

Up On the Roof

A Short Play

By Kenneth Robert Crost

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Cast of Characters

Trisha: Rich, spoiled, and in her middle twenties, dressed in jeans and a plain white tee shirt.

TR Homeless man in his forties. He is dressed in whatever he could find.

Scene: A summer night in the city of New York. The rooftop of the Hancock Terrace apartment building.

At Rise: The lights come up slowly revealing the rooftop of the Hancock Terrace apartments. The lighting should reflect the time of day: night. The sounds of the city fill the stage: horns honking, sirens blaring. In the corner of the rooftop is a rolled up piece of carpet with TR's feet sticking out of the end. Other than that, the roof is empty, except for a beat up newspaper, a few empty bottles of beer, a sandwich bag from McDonalds, and an old backpack. TR makes a few low moans and then is quiet. Trisha climbs onto the roof and slowly crosses to the roof's edge. We should see her pain, her hesitancy at what she is going to do. As she crosses, she accidentally kicks one of the beer bottles. She ignores it as she stands up on a low wall and looks down onto the street. TR pokes his head out and sees Trisha. He gets out of his make-shift tent and slowly and quietly crosses to her.

TR

Jumpin'?

(Trisha screams and begins to fall. TR grabs her by the arm and pulls her back onto the roof. Trisha pulls away from TR's grasp.)

TRISHA

Get away from me. I'll scream again.

TR

Calm down, calm down, lady.

(Trisha slowly backs away. They stare at each other for a moment. Trisha looks terrified.)

TR

Oh, I get it. You're peeing in your pants because you think I'm gonna attack you, rape you or something. Yeah, right. That's always my plan, lady. Make my way to the roof of some big, building in Manhattan and lie in wait for some young, unsuspecting, beautiful woman to come along so I can get my jollies off. Like it get's so busy up on these roofs that, hell, I can just take my pick. No not her, not pretty enough, wait, what about her, nice ass. Jesus Christ, lady, I'm up here because I don't want any trouble. Now get out of here and leave me alone.

(TR crosses to his carpet and rolls up in it. Trisha crosses to him.)

TRISHA

I think you have this a bit backward, sir. This isn't your roof, it's mine. I happen to live in this building and my father happens to own it. So you get your ass off of here or I'll call the cops and have you arrested.

TR

Call 'em. So they take me away, throw me in the slammer for a few days, I get some decent squares, and then I'm on my way. Been there before, be there again. Now's as good a time as any. Go, go ahead, give a call. I really don't give a shit.

(Trisha crosses to the low wall and sits. She looks down at the street below.)

TRISHA

Just get out of here.

(TR gets out of the rolled up carpet and crosses to Trisha.)

TR

I think I'm getting the picture, here. You're not up here to take in the view, are you? You really are thinking of taking a dive. Look at you - young, beautiful, rich and thinking of cutting the knot by slamming into the sidewalk. Well, fuck me - I guess I'm losing something here.

TRISHA

It's none of your business. Just go.

TR

You're right, it is none of my business. You want to jump, go ahead.

TRISHA

(sarcastically)

Really? Oh, how sweet, how kind of you, sir. Yes, you just scurry off now and leave me to my ultimate fate.

(Trisha jumps back up on the low wall. It should look like she is ready to jump. TR quickly crosses back to Trisha and grabs her before she can jump.)

TR

Goddamn it, lady. Jesus Christ, can you at least give me a minute? I'd like to collect my things and get outta here.

TRISHA

(sarcastically)

Oh, of course, kind sir. How insensitive of me. What was I thinking? If I leap to my death while you're still here, of course, the police will assume it was you who pushed me to my grizzly death. I wouldn't want to spend eternity with that on my conscience.

TR

Thank you, very much.

TRISHA

Now, you go collect your meager belongings and I'll give you, what, five minutes? Will that do?

(TR crosses to his bag and piece of carpet.)

TR

Make it ten, just to be on the safe side.

TRISHA

Then ten it is. We have an agreement.
(TR picks up his bag and
carpet and begins to exit.)
You really don't care if I jump, do you?

TR

Nope.

TRISHA

Yes, of course. No one has obviously cared about you, so,
why should you give a damn about anyone else. You just run
along now. I'll wait the ten minutes as agreed.

TR

You looking for someone to save your ass, lady?

TRISHA

No, no of course not.

TR

'cause if you are, it ain't gonna be me.

TRISHA

As it should be.

TR

I'll leave you to do what you need to do.

TRISHA

Yes, thank you, sir. Maybe you'll read about it in the
morning paper, if you can find a free one, that is. I have
some money. I could give you a dollar, or so, so you could
get a newspaper and a cup of coffee in the morning. Give
you something to look forward to during the long night.

TR

You keep it. I'll get along.

(TR crosses to the roof
exit.)

TRISHA

Just so you'll know, if you happen to find a paper in the morning, my name is Trisha, Trisha Hancock. From the famous Hancock family? I'm sure you've heard of us: Hancock Foods, Hancock Telecommunications, Hancock...well, it goes on and on and on.

TR

It goes on for me too, lady. Just a different on and on and on.

TRISHA

Of course. I've taken up enough of your time, sir. And I have a date to keep.

TR

Then I'll just be shoving off here. Ten minutes, now.

TRISHA

Agreed.

(Trisha sits on the ledge
looking out over the city.
TR starts to exit, but stops
and looks back at Trisha. He
puts his things down and
slowly crosses back to
Trisha.)

TR

You are something else, yes, little lady, you are something else.

(TR jumps up on the ledge and
sits next to Trisha.)

My friends call me TR. (pause) You can call me TR, if you'd like.

(Trisha turns to TR.)

TRISHA

I thought you were leaving?

TR

Oh, hell, lady, you think I could face myself knowing you jumped? Hell, I'd spend the rest of my life seeing your face as I fell asleep. So you're stuck with me until you get your ass off this roof.

TRISHA

So, you're going to try and save me, is that it? Be my white knight, my hero.

TR

I ain't no white knight, that's for sure.

TRISHA

Your name is TR?

TR

Yep.

TRISHA

Just TR, nothing more?

TR

Yep, that's it. TR - nothin' more, nothin' less.

TRISHA

I like that. Yes, I like that very much. TR. How wonderful to have a name like yours. TR. It leave so much to the imagination. One can conjure up all sorts of possibilities. While my name, Trisha MacDougal Hancock just sounds...

TR

Rich.

TRISHA

Yes, rich. (pause) TR, the man who sleeps on roofs.

TR

You got it.

TRISHA

I've often admired people like you.

TR

Well, aren't I flattered.

TRISHA

In some ways it seems so liberating. Just carrying what you need on your back, sleeping from place to place. There have been nights when I've sat in the dark looking out my window at the street below. I'd see some unfortunate soul sitting on the sidewalk waiting for the cold to numb him to sleep. There were times when I almost felt compelled to join him.

TR

Street's no place for someone like you...or me. I decided along time ago, no more streets for me. Did that for too long. Nice and safe up here, usually. Got about ten roofs that I call home. Starts getting' dark, I make my way to one of my roofs and set up home for the night. I've had enough of sleeping in the streets. So, since this here is my roof, I say get your ass off that ledge before...

TRISHA

Before what? Have me arrested? Evicted? Maybe push me off?

TR

I ain't pushing you off, that's for sure.

TRISHA

What do you care whether I jump or not? I'm just some rich, spoiled bitch who doesn't care anymore. So leave me alone and go sleep it off on one of your other roofs.

TR

I ain't letting you jump.

TRISHA

I could jump tomorrow.

TR

Tomorrow's, tomorrow.

TRISHA

Yeah. (pause) Yeah.

(Trisha and TR sit on the edge of the roof looking out over the city. Trisha starts to laugh.)

TR

What're you laughing about?

TRISHA

I was just thinking how this would make a very interesting story.

TR

What would?

TRISHA

The two of us...jumping together.

TR

You and me play patty cake with the sidewalk?

TRISHA

Yes.

TR

Really? That's what you want?

TRISHA

Yes.

TR

Okay, goddamn it, let's do it. What the hell? Who's gonna miss a no good loser like me. A guy who turned his back on his wife and kid. Hell, I've turned my back on a million people: Gus, Big Toe Joe, the Termite, Little Jewish Annie, the Dwarf, shit, so many. So, what do I got to lose. Nothing. Just more days and nights of misery. So come on, goddamn it, give me your hand and let's have a go.

TRISHA

At least that way, we won't die alone.

TR

Lady, we always die alone, no matter what. Ain't something we can do together, that's for sure. And don't think I haven't thought about it, 'cause I have. Hell, I've stood on this very roof, looking over the edge, thinking I'd be better off as a big, red Picasso on the sidewalk. So let's do it. Two losers, one poor, one rich, taking a dive off the fucking Hancock Terrace Apartments.

(TR grabs Trisha's hand and tries to pull her up.)

Come on.

(Trisha jumps away from the ledge.)

TRISHA

No.

(TR gets down from the ledge.)

TR

Whadda mean, no. I thought that's what you wanted. So let's get with the program here. Off into the wild blue yonder.

TRISHA

I'll give you a hundred to leave, right now.

TR

A c-note? Just like that? Just so you can take a dive alone?

TRISHA

Yes.

TR

Nope. Can't do.

TRISHA

When was the last time you had a hundred dollars? I bet years.

TR

Longer than I can remember.

TRISHA

Then I'll make it two, two hundred dollars.

TR

Two hundred dollars? And all I have to do is take a hike off this roof?

TRISHA

Yes.

(TR thinks for a moment.)

TR

Listen, lady, 'bout 12 years ago, bunch of us set up a little camp, somewhere south of Albuquerque. It was about sunset and we were all sitting around telling stories, laughing, and drinking some joe when this big-ass diesel come rumbling up. We all stopped to take a look. And there, standing in the middle of the tracks with his arms spread like Jesus on the cross, was my good friend Alvin, Alvin Rickets. Just standing there, arms spread, ready to hug that train to death. Worst thing I ever seen and I've seen some shit, believe me. Ever since then, when I start to fall asleep, I see that train barreling down on Alvin. So, sorry, lady, but I don't need no more nightmares. Keep your money. Let's get down from here.

(Trisha reaches into her pocket and pulls out a large wad of cash.)

TRISHA

Here, take it all. Just get out of here.

(She hands him the money and he begins to count it but stops.)

TR

Jesus Christ, lady, I bet there's over six hundred here, maybe seven. I haven't seen this much cash since, well, hell, I don't remember.

TRISHA

Keep it. Have some fun on me.

(TR looks at Trisha.)

TR

I stuff this cash in my pocket, take a hike out of here, and I'm a rich guy. I can go sleep in one of those nice hotels, eat a great meal at some fancy restaurant. Just like all those normal people in the world. Get to try that on for a few days. It's like a dream come true.

TRISHA

Pretty easy, huh?

TR

So that's it? I stuff this cash in my pocket and we're done, just like that?

TRISHA

Everyone has their price.

TR

That's what I've heard. I just never thought I'd get a chance to find out what my price was.

TRISHA

Well, now you know.

TR

Six, seven hundred. Lot of cash for a guy like me. I'll tell you what, I'm keeping this money, putting right here in my pocket. But I'm not like the rest of the people in your life, where a little cash goes a long way. You probably throw this kind of money around all the time, get what you want: cabs, clubs, people. You're a sad, little rich kid, who, for some reason, isn't getting her way. So, you're ready to take a dive off the roof just to piss someone off. I am taking a hike otta here, but you're coming with me.

TRISHA

You're crazy.

TR

Yeah, yeah I am. Now that I'm this rich guy all of a sudden, I want to spend some of it. And you want to know what's even crazier? I want to take this sad, beautiful young woman out for dinner. I'll tell her my story and she can tell me hers. (pause) Deal?

TRISHA

Me?

TR

Yeah, you.

(Trisha stares at TR for a moment.)

TR

You gonna turn me down?

TRISHA

No.

TR

Good, that's good.

TRISHA

But I'll probably be back up here tomorrow night.

TR

Maybe. If so, leave me a note saying goodbye.

TRISHA

Yeah, I will.

TR

You are something, little lady. Come on, take my arm. Make me feel like a regular guy. It's been a long time.

TRISHA

Yeah, sure.

(Trisha puts her arm around
TR's.)

TR

Hey, look at that. Moon's coming up. Nothing more
beautiful than a big old moon rising up over a big ass
city.

TRISHA

A big ass city.

TR

Come on, time for dinner.

(Trisha and TR start to exit.
Trisha breaks away and runs
for the edge of the roof. TR
catches her and grabs her by
the arm.)

TR

Trisha.

(She turns back to TR.)

Tomorrow.

(The two stare at each other
for a moment, then she looks
back out over the city.)

TRISHA

Yes, tomorrow.

(Blackout.)

THE END