moving." - *New York Times*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In one of Edward Hopper's most famous paintings (*Automat*, 1927), a woman sits alone, a cup of coffee on the table in front of her. She is alone, as most of the people in Hopper paintings are, even when others share the landscape with them. (See *Nighthawks* [1942] and *Office at Night* [1940].) *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, by the young playwright (she was born in 1974) Sara Ruhl, conveys much

the same mood as Hopper's paintings, though presented in a very different medium and a radically different style. It's a play about disconnectedness -a comedy really, because, for all the seriousness of its theme, the play is really funny. (In some ways, Ruhl is close to Arthur Adamov, the now-forgotten offspring of the absurdist era in playwriting.) The play's protagonist, meek, mousy Jean (described by another character as "a paleish woman, sort of nondescript") becomes alive handing on to people she doesn't know imaginary messages from a dead man she's never met (while he was alive, that is). The characters in *Cell Phone* all talk past each other, out of their own self-fantasies or from a need to connect. Each presents a different picture of Gordon, the dead man, who, it transpires, was truly awful. The effect is pointillistic. Visual images come and go behind the actors, or people swirling around them, umbrellas on high and cell phones up to their ears. Disparate meetings and the soliloquies of various players coalesce to build a mood of separateness and misunderstanding, which is played out through each character's incomprehension of the other characters' motivations and inner fiber. What is surprising, though, is the humor. In even the most savage passages (the "dead man's" monologue in Act II, for instance), how funny the lines are!

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