

The Dane

a ten minute comedy

by

James O'Sullivan

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The Players:

Richard
David
Seb
Director

Scene: In the foyer/waiting room of an acting studio space.

(Richard and David are waiting patiently in two of three chairs. Director enters from the studio space.)

Director: Hi, guys. **(Actors stand and Director shakes their hands.)** Richard, David, I've always loved your work and I'm thrilled that you've auditioned for our production. Now, we're going to have you all in the audition space at the same time. We'll start with the To Be Or Not To Be speech and go from there. We're just waiting on one more person. He shouldn't be too long.

Richard: Fine.

Director: Once again, thanks, and it's going to be a tough choice. It really is. You all bring so much to the part. Okay. I'll just leave you to yourselves.

(Director exits to the studio space. David and Richard sit down.)

Richard: What did he mean, leave us to ourselves?

David: He's an idiot.

Richard: You know who this other guy is, don't you?

David: No idea.

Richard: A certain leading man in a well known local medical drama.

David: You are kidding me?

Richard: That's what I'm hearing.

David: But he can't act. Certainly not Shakespeare, and definitely not The Dane. He couldn't have got through to the final audition stage, surely?

Richard: I'm just telling you what I heard.

David: Nonsense. The way actors gossip is pathetic. It's just small people confined to small parts wanting to upset us.

Richard: I'm not so sure. I heard it from...

(Seb enters from the street door talking into his phone).

Seb: Yeh, I'm telling you, you could see right down her top. It was distracting to say the least. Well I'm here now, so I better let you go. Call me in about two hours and we'll do lunch. Yeh. No not there, the service is horrible. Okay, see ya. **(Puts away phone.)** Good morning. Final auditions for Hamlet?

Richard: Yes.

Seb: Great, I'm not too late then. I'm Sebastian, but call me Seb.

(Seb shakes their hands.)

Richard: Richard.

Seb: Dick?

Richard: Richard.

David: David.

Seb: Dave?

David: David.

Seb: Well anyway, it's great to finally meet you guys. I am among theatre royalty here, I can see that. Where's the director?

Richard: He told us...

David: Asked us.

Richard: He asked us to wait here. He'll be coming back soon. We are waiting on you.

Seb: Yeh, sorry about that, just had an early meeting with my agent. Big budget Hollywood project in the works. Big name actor, big name director, big breasted actress, but I can't say anything about it just yet. Anyway, that's not until next year, so this will be a good filler.

David: Filler?

Seb: If I get the part. But I'm up against it with you guys. Dave...

David: David.

Seb: David, let me tell you, you were great in Charles the Third.

David: Pardon?

Richard: I think you mean Richard the Third.

Seb: Yeh, it was Third something.

Richard: There's never been a Charles the Third of England, on the page or otherwise.

Seb: Nerves. I always get nervous before auditions. Right. **(Turns off his phone.)** Phone goes off. Don't you hate it when your agent calls just as you're preparing for an audition?

Richard: It's really awful.

Seb: He's probably going to call me back about that big budget Hollywood project. You wouldn't believe who they've got attached.

David: You're right, we wouldn't believe it.

Richard: Sebastian...

Seb: Seb.

Richard: Seb, have you done any Shakespeare before?

Seb: At school. I played Romeo. Or was it Juliet? I can't remember. I went to an all boys school so we had to improvise, well, compromise is probably the better word.

David: So you think you have the maturity to play The Dane?

Seb: The who?

Richard: The Dane. The Prince of Denmark.

Seb: I thought I was playing Hamlet?

Richard: Oh dear God.

David: Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark.

Seb: Oh good. For a minute there I thought I was having to audition for two parts. Now, speech. **(He gets out the play.)**

Richard: You mean you haven't memorised the speech yet?

Seb: Well yes, but I like to go through my lines before the audition. Helps to settle the nerves. You wouldn't believe the nerves you get when you're auditioning for big budget Hollywood projects, especially playing opposite big name actors.

David: Not to mention the big breasted actresses.

Seb: Exactly. You know what I'm talking about. It's very distracting. **(Looks at play.)** God look at all this gibberish. Why do these characters go on and on? I mean, who stands around and talks for a whole page? A whole page. People with no friends, that's who. Or no real friends.

David: It's a famous speech.

Richard: It's when Hamlet contemplates living or dying. Weighs up the pros and cons.

Seb: Yeh, he was a bit of a sad old bugger wasn't he? But some of this language is quite baffling, though. I mean look at this for example: 'And the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.' What's all that about? And then it goes on, 'When he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin.' What the hell's a bare bodkin?

David: It's a pointy stick thing.

- Seb: Well, why doesn't he just say that?
- Richard: Oh okay, we'll plug that in shall we? 'And the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes. When he himself might his quietus make with a pointy stick thing.' Do you really think that sounds better?
- Seb: Least the audience will know what you're talking about.
- David: I've got that covered. I am making use of a prop. **(Pulls out an imitation bare bodkin.)** See, this is my bare bodkin.
- Seb: Great idea. Can I borrow your bare bodkin?
- Richard: No, get your own bare bodkin.
- David: You might as well lend it to him, Richard. I don't think it will make much difference either way. I've got a bad feeling about this.
- Richard: Bad feeling about what?
- Seb: I can't believe all the lines I have to remember. It's daunting.
- Richard: Why are you doing Shakespeare?
- Seb: Oh you have to do Shakespeare. I need acting credibility, that's what gets you parts in big budget Hollywood projects. And nothing says acting credibility like Shakespeare. Just wish it wasn't so difficult to remember all these lines.
- David: Why don't you fudge them?
- Seb: Fudge them?
- David: Yes, fudge them.
- Seb: You can fudge them?
- Richard: Let me tell you a bit about your average Shakespeare audience. A quarter of them are drunk, a quarter of them are asleep, and a quarter of them have been dragged to the theatre by someone else and therefore have absolutely no interest in what's going on. Of the remaining quarter, half of them aren't paying attention at the time of the fudge, and out of the remainder there may be one or two at the most who actually know the speech well enough to realise you are fudging. And that's if you're unlucky.