

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WR_oNG?

A comedy in two acts

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ACT IScene 1

Setting: Backstage of a community theater. Evening time. On the upstage wall, there is a door which leads to the stage. SL of the door is the props table which has a wide assortment of props on it, including a script. On the SR side of the door is a costume rack. On the SL wall, there are two dressing rooms, women's and men's, respectively. In-between the two doors is a chair. On the SR wall there is a door which leads to an alley behind the theater, and a door which leads to the lobby of the theater. Upstage of the alley door on the SR wall, there is a telephone on a tiny shelf. All around the room, there are framed posters of fictional past shows on the walls.

(TITUS WILTSHIRE, late twenties, handsome and nervous, is alone onstage performing a pre-show ritual. He wears his Romeo costume.)

TITUS.

(Pacing back and forth.)

When do west wing wombats wallow? On Wednesday in Wisconsin whilst wailing words of worry? What if west wing wombats wag williwaw wigs on Wednesday?

(MAC, late fifties, scruffy and sarcastic, enters from upstage, carrying a clip board. He wears all black, just like a tech crew member would wear.)

Don't dare drink down dairy on the daily.
Dairy drinking on the daily does drastic danger to the dizzy drunkard who drinks it on the daily.

MAC.

Getting fluent in gibberish, Titus?

TITUS.

It's a pre-show ritual. Doing repetition exercises before a performance is scientifically proven to improve the diction of an actor.

MAC.

What scientist has so little of a life that he studies what pre-show rituals do to an actor?

TITUS.

The same scientist who studies how monkeys gamble.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

Fair enough. But in all honesty, rituals don't do anything really. It's all cycle-logical.

TITUS.

You mean psychological?

MAC.

Yeah that. It's all up in your head. You just think you need pre-show rituals to have good diction, but in reality you don't.

TITUS.

I know it's all up in my head, but I just feel more comfortable doing it. It's like a safety blanket, I don't need one, but I just have one to make me feel better.

MAC.

Titus, did you just say that you still have a blanket?

TITUS.

Mac, please, stay on topic. Do you understand what I'm saying about pre-show rituals? It's to make me feel comfortable. And the Lord knows that I need as much comfort as I can get what with me doing Shakespeare and all.

MAC.

Yeah, Shakespeare never was one for Layman's terms.

TITUS.

I'm going to be honest Mac, I'm really nervous for tonight.

MAC.

Nervous? For what?

TITUS.

(Crossing to SL.)

It's Shakespeare! It's like trying to speak Spanish in Italian. I have to understand what I'm saying and then portray what I'm saying to a huge audience, and neither of us can truly speak old English.

(Sits on chair.)

MAC.

Calm down, Titus. Plenty of people have performed Shakespeare successfully, and I'm sure you can too. If it wasn't possible to do Shakespeare, then Shakespeare wouldn't be as famous as he is.

(CONTINUED)

TITUS.

I guess you're right.

MAC.

I know I'm right. Look, when I was in little, the first play I ever saw was Hamlet. The man they had playing the part of Hamlet was a guy named John Cassio. Starting out, he wasn't cast in the play; but the week before the show, the man they originally had playing Hamlet had to have his appendix removed. For some reason, they did not have an understudy for the part, so they went into mass hysteria. Then John walked in out of the blue. They gave him a week to learn all the lines, but he knew all of them already. No one knew who he was, no one had ever seen him before, he just appeared out of nowhere and performed some beautiful Shakespeare, oh it was so beautiful. Then after the closing night of the show, he vanished and no one has seen him since. Now, if some nobody can appear out of nowhere and perform one of the most difficult roles in all of Shakespeare's plays perfectly with no rehearsals, you can do it even better considering you've had three months to learn this.

TITUS.

(Rising from chair.)

I know I've had three months to learn this, but it's just so hard. I'm worried about my reputation being ruined.

MAC.

Reputation? Who cares about reputation?

TITUS.

Me, I care about reputation. I've got high expectations to live up to. My grandfather was in a movie with James Dean.

MAC.

He was? What movie; what part did he play?

TITUS.

I don't remember. It was a low budget film done in the early years of Dean's career, before he was really famous. My grandfather was one of the extras in the background. The point is, I have a high standard to live up to, and the critic that is here tonight could make or break my reputation.

MAC.

Critic? What critic?

(CONTINUED)

TITUS.

(He swallows.)
Alice Ford.

MAC.

Who?

TITUS.

The entertainment critic from the Falconbridge Review.

MAC.

Doesn't ring a bell.

TITUS.

The woman who gave Nathaniel De Armado a review so negative, he retired.

MAC.

(Realizing who she is.)
Her? She's coming here tonight?

TITUS.

Yes, now do you see my concern? She forced the over forty year veteran of the stage to wet himself after reading her review of his performance.

MAC.

She's harsh, *really* harsh.

TITUS.

Her review of Nathaniel even made me cry. I didn't exactly understand some parts of her review, she said that he was too quiet.

MAC.

Wasn't he playing Charlie Chaplin though?

TITUS.

Yeah, she said his delivery was "the equivalent of watching a cow pie act", and that was probably the nicest part of the review. He's been in therapy ever since the review came out.

MAC.

Now let's think positive here; there is no guarantee that she will be that harsh with you.

TITUS.

I hope not, you know I'm emotionally fragile. If I mess up, I may as well start looking for a retirement home in Florida.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

No one is going to notice if you mess up.

TITUS.

(Flustered.)

It's Romeo and Juliet, the world's most famous love story. People can usually tell when you mess it up. Why do Shakespeare plays have to be so hard? Who's he trying to impress with all that fancy language anyway? If he was trying to impress some wench, he should have showed up at her house with a guitar and a bouquet of flowers, not write some overcomplicated play! I just don't want to mess this up.

MAC.

You're not going to mess this up. Here, let's go over your lines if that will help you feel more comfortable.

TITUS.

Okay.

MAC.

Where's your script?

TITUS.

On the props table.

(MAC grabs the script.)

MAC.

Now, is there any particular part you are struggling with?

TITUS.

Any scene that has Romeo in it.

MAC.

Alright, let's go with the famous scene between you and Juliet.

TITUS.

Mac, it's Romeo and Juliet, all of it is famous scenes between Romeo and Juliet.

MAC.

Fine, we'll do the "wherefore art thou Romeo?" scene.

Ay me!

TITUS.

You can't say it like that.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

What's wrong with the way I'm saying it?

TITUS.

It sounds like *you*. In this scene, I'm not flirting with *you*, I'm flirting with Juliet. Girl up.

MAC.

Fine.

(In a high pitched voice.)

Ay me!

TITUS.

She speaks! Oh, speak again, bright angel! For thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my head. As is a winged messenger of heaven unto the white-upturned wondering eyes of mortals that fall back to gaze on him when he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds and sails upon the bosom of the air.

MAC.

Oh Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

TITUS.

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

MAC.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face.

(In regular voice.)

Alright, we get the picture. See, you did fine right there.

TITUS.

I know, but when I'm in front of an actual audience, I tense up. There are just so many eyes just staring at you, watching your every move. Their retinas literally burning holes through your skin. The heat from the stage lights and their gaze makes it about a million degrees onstage. Throw a thick costume into the mix, and you're cooking hotter than the sun.

MAC.

I'll turn the air condition up when I have the time. Just calm down, this production is going to run smoother than slicing through hot butter with a butter knife. What could possibly go wrong?

(CONTINUED)

TITUS.

Everything! It's hard enough to learn the lines of one part in a Shakespeare play, let alone several! Who was the idiot who decided that some of the cast members should play several parts?

MAC.

I suggested it to the director.

TITUS.

And what exactly were you smoking when you decided to suggest that?

MAC.

Nothing. I know it's not as you like it, but get over it. Look, it's good for advertising to say that we have a bunch of Shakespearean actors doing several parts. It gives our theatre a more professional reputation.

TITUS.

And it gives the performers a bigger headache.

MAC.

Why do you care? You *only* play Romeo. You don't have to play several parts like Antonio and Henry do.

TITUS.

I care because it's stressing everyone out. And when people get stressed out they can't focus. And when they can't focus, they mess up. And when they mess up, the show becomes bad. And when the show becomes bad, it gives everyone in it a bad reputation. And if I have a bad reputation, I can't get on Broadway. And if I can't get on Broadway, then I have to live with my mother for the rest of my life. And that will be yet another blooper in the life of Titus Wiltshire. My life is a comedy of errors!

(He plops down on the chair.)

MAC.

I know it was a challenge, but everyone has their lines down now. They've had them down for a while. Line memorization isn't that hard anyway, if anything it's easy.

TITUS.

If it was so easy, how come you don't do it? How come you don't learn all the lines along with the rest of us? Heck, how come you aren't one of the actors out onstage with us?

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

I'm not a performer. Put me on a stage and I'll freeze up like an ice cube. Before I worked for this theatre, I was a lawyer. Every time I got up in front of a jury, my tongue got more tied than the Gordian knot. Trust me, you don't want me acting onstage. I'd make a bigger fool of myself than, well, a fool.

TITUS.

You mean like what I'm going to do tonight. After tonight, people will expect me to wear a hat with bells on it and dress in a leotard. And worse than all that, they'll expect me to know how to juggle.

MAC.

Stop your stressing. If you keep this up, we will be doing *The Taming of the Shrew* next, and you'll be the Shrew we'll be taming.

TITUS.

I'm not the one who needs taming. I may be on sanity's ledge but I'm calmer than Kate. For the past couple of weeks, she has been performing every remedy in the book to ward off bad luck and evil spirits.

MAC.

Different people handle nervousness in different ways. Some people pray, some people try to ward off bad luck, some people do repetition.

(Pulls out a flask.)

And some people find liquid comfort.

TITUS.

Do you really think it's the best idea to be drinking in this situation? What if you end up getting drunk?

MAC.

That's a pretty good impression of my mother you're doing.

TITUS.

I'm just saying, you've yelled at me before for drinking here.

MAC.

One, I'm the Stage Manager, it's my job to yell. Two, you were drinking in costume, and you know just as much as I do that you don't do that. And three, it's usually my liquor that you're drinking.

(CONTINUED)

(MAC takes a big swig. He turns the flask upside down to check for anymore drops. He puts the flask in his pocket. JESSICA, mid forties, old for her age and stern, enters from the girl's dressing room. She carries a dress on a coat hanger.)

JESSICA.

Mac, where is Kate? She has to get in costume.

MAC.

I don't know, I am not Kate's keeper.

JESSICA.

Well you're the stage manager, so yes, you are.

TITUS.

Last I saw Kate, she was out in the alley.

JESSICA.

What in Venice is she doing out there?

(Yells out of the alley door.)

Kate, get in here! I fixed your dress and I need you to try it on!

TITUS.

Is the house open yet, Jessica?

JESSICA.

Yes, there isn't a whole lot of people out there yet. But don't worry, I'm sure the buses filled with people should be getting here any minute.

(She looks through the clothes rack.)

For the love of Oberon, where is Alexas' costume?

MAC.

Are you sure you left it there?

JESSICA.

Yes, I'm positive. It's been stolen, that's the only explanation, someone has come in here and stolen it in the middle of the night.

MAC.

Jessica, no one has use for a 1300's costume, it hasn't been stolen.

JESSICA.

You never know, Halloween is just around the corner. What on earth am I going to do? I can't send Alexas out there in jeans and a sweater.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

True, it's way too hot out there for that, she would burn up.

JESSICA.

I don't have time for this. I'll think of something. Send Kate into the dressing room when she gets in here.

(JESSICA exits into the women's dressing room.)

TITUS.

This is just the beginning of a terrible show, Mac. A costume is missing, I'm sweating like a whore in church, this night has all the makings of a complete disaster.

MAC.

That's what my best man said on my wedding night. Of course, he was right. But this is different, we are all well-prepared, my in-laws aren't here, and this isn't a barn in Nebraska. What could possibly go wrong?

(KATE, late twenties, pretty, paranoid and superstitious, enters from the alley door. She wears her shirt inside out. She rubs the doorpost as she enters. She carries a small cage and a horseshoe.)

MAC.

Kate, you're sweating like a dog. What's wrong?

KATE.

I'm freaking out, Mac, I'm *freaking* out. The most *tragic* thing happened to me this morning.

TITUS.

What happened?

KATE.

My bathroom mirror broke.

MAC.

(Sarcastically.)

Oh no! How will we ever go on with our lives?

KATE.

It may not seem like a big deal to you, but to me it's a sign. A sign of things to come for tonight. That is why I am doing every thing I can possibly do to ward off the bad luck. I've got a horseshoe and a cricket.

(KATE opens the cage door. A cricket chirp is heard.)

(CONTINUED)

MAC.
What the heck are you doing?

KATE.
A cricket in a house is good luck.

MAC.
It's also a big exterminator bill.

KATE.
You'll thank me when the evil spirits aren't cursing us with bad luck.

MAC.
I doubt that.

(Attempts to stomp cricket.)

TITUS.
Kate, your shirt is inside out.

KATE.
I know, it's by design.

MAC.
I will never understand modern fashion.

KATE.
It's not a fashion trend. Wearing ones clothes inside out brings good luck.

MAC.
Oh, at least you have a reason. I thought you were just doing it to look stupid.

KATE.
At least I care enough about this show to try to ward off bad luck.

MAC.
I care about this show. Why else would I stay here till the late hours of the night every weekday?

KATE.
Because you don't want to go home to your wife.

MAC.
Now is not the time to get into my personal life.

KATE.
You're right, I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

It's alright. Oh, by the way, Jessica was looking for you, she's in the women's dressing room.

KATE.

Oh, thank you.

(KATE rubs the doorpost as she enters the women's dressing room. BIANCA, mid thirties, plump and perky, drags ANTONIO MARTEX, mid twenties, handsome and quirky, in from the upstage door by the ear. She holds a knife.)

BIANCA.

Mac, will you please remind Antonio here what the props chief's policy is?

MAC.

Is it still twenty for two hours, thirty for the whole night?

(She hits MAC.)

BIANCA.

No, my policy about touching props that aren't yours.

MAC.

If you touch a prop that isn't yours, Bianca has the authority to cut your pinky toe off with the prop that you touched.

BIANCA.

It will be a smooth cut with this knife.

ANTONIO.

Wait, please! Don't cut off my toe! I like my littlest piggy. It's the one that goes to market. I won't ever touch a prop that's not mine ever again.

BIANCA.

Alright. This is strike one and two. Make it strike three and I'll make the murder of Julius Caesar look like a pillow fight compared to what I'll do to you. Do you hear me?

ANTONIO.

I won't be able to if you rip my ear off.

(She lets go of ANTONIO's ear.)

Gosh Bianca, one more good tug and my ear would have fallen off and I would look like Vincent Van Gogh.

(CONTINUED)

BIANCA.

That's what you get for touching a prop that's not yours. Now, where is the rookie?

TITUS.

You mean Regan?

BIANCA.

No, I mean Cleopatra. Yes, I mean Regan.

MAC.

She's in the women's dressing room, doing her makeup. Why do you need her?

BIANCA.

I need her to check her props. If she's going to be playing the nurse, she needs a rag and all of her medical supplies and what not. Mac, between you and me, I don't really understand why she was cast in this role.

MAC.

What do you mean?

BIANCA.

I don't really see this girl being a Shakespearean actress. She's not exactly the brightest knife in the drawer.

TITUS.

She's got all of her lines down.

BIANCA.

She may have them down, but the way she delivers the lines is just...

MAC.

Is just what?

BIANCA.

I don't want to say it's bad, it's just not good. Everything she says sounds like a stereotypical blonde, and not really Shakespearean. Why exactly did she get this part if she can't act?

ANTONIO.

It helps if the director has a thing for pretty, young blondes. All four of his ex-wives were pretty, young blondes.

MAC.

Who knows, Bianca? Maybe he sees something that we can't see.

(CONTINUED)

BIANCA.

He must have microscopes for eyes then. I'm just glad she only has one part and not multiple parts like Antonio here.

MAC.

How many parts do you play again, Antonio? I forget.

ANTONIO.

Well let's see, I play Mercutio, Benvolio, Tybalt, Paris, Abram, Gregory, Sampson, Peter, Balthazar, the Prince of Verona, the musicians, and all the rest of the male parts except for Friar Laurence, Romeo, and Lord Capulet.

BIANCA.

That's unbelievable. You may be an idiot but you're a genius when it comes to this kind of stuff. It just baffles me how you are able to do all of those parts in the different voices. How do you do it?

ANTONIO.

Well, I have to make each character identifiable to the audience using my physicality and voice. So for example, when I play Benvolio, I imagine him as an Irishman. So I stand like this.

(Shifts into an Irishman posture.)

And I talk like this.

(In Irish accent.)

"Have you importuned him by any means?" And then for a character like Paris, I imagine him to be a Frenchman, so I stand like this.

(Shifts to French posture.)

And I talk like this.

(In French accent.)

"Stop thy unhallow'd toil, vile Montague! Can vengeance be pursued further than death? Condemned villain, I do apprehend thee: obey, and go with me; for thou must die."

BIANCA.

How the dickens do you memorize all of those lines?

ANTONIO.

I've got a photographic memory. All I had to do was read the lines once and I had it. I will say, the hardest part about playing so many roles is having to talk to myself. And then of course, I have to fight myself as well.

(CONTINUED)

BIANCA.

Have you ever tried memorizing all the lines to a Shakespeare show and doing a one man show?

ANTONIO.

I have a photographic memory, but I can't store all of the world's information in my head. Sometimes, it can get scrambled up if I have too much in my head. It takes a true master of the mind to memorize all the lines to a Shakespeare show and still keep his sanity. Maybe some day I can get to that level but for right now, I'm focused on these parts.

TITUS.

And you are doing very well. I tell you, Antonio, if we didn't have you in this production, we'd be in a pickle.

(REGAN, early twenties, gorgeous and dull-witted, sticks her head out of the dressing room.)

REGAN.

Bianca, can you do my hair while Jessica fixes my costume?

BIANCA.

Why can't you fix your own hair?

REGAN.

Because the blow dryer won't work.

BIANCA.

Did you try plugging it in?

REGAN.

I never thought of that.

BIANCA.

I'm coming.

REGAN.

I thought your name was Bianca.

(BIANCA and REGAN enter the dressing room.)

MAC.

Me thinks that one is a little snail paced in the head.

ANTONIO.

She wouldn't even be here if it weren't for me. I was driving down the street and I saw her out of my car window, so I picked her up. She was standing outside of the movie theater.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

The movie theater? What was she doing there?

ANTONIO.

Someone told her that the show was at the theater and so she thought they meant the movie theater.

(Both laugh.)

Well, I'm going to go set my props.

MAC.

I thought Bianca said not to touch the props.

ANTONIO.

She said not to touch other people's props, I can touch mine.

MAC.

Oh, okay.

(ANTONIO exits upstage. The PHONE RINGS.)

MAC. (cont'd)

Why is the phone ringing? I thought it was broken.

TITUS.

It only works if someone in the box office patches a call through to it.

MAC.

Oh, well answer it.

TITUS.

(TITUS picks up the phone.)

(Name of theater this production is being done in.), Titus Wiltshire speaking.

(Beat.)

Okay, I'll tell him. Thank you.

(Hangs up.)

Some woman named Margaret just called to say that we need to open the alley door.

(MAC opens the alley door. HENRY, mid thirties, sophisticated and narcissistic, and MARGARET, late twenties, pretty and complex, enter. MARGARET carries a briefcase.)

MAC.

The door was unlocked, you could have just come in.

(CONTINUED)

MARGARET.

My client's contract with your theatre for this production clearly states on page three, paragraph four, line two, that at no point is he to have to open his own door. All doors must be opened for him.

MAC.

Henry, what is this?

HENRY.

The question is not what, it is who.

MAC.

Who?

HENRY.

That is the question. The correct phrasing of your question would be who is this.

MAC.

Fine, who is this?

HENRY.

This is my agent.

MAC.

Why is your agent here?

HENRY.

It occurred to me during our rehearsal process that certain elements of my contract were being violated, and I was being the victim of tragic mistreatment. As the talent, I need to be treated with the utmost respect and care so that I can perform my best and save this production from certain death.

MAC.

What kind of contract violations?

MARGARET.

For starters, are either of these rooms here my client's personal dressing room?

MAC.

No, one is the women's, the other is the men's dressing room. Everyone has to share.

HENRY.

Unacceptable; I refuse to go on! I just found out this morning that I got a callback for a national commercial. I could potentially be cast as one of the two gentlemen of Viagra. I could potentially be one of the two faces of erectile dysfunction. Believe me,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY. (cont'd)
there's a lot of stiff competition, but I think
I'm best suited for the part.

TITUS.
(Aside.)
He's definitely cocky enough for the part.

HENRY.
What was that?

TITUS.
Nothing.

HENRY.
As I was saying, I am starting to have success in other
areas of my career so I don't need this.

MAC.
You can't just leave.

MARGARET.
Oh yes he can.

(Pulls out contract from the briefcase. Hands it
to MAC.)
According to page five, paragraph one, line four of my
client's contract, if at any point any element of his
contract is broken by you, the theater, my client can
refuse to perform in the show at no legal or financial
consequence to him.

MAC.
Who signed the contract agreeing to this?

MARGARET.
The director. He put his signature on the bottom line
in between his second and third glasses of scotch.

MAC.
Oh brother.

MARGARET.
Secondly, my client also demanded that during tech
week, catering be done by Julius' Bistro, and it was
not.

MAC.
That's because they wanted a pound of flesh to pay for
it. Why would you want them to cater us anyway?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY.

Are you serious? Have you not tried their Caesar salad?

MAC.

No.

HENRY.

What a tragedy.

MARGARET.

Furthermore, he was not properly addressed in the program as was agreed to in his contract.

MAC.

Were we supposed to include his address and phone number or something?

MARGARET.

No, my client's name in the program is listed as Henry I. Verona. In his contract, Mr. Verona stated on page five, paragraph five, line five, that he wanted his surname to be only the initial.

MAC.

So, Henry I.V.? Why?

HENRY.

It makes me seem more vague and mysterious. Kind of like C.S. Lewis or T.S. Elliot.

TITUS.

Or O.J. Simpson.

MARGARET.

My client's contract was not upheld, therefore he is walking away from this production.

(MARGARET snatches the contract as she and HENRY turn to leave.)

MAC.

Wait! Look Henry, I'm sorry that we messed up your name in the program. If it makes you feel any better, they misspelled Titus' name too.

TITUS.

What?

(MAC gives TITUS a program from his clipboard.)

I'm sorry about the catering thing as well. If you really want, I will take you there after the show tonight, my treat. And when it comes to the dressing room situation, I really can't do anything. Personally,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TITUS. (cont'd)

I couldn't care less if you leave, but we need you.
After all, you do play several of the parts. So I'm
begging you, please stay.

HENRY.

I'll need to discuss it with my agent.

*(HENRY and MARGARET move DR and talk. TITUS
crosses next to MAC.)*

TITUS.

Why are you stretching your neck out so much for this
guy? He's a bigger narcissist than Iago in Othello. If
he turns his nose up at us any more, I'll probably be
able to see his brain. We don't have to put up with
this guy.

MAC.

Yes we do. He's your understudy, and he's Lord Capulet
and Friar Laurence; two of the most important roles in
the play. We can't get rid of him.

TITUS.

I guess you're right.

MAC.

Besides, he won't actually leave. He's bluffing. He
believes that this production won't be able to function
without him. And since we've already advertised that he
is in this production, he can't just leave and let his
millions of adoring fans down by him not being in this
production. He's our saving grace. He is this show.

TITUS.

You mean he wishes he was this show.

MAC.

What do you mean?

TITUS.

He wanted to be one of the title characters of this
show.

MAC.

He could have been cast as Juliet.

TITUS.

According to various sources, he'll do just about
anything to get what he thinks he deserves. I've heard
he's been badmouthing me because he was robbed of being
Romeo.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.
What has he been saying?

TITUS.
Titus is a cream-faced loon. Titus is a scullion. Titus is as fat as butter.

MAC.
Who's your source?

TITUS.
The bathroom wall.

MAC.
How do you know it's him?

TITUS.
He autographed it at the end.

MAC.
Why would he do that?

TITUS.
His narcissism won't let him let others take credit for his work.

(MARGARET and HENRY turn to MAC and TITUS.)

MARGARET.
My client and I have talked it over, and he will stay, against my advice. But, he requires that all the things you said you were going to do to make it up to him be done, and he wants the lead role in the next production this theater does, with no audition.

MAC.
What if we were planning on doing an all women show?

HENRY.
Then strap a bra on me and put me in high heels, as long as I get the lead.

MAC.
I can't promise you that. It's unfair.

MARGARET.
Then we walk.

(HENRY and MARGARET turn to go.)

MAC.
Wait!
(Regrettably.)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAC. (cont'd)
Fine, you'll be the lead.

MARGARET.
Glad we could come to an understanding. Now Henry, if you feel wronged in any way by these people at any point, you can always call me on my mobile and I'll be here faster than a headache at a family reunion. Break a leg.

(MARGARET exits out the S.R. door.)

TITUS.
How much time till places?

MAC.
Let's see.

(Checks watch.)
Great sound and fury! It's ten minutes till places!

TITUS.
Oh gosh, I don't feel so hot.

HENRY.
Feeling under the weather are we? You know Titus, if you need to sit this one out for the sake of the show, I'm sure everyone will understand. And with a heavy heart, I will try my hand at playing Romeo until you are back to full strength.

TITUS.
I'm good Henry, I just need to go over my lines a bit.

(TITUS enters the men's dressing room.)

MAC.
Alright Henry, go get into costume, we've got a show to do.

HENRY.
I didn't hear a please.

MAC.
Henry, I don't have time for this.

HENRY.
Well make time. It's important to keep your stars happy, Mac.

MAC.
(Agitated.)
Please go get into costume, Henry.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY.

That's more like it.

(HENRY enters the men's dressing room.)

MAC.

(Aside.)

If we ever do *A Mid-Summer's Night Dream*, he'll be the one wearing the ass' head for sure.

(MAC opens the door to the women's dressing room.)

Ten till places.

KATE.

(Offstage.)

Thank you ten.

(EDGAR QUINCE, late sixties, old and whimsical, enters from the lobby door. He wears thick glasses. He carries a flask.)

MAC.

Edgar, what are you doing back here?

EDGAR.

I have to make the opening speech, silly. I'm the conductor and the conductor always makes the opening speech.

MAC.

That's director, sir, not conductor. And sir, the play doesn't start for another ten minutes.

EDGAR.

Ten minutes? Wow, I can probably down this and still have time to down a refill.

MAC.

Sir, are you intoxicated?

EDGAR.

No, I'm Presbyterian.

MAC.

I'll take that as a yes.

(Taking the flask from EDGAR.)

I'll give this back to you when the play--

(EDGAR stomps in a temper tantrum. MAC gives him the flask back. EDGAR drinks from it like drinking from a baby bottle.)

Alright, calm down! Sir, you are worrying me, I'm not sure I can allow you to go out there and make the opening speech.

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR.

Nonsense, I can do it.

MAC.

Alright then, tell me exactly what you are going to say.

EDGAR.

Alright.

(Beat.)

Goodbye, ladies and gentlemen.

MAC.

It's greetings.

EDGAR.

Oh right. Goodbye, ladies and greetings.

MAC.

No, just keep going.

EDGAR.

Remember to take out your cell phones and turn them all the way up.

MAC.

No, Mr. Quince! Great dickens, that would be Patti Lupone's worst nightmare. I'm sorry, I can't risk you doing the opening speech.

EDGAR.

Let me finish.

(Beat.)

I am very pleased to present to you, Mr. William Shakehands play-

MAC.

It's Shakespeare.

EDGAR.

Why would we shake spears? My daddy always taught me to shake people's hands. I don't even own a spear.

MAC.

His name is Shakespeare.

EDGAR.

Oh, okay let me finish.

(Beat.)

I am pleased to present to you Shakespeare's Rome and Julia.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

It's Romeo and Juliet.

EDGAR.

I don't know a Romeo and Juliet.

MAC.

(Slaps forehead.)

That's the name of the play. You know what, I can't let you do this.

EDGAR.

Come on Anthony, don't be such a spoil sport.

MAC.

My name is not Anthony, it's Mac.

EDGAR.

Oh, well then could you go get Anthony?

MAC.

I'd be a fool to let you go out there.

EDGAR.

Give me a chance.

MAC.

Fine, I'll give you a DUI test.

(Aside.)

Directing under the influence test.

EDGAR.

Alright, what do you want me to do?

MAC.

Uh, say the alphabet backwards.

EDGAR.

The alphabet backwards.

MAC.

No, I mean recite the alphabet backwards, from Z to A.

EDGAR.

Oh, alright; Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F
E D C B A.

MAC.

Wow, I didn't actually expect you to be able to do that. I can't even do that sober. Okay, hop on one foot.

(EDGAR does all of things MAC says.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAC. (cont'd)
Switch feet. Jog in place. Do jumping jacks.

EDGAR.
Is this a DUI test or a workout video?

MAC.
Alright, stop. Now how about you just walk in a straight line?

EDGAR.
That's easy.

(EDGAR starts to walk in a straight line.)

MAC.
Good, good.
(KATE opens the door.)

KATE.
Mac, can you zip me up?

MAC.
Sure, Kate.
(MAC turns to zip KATE up, EDGAR is still doing the straight line test. He loses his balance and stumbles over, but then pops back up before MAC turns around from zipping KATE up. KATE goes back into the dressing room.)
Alright, Mr. Quince, you can do it. Just promise me that you'll go over what you're going to say before, and promise me that you won't drink anymore until the show starts.

EDGAR.
Will do, Anthony.
(EDGAR exits out the alley door. MAC runs to the door and opens it then yells out.)

MAC.
Other door, Mr. Quince.
(EDGAR comes back in and exits through the lobby door.)
Alright, let's see here.
(Marking the checklist.)
Henry is here. Titus and Antonio are also here. That's all the guys. Kate is here, Regan is here.

(CONTINUED)

(ALEXAS, mid thirties, plump and egotistical, enters from the alley. She stands in the door frame in a sultry pose. She wears a trench coat.

Something's not right, who is missing?

ALEXAS.

Good to see that I'm so easily forgotten. That tells me I need to make myself more memorable.

MAC.

Alexas, I thought you were already here. Where have you been? Places is in less than ten minutes.

ALEXAS.

Patience, Mac. I was off on a spiritual adventure, getting into character.

MAC.

What is there to get into? You only have like two lines.

ALEXAS.

There are no small parts, only small actresses. As I was saying, I taped a photo of William Shakespeare onto the wall of the van I live in, and I stared at it for two straight hours so that I could make my mind one with the characters Shakespeare wrote for me. I have reached the embodiment of my characters mentally, physically, and emotionally. I am Lady Montague and the Page, and Lady Montague and the Page are me.

MAC.

And you are also late. Punctuality is key, you're not even ready yet. Go get dressed.

ALEXAS.

No need.

(Takes off trench coat.)

I slept in my costume.

MAC.

There's that costume. Jessica has been worried sick. She thought someone had stolen it.

ALEXAS.

Oh please, why would someone steal a 1300's dress? Halloween isn't for a couple more months.

(The PHONE RINGS, ALEXAS picks it up.)

Hello? This is Lady Montague speaking.

(Beat.)

Just a moment. Mac, Beth.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

What?

ALEXAS.

Some woman named Beth is asking for you.

MAC.

Oh.

(MAC takes the phone.)

Hi, Beth. Yes, we are just about to start. I don't know what time I'll be getting home. Probably around twelve, if I had to guess. What did you make for supper?

(Disgusted.)

Oh, meatloaf. Yeah, now that I think about it, it will probably be around one. Don't wait up, bye.

(He hangs up.)

ALEXAS.

The old wife, eh?

MAC.

(Sarcastically.)

No, it was the President.

ALEXAS.

I sense that you really didn't want to be going home.

MAC.

Excellent observation, detective.

ALEXAS.

Any particular reason why?

MAC.

Well, to be perfectly honest, I don't think marriage is for me. I mean it was fine at first, but then the spark just kind of got lost over the years. I don't feel like me and her--

ALEXAS.

Her and I.

MAC.

Whatever. Anyway, I don't feel that her and I are really star-crossed lovers anymore.

ALEXAS.

Well, how do you feel when you are around her?

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

Awkward; we don't really talk anymore. That little phone call we just had was probably the longest I've talked to her in a few weeks. We both know there is a problem, we just have never addressed it. Well rather, I've never addressed it.

ALEXAS.

Why haven't you?

MAC.

I have a fear of confrontation. Not with people in general, just my wife.

ALEXAS.

I know what you mean. You know, I used to be married.

MAC.

No kidding?

ALEXAS.

Yep, for two whole months.

MAC.

You were only married for two months? Did you decide to get a divorce while on the honeymoon?

ALEXAS.

I know what you're thinking. "Alexas, you didn't give love a chance, it was like a flower that never got the chance to bloom. You have to give it time." Well maybe love is not for me, Mother.

(Realizing what she said.)

I mean, marriage just was not my thing. I realized a month in that all Emalia was trying to do was hold me back. I'm a free spirit; a wild stallion that cannot be tamed.

MAC.

Hold up, did you say Emalia? You were married to a woman?

ALEXAS.

Well I didn't know she was a woman. The photograph in her newspaper ad wasn't very high quality.

MAC.

You really should write a book.

(Checks watch.)

Great sound and fury! It's five minutes till places.

(MAC opens the women's dressing room door.)

Five minutes till places, everyone out for a pre-show meeting.

(CONTINUED)

(He moves to the men's dressing room.)
Five minutes till places, everyone out--

HENRY.

(Offstage.)
We heard you yell it the first time.

MAC.

Right, get out here.

(All of the cast and crew except ANTONIO enter from the dressing rooms.)

JESSICA.

(Noticing ALEXAS.)
There's that dress. You were the one who stole it!

ALEXAS.

I didn't steal anything, it is my character's costume.
I am my character, therefore, this is *my* costume.

JESSICA.

But that doesn't mean you can just take it from the theatre.

(Examining the dress.)
And look at this thing, it's wrinkled. It's almost as if someone slept in it and then tossed and turned all night.

ALEXAS.

I do not toss and turn while I sleep, I'm a very still sleeper.

HENRY.

Will you two shut up? You are disrupting my concentration.

MAC.

Quiet! Now, has everyone set their props?

ALL.

Yes.

MAC.

Has everyone used the bathroom?

ALL.

Yes.

MAC.

Is everyone's fly up? We don't want to relive the infamous Much Ado About Nothing incident of last year.

(CONTINUED)

ALL.

Yes.

MAC.

Good. Well ladies and gentlemen, this is it, opening night. It has been a pleasure working with most of you. Just remember to focus, and *listen*. Acting is reacting. Stay in character no matter what. We've put months of work into this production, and I'm proud of you all. Now let's all put our best foot forward, and break a leg.

REGAN.

Well that's a rotten thing to wish on someone. What if I told you to throw yourself upon a sword, how would you feel about that?

MAC.

It's an expression, Regan. It means good luck.

REGAN.

Oh.

MAC.

Are there any questions?

TITUS.

Can we do a warm up or something?

MAC.

Sure, what do you have in mind?

BIANCA.

I've got one. Alright everyone, repeat after me and remember to over-articulate your consonants, make them stand out.

(Beat.)

Red leather.

ALL.

Red leather.

BIANCA.

Yellow leather.

ALL.

Yellow leather.

BIANCA.

(Slowly increasing speed.)

Red leather, yellow leather. Red leather, yellow leather. Red leather, yellow leather.

(CONTINUED)

ALL.

Red leather, yellow leather. Red leather, yellow leather. Red leather, yellow leather.

BIANCA.

(Slowly.)

The back street black sheep backs down the black streak.

ALL.

The back street black sheep backs down the black streak.

MAC.

Alright, good.

KATE.

Can I do something?

MAC.

Make it fast.

KATE.

As you all know, for the past couple of weeks I have been trying to ward off the spirits of bad luck in preparation for this opening night. It is scientifically proven that bad luck spirits are most active on the opening night of a play. But unfortunately, I fear that my efforts have a minimal effect considering that I am just one person. So, if all of you would join me in a ritual to ward off the bad luck, I believe it will do the trick.

(Various groans.)

MAC.

Humor her.

KATE.

To bring us good luck, and to ward off any bad luck, everyone turn seven times in a clockwise circle.

(ALL do so.)

BIANCA.

I'd rather have bad luck than have to throw up.

HENRY.

I've got whiplash.

REGAN.

The world is spinning.

(ANTONIO enters from the upstage door.)

(CONTINUED)

ANTONIO.

Hey guys, what did I miss?

HENRY.

Great, now we have to redo everything because of Mr. Punctuality.

MAC.

We don't have time to redo anything. Places everyone; break a leg!

REGAN.

Hey!

MAC.

It's still an expression, Regan.

(REGAN exits upstage, followed by KATE, who rubs the doorposts. JESSICA and BIANCA go into the women's dressing room. HENRY examines the clothes rack.)

ALEXAS.

(Getting into character.)

Goodbye Alexas, hello Lady Montague.

(ALEXAS exits upstage.)

TITUS.

I'm not feeling so hot all of a sudden.

HENRY.

Would you like me to fill in as Romeo, old buddy, old pal?

(Dramatically, faking sympathy.)

I don't want you to hurt yourself if you are not up to performing tonight.

TITUS.

Thanks Henry, but I think I can make it.

HENRY.

Drat! I mean, that's good.

(Exiting.)

Break a leg.

(Aside.)

Literally I hope.

TITUS.

What was that?

(CONTINUED)

HENRY.

Nothing.

(HENRY exits upstage.)

MAC.

You can do this, Titus.

TITUS.

I don't know, Mac.

MAC.

You know, I was going over the reserved seats list for this evening and I happened to have stumbled upon a few names that may be of interest to you.

TITUS.

Like who?

MAC.

No one really, just Adriana Minola.

TITUS.

Adriana Minola? The model, Adriana Minola? The girl who is the personification of a summer's day? The girl with a heart of gold and looks fit for the gods? That Adriana Minola?

MAC.

Yes, have you heard of her?

TITUS.

I've heard the name in passing.

MAC.

Oh, did I mention that she is coming to this performance tonight to console herself after a break up with her boyfriend?

TITUS.

The fool dumped her?

MAC.

Not necessarily dumped. Her boyfriend, or shall I say ex-boyfriend, Fenton Page, whom I'm sure you have heard of, has recently decided to join the fight against bronchitis in Africa. Since Fenton would be gone for several months, and he does not believe that a long distance relationship would work, Adriana and he decided to break up.

(CONTINUED)

TITUS.

Fenton is gone? Yes! Thank God for bronchitis in Africa! I mean, I'm glad he has decided to devote his life to helping others. It just really is a shame that Adriana has to suffer so. Maybe I can take her out to dinner after the show, to help comfort her, of course.

MAC.

Yes, of course.

TITUS.

I'm suddenly feeling a lot better. The game's afoot!

(TITUS exits upstage. EDGAR enters from the lobby door, holding a flask. He is even more drunk than before.)

EDGAR.

It's time to give a speech.

MAC.

Mr. Quince, I thought I told you to not drink anymore tonight.

EDGAR.

I didn't, I chugged.

MAC.

You've had enough for one night, Mr. Quince.

EDGAR.

Nonsense, I've barely even *Quinced* my thirst.

(Slaps his knee and laughs.)

MAC.

Mr. Quince, leave the comedy to people with a funny bone. Can you make the opening speech without making a fool out of yourself, and more importantly, this theatre company?

EDGAR.

Sure.

MAC.

Are you positive?

EDGAR.

Positive.

MAC.

What's my name?

(CONTINUED)

EDGAR.
Nac?

MAC.
(Reluctantly.)
Close enough, get out there. And give me that flask.

(MAC takes the flask, EDGAR exits upstage. MAC
unscrews the cap.)
Here's to another opening night.

(He takes a big swig, exits upstage. Blackout.)

Scene 2

*The curtain is closed. This takes place in the
space downstage of the curtain, which will remain
closed for the entire scene.*

AT RISE:

*(No one is onstage. After a few seconds, EDGAR
stumbles onstage from SL.)*

EDGAR.
(Drunken.)
Merry Christmas, ladies and gentlemen. I am the
director of this fine reduction, Mr. Edgar Quince.
Thank you really much for coming to tonight's
performance of Romeo and Juliet's famous play, William
Shakespeare. If you would, please take out your cell
phones and turn them all the way up.

*(MAC holds out a giant sign that says "Do not
actually do this.")*
Just a remainder, there is to be no photocopy, flash or
otherwise. And of course, this show is brought to you
by the law offices of River, Trickle, and Peade. So
with further ado, (Name of theatre this production is
at) presents Romeo's Shakespeare and Juliet.

*(EDGAR exits SL. The lights are lowered. After a
few seconds, ANTONIO enters from SR armed with a
sword and bucklers. Lights up.)*

ANTONIO.
(As SAMPSON.)
Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals.
(Hops over. As GREGORY.)
No, for then we should be colliers.
(Hops back. As SAMPSON.)
I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.
(As GREGORY.)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANTONIO. (cont'd)

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.

(As SAMPSON.)

I strike quickly, being moved.

(As GREGORY.)

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

(As SAMPSON.)

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

(As GREGORY.)

To move is to stir; and to be valiant is to stand:
therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.

(As SAMPSON.)

A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take
the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

*Backstage, about forty five minutes later. The set
is exactly the same as before.*

AT RISE:

*(MAC is standing center stage checking his
clipboard.)*

MAC.

So far so good.

(REGAN enters from the women's dressing room.)

REGAN.

What scene are we in?

MAC.

Haven't you been paying attention?

REGAN.

I'm not good at multitasking.

MAC.

It's act two, scene four.

REGAN.

(Confused.)

Oh. Which one is that again?

MAC.

The scene where Romeo arranges the meeting in Friar
Laurence's room for the secret wedding of him and
Juliet.

(CONTINUED)

REGAN.

Romeo arranges for Friar Laurence and Juliet to get secretly married in this play?

MAC.

What? No. Romeo and Juliet are having their wedding in Friar Laurence's room.

REGAN.

Oh, I've got it now.

(REGAN exits upstage. HENRY enters when she opens the door. He is wearing his FRIAR outfit. MAC resumes checking his clipboard. He doesn't pay attention to HENRY.)

HENRY.

Did you hear that crowd cheer at the end of that last scene? I thought that fellow on the front row was going to clap his hands off. It is a marvelous feeling to know that you brought the people a magical acting performance, one that they will only dream of seeing again. And then for them to reward you with a thunderous applause that could awaken Sleeping Beauty, oh it is an exhilarating feeling. But of course, the real treasure in the audience this evening is--

(KATE bursts in from upstage.)

KATE.

Florizel Brackenbury is in the audience!

HENRY.

I know, I was just telling Mac.

KATE.

Oh, wait!

(KATE runs to the upstage door. She rubs the doorposts, then runs back. ALEXAS enters from the women's dressing room.)

ALEXAS.

Did I hear that correctly? Florizel Brackenbury is in the audience?

HENRY.

Unless he has an identical twin, it is him!

(HENRY, ALEXAS, and KATE join hands in a circle. They jump around with glee.)

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

I'm sorry, who?

(KATE, ALEXAS, and HENRY dart their gaze to MAC.)

KATE.

You've never heard of Florizel Brackenbury?

MAC.

Is that a racehorse jockey?

HENRY.

Florizel Brackenbury is a Broadway director.

ALEXAS.

He directed that musical about the life of William Howard Taft.

MAC.

"Fat Lard and In Charge," I love that musical!

(Singing.)

MY NAME IS WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT, MY BELLY JIGGLES WHEN I LAUGH.

HENRY.

Yes, it is such a great show.

ALEXAS.

I wonder what he is doing here.

KATE.

I hear he's a big supporter of community theatre.

HENRY.

What a noble man.

KATE.

He's a brilliant man, and he's very influential on today's Broadway stage.

ALEXAS.

He could make or break an actor in this business.

HENRY.

And with a little luck, he will see my performance tonight and bump me straight up onto a Broadway stage to perform in one of his musicals. "Debauchery in Dubois," "The Cannibal's Cook Book," "Betrayal, the Benedict Arnold Musical," there are just so many options to choose from.

(CONTINUED)

KATE.

(Smirking.)
Good luck with that.

HENRY.

What are you smirking at?

KATE.

I didn't smirk.

HENRY.

I heard a smirk.
(To MAC.)
Did you hear a smirk?

MAC.

I heard a smirk.

HENRY.

He heard a smirk.
(To ALEXAS.)
Did you hear a smirk?

ALEXAS.

I heard a smirk.

HENRY.

She heard a smirk.

What was the smirk for?

KATE.

Nothing, it's just that...

HENRY.

Just that what?

KATE.

It's just that I doubt that Mr. Brackenbury is scouting for anyone to star in one of his musicals on Broadway at some community theatre showing of Romeo and Juliet. And besides, even though you are onstage a lot, you share the spotlight with Antonio, who plays about a million different roles, and Titus who plays Romeo, the title character. And unless you give a performance tonight that is fit for the gods, you won't be getting called up to the Broadway stage by Mr. Brackenbury, because you don't stand out in this show, thanks to the incredible performances of your co-stars.

MAC.

I hate to say it Henry, but it's true.

(CONTINUED)

(MAC exits upstage. KATE rubs the doorposts, then goes into the women's dressing room.)

ALEXAS.

What can I say? The theatre makes you feel so alive yet dead at the same time. You know, I used to be addicted to cocaine. True story. It made me feel like I had wind in my sails and a fire in my engine. Eventually, I quit the stuff. I didn't think I could ever feel as I did when I used that stuff ever again, but then I discovered the stage. Or did the stage discover me? Life is an endless cycle of unanswered questions that you have to seek out the answers to.

HENRY.

Is there a point to this or are you talking just to hear yourself talk?

ALEXAS.

I can take a hint. You don't want me around. I will just be in the dressing room collecting my thoughts, or will my thoughts be collecting me?

(ALEXAS exits into the dressing room.)

HENRY.

(Aside.)

I'm not entirely sure she is off the cocaine.

(Talking to himself.)

That Kate girl is right about one thing though, I'm getting outshined out there. I hate it when other people are right. Come on Henry, think. What impresses an audience member more than anything? A jazz square? No, this isn't a musical. Wait, covering for someone! That's it! All I have to do is get Titus out of there and then I can take his spot and impress Mr. Brackenbury. He will see how I quickly hopped into the role of Romeo and then he will be so impressed with how good I do with it that he will give me a part on one of his Broadway shows. But how do I get rid of Titus? Murder him? No, because then this will turn into a whodunit. I know, I'll poison him! It will be like Claudius in Hamlet, but of course, I won't be killing the boy, I'll merely be decapitating him.

(Realizing his mistake. Aside.)

Incapacitating him. Sorry, it has been a long night.

(He crosses to the phone.)

Margaret, it's Henry. Listen, I need you to go to the store and pick up some rat poison. I have got an idea that will shoot me straight to Broadway. What do you mean which store? Yes, I said *the* store, but you know what I meant. Look, just go get the poison and bring it here as fast as you can.

(CONTINUED)

(He hangs up. Lights down.)

Scene 4

Thirty minutes later. Curtain closed.

AT RISE:

(A scene in the play has already started. The lights slowly raise up on KATE stands D.S.C. as JULIET.)

KATE.

O, I have bought the mansion of a love but not possess'd it, and, though I am sold, not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day as is the night before some festival. To an impatient child that hath new robes and may not wear them. O, here comes my nurse, and she brings news; and every tongue that speaks but Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.

(REGAN, as the NURSE enters from S.L. She carries a rope ladder. She is wringing her hands.)

Now, Nurse, what news? What hast thou there? The cords that Romeo bid thee fetch?

REGAN.

Ay, ay, the cords.

(REGAN throws the rope ladder down.)

KATE.

Ay me! What news? Why dost thou wring thy hands?

REGAN.

Ah, weraday! He's dead, he's dead, he's dead! We are undone, lady, we are undone! Alack the day! He's gone, he's kill'd, he's dead!

KATE.

Can heaven be so envious?

REGAN.

Romeo can, though heaven cannot. O Romeo, Romeo! Who ever would have thought it? Romeo!

KATE.

What devil art thou, that dost torment me thus? This torture should be roar'd in dismal hell. Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but 'I,' and that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more than the death-darting eye of cockatrice: I am not I, if there be such an I; or those eyes shut, that make thee answer 'I.'

(CONTINUED)

(REGAN stares out into the audience.)
 If he be slain, say 'I'; or if not, no: brief sounds
 determine of my weal or woe.

REGAN.

(Breaking character of JULIET.)
 Huh? Oh. Uh...
(Forgetting lines, trying to improvise.)
 I saweth the woundest, I saweth it with thouest owneth
 twoeth eyesighteth. God save Mark! Here on his manly
 breath: A pitiful corpse, a bloody pity corpse; Pale,
 pale as the Irish, all bedaubed in blood, all in
 whore-blood; I swooned at the sighteth.

KATE.

(In shock. Trying to recover.)
 O, break, my heart! Poor bankrupt, break at once! To
 prison, eyes, ne'er look on liberty! Vile earth, to
 earth resign; end motion here; and thou and Romeo press
 one heavy bier!

REGAN.

O Tybalt, Tybalt, my besteth friend I hadeth! O chaotic
 Tybalt! Honest gentile man! That ever I should liveth
 to seeth thee deadeth!

(KATE slaps her head. Blackout.)

Scene 5

Backstage. Five minutes later.

AT RISE:

*(MAC paces back and forth in a rage. BIANCA checks
 the props table. JESSICA checks the costume
 rack. KATE and REGAN enter from upstage.)*

MAC.

(To REGAN.)
 Do you care to explain yourself?

REGAN.

Me?

(ALEXAS enters from the women's dressing room.)

MAC.

What happened out there?

REGAN.

What are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

The flubbed up lines.

REGAN.

Oh, you mean that.

MAC.

(Mocking her.)

Oh, you mean that. What the heck is I saweth it with thouest owneth twoeth eyesighteth? And what about God save Mark? Who the heck is Mark?

(Reading from the script.)

The line is "I saw the wound, I saw it with mine eyes, God save the mark." Not the jibber jabber you just said out there! What the heck happened?

REGAN.

Well, there was this guy in the audience--

MAC.

Hold up, you just screwed up a bunch of lines, completely broke character, and butchered an improvised recovery, all because of some guy in the audience?

REGAN.

But he's famous.

MAC.

I don't care if Moses from the Bible parted the seats during the middle of the show, you don't break character and screw everything up!

REGAN.

But it was Florizel Brackenbury.

BIANCA.

(Excited.)

Florizel Brackenbury?

JESSICA.

(Excited.)

He's here?

BIANCA.

I love him!

ALEXAS.

He's so handsome.

MAC.

Shut up!

(CONTINUED)

KATE.

Just calm down, Mac.

MAC.

I don't want to calm down.

(To REGAN.)

Listen here you knave; after this show, you will never work with us again. After this, you are getting the boot!

REGAN.

I love boots! But why just one boot? You need two boots to make a pair, duh.

MAC.

You are an idiot! I don't know why you were cast in this play in the first place, you suck!

(ANTONIO enters from the upstage door. He has parts of his costume removed.)

REGAN.

Well, at least I don't...

(Struggling.)

At least I don't...

MAC.

At least you don't what?

REGAN.

AHH!

(REGAN blindly turns and punches ANTONIO in the gut. ANTONIO falls to the ground in pain.)

JESSICA.

Good heavens!

MAC.

Check on him!

(BIANCA rushes to ANTONIO's side.)

Is he alright?

BIANCA.

He's knocked out.

MAC.

What? He got hit in the gut, how could he be knocked out?

(CONTINUED)

BIANCA.

He must have passed out from the pain.

REGAN.

I'm sorry, I forgot that I can hit that hard. I've been taking boxing lessons since I was fifteen.

MAC.

Look what you have done! What do you have to say for yourself?

REGAN.

I'm sorry, I have to be onstage.

(REGAN runs and exits upstage.)

MAC.

No you don't, come back here!

BIANCA.

What do I do with Antonio?

JESSICA.

We have to dump the body.

BIANCA.

He's not dead, he's just knocked up.

JESSICA.

Knocked out, not knocked up. He's not pregnant.

KATE.

A person getting knocked out is *not* good luck. It's bad. Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad!

BIANCA.

Seriously, what do I do with Antonio?

MAC.

Perform CPR.

BIANCA.

I don't know how, I'm not certified.

MAC.

Just do it!

(BIANCA starts pressing on ANTONION's mouth. Then puts her mouth on his chest and blows. She switches back and forth between the two. KATE frantically paces back and forth.)

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA.

Wait, isn't Antonio in the next scene?

KATE.

This scene is almost over.

BIANCA.

What do we do? He hasn't woken up yet.

JESSICA.

Mac, you have to do it.

MAC.

Me? Why me?

JESSICA.

Because you're the only guy here. Plus, you are the only one of us that knows Antonio's lines, because you've helped him study them.

MAC.

But I'm not an actor.

BIANCA.

And I'm not a mechanic, but that doesn't stop me from driving my crappy, old car to work everyday. Now get out there.

MAC.

But I have really bad stage fright. I tried acting one time back in grade school and I froze up. I just sat there, silently. It was so quiet in that auditorium that my grandmother thought her hearing aides were broken.

JESSICA.

You won't freeze up this time.

MAC.

I can't.

BIANCA.

Do you want us to call your wife and start a confrontation?

MAC.

How do you know about that?

JESSICA.

Alexas told us.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.
Can't she keep her mouth shut?

KATE.
So what's it going to be?

MAC.
(Admitting defeat.)
Oh, dang it! Give me one of his costumes. If I'm going to do this, I'm going to do this right.

(JESSICA begins removing parts of ANTONIO'S costume. MAC undresses. Blackout.)

Scene 6

Two minutes later. Curtain is closed.

AT RISE:

(The stage is empty. After a few seconds, HENRY enters from S.L. as LORD CAPULET, followed by ALEXAS as LADY CAPULET.)

HENRY.
Things have fallen out, sir, so unluckily, that we have had no time to move our daughter. Look you, she loved her kinsman Tybalt dearly, and so did I. Well, we were born to die. 'Tis very late, she'll not come down to-night: I promise you, but for your company, I would have been a-bed an hour ago.

(HENRY realizes that MAC isn't there. He goes S.L. and drags MAC out. MAC is dressed as PARIS. MAC has a deer in the headlights look.)

MAC.
(Scared.)
These times of woe afford no time to woo. Madam, good night, commend me to your daughter.

ALEXAS.
I will, and know her mind early to-morrow. Tonight she is mew'd up to her heaviness.

HENRY.
Sir Paris, I will make a desperate tender of my child's love. I think she will be ruled in all respects by me. Nay, more, I doubt it not. Wife, go you to her ere you go to bed. Acquaint her here of my son Paris' love, and bid her, mark you me, on Wednesday next. But, soft! what day is this?

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

(Scared.)

Monday, my lord.

HENRY.

Monday! Ha, ha! Well, Wednesday is too soon, O' Thursday let it be. O' Thursday, tell her, She shall be married to this noble earl. Will you be ready? Do you like this haste? We'll keep no great ado, a friend or two. For, hark you, Tybalt being slain so late, it may be thought we held him carelessly, being our kinsman, if we revel much. Therefore we'll have some half a dozen friends, and there an end. But what say you to Thursday?

MAC.

(Scared.)

My lord, I would that Thursday were tomorrow.

HENRY.

Well get you gone. O' Thursday be it, then. Go you to Juliet ere you go to bed. Prepare her, wife, against this wedding-day. Farewell, my lord. Light to my chamber, ho! Afore me! It is so very late, that we may call it early by and by. Good night.

(Blackout.)

Scene 7

Backstage. A minute later.

AT RISE:

(ANTONIO is still unconscious. BIANCA is rubbing a wet rag on ANTONIO's head. JESSICA waits at the door with a coat hanger. MAC and HENRY enter from upstage.)

JESSICA.

Well, if it isn't the deer in the headlights.

HENRY.

Hey guys, who am I?

(He does an impression of MAC's deer in the headlights face. All laugh except MAC.)

MAC.

(Taking off the costume.)

If you don't like how I did it you could have done it yourself.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA.

We're just messing with you, Mac. You did very good.

MAC.

Well thank you, Jessica. Just send my Tony award to my PO Box, will you?.

(He gives the PARIS costume to JESSICA. She hangs it on the clothes rack.)

BIANCA.

Guys, Antonio is waking up.

(ALL gather around ANTONIO. MAC leans down beside him. ANTONIO sits up.)

ANTONIO.

(Dazed.)

What happened?

MAC.

You took a hard punch to the stomach.

BIANCA.

You passed out from the pain.

ANTONIO.

Who punched me?

BIANCA.

Regan.

ANTONIO.

Are you sure it wasn't Muhammad Ali?

JESSICA.

She's been boxing for years.

ANTONIO.

I can tell.

MAC.

Don't worry, Antonio, Regan will be punished for punching you. I have a law degree, so if you wish to take her to court, I can offer you legal advice.

ANTONIO.

Nonsense, I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't want her to receive any punishment whatsoever. Okay, Mac?

(CONTINUED)

MAC.

Alright.

ANTONIO.

Okay. So, did you guys call the show for the night?

HENRY.

No, the show is going on right now.

ANTONIO.

What? What part are we at?

MAC.

Act three, scene five. The scene where Juliet fakes taking the Nurse's advice about marrying Paris instead of Romeo because Romeo is banished. And then plots to go to Friar Laurence for advice.

JESSICA.

The one where she says she'll kill herself if Friar Laurence can't help her.

ANTONIO.

Wait, that means the scene between Paris, Lady Capulet, and Lord Capulet has already happened. Who played Paris?

MAC.

I did.

ANTONIO.

(Laughing.)

No seriously, who?

MAC.

I did.

ANTONIO.

Are you serious? Oh gosh, the show is doomed!

HENRY.

He surprisingly did pretty good.

MAC.

Surprisingly?

BIANCA.

Desperate times called for desperate measures. We didn't want to have him do it, but we had no other choice.

(CONTINUED)

MAC.
You all begged me to do it.

JESSICA.
Only because we had to.

MAC.
Unbelievable, all of you!

(MAC exits upstage.)

ANTONIO.
Well, at least the show is still going on. I need to change into the Paris costume.

JESSICA.
I'll help you change, just don't take off your underwear. Go to the women's dressing room, I'm not going into that sweat lodge you men call a dressing room.

(JESSICA grabs the PARIS costume. JESSICA and ANTONIO exit into the women's dressing room.)

BIANCA.
I believe the worst is behind us, or so I hope.

(BIANCA exits upstage. MARGARET knocks on the alley door. HENRY opens the door. MARGARET enters, carrying a bag.)

HENRY.
There you are, what took you so long?

MARGARET.
I couldn't find any rat poison. Apparently that Julius' bistro place you love so much bought all the rat poison in the city. So the next time you go there and get the Caesar salad, know that the bacon bits may not actually be bacon bits.

HENRY.
So you didn't get anything?

MARGARET.
Don't be silly. I'm an agent; I always come through for my clients. Since I couldn't get you rat poison, I got you some syrup.

HENRY.
What are we going to do, give him pancakes?

(CONTINUED)

MARGARET.

Not pancake syrup, cough syrup.

(She pulls out a bottle of cough syrup.)

HENRY.

I'm trying to poison him, not take his cough away.

MARGARET.

You are not going to *poison* anyone. All you are going to do is put them to sleep for a few hours. In case you haven't realized, poisoning people is illegal and it's a good way to get yourself sued. No one can sue you for putting them to sleep. Heck, if it was me that you were putting to sleep, I'd probably thank you for it. Now a side effect of cough syrup is that it causes drowsiness. This particular brand of cough syrup that I picked up is so potent, it could make a horse drowsy.

HENRY.

Where did you get it from?

MARGARET.

The Merchant's store over on 12th street. Well, not really from the store, more from the alleyway behind the store. The point is that I got it.

HENRY.

(He takes the bottle.)

Brilliant, I'll have Titus down the entire bottle.

MARGARET.

Whoa there, you don't want to kill the man. You don't want to kill him right?

HENRY.

No, of course not.

MARGARET.

Good, because I swore I would never cross that line again.

HENRY.

Again?

MARGARET.

Never mind, we are getting off subject. You don't want to have the man drink the entire bottle, that could kill him. Give him just a little bit, that should do the trick. It will knock him out about thirty minutes or so after he's swallowed it, and once he's knocked out, you swoop in and steal his spot before he wakes up.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY.

Thirty minutes? I can't wait that long for him to be knocked out. I need to take his part as soon as possible if I want Mr. Brackenbury to see a lot of me.

MARGARET.

Well I'm sorry, you're just going to have to wait.

HENRY.

Alright, thanks for bringing it.

MARGARET.

My pleasure.

HENRY.

Oh, and it is common sense, but common sense seems to be lacking nowadays, so I had better clarify. This is staying between you and I correct?

MARGARET.

Of course. My lips are ninety percent sealed.

HENRY.

Ninety percent sealed?

MARGARET.

(Hinting.)

Well, they could be sealed all the way with maybe a few extra dollars for dinner. I mean, I did get almost to my house and then have to turn around to go get you some black market cough syrup from a sketchy part of town.

HENRY.

Send me the dinner bill and I will reimburse you.

MARGARET.

(Hinting.)

Oh thank you, Henry. You know, I feel as though my lips still aren't sealed all the way. I bet they could be with a nice new dress.

HENRY.

Fine, send me that bill as well.

MARGARET.

Oh you are too kind, Henry. I'll be at Timon's Dress Shop if you need to contact me. My phone died so you'll have to call them. Tootles, Henry.

(MARGARET exits.)

(CONTINUED)

HENRY.

(Aside.)

Greedy shrew. Now, to put my plan in motion.

(HENRY goes into the men's dressing room. He comes back with a flask.)

(Aside.)

My father always told me to keep my friends close, my enemies closer, and my liquor closest.

(He pours the cough syrup into the flask. He puts the cap on the flask, then shakes it. He then smells the concoction.)

(Talking to himself.)

It smells like expired grape soda. This should work. Although, I do hate that it will take thirty minutes, the sooner that Titus is out of the picture, the sooner I will be able to take his place. Maybe I can speed up the process by adding more cough syrup. I won't add enough to kill him, just enough to knock him out faster.

(Reading the label.)

"This product takes about forty minutes to take into effect." That must mean that it takes the same amount of time for the drowsiness side effect to kick in as well. So if I added about a two seconds worth of cough syrup and that took off ten minutes of the effect, making it thirty minutes until he felt the drowsiness...

(He does math on an imaginary chalk board in the air.)

Then for every second that I pour the cough syrup into the flask, it takes off about five minutes until the effect is felt. That means I just have to pour five seconds worth of cough syrup into the flask for it to be five minutes until the effect is felt. I think. Is this right?

(Shrugging off doubt.)

Of course it is.

(HENRY opens the flask and pours the cough syrup into it. He counts out loud to five as he pours. He screws the cap back onto the flask.)

Now I have to make sure that Titus discovers his little treat.

(HENRY sets the flask on the chair. He exits into the men's dressing room. BIANCA enters from upstage. She is massaging her forehead.)

(CONTINUED)