

Quarky, Quirky *Terrible Things* and *Crime or Emergency*

The theater of marshmallows, plus the Boss

By **Alexis Soloski** Tuesday, Dec 15 2009

According to one interpretation of quantum mechanics, in the course of any event in which multiple outcomes are possible, every outcome occurs—one in this world, others in an array of parallel worlds. So in one world, I might write that I despise [Katie Pearl](#) and [Lisa D'Amour's](#) *Terrible Things* and Sibyl Kempson and [Mike Iveson Jr.'s](#) *Crime or Emergency*, both at P.S.122. In another, I might champion one show at the other's expense. In a third, I might never pen a word, as a racetrack win enables me to abandon my career and light out for regions rum-soaked and tropical. But in this world, I will celebrate both shows as appealing and eclectic (and perhaps heave a quick sigh for daiquiris unsipped).

Terrible Things takes the idea of parallel universes as its central premise. In a long monologue scripted by Pearl and D'Amour, the former offers a précis of her life in which she explores alternate choices and circumstances. If she had kept growing, she might have become a ballerina. If she had stayed in college, she might never have embraced Downtown theater. If she had not subjected "a long line of lovers to terrible breakups followed immediately by dating their best friend," she wouldn't have so much amusing material to draw upon.

As Pearl summarizes her 39 years, in a process her own father describes as "trying to pawn off your self-absorption as some metaphysical



Justin Bernhaut

Jujitsu wrestling as autobiography: Lisa D'Amour in *Terrible Things*

Details

Terrible Things

By Lisa D'Amour and Katie Pearl

Crime or Emergency

By Sibyl Kempson and Mike Iveson Jr.

P.S.122

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experiment," three dancers and two jujitsu wrestlers swirl and stumble around her. Sometimes they mirror her gestures, sometimes she mimics theirs—seemingly an attempt to explore the physics premise, well, physically. Pearl engages and her stories entertain; the choreography and the varieties of lighting, sound, and setting components can sometimes seem surplus to requirements. Yet, as in their previous collaborations, Pearl and D'Amour prod the boundaries of theater and performance art, working to transform straightforward narrative into something richer, stranger, and ineluctably feminine. Perhaps *Terrible Things* does not require a floor grid composed of 600 marshmallows (courtesy [Anna Kiraly](#)), but their presence makes the play that much sweeter.