

THE TRAUMA OF BEING RALF

Keith Williams

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keith@williams.sh**

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THE TRAUMA OF BEING RALF

The upper level is black and clear of any set except for two chairs. The main stage resembles a gloomy, desolate train platform. Any characters that appear on the upper level are the consciences of the corresponding character on the main stage.

RALF 2 enters the upper level. Simultaneously, RALF 1 enters on to the main stage. They are wearing the same costumes. RALF 2 sits in a chair, while RALF 1 remains standing with his satchel. RALF 1 checks his watch.

RALF 2
What time is it?

RALF 1
10:28 AM

RALF 2
I must arrive in exactly an hour and thirty minutes, so the train can only be, a maximum, of two minutes tardy. Is my watch off?

RALF 1 checks his watch, then points his arm at the sun. He slowly brings his arm down, in a linear fashion, until he is pointing at his toes. Keeping his arm pointed at the ground in front of his toes, he moves the rest of his body away. Again, he looks at the sun, then at the appointed piece of ground.

RALF 2
No. It's right on. I wonder what the train schedule has to say.

RALF 1 walks to the train schedule and begins to read, inaudibly at first.

RALF 1
... Arrives at 10:30 AM on Platform (hesitation)... three.

RALF 2
Oh no. How could I not notice which platform I was on?
(Increasing volume) I'm on the

third platform! (Frantic) Number three!! I can't stand the number three. Of course this *would* happen to me today, when I'm supposed to present Guthenberg's lucrative marketing scheme to Kujimari, our biggest investor. This better not be some kind of omen.

Both RALFs sigh.

RALF 2

I guess I'll just have to hope for the best. (pause) Okay. I'm just going to sit on this bench, and I won't even think about how I'm on the... the... th..th..third platform.

Both RALFs shudder.

RALF 1 sits on the bench, goes to rearrange himself to get comfortable, when he realizes he just sat in some gum.

RALF 1

(angry)

Oh Jesus! For Christ's fuck'n sake! I've ruined my pants! What the hell? (Pause. Then, long, drawn out and melancholic)
Oh... Shit.

RALF 2

(calm and consoling)

I just sat in someone's chewing gum. That's all I did. I should have looked before I sat down, but I didn't. It was simply the punishment for my absence of concentration...

RALF 1

(In self reflection, then actually speaking to a personified "number three.")

...by no means is there any relation to the incident, which just occurred, and the unlucky number three...I mean, the neutral, and actually, often times, quite benevolent number three.

RALF 1 pauses, then begins to survey the station

RALF 2

What an odd town for a layover.
Is this even a town? I don't see
any buildings... only this old,
decaying station, whose sign is
barely legible! A plethora of
telephone poles...connecting whom?
The only inhabitants I see are a
bunch of black ravens... (with a
bit of fear) who look like they
wish I were gone. (pause. serious
tone again) I wish the train would
come.

A big gust of wind blows, dumping an absurd amount of
leaves on RALF 1. He stands up without the suitcase

RALF 1

Oh Jesus! What the hell? What's
going on here?

RALF 2

What *is* going on here? That's a
little odd. (pause) Okay, leaves
are known to blow. These things
happen. I just happen to be
sitting... exactly... where the
leaves were blowing. Pure
coincidence.

RALF 1 picks up the suitcase, and the handle breaks off.

RALF 1

Oh Christ man! (looks at sky) Hey,
Providence! You want to work *with*
me for a while?!? Jesus!

RALF 2

Strange. Very strange. Highly
peculiar that all of these things
are happening to me, and to me
alone. Granted, there's no one
else around to play victim to this
string of events, but this is
still a bit too eccentric.

LOUDSPEAKER

Train three hundred thirty three, arriving on platform three, will be three minutes (pause) and thirty seconds late. Sorry for the inconvenience. While you're waiting, please feel free to stop by the bar, in the station, where we are selling discounted shots of Triple-Sec for only three Marks...that's thirty three percent off the regular price!

RALF 1

(loud)

Who are you talking to?! There's no one here except me! Why don't you just say, "hey Ralf, the guy who keeps getting shit on, you're train's late, so why don't you come get plastered in the bar, and...oh, by the way...THREE, THREE, THREE!!!

RALF 2

Well, I'm obviously not alone here!

RALF 2 starts counting with his fingers

RALF 2

(nervous, frantic)

Okay, there's at least *one* man working the loudspeaker. There has to be at least *one* person working the bar...unless the person working the bar is the person who operates the loudspeaker. (on a tangent) What was the deal with the number three?! That does not seem like coincidence! I mean, there was the train with the number 333...(in shock) oh shit! The train! My god! I'll never make it on time now!

RALF 1

What else could go wrong?

RALF 1 looks up just as a raven shits on him

RALF 1

(dry)

Yes. Yes of course.

Pauses to digest all of the aforementioned events.

RALF 1

(irate, crazed)

Jesus! What the hell?! What in God's name can explain this unabated and stealth like attack on me?! Where the hell am I... (pause, looks around in reflection) or *when* am I?!

RALF 1 looks around with a psychotic look to his face.

Enter SLAV 2 (upper level) and 1 (main stage), with rough appearances. SLAV 1, carrying a cellophane bag containing magazines, walks to the bench and sits down. SLAV 2 sits down in the open chair next to RALF 2. SLAV 1 immediately experiences discomfort and notices that he has sat on something. After noticing that it's just a pebble (and not chewing gum), he holds it out in front of RALF.

SLAV 1

Ha! Rock! Na?!

SLAV 1 throws the pebble, as if he were violently throwing a baseball at the tracks, in the style of a pitcher. He, then, pulls out a small pocketknife and begins carving the dirt out of his shoes.

SLAV 2

(candid)

I am a normal human being with no paranoia or neurotic tendencies. (pause) Okay, now that I've cleared that with my quite normal psyche, I will commence the act of carving the dirt out of my shoes, so people won't think that I have dirty shoes. (pause)

SLAV 1 stops to reflect

SLAV 2

I have an itch on my neck, so I am going to itch it...to relieve the itching sensation.

SLAV 1 itches his neck. RALF 1, meanwhile, has dropped anything he was doing, to observe the new stranger, SLAV 1.

RALF 2
(on guard, defensive)
Who is this man? He looks so...so...evil! I mean, I understand the desire to improve one's self image, but his "unique" application of a pocket knife seems far too extraordinary, as far as I'm concerned. Why didn't he just use a twig, or something less...deadly?! I'm going to watch my back around this freakshow.

SLAV 1 stops the work with his shoe and notices RALF 1.

SLAV 2
I wonder if he has the time.

SLAV 1
(with Slavic accent; to RALF 1)
Mister, you have o'clock the day?

RALF 1 stares at SLAV 1

RALF 2
Where is this man from? He looks and sounds...Slavic. God, I hope he won't mug me! I mean, today I've already...

RALF 1
(cutting RALF 2 off)
Ten thirty.

SLAV 2
That was nice of him. Perhaps he knows if the train will be late.

SLAV 1
Thank you. (pause) Train late?

RALF 2
Duh!!! God, just leave me alone!
You're fuck'n psycho!

RALF 2 waves his arms wildly about and makes wacky facial gestures, with particularly weird eye movement.

RALF 1

Yes.

SLAV 2

Oh splendid, I just remembered!
I've got some lovely pornographic
magazines in my bag. That will
surely make the time fly while I'm
waiting for the train! Maybe this
gentleman would care to join me in
reading them, since he is
obviously annoyed from waiting for
the tardy train.

SLAV 1 reaches into bag to grab the magazines.

SLAV 1

In bag, I have porno! You want to
look at...

RALF 1 notices the number "3" tattooed on the SLAV's arm

RALF 1

(frantic)

Who are you?! Where did you get
that?

SLAV 1

(obviously
misunderstanding)

It's easy. (points to kiosk at
station) It's at liquor store.
You just ask man, and he gives
you. It wonderful! He has so
many kinds... Playboy, Penthouse,
Women Over 50... anything you want!
(Slav 2 suddenly notices Ralf's
nervousness) You afraid? I can go
get them for you if you want.
Here, give me your money.

RALF 2

Oh Shit! Thief! Thief! Thief!

RALF 1

Get away from me!... (suddenly
realizing the abrasiveness of his
tone) No! I mean, no thank you.
You've misunderstood me.

RALF 1
(conciliatory and
fearful)
Where did you get that tattoo?

SLAV 1 looks at the "3" tattoo.

SLAV 1
Oh...this! (Laughs an evil,
vampire like laugh, but completely
natural for SLAV) and the RALFs
immediately react, while SLAV 1
begins to explain his tattoo)
Ooops! I thought you meant the
porns. The tattoo? You see, I
have two brothers and we started
this...

RALF 2
(freaks out. interrupts,
while SLAV 1 lip syncs
the rest of his story.)
Psycho! Oh...my...God, did you
hear that laugh?

Voice from backstage upper above.

RALF 3
(answering RALF 2's
question)
Yes, I did!

RALF 2
(pause)
Whoa! Where did that voice come
from? Was that me? How could I
be answering my own
questions...without my knowing?
(pause, then alarm) Dear God! Did
I just iterate that thought
audibly?

SLAV 2
What's wrong with this guy?

SLAV 1
HEY! You listening? This
important... (after getting RALF
1's attention) da (Russian for
"yes"), so me and my brothers were
whacking away at this thing.
Whack, whack, whack! First
Frederick, Whack! Then Masha,

Whack! Then me, Whack! Wow!
What a sweat, no?

RALF 1
Excuse me... what... exactly... were
you whacking?

SLAV 2
(with a grimace)
Who is this guy? He's obviously
never heard of the pinata whacking
tradition of Cinco de Mayo, in
Russia. I could spend the next
half hour, laboriously trying to
explain the all too obvious
connection between Russian and
Mexican holidays, but I firmly
believe that this man is
cerebrally incapacitated and
unable to comprehend even such a
simple notion as that.

SLAV 1
(gives conciliatory
smile)
Oh, it long story.

SLAV 1 glances at his watch-less wrist

SLAV 1
Wow! Look at time. I must go get
my...

SLAV 1 stops. Pauses. Unable to think of a good excuse, he
briefly smiles, then walks to another part of the platform

RALF 1
(soft, sarcastic)
Good-bye!

RALF 2
Holy psychoness! That was just
plain weirdness! He's the
opposite of normal! He's off the
beaten path! Mr. Askew from the
real world!

Voice from backstage again.

RALF 3
(joining in on the rant)

Yes, *he*,
Is far from anything,
Even remotely close... to *me*.

RALF 2 AND RALF 1
(in unison)
What?!

Entering the upper level.

RALF 3
I said he's not like me. He's
loopy... I'm loony.

RALF 2
(pause)
No. You can't be
loony... because... you're
me... aren't you? Or are you? Why
are you here? Why... are you me?

RALF 3
Okay then. *I'm loopy and he's*
loony.

RALF 2
No! I'm not... you're
not... we're... *We're* not LOOPY or
LOONY!!! We're sane. Very
mentally healthy human
beings... excuse me, mentally
healthy human being... *singular*.
I'm having a very bad *life*... I
mean, *morning*. Shall I recap for
you?

RALF 2 is half waiting for a response and half propelled by
the momentum of his own anger to just speak further.

RALF 2
Okay then!! I am going to be late
for a meeting! One minute and
thirty seconds, to be exact! But
so many other things have gone
wrong, that's beside the point.
I've sat in some fuck's chewing
gum. I broke my suitcase. God's
throwing leaves at me. Evil
ravens are shitting on my five
hundred dollar suit. Then, to top
it off, the only person in this
ghost of a desolate town is some
somasochistic, incestuous,

Slavic, sexual gratifier, who
picks dirt off his shoes with a
deadly weapon! I'm not loony! I
just live in a world of FUCK!!

Enter RALF 4, in horizontal line to RALF 3 on the upper level.

RALF 4
Hold on a minute. I'm getting
kind of confused here.

RALF 2
(tired and angry)
Ohhhhhhh. Fuck me.

RALF 1, meanwhile, is pacing back and forth, clawing at his hair and face, giving off an impression of general lunacy.

RALF 4
Excuse me? I hardly think that is
appropriate.

RALF 2
Oh yeah? "Fuck me?" Fuck you,
you fucking fuck! Where the fuck
do you get off, fuckin' telling me
what kind of fucking language is
fucking "appropriate?" Since when
have you, or should I say, "since
when have I" been the type of
person who watches his fuckin'
tongue... Fuckball!

RALF 4
My word, that's got to be...

Enter RALF 5 to the horizontal line on the upper level.

RALF 5
...the most foul language I've
ever heard?

RALF 4
Yes!

RALF 2 only stares in numb disbelief at RALF 5's entrance.
RALF 6 enters from opposite side and joins the line, and
RALF 2 turns at the sound of his voice.

RALF 6

Indeed! That's just what I was going to say. I've never heard so much foul language.

Enter RALF 7 to the line.

RALF 7
You'd think I was mad.

RALF 2 lets his head sink in his hands, as he, too, begins to claw at his hair. Enter RALF 8 to complete the line.

RALF 8
I don't *think*; I *know* that I am mad!

RALF 3 takes center upper level stage, just next to RALF 2.

RALF 3
(Breaking into song and signaling to the other Ralf consciences to do the same.)
Crazy that is; that's American for "mad." Yes, yes I'm crazy.

RALFs 4 through 8 join in the singing. RALF 3 reenters the line, and all of the RALF consciences (except RALF 2) link arms and begin to kick their legs and dance in unison.

OTHER RALFS
(in the style of backup singers)
I'm crazy!

RALF 3
We're all a little crazy!

OTHER RALFS
(together in baritone)
Just a little mad.

SLAV 1 and SLAV 2 are looking on in confused disbelief. They are almost wanting to help.

RALF 3
Crazy as a clown!

RALF 4
Or maybe even crazier.

RALF 3
Who'd a thought a business man?

RALF 4
(points to audience)
Just like you and her and me!

RALF 3
Yes, yes I'm crazy!

OTHER RALFS
We're crazy!

RALF 3
(belting it out)
Nuttier than a loon!

There is a loud loon call from the wing. The singing RALFs turn to look(in unison) and then come back to song with full smiles.

OTHER RALFS
We're wackier than a horde of deaf bats.

RALF 3
Rhyme or reason?

OTHER RALFS
What's that?

The singing RALFs begin to hum the chorus of the song. There is a train whistle but the humming continues. RALF 2 lifts his head and looks in the direction of where the train is coming. RALF 1 looks too.

RALF 2
(still sitting but
joining the song)
Ooooh! I'm pretty sure I hear the train.

OTHER RALFS
We're crazy!

RALF 2
Yes indeed, that's the train coming my way.

OTHER RALFS
Nitrous gas? Who needs that?
We're all just a bunch of looney tunes.

RALF 1 gradually walking in the direction of the tracks(the wing).

RALF 2
Universal punctuality?

OTHER RALFS
Too boring! You just can't time
the fun of life.

RALF 2
Am I crazy?

OTHER RALFS
Yes, yes we're crazy! (pause for a
beat, baritone) We're all a little
mad.

RALF 1 stops just before reaching the wing. Train whistles again.

RALF 2
No if's, and's, or but's about it;
I'm goin' my own way.

OTHER RALFS
We're going our own way.

Light from the wing gets consistently brighter.

RALF 2
I'm goin' my own way!

OTHER RALFS
We're going our own way!

RALF 1
(hypnotic, slow, singing)
I'm goin' my own way!

After having given up on RALF, SLAV 1 casually looks up and tries to stop RALF 1, but just as the light is at its brightest, RALF 1 jumps off stage, into the wing. RALF 2 remains sitting in his chair while the other RALF consciences take a bow. While they bow, the curtain to the upper level goes down. SLAV 1 stands paralyzed, looking off into the wing.

BLACKOUT