

**Dread Awakening - April 6th - 23rd, 2006**  
**45th Street Theatre, 354 West 45th Street**

Through a series of one act plays, *Dread Awakening* reveals and explores the enigma often associated with what many of us consider to be the downright creepy. The play manipulates the sensations of the audience, tricking us into laughing while we are slowly and unwittingly being pulled closer to the truly terrifying. It is here that the four vignettes together serve as a chilling and effective, spooky camp-fire story for adults.

As the play begins, we feel as though we have stepped into the whimsical world of a fun-house ride. The dark theater accompanied by the annoyingly methodical repetition of the phrase, *Bloody Mary*, slowly begins to draw us in. Through our almost embarrassed laughter, we are reminded of a time when ghost stories and a quick peek at the paranormal could scare us to the point of delight. Yet, as the plays transition from one to the other we are taken further and further beyond what can be construed as mere fun as the creepiness level begins to rise.

The second play, *Pearls*, moves us just a step closer while managing to keep the grin on our faces. We are, unknowingly at first, given a view of the socially-frightening world we live in; a world that often calls for complete trust in fellow humans and reveals just how disturbing that actuality can be. The play shows us how easily a violation can go undetected. But here again we feel more giddy than spooked as we are unconsciously primed for the third play, *Treesfall*, which is ready to slam us. We sit and serve as mere spectators to evil as this act, through longer and more lively scenes, quickly unfolds into a gruesome and sad depiction of betrayal. It is *Treesfall* that is the heaviest as it unmercifully reveals that even lovers and friends can be so indifferent to our suffering that they may cause and even relish in our own demise; and without our ever knowing it.

As we watch, our emotions react to the witnessing of a sadistic murder that is accompanied by a level of apathy which, we see, can even transcend the effects of hate-- and all at the hands of the trusted.

Fortunately, the fourth play, *Sleep Mask*, gets us laughing again. We are almost placed back to the beginning as we think we recognize the source of the real scariness put upon us. Since children we know what it is like to fall prey to a nightmare, the condition where our own minds beat and consume us with horrifying complexities. We are never quite sure: is it real or something we will wake from-- where we open our eyes, and all will magically disappear. It is the question we have all asked ourselves at some point while asleep or awake, in times of complete fright.

Although some scenes could have been fleshed out a bit more while others might have cut down on trivial nonsense, the actors were magnificent in their emotionally-charged performances. The intensity of each part allowed the play to keep our emotions too busy reacting to think of why we actually felt as we did. Part of the play's success is its power to keep us frightened and entertained and waiting till later to wonder why. It was only upon the play leaving us, which felt as abrupt as walking out the fun house door and getting hit with the cold light of day (or the lights of Broadway 2 blocks up) that we realize what our sense of fear is often based on. Whether it be even a slight belief in the paranormal, our blind faith in humans, the innocent trust in lovers and friends, or our loss of control over our own minds while we sleep, we are all incredibly vulnerable-- to the point of being pathetic, at times. And, *Dread Awakening*, did just what it promised, it awoke us to that kind of dread and that my friends, is indeed creepy.

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