

*Extract from Act Two Scene Three of 'Death of a Tomato Salesman'
by David Weedall*

The action of the play takes place in London. The near future.

(RINA (F) is eating a packet of crisps and reading a book. She looks up to speak to the audience)

RINA: They talked him down of course... from the top of the Tate Modern chimney. After one night and a day, and a slight dose of exposure and dehydration, resolved by a few days in hospital on a tomato rich diet... which he utterly rejected! But his new crusade had now begun in earnest and there seemed no way back. It was as if a dam had burst within his being and stored up energies gushed forth in a cascading torrent of well.... ketchup!! *(The sound of a door banging. PERET (M) Enters):* Peret...you're home! The doctor said you'd be in for at least another day. I was going to visit you later. How are you?

PERET: I'm fine... discharged myself. But I've been advised not to climb any more chimneys... well not in the foreseeable future!

RINA: That's very sound advise! So you're OK?

PERET: Couldn't be better!

RINA: It's good to see you! *(She embraces him)*

PERET: It's good to be here!

RINA: I checked your emails this morning and printed one off marked 'Urgent' from Luigi Delusho! *(She hands him the email)* I guess your dismissal from his Company was a foregone conclusion, what with worldwide TV coverage of your 'Tate Protest'! I mean, having a UK Head of Sales campaigning for an international ban on the tomato, was a little out of the question! He says if you don't stop your campaign, you'll have to 'bear the consequences!'

PERET: Take no notice, Luigi always was full of Italian hot air! I now despise the cause to which I was so devoted!

RINA: Your bedside interview this morning was beamed round the world by Sky News!

PERET: This message is for all of mankind!

RINA. Well, you're certainly getting unprecedented coverage! So much so that that I've had calls from two nutritionists, a scientist and several church leaders, all wanting to talk to you! Peret, you've got to stop all this, before it's too late!

PERET: It's already too late!

RINA: But what made you change? I mean, the one moment you were campaigning on behalf of the tomato and it's benefits.... the next you to make this ridiculous statement that the humble tomato is leading the human race to destruction!

PERET: The people are responding!

RINA: I really don't think you understand the magnitude of what you're doing! There's a slump in tomato consumption both here and across Europe. If you're not careful, you'll make yourself a great many enemies!

PERET. Increasing numbers will respond and cease from consuming!

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RINA: You've created a panic worse than the salmonella and BSE emergencies of years ago, combined! It's amazing what people believe, if you speak about a cause with enough conviction!

PERET: I have a dream... that very soon, the movement, 'Ban All Tomatoes' or BATs for short, will grow to such a size that tomato eating will cease throughout the world, forever! I'm now the figurehead of a movement offering salvation to the world by simply leaving out one key ingredient from their diet...

RINA. Which is easier said than done! I mean, I just can't imagine cooking without tomato!

PERET: It's far easier than you might imagine! *(Pause)* So what's that you're eating?

RINA: Oh, just some crisps!

PERET: Oh. *(He sniffs the air)* What flavour are they?

RINA. Just cheese. Cheese and something or other...

PERET: What something or other?

RINA: Cheese and let me see... oh.... they're cheese and err... tomato!

PERET: That's disappointing!

RINA: Well, I'm sorry Peret, but I really don't share your convictions!

PERET: What book are you reading?

RINA: Oh... just some boring old cookery thing!

PERET: *(Takes the book off her.)* "Fifty Ways to Cook with Tomatoes!" You see all this as some big joke! You fail to grasp, the entire destiny of the human race now rests upon my shoulders!

RINA: You're deluded!

PERET: In your view, maybe. But we went through all that with Thelva and her highly sexed assistant!

RINA: Well, only you would know about that! But I'm quite certain she kept you fully entertained on your night there!

PERET: What's that supposed to mean?

RINA: I think you know! And what a couple of bloody charlatans they were!

PERET: They helped me see the light!

RINA: What, that you're some kind of messianic figure? A "Tomato Messiah?"

PERET: God has given me a message, yes! In fact, that phrase is very pertinent!

RINA: Oh no! I was being ironic!

PERET: No... 'Tomato Messiah' is about right, since this message will save the world and is a cause for which I'm ready to die!

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RINA: Oh, for God's sake! Look, I seem to recall hearing that someone did all the sacrificing that was required, on behalf of mankind, some two thousand years ago! I think his name was Jesus Christ and by all accounts, he made a pretty thorough job of it! The world really isn't looking for another Messiah!

PERET: No, but many are still searching for something! I have a message to bring to this planet. Nothing will stop me now!

RINA: You need to see a doctor.

PERET: 'Physician, heal thyself!' Now, I must go...

RINA: Go? Go where?

PERET: Supported by the donations from an ever growing band of followers, I shall rent a suite at the Mayfair Hotel. From that base, in the West End, I can get my message to a waiting world!

RINA: Peret, I loved you... I think I still do...

PERET. And I you. When the world is tomato free, we will meet again! Until that day, fare thee well, my sister! *(They embrace)*

RINA: Don't go. This is all such a terrible mistake!

PERET: It's the tomato that's the mistake! Goodbye... 'til the world be tomato free! *(He exits)*

RINA: 'The world... tomato free?' Well, that's the end of that then... once and for all!

(The Lights Fade)

'Death of a Tomato Salesman' is an absurd play dealing with the subject of obsession for six actors (3f 3m) with a running time of approx 70 mins. It was written to be easily produced with very few props and minimal furniture on a low budget.

The play was first performed at the Brighton Fringe Festival 2005.

'A truly promising theatrical venture!' The Times

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