

CAST AWAY TO SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

By Claudia Haas

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ISBN: 1-60003-550-7

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(8 Females, 3 Males, 1 Either)

THE CAST AWAY KIDS

AMY (f)	15 yrs. old; flighty and talks and eats when nervous; likes the easy way out
HANNAH (f)	15 yrs. old; over-analyzes everything
TYLER (m)	17 yrs. old; takes charge but doesn't think things through; Hannah's brother

THE LEFT-BEHIND KIDS

CASSANDRA (f)	13 yrs. old; has a computer for a brain; Amy's sister
LAWRENCE or LAURA (m/f)	13 yrs. old; affable next door neighbor

SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN - 1596

WILL SHAKESPEARE (m)	ageless; the "playwright"
ANNA SHAKESPEARE (f)	ageless; Will's pragmatic wife
SUSANNAH (f)	15 yrs. old; high-spirited bossy daughter of Will and Anna
HAMNET (m)	11 yrs. old; ready to be a man, but a bit young! Son of Will and Anna
JUDITH (f)	11 yrs. old; Hamnet's twin; as strong-willed as her sister
MARY (f)	16 yrs. old; niece of Will and Anna; puts on "airs"
AMELIA (f)	12 yrs. old; Mary's younger sister; lives in a dream world of her own making

PROPS

- Chip Bag - AMY
- Notebook and papers - HANNAH
- 2 cell phones - Tyler and CASSANDRA
- Smelling salts - JUDITH
- Branch - SUSANNAH
- Handkerchief - SUSANNAH
- Lantern and branch - AMELIA
- Flower – SUSANNAH

SETTINGS

The play is episodic moving from a home office in our time to Shakespeare's Garden in 1598. The office can be set anywhere – off to the side, above on a platform. You may do this as simply or as high tech as you would like. (A web-cam can be placed to monitor Cassandra and Lawrence as they watch the Castaways go through their adventures in Shakespeare's Garden.)

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Produced as CAST AWAY IN TIME; Lakeshore Players Summer Youth Project July 2004; White Bear Lake, MN

Semi-finalist, Bonderman Symposium 2005; excerpts staged at the Indiana Repertory Theatre (As the Bonderman Symposium is a development conference, play was significantly re-worked) Indianapolis, Indiana

The edited CAST AWAY IN SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN received second place in the Jackie White Memorial Play Writing Contest in August 2008.

Cast Away in Shakespeare's Garden produced by Crosswinds School, Woodbury, MN April, 2010 as part of a student's Baccalaureate Project

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CAST AWAY TO SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

by
Claudia Haas

CAST AWAY IN TIME

ACT I, SCENE 1

AT RISE we are in a home office. Frustrated, AMY and HANNAH are huddled over a computer staring at a monitor. Eyes glazed over, THEY have had it with their homework project: Shakespeare's England. It is a hot, late-spring day and the KIDS are dressed accordingly. AMY is at her wits end.

AMY: I - can't stand it any longer! Do you hear? I don't care about the times of Shakespeare! I don't care about the food of Elizabethan England! Give me some Beatles music and skip the "thou's" and "thee's" if you please! I'm hungry. The chip bag is empty.

HANNAH: Just read what the computer says, Amy. Do you want an "A" or not?

AMY: A "B" would suit me fine. Boys start with "b" and the "Beatles" and "bribery!" How can I bribe you, Hannah? I'll pay you to do all the work!

HANNAH: Stop talking and read.

AMY: "This page cannot be displayed."

HANNAH: What?

AMY: That's what it says. "This page cannot be displayed."

HANNAH: Go back. We'll try again. Come on! Tyler will be here any minute and then I'll have to leave. I've found three recipes to prepare. You have nothing.

AMY: I thought Elizabethan food would be easy. I mean, what's more fun than eating? But this stuff is disgusting. Beef and kidney pie! Yuck!

HANNAH: Just get back to that first Elizabethan site. That's where I got my recipes. We'll choose some and then I'm out of here.

AMY: I'm trying! Can't you see how hard I'm trying? That's it! It's frozen. The computer is totally in a state of fear. It's a sign, do you hear? The computer is saying, "Leave me alone. Do not work here, anymore!" Any more candy bars left?

HANNAH: We've been working at this for two hours and you have nothing to show for it.

AMY: What do you want me to do? It's locked up. Cassandra!
CASSANDRA!

HANNAH: Don't bring your little sister here! We've enough to do without mouthy Cassandra around!

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AMY: She's the only one in the house who can work this computer.
Ever since she installed this virtual reality site, the computer has been very fussy. Harold only responds to Cassandra.

HANNAH: Harold? Who's Harold?

AMY: The computer.

HANNAH: You named your computer?

AMY: Sure. Doesn't everyone? CASSANDRA!

CASSANDRA: (*Entering*) Stuff a sock in it, Amy. I heard you the first time.

AMY: What took you so long?

CASSANDRA: I have a life.

(*Looking at HANNAH who is fiddling with the computer.*)

HANNAH: It's no use. You have to turn it off.

CASSANDRA: No! Don't do that! Harold goes crazy. It'll take hours to put him right. Okay - watch a master at work. You press "escape," see? And then - before it escapes - you recapture it with the "restart" and *then* before it restarts, you press "cancel" and return to Windows and there you are! The trick is to anticipate. Keep changing his mind and confuse him so he has to listen to you. You have to tell these computers who is the boss once in a while or else they'll just take over.

HANNAH: You are so weird -

CASSANDRA: But I know what I'm doing.

LAWRENCE: (*Entering*) Hey you guys! Never fear! Lawrence is here.

CASSANDRA and AMY: (*With no enthusiasm whatsoever*) Hi, Lawrence.

AMY: You can get lost now.

LAWRENCE: No way. Guess who's coming to dinner?

AMY: Doesn't your mother ever feed you?

LAWRENCE: Take-out. She's always too tired to cook. I'm growing - I need a home-cooked meal. It's fine with your mom. And everything smells delicious down there. I'm not going anywhere.

AMY: I wish my mom would work. Then she would be too tired to nag me all the time about "getting things done."

HANNAH: Can we finish up?

LAWRENCE: What are you doing?

HANNAH: Working. Go away. How do I get back to the Elizabethan sites? "Harold" is not responding.

CASSANDRA: (*Furiously typing*) That's because he knows something you don't know. I installed this fabulous site. You're going to love it. It's called "Comet Castaway." You follow this comet back in time and

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it brings you right into Shakespeare's garden. It really gives you a feel for the people and there it is!

LAWRENCE: Awesome. Look at the kids play.

HANNAH: Excuse me! This is *my* research? Can I look?

LAWRENCE: Hey, there's even a sort of "Ask Jeeves" button . "Ask Lord Essex." Cool. I want to try.

HANNAH: Would you just move so I can see it? Oh wow. I like this. Look, Amy – it's like the kids are inviting us to play.

TYLER: (*Entering*) Come on, Hannah. We're out of here -

HANNAH: Hold on – I'm working. I need to see what they're eating. So far, they just seem to be playing ...

TYLER: I said, move it, Hannah! I still have to pick up milk and get Annie from dance class. I hate this driving thing! I thought it would make me independent. Instead all I am is an indentured chauffeur. I'm running late and rehearsal is early. Let's go!

AMY: What are you rehearsing?

HANNAH: Concentrate on the work, Amy. Not my brother.

TYLER: If you must know, I'm Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It's the starring role, of course.

HANNAH: He plays an illiterate ham-actor which is perfect casting. Even though he refuses to learn anything about acting in a Shakespearean play.

TYLER: What's to know? You speak loudly and don't bump into the scenery.

HANNAH: You can tell the high school was desperate for male actors. I like this site. It's so real – like a movie from the past. Is it really happening?

CASSANDRA: Get real, Hannah. It's a simulation. Pre-recorded.

HANNAH: I knew that.

TYLER: Hannah! MOVE IT!

(The lights dim as the sky darkens.)

LAWRENCE: Uh oh. Looks like a storm's coming.

TYLER: I don't want to get wet. I just did my hair! We are so out of here, Hannah - or else you're walking!

HANNAH: I can't - leave. I feel like I'm there - in the garden. Look at this. (*She touches the computer*) Whoa! Do you feel that! I'm shaking. Weird.

TYLER: HANNAH!

HANNAH: WAIT! I'm just asking Lord Essex about the food. Come on, send already!

(The lights grow dimmer. LAWRENCE and CASSANDRA move to a window.)

LAWRENCE: What's that in the sky?

CASSANDRA: It almost looks like an exploding star. But it can't be. It's too early. Maybe a comet?

HANNAH: *(Joins them at the window)* They say an exploding star has the energy to move you faster than the speed of light. Faster and faster until you are tumbling through time.

TYLER: *(Coming to the window)* Yeah, right. Let's go before my hair gets drenched.

CASSANDRA: I'd better turn off Harold. He doesn't like storms.

HANNAH: No! I'm sending!

AMY: Check out that light. It's coming right at us!

(LAWRENCE gets edged out of the way by HANNAH. CASSANDRA goes to turn off the computer.)

HANNAH: I can't stop shaking.

(AMY grabs HANNAH's hand in comfort. TYLER grabs HANNAH's other hand to take her away.)

CASSANDRA: Come on, Harold! Turn off already!

LAWRENCE: Control-alt-delete!

HANNAH: No! It's sending!

TYLER: Hannah!

(With LAWRENCE and CASSANDRA at the computer, TYLER, HANNAH and AMY stand hand-in-hand, electrified at the window. Suddenly we hear a sharp noise and the light illuminates the THREE in the window. Then, all lights go out.)

CASSANDRA: *(In darkness)* There goes Harold.

SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

SCENE 2

AT RISE we are literally in Shakespeare's Garden. It's a lovely blooming area of plants typical of the time. There may be a grand tree. A sitting area of stone benches may be provided. SUSANNAH, HAMNET and JUDITH are arranging a skit for their parents. THEY are creative, headstrong children and deal with each other in the same way siblings would today. (Bossy, impatient,

arguing and affectionate.) Elizabethan music could underscore the change of time.

SUSANNAH: The garden area will be translated into our stage. Judith plays "The Wall" as is our custom. I am both Pyramus and Thisbe. For I am nearer their age. And exceedingly good at feigning love.

JUDITH: That is without rhyme or reason, Susannah! Then you need to talk to yourself! There are enough parts. Let us draw lots for the roles!

HAMNET: Pyramus is a man! I should play him.

SUSANNAH: You are a mere boy, Hamnet! You shall be moonlight. You just need to glow.

HAMNET: At least let me act the lion! I can roar!

SUSANNAH: Hamnet - you roar like a poor, sick cat.

HAMNET: No, listen! I've improved! *(HE lets out a loud, shrill roar)*

WILL: *(Entering)* Zounds! Is there a sick sheep about? I cannot concentrate with all this hurly-burly.

(The SHAKESPEARE children rush to their father with affectionate hugs and tussles.)

JUDITH: Papa – that was your son! He elicits the most disquieting sounds.

WILL: Hamnet, I would be grateful for some quiet. I have begun work on a new play.

SUSANNAH: Will you write me in it, Papa?

JUDITH: And me! I await my sonnet!

HAMNET: You need to craft a lion for me, Papa and then I will play the role!

WILL: My son, you are a wee bit green to be a player!

HAMNET: I can learn. If my sisters would let me play something besides Moonlight!

WILL: And what would you be?

HAMNET: The lion! Listen! *(HAMNET again lets out a shrill roar.)*

WILL: From the chest, son! Your roar must begin at the chest.

(HAMNET tries again and this time is a bit more successful. WILL and HAMNET have a bit of a tussle which turns into a small wrestling match. ANNE appears.)

ANNE: What? Do I have three children? Or four?

WILL: Anne.

ANNE: You do make quite a clamor – the four of you!

SUSANNAH: Hamnet is playing a sick cat.

HAMNET: Lion!

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WILL: And I am at to unveil a new play before the next moon. Can we persuade our children to occupy themselves in a gentler manner?

ANNE: Perhaps if you set an example, they might learn.

(The CHILDREN all chime in.)

SUSANNAH:
We're devising a
play -

JUDITH:
Susannah is
taking over –

HAMNET:
Watch me roar!

WILL: Do you hear that cacophony?

ANNE: Do as your father says and play quietly and you'll get an extra marchpane after supper.

WILL: Anne! That's bribery!

ANNE: I agree, Will. Do you have a better way to resolve this? Now if you please, the Stafford cousins are arriving shortly and I must tend to supper.

SUSANNAH: Oh! Not them! Mary shall come with her nose in the air mincing about how gentle she is.

HAMNET: And Amelia will want to play "Fairy Kingdom." I don't fancy playing that again.

ANNE: What a trio of malcontents I have raised!

WILL: But that is an accurate accounting of my cousin's daughters. I am resolved to work in the cellar.

ANNE: Isn't that your way? You spend most of your time in London and when you finally do return home, you tend to your work and not your family. Are you afeared of a few poppets?

WILL: Why Anne, you know I remain most fond of my own children. *Our* children. All other poppets may remain in their own home being adored by *their* parents.

MARY: *(Offstage)* Is anybody about?

WILL: That is my cue to exit. *(And HE does so.)*

ANNE: Oh my, they would be early. Now, you three will be gracious.

They are your cousins come to visit - even if they be nothing but vain bibble-babbles.

(MARY and AMELIA enter.)

MARY: Good-morrow, cousins, Aunt Anne.

ANNE: Good Day Mary and Amelia. I shall leave you to your amusements. There remains work to be finished. *(ANNE exits)*

MARY: Well met, Susannah! I see you have not yet dressed for the day.

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SUSANNAH: Sweet Mary, how kind of you to remind me of your charm so soon after you enter our home.

AMELIA: Hamnet! Let's devise a new "Fairy Kingdom!" You can be the Fairy King and shower oaths of love upon me!

HAMNET: I would love to, Cousin Amelia but I am employed playing the Lion for my sisters.

SUSANNAH: You're Moonlight!

HAMNET: LION!

AMELIA: There are no lions in Fairy Kingdom!

HAMNET: I AM NOT PLAYING FAIRY KINGDOM!

SUSANNAH: You will do as I say for I am the eldest!

JUDITH: And the most imposing!

SUSANNAH: I merely want to do it properly. Come cousins, we are devising a melodrama from the tragedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. We need many characters.

MARY: I don't wish to devise yet another concoction from that silly play. We have oft done it before.

JUDITH: Maybe this time you will do it properly!

MARY: I am sorry, Judith. We are simply not accustomed to such a ... theatrical ... household. We prefer the more exquisite pleasures of an aristocratic life.

HAMNET: Wonderful! More parts for us!

SUSANNAH: I certainly would not want you to do anything you do not fancy doing, sweet Mary. We shall go about our play and you two may sit quietly and aristocratically under a tree.

MARY: Gramercy.

AMELIA: But Mary ... I want to be a player!

MARY: No - you - DON'T! It's most unseemly!

(As MARY and AMELIA go to sit, there is a strange noise such as the one heard at the end of SCENE 1. TYLER, HANNAH and AMY "blow" in and land at the feet of the SHAKESPEARE SIBLINGS.)

HANNAH: *(Amazed and pointing at all SHE sees.)* It's ... we're ... I think ...

SUSANNAH: She speaks but says nothing.

(The SHAKESPEARE CHILDREN and COUSINS group together.)

AMY: Whoa! What a ride! *(SHE carefully looks around)* Hello! I think we are not in Kansas anymore.

TYLER: Is my hair messy?

(MARY and AMELIA grab each other. SUANNAH, HAMNET and JUDITH move together and just stare at the intruders.)

HANNAH: I don't believe this. This is the setting I saw on the computer.

AMY: Look at how they're dressed.

MARY: They are but beggars! Look at their clothing!

HAMNET: They must be foreign! Look at his hair!

TYLER: Did he say something about my hair?

HANNAH: How did we get in the computer?

TYLER: Get real, Hannah! We can't fit in a computer.

HANNAH: Explain this.

TYLER: We got caught in some downline wind and were carried off to some bizarre historical re-enactment and I really don't have time for any of this.

(SUSANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET take a step in to peer at them. TYLER notices.)

Hello.

(SUANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET immediately move back. TYLER turns to HANNAH.)

Okay - who are they?

SUSANNAH: Look at those pathetic creatures. They must be very, very poor.

AMY: Poor? We're not poor.

SUSANNAH: You are sans proper dress!

AMY: "Sans proper dress?" What does that mean?

SUSANNAH: Your attire – is very – meek.

AMY: What? My clothes? Are you criticizing my clothes? When you are in a costume from a Renaissance Fair?

MARY: *(Going towards the SHAKESPEARE children.)* Susannah – keep away from them! They could be likened to criminals!

AMELIA: Nay! They're fairies!

MARY: They are not fairies!

AMELIA: But they're naked - almost! Just like proper fairies!

TYLER: We're not naked!

AMY: This is one bizarre dream. WAKE UP, AMY!

JUDITH: Susannah, do you think they could be the new family that moved to Haycroft Manor?

SUSANNAH: It's possible. But why wouldn't they have proper clothes?

HAMNET: Because they're foreign and poor.

TYLER: They're talking about us.

HANNAH: I know. They keep going on and on about our clothes.

TYLER: They should talk! Look at their get-up!

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SUSANNAH: Maybe we should ... introduce ourselves? What do you think, cousin? Surely you know the proper niceties that should be employed in a situation such as this?

MARY: Really, Susannah – just throw them out!

AMY: What did she say?

HANNAH: Something about throwing us out.

JUDITH: I feel sorry for them. They must be cold. We should be kind.

Good morrow, good folk! I am Judith.

TYLER: *(To HANNAH)* They're talking to us.

HANNAH: Make nice.

(HANNAH puts on a big smiles and waves at the SHAKESPEARE CHILDREN.)

Hi. I'm Hannah and this is Tyler ... and that's Amy.

SUSANNAH: I'm Susannah - Judith's sister. And this is our brother Hamnet ...

HAMNET: Good day.

HANNAH: Nice manners.

SUSANNAH: And these are our cousins. Don't pay them any mind. We don't.

TYLER: Nice to meet you all. Didn't mean to barge in. Gotta go. Come on, Hannah. Amy! C'mon!

HANNAH: Where're you going?

TYLER: Uhhh ... home? Remember "home?"

HANNAH: How?

TYLER: The car was just outside ...

JUDITH: Car?

SUSANNAH: It must be a foreign word. Their English is strange. They must be from some faraway land.

HANNAH: The car was parked at Amy's house. We're not at Amy's house.

AMY: Maybe this is some sort of mass hallucination. I've read about things like this. I'm hungry. I wonder if you can eat during a mass hallucination.

TYLER: Or - maybe we were knocked out and kidnapped by aliens and brought here to be part of some bizarre alien reality TV show!

JUDITH: *(To her BROTHER and SISTER)* Should we help them? It is our duty to help those in mean circumstances.

MARY: Not proper. What will your Father and Mother say?

SUSANNAH: *(To her SIBLINGS)* Let's ask them. Besides, look at the young man. He is certainly well-favoured!

MARY: SUSANNAH!

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SUSANNAH: He is! They are probably hungry. Should we offer them some sustenance?

AMY: Hungry?

MARY: Susannah - they could be criminals!

TYLER: Criminals? No - I like the lunch idea much better.

HAMNET: We should get Mama.

AMY: I don't like the way they keep staring at us.

HANNAH: Be nice - we don't know where we are and we need to make friends.

TYLER: Why don't we just leave?

HANNAH: Because we have no where to go! Look around you. This is strange.

MARY: Really Susannah, your play acting is bad enough. Speaking to these beggar-children can only worsen your reputation. People do wonder about your family!

SUSANNAH: Really! Why is that?

MARY: If you must know, because your father lives in London – and is – a player!

HANNAH: Player?

SUSANNAH: Indeed ... yes. We are all players. At least in the garden. I wish women were allowed on stage.

TYLER: On stage?

HANNAH: Oh this is good - we can forge a bond here. Talk about theatre - it gives us something in common.

TYLER: Theatre - yes - hey - guess what? I'm in a play?

SUSANNAH: Truly?

TYLER: In my school ... *A Midsummer Night's Dream* - I play two parts - Bottom and this weirdo guy - Pyramus.

SUSANNAH: Pyramus?

HAMNET: Wouldn't you rather play the Lion?

TYLER: Do you know this play?

JUDITH: Know it! We're performing an abridgement of it for our mother and father!

SUSANNAH: If I can get you two to properly rehearse! (*Aside to SIBLINGS*) He would be a good Pyramus, don't you think?

JUDITH: It would at least stop you from speaking to yourself on stage.

SUSANNAH: And after we perform, Mother has promised us a steak and kidney pie!

AMY: What is it with these people and their steak and kidney pies?

HANNAH: That's what I saw in the computer – the mother promising them steak and kidney pie! I'm telling you - we're in the computer!

TYLER: Then we need to get out of the computer! I have a rehearsal!

SUSANNAH: That's the spirit! You will rehearse with us! After we tell Mother and Father about you. Excuse us.

(The SHAKESPEARE CHILDREN exit. The COUSINS and the CASTAWAYS group themselves separately and remain frozen watching each other carefully. THEY freeze and lights come on back at the home office.)

SCENE 3

LAWRENCE: I don't like the dark. Did I tell you I really don't like the dark?

(The electricity is restored as the lights get brighter.)

Much better. Where is everyone?

CASSANDRA: Tyler and Hannah must have gone home.

LAWRENCE: How could they drive in that storm?

CASSANDRA: They're teenagers. They probably think it's fun.

LAWRENCE: Where's Amy?

CASSANDRA: I don't know, Lawrence! It wasn't my turn to watch her. I need to fix Harold. He doesn't like it when the power suddenly goes off.

LAWRENCE: Can we go back to that virtual reality site? The one Hannah was looking at? It looked pretty cool.

CASSANDRA: One thing at a time, okay? First - we need to get Harold going again. Then we'll see about reinstalling the Comet Castaway software. It is pretty neat. We could have some fun with it.

(The lights dim on CASSANDRA and LAWRENCE.)

SCENE 4

We go back to Shakespeare's Garden. The CHILDREN enter from the home. MARY and AMELIA go off to one side to be apart from the OTHERS. SUSANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET stand aside and stare at the CASTAWAYS. ANNE appears.

HANNAH: That must be the mother.

ANNE: Good morrow, gentle folk. What brings you to our home?

HANNAH: We – I don't know ... just arrived. We didn't mean to impose or anything. We can go ... by your leave ... if you please ...

TYLER: By your leave?

HANNAH: Shh.

ANNE: I am not here to censure you. I just look to protect my own children.

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HANNAH: I understand.

TYLER: You do?

HANNAH: You need not have any fears regarding us. We are just here for a visit. *(Aside)* I hope.

ANNE: I shall speak with my husband. If he approves, I'll allow you to visit. If you need anything, I will remain close. Excuse me.

(ANNE exits. The TWO group themselves again. The SHAKESPEARE CHILDREN are together and the CASTAWAYS remain together.)

AMY: Supper is sounding pretty good.

HANNAH: They're staring again. Talk to them!

TYLER: Me? Why me?

HANNAH: 'Cause you're the actor! See if you can find out exactly where we are. Come on – you're the big brother. Protect me!

TYLER: All right. I want some answers anyway. *(Stepping forward.)* Could you just tell us something? We're a little confused here. I mean, where are we?

JUDITH: You don't know you're in Stratford? How is that possible?

HANNAH: Where did you say we are?

HAMNET: Stratford-on-Avon!

AMELIA: Home of witches and fairies!

HANNAH: And William Shakespeare!

SUSANNAH: Do you know our father?

HANNAH: Your father? No, I - wait a minute - what's your last name -

SUSANNAH: Shakespeare.

HANNAH: No - I mean - no. It cannot be.

TYLER: This is a joke, right? What exactly are you playing at?

SUSANNAH: Sir?

HANNAH: Let me do the asking. What year is it?

SUSANNAH: Why, 1598. How can you not know that?

TYLER: Okay - you're good at history. Did she have the right year?

HANNAH: You know ... it's possible it's 1598. I'm not sure how - but isn't Einstein's theory about all of time existing - somewhere?

TYLER: Don't start in on something that we have no way of proving ... or understanding. This is all nonsense!

HANNAH: Don't yell at me! At least I'm trying to figure something out here!

TYLER: Well don't rant and rave at me either!

MARY: What speak you? Of ranting and raving? Are you conjuring a spell?

HANNAH, TYLER and AMY: Whaaat?

MARY: You're conjuring a spell, aren't you? You're trying to bewitch us! Susannah, these are witches!

AMELIA: Fairies!

MARY: They are cursing us! They should burn! Witches burn!

AMY: Okay, I'm going. This situation has taken a nasty turn.

SUSANNAH: No, stay! Ignore my cousin! We do. I stand amazed at your arrival and would like to be better acquainted with you.

(AMY, TYLER and HANNAH hold back.)

TYLER: Hannah, you don't really think we're back in time, do you?

HANNAH: If it has anything to do with Cassandra's virtual reality site and the storm and - oh - I don't know - we might be.

TYLER: And if we are?

HANNAH: We need to depend on Cassandra to get us back.

TYLER: We're doomed.

HANNAH: We need to get them on our side. In case we're here for awhile.

(The CASTAWAYS move in to converse with the SHAKESPEARE CHILDREN as the lights switch to the present.)

SCENE 5

CASSANDRA: There! It's all set. Here's the site you wanted, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE: Cool! Find Amy. I bet I can help her with her assignment.

CASSANDRA: Amy! AMY! ANSWER ME! I have no idea where she is.

(LAWRENCE is intently staring at the screen.)

LAWRENCE: You're not going to believe this, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA: What?

LAWRENCE: I think I just found Amy.

(As CASSANDRA moves to view the screen, the lights change and return to the CHILDREN in Shakespeare's Garden.)

SUANNAH: So, all is worked out. It is quite, quite wonderful that you are familiar with *Pyramus and Thisbe*. It's almost like we were fated to meet.

(The noise of a cell phone with a distinct ring tone - it could be anything - a mooing cow, an outer space noise, music - is heard.)

MARY: What is that annoying sound?

AMY: Tyler! Your cell phone is ringing.

TYLER: I know.

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HANNAH: Answer it.

(TYLER pulls out his phone and looks at it.)

TYLER: It's from Mom.

AMELIA: Oh! A fairy wand! I knew they were fairies.

HANNAH: Answer it already!

TYLER: Think of the roaming charges! I'll be grounded for a month when she gets the bill!

HANNAH: You have to let her know we're safe.

TYLER: Are we? *(TYLER answers the phone)* Nothing. The signal's gone.

AMELIA: *(Grabbing the phone)* I've always wanted to see a real fairy wand! Why did the sound stop?

TYLER: *(Grabbing it back)* That's because you're not a real fairy. It only works for us.

AMELIA: So you are true fairies!

TYLER: Yeah. We're true. Are you?

HAMNET: That's quite strange Susannah - that talking stick.

SUSANNAH: I know.

JUDITH: Can they be magical creatures? Is that possible?

(SUSANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET huddle together as MARY and AMELIA join them.)

MARY: They are witches to be sure.

(They intently watch the castaways as TYLER, HANNAH and AMY also group closer together.)

HANNAH: They're doing that staring thing again.

AMY: With that Mary-kid leading the witch hunt.

HANNAH: We have to start taking our situation seriously. This *is* the setting I saw in the computer. If this is Shakespeare's home – we could actually talk to William Shakespeare! We could ask him if he wrote his plays!

AMY: Huh?

HANNAH: You know – there's a controversy regarding the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Some don't believe a simple man from Stratford-on-Avon could have written works of such power.

AMY: Who cares?

HANNAH: Lots of people.

AMY: Then they can come here and figure it out! I want to go home!

HANNAH: As long as we're here – I hope we get to meet him. I didn't see him anywhere, did you?

(We switch to the SHAKESPEARE KIDS.)

MARY: Look at them! They're making plans. If they're not witches – they're spies.

SUSANNAH: They're awfully young to be spies!

MARY: That's why they were brought here – nobody would suspect – besides the man is certainly old enough.

JUDITH: No more of your conversation, Mary. It infects my brain! It's all been arranged with mother. They're staying for lunch and I for one think it's an improvement over our present company!

SUSANNAH: They look scared.

HAMNET: Maybe they don't want to play anymore.

(The conversation goes back to the CASTAWAYS.)

AMY: We need to find a way home!

HANNAH: If we can figure out how we got here – we can maybe figure out how to leave –

AMY: I want my own nagging mother –

TYLER: The computer must have done something –

HANNAH: or the comet – If the phone rang, maybe there is a way to reach home.

TYLER: But we can't connect.

AMY: I know - let me send a text message to Cassandra. Maybe cyberspace transcends time?

HANNAH: Wow, Amy! That was almost well-thought out.

(AMY grabs the phone as SUSANNAH inches closer carefully watching them.)

SUSANNAH: What are you doing?

TYLER: I don't know how to explain this to you -

AMY: We're trying to call home - to our fairy kingdom.

(AMY breaks from the group and concentrates on sending a text message to CASSANDRA.)

HANNAH: She means - what she's trying to say is -

TYLER: - it's just make-believe. We play act all the time. It's - you know - a prop.

SUSANNAH: But it makes noises.

TYLER: Yeah. We make the noise. We ring and scream and sing and do what all good play actors do. For - what do actors have but voices and their bodies to work with?

HAMNET: That's what Father always says!

HANNAH: (*Whispering to TYLER*) Keep talking. They're looking friendlier.

TYLER: So ... how do you rehearse? Do you try to find ... your inner being? Do you think of your character - as a color? Or an animal ... a musical instrument? How do you warm up? Do you prefer the "method" approach?

SUSANNAH: What speak you?

TYLER: Why, I - am - (*To HANNAH*) What *am* I talking about?

HANNAH: I don't know. But it's working. They're listening.

TYLER: So - about your little rehearsal - did you find any comic bits?

Like when I play Pyramus - I sort of have him die a thousand times -

SUSANNAH: Comic bits?

JUDITH: Why, sir. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is high tragedy.

TYLER: Yeah - but - well - you know you could play it for laughs - haven't you ever done that?

SUSANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET: No.

TYLER: Do you want to try a new way? Come here. Let me tell you my ideas and then you could let me know what you think.

(SUSANNAH, JUDITH and HAMNET gather around TYLER and HANNAH. AMY is busy text messaging. SHE looks up at the CROWD as MARY takes a step in and glares at her. AMELIA stays behind MARY. THEY freeze. The lights dim on SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN and return to CASSANDRA and LAWRENCE.)

SCENE 6

CASSANDRA: I don't know. It's impossible. They can't be in the computer. I mean, how did they shrink?

LAWRENCE: I don't know. It's way scary but also sort of cool.

CASSANDRA: My sister is two inches tall. That's not cool!

LAWRENCE: Did you ever think Cassandra - maybe it's not a simulated sight - maybe it's really showing you another time?

CASSANDRA: No. It's silly. It's - ridiculous. It cannot be. Let me see.

(As CASSANDRA describes what SHE sees, ALL do the movement below in the dim light.)

Look at Tyler – he's gesturing like a madman. And now – he's – dying?

LAWRENCE: *Dying?*

CASSANDRA: Not really – sorry. More like play-acting. Badly. Okay, they're getting into some sort of position. It's almost like they're taking places for a show.

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LAWRENCE: Let's watch.

CASSANDRA: We can't watch! We have to get them out of there.

LAWRENCE: Maybe if I try directing them with the arrows -

CASSANDRA: Don't touch anything! Not until we know what to do. You could delete them!

LAWRENCE: You can't delete a person!

CASSANDRA: You can't go back in time either. We must be very careful – I don't know what we are dealing with. Where's my Comet Castaway booklet?

LAWRENCE: Right here.

CASSANDRA: Okay - I'll read. You watch. Tell me if you see anything unusual.

LAWRENCE: I'm watching your sister in a computer. I think that's unusual enough.

(The lights dim on CASSANDRA and LAWRENCE as they rise on SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN.)

SUSANNAH: I don't see it! We cannot play *Pyramus and Thisbe* for laughs!

JUDITH: Why not? I think Mother and Father would be more entertained with a little comedy right now than a lamentable tragedy.

HAMNET: And if we make it funny, I can play the lion!

TYLER: Just try my ideas. If you don't like it – we could do it your way.

SUSANNAH: But everyone knows the play as a tragedy. None will understand this new way of presenting it.

TYLER: That's why we need a Prologue. Hannah would be a really good Prologue!

HANNAH: What? Me? I don't think so. I don't - act. I study.

TYLER: Come on! You know it by heart. *(Aside)* It was your idea to forge a bond until we figure out how to get out of this mess.

HANNAH: Get Amy!

AMY: Amy's busy. I can't get our situation into one text message. It's too long. It won't send.

TYLER: How about just typing in "help?"

AMY: I did that! Leave me alone. Let me figure this out.

SUSANNAH: All right - we'll ... play with this play. What can it hurt?

MARY: You are letting these vagabond children interfere with your sensibilities, Susannah. No good can come of this.

AMELIA: But Mary - it looks amusing!

MARY: No - it does not!

(MARY and AMELIA go sit as ANNE and WILL enter. THEY stand over to the side and stare at the CASTAWAYS.)

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SUSANNAH: Father! We're not ready yet! Go inside, please!

WILL: I just needed some air.

AMY: We're being stared at again.

HANNAH: I know. Make nice. Wave.

(The CASTAWAYS do so.)

WILL: They look innocent enough.

ANNE: But – they're so different. Look at the clothes – or the lack of them – the hair. Could they be spies?

WILL: They're just children. Admittedly, we do not need more children about today. But they seem innocuous. Playing at being players. It's quite a splendid way to occupy their time.

ANNE: You would approve! But what think you of the older boy. Will? Have you done or said anything in London – wrote something that could possibly offend –

WILL: Of course not. And eye him carefully – he's just a boy at play.

(The conversation goes back to the CASTAWAYS.)

TYLER: So Hannah – is that William Shakespeare?

HANNAH: How should I know?

TYLER: Come on – you've studied him – you pay attention. Haven't you seen a picture?

HANNAH: There aren't that many – and he's younger than the pictures – it's possible – "I am amazed and know what not to say."

TYLER: You're quoting *Midsummer*.

HANNAH: I know.

(The conversation goes back to WILL and ANNE.)

ANNE: Look how they gaze at us. As if they want to figure something out. I don't know Will –

WILL: We'll allow them to dine with us. There be no harm in that.

ANNE: There is harm if they are sent to spy on us. These are dangerous times.

WILL: We will watch their divertissement. If they are up to something – it may show in their presentation.

ANNE: If you're sure. If I feel for one moment that our children are in danger –

WILL: I shall summon help at once. Come on in Anne and leave the children to their play.

(And the conversation returns to the CASTAWAYS.)

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TYLER: ANNE!

HANNAH: What?

TYLER: He called her ANNE!

HANNAH: That's her name.

TYLER: Annie! We forgot about Annie. She's probably getting worried—

HANNAH: She has a cell. She'll call Mom.

TYLER: Mom. She'll be mad.

HANNAH: If the worse that can happen is Mom gets mad at us – we'll be fine.

TYLER: What do you mean?

HANNAH: I mean – I don't know if we're ever going to see Mom again.

(TYLER just looks at HANNAH as the lights fade to black.)

INTERMISSION

ACT 2, SCENE 1

AT RISE we see LAWRENCE and CASSANDRA with the computer. A phone is ringing.

LAWRENCE: Cassandra. A phone is ringing.

CASSANDRA: I'm busy. Whoever it is will leave a message.

LAWRENCE: It's annoying. Answer it!

CASSANDRA: Oh, all right. Hello? Hello? Oh! It's a text message.

LAWRENCE: Who's it from?

CASSANDRA: It's from - Amy. IT'S FROM AMY! It says "Help! We're in a weird place."

LAWRENCE: Well, now we know they are really there.

CASSANDRA: I've got to tell them to stay put. That we're figuring a way out of this. There's nothing in the booklet about rescuing people from the computer.

LAWRENCE: Did you try the online help?

CASSANDRA: Those are canned responses. It could take days. How did they get there? If we can figure that out – maybe we can reverse it.

LAWRENCE: There's the software –

CASSANDRA: I know about the software Lawrence!

LAWRENCE: I'm just trying to help –

CASSANDRA: I know. I'm sorry – I'm just – frustrated.

LAWRENCE: And there was that strange comet –

CASSANDRA: Wasn't that weird? Seeing a comet streak across the sky during the day? Hey, Lawrence – that was strange, wasn't it?

LAWRENCE: Very.

CASSANDRA: Do you think – Lawrence – minimize that screen and begin a search for comets in Shakespeare time –

LAWRENCE: Minimize – I thought they were as small as they could possibly get –

CASSANDRA: Just do it! I need information on comets – and I don't want to lose them. Hurry!

LAWRENCE: I'm typing as fast as I can –

CASSANDRA: Find anything?

LAWRENCE: There's a lot of sites.

CASSANDRA: Let's go through them. One by one. I'll text Amy that help is on the way. I hope she gets it. And I hope we really can help.

SCENE 2

We return to SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN. The CHILDREN are gathered together making plans for the play.

SUSANNAH: So we shall try your interesting idea for *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Because you are guests. At the end of the rehearsal, I shall decide if it is worth doing or if we should do it my way.

TYLER: That works.

SUSANNAH: Interesting turn of phrase – “that works,” I like it. How is it that you have so many new ideas regarding plays?

TYLER: Well ... I didn't want to tell you before ...but ... but ...

SUSANNAH: Yes?

TYLER: We're players!

AMY: We are?

TYLER: Certainly. Which is why ... we're dressed like this!

JUDITH: And what roles exactly do you play in these costumes?

TYLER: It's rather a long story ... you don't want to hear it –

HAMNET: Yes, we do! We love stories! We all invent our own.

TYLER: Well, there were these robbers -

MARY: Robbers! I told you they were from the low reaches of society!

HANNAH: Great going Tyler. Why'd you say that?

TYLER: We're not robbers! We were robbed!

AMY: Of most of our clothes!

TYLER: Yeah. What she said.

JUDITH: That's simply awful!

AMY: We know.

SUSANNAH: You are a curious group.

(The cell phone rings. ALL jump.)

How'd you do that?

AMY: It's Cassandra!

TYLER: We – well ... we're ...

HANNAH: ... really good at sound effects.

(TYLER and HANNAH make credible ringing noises or approximate whatever ring tone you use.)

AMY: She's helping us. SHE'S HELPING US! She wants us to stay put.

TYLER: That's easy. We have no place to go.

SUSANNAH: Let's arrange the play.

(And the CHILDREN in Shakespeare's Garden huddle.)

SCENE 3

We return to CASSANDRA and LAWRENCE.

LAWRENCE: I found something! I can't believe I actually found something! There was a comet that streaked across the sky – in 1598 – of course that was in London. Shakespeare's home isn't in London.

CASSANDRA: Stratford-on-Avon – but if it was seen in London we can hope it was also seen in Stratford. Does it say when?

LAWRENCE: No and it's kind of vague. But it may be our only chance. If a comet brought them to Shakespeare's time – maybe it can bring them home.

CASSANDRA: But it did so with the computer.

LAWRENCE: What if we get the comet to pick them up again? How can we direct it to drop them here? In our year?

CASSANDRA: I don't know.

LAWRENCE: We need another site.

CASSANDRA: What?

LAWRENCE: We need a second virtual reality site and it needs to be this home in the present time.

CASSANDRA: Harold cannot hold anymore. The Shakespeare site was so large I used up its memory.

LAWRENCE: Here's what we need to do - I'll go home and get my Dad's memory card. And then we need to set up a virtual reality site - and it needs to be your garden. Today. The comet needs a destination. Otherwise they could be lost in some black hole forever.

CASSANDRA: Can you do this?

LAWRENCE: Of course. I took Computer Basics in 7th grade. It'll be a snap. The only thing is -

CASSANDRA: What?

LAWRENCE: It'll take a little time. We've got to add memory to Harold and create a virtual reality site in your garden. And then we need to load it in. And we don't know when the comet will come back. We don't even know if it's coming back.

CASSANDRA: Go! Get the card and I'll load it.

LAWRENCE: And I'll send you my website. I have a web cam above my computer. It's a family website so it has a location – my home. Next door. Close enough.

CASSANDRA: You have a website?

LAWRENCE: Sure. Doesn't everyone? You will need to download it and add it to the Castaway Comet site. Can you do that?

CASSANDRA: I won't know until I try.

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LAWRENCE: Meanwhile, I will set up the web cam in your garden and we will funnel it into my website. Got it?

CASSANDRA: I think so. Better hurry. The sky is darkening over there.

LAWRENCE: The comet could be on its way.

CASSANDRA: In which case - we're too late.

(We return to Shakespeare's Garden where the sky has darkened a bit and the CHILDREN are ready for the play.)

TYLER: So what do you think?

SUSANNAH: I approve. It is a bit strange but very amusing. And Hamnet will be pleased to use his ridiculous roar. How have you come by this knowledge – of being a player?

TYLER: I don't know – school plays, I guess.

SUSANNAH: That's where my father learned to love theatre. He finds that witnessing plays leaves him quite translated.

TYLER: Translated. I like that. It is fun to get into someone else's skin ... to be someone else and act in a way you couldn't in real life.

SUSANNAH: I wish women were allowed on the stage. It seems such a dashing life.

TYLER: Someday ... in another time ...

SUSANNAH: What say you?

TYLER: Nothing. You wouldn't understand.

SUSANNAH: I have my wits about me. Tell me. I understand quite a lot.

(The conversation switches to JUDITH and HANNAH. MARY stands close and listens.)

HANNAH: Do you see your father's plays?

JUDITH: Not often enough. They are mostly performed in London.

HANNAH: What's your father like?

JUDITH: Why are you so curious about him?

MARY: Because they are spies, Judith! Why else?

HANNAH: No! Because he's famous – you know. Really well-known.

MARY: The whole family's well-known in Stratford!

JUDITH: I never thought about it but I suppose he is. He has played for royalty and has travelled extensively. I suppose it possible that others know of him.

HANNAH: Others know a lot about his plays. Believe me. But surprisingly little about him.

JUDITH: It's curious. You have sparked my imagination about my father's life in London. It always seemed an ordinary existence. Methinks one always finds one's own life – ordinary.

HANNAH: Trust me when I say this – but your father - is extraordinary.

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(The conversation switches to HAMNET, AMY and AMELIA.)

AMELIA: May I see your wand?

AMY: I'm sorry. I have to keep it close by me for now. I need it – it's my connection -

AMELIA: To the Fairy Kingdom!

AMY: To my home.

HAMNET: Where lies your home?

AMY: Far away. Really, really far away.

HAMNET: You are a foreigner, aren't you?

AMY: You have no idea.

(ANNE and WILL enter.)

WILL: We have come to view your entertainment. It seems like a storm is coming so let us enjoy the air while we may.

ANNE: I fear supper will be served inside today.

WILL: And when the rain calms down, I am sure these three will be on their way – home.

HAMNET: They have no home! They are players. Foreign players!

WILL: Indeed? Even players have a home.

HANNAH: And – we do. Truly. And hope to be going there very soon.
(Aside) Any news from Cassandra?

AMY: Just something about staying still if we see a comet streak the sky.

WILL: *(Addressing HANNAH)* Young lady, you study me carefully. Have we met?

HANNAH: I'm ... uhhh ... Hannah. The prologue. The explanation, I guess you could say.

WILL: Maybe I should put an explanation into my play. It lacks clarity. Maybe that is just the thing.

ANNE: Why, dear - the play's the thing. You shouldn't need to explain it.

WILL: Yes - but - well, I begin with this wedding for it is to be presented at a wedding. And somehow, I have concocted magic spells, lovers, fairies - all very amusing. But it is not tied together. It's rather laid out as in a dream. Images, thoughts - but no order. A veritable midsummer dream.

HANNAH: What did you say?

WILL: Nothing, child. You are ready to perform. I give you leave.

HANNAH: No - your play. It's about a wedding and to be performed at a wedding? You're talking about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Are you talking about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?????!!!!

WILL: At present my play is entitled *The Dream*. But to speak truth, I like your title very much.

HANNAH: You are then, aren't you – art thou – truly – really – “close my eyes and hope to die” William Shakespeare? The playwright?

WILL: Very dramatically put. You are in the theatre after all. Perhaps a patron?

HANNAH: Tyler! Amy! *It is him! For real!* We were speculating – but now I know - I'm talking to Shakespeare. I named a Shakespeare play! Well, actually he named it and I studied it and went back in time and changed it! I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!

SUSANNAH: Are you all right?

HANNAH: I'm - fine.

(And SHE falls into a dead faint as the lights fade.)

SCENE 4

We return to LAWRENCE and CASSANDRA.

CASSANDRA: Okay – the memory's in. Thanks! Now I have to restart Harold.

LAWRENCE: But you haven't loaded the website yet!

CASSANDRA: Harold needs to be carefully handled or he will explode!

LAWRENCE: We're going to lose them.

CASSANDRA: No, we won't!

LAWRENCE: Shakespeare's garden is getting darker.

CASSANDRA: That means the comet's coming. Okay - I won't restart.

Let me check the e-mail and see if your website came. The web cam's set up in our garden, right?

LAWRENCE: All done. Let's just see if it's coming through to Harold.

CASSANDRA: It's coming - it's here.... oh man! It just says "loading." How big is your website anyway?

LAWRENCE: It's only 27 pages - of course the video is huge. It'll load.

CASSANDRA: It had better.

(The lights return to Shakespeare's garden.)

MARY: The witch died!

AMELIA: She can't die - she's a fairy!

ANNE: One of you, fetch the smelling salts. Quickly now!

(JUDITH quickly runs in for some.)

TYLER: *(Kneeling beside her)* Hannah! HANNAH! Wake up! I wouldn't know how to explain any of this to Mom. WAKE UP! This – is not funny – anymore. This is too real. AMY! Come help. Stop fiddling with the phone!

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AMY: I – Tyler – I'm scared. This phone is our connection to home. I want to go home.

(JUDITH returns with the smelling salts. ANNE puts it under HANNAH's nose.)

HANNAH: Whoa! That stinks!

WILL: Child, are you ill?

HANNAH: Is that William Shakespeare talking to me?

WILL: 'tis.

(And HANNAH passes out again. ALL crowd around her.)

HAMNET: Pardon me, but if she can't play, can I have her part.?

(HANNAH awakens.)

HANNAH: I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. Am I awake? Do I dream?

ANNE: Come, child. Sit by me.

JUDITH: No! We need her to perform in our entertainment! She is our introduction. It's quite extraordinary. She has it all memorized. Strange - but immensely helpful.

MARY: They're more than strange. Throw them out, I say! Guests are most welcome when they leave!

SUSANNAH: My sentiments exactly, dear cousin.

TYLER: Are you all right?

HANNAH: I – think so. We had better do the show. I'm sorry I was such a silly.

TYLER: Yes. The show must go on and all of that.

WILL: "The show must go on." What a pleasing sentiment. You must truly be players after all.

SUSANNAH: All gather here please. Let us make ready.

(ALL gather except for MARY and AMELIA who remain apart.)

HANNAH: We better do well.

TYLER: What do you mean?

HANNAH: If we can't get home and have to live here – well – I think it would be helpful to have friends. Maybe you can act in Shakespeare's group. Just – do your best Tyler.

TYLER: Gee Hannah – no pressure, right?

JUDITH: Gather everyone! Before it rains!

(HANNAH steps forward.)

HANNAH: This is so weird. I memorized this last year for class ... a class about *you* ...they're your words ... and now I'm saying them in front of you -

WILL: Proceed, please.

HANNAH: If we offend, it is our good will

That you think we come not to offend ... but - with our good will.

To show our simple skill - that is the beginning of our true end.

Our true intent is all for your delight.

We are not here!

WILL: You are not here!?

HANNAH: No, truly. We are in a dream! I think. I hope.

SUSANNAH: That's not the line! Speak the line as rehearsed!

HANNAH: Oh!

The actors are at hand and now you will know ...

all you are meant to know?

ANNE: She does not know when to stop.

WILL: The speech was a bit disordered. But no matter. Who is next?

HANNAH: Why, me. For I am still here.

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