

# THE TEMPESTUOUS AND FRACTIOUS SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

By Edith Weiss

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## CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

**KELLY:** (*flex*) The stage manager, extremely competent, professional and quick to stress over problems. Impatient with wasted time

**ASHLEY:** (*flex*) Ashley is emulating a stereotypical director: self important and loves the power of directing.

**KARL:** (*flex*) A kind, calm person mature beyond their years, Karl is the other director.

**ANNA:** (*female*) Anna is the supportive, talented, good hearted person everyone loves to have in a cast. Plays the Wall and Mistress Quickly.

**PAT:** (*flex*) The sort of person who, while rather shy and even a bit dorky offstage, is dynamite onstage. Plays the Host of the Game Show.

**AMY:** (*female*) Quick tempered, pro active, very direct about her feelings. Large range as an actress, plays Charmian and Tamora.

**CARDENAS:** (*male*) An 'everyman', an ordinary guy who is the strong and silent type but can play anything on stage. Plays the messenger and Pyramus.

**CLAIRE:** (*female*) A girl with self esteem issues, quiet, deferential, but learns to speak up for what she wants. Plays Thisby.

**LARA:** (*female*) One of the self assured, popular girls. Manipulative and used to getting what she wants. Plays the Nurse.

**MEGAN:** (*female*) Confident, athletic, friendly. Plays Cleopatra.

**CHRIS:** (*female*) A girl who lives for the theater. Quick to anger, forceful, talented. Brad's girlfriend. Plays Juliet.

**BRAD:** (*male*) Torn between football and theater, and Chris' boyfriend, he doesn't particularly like or understand Shakespeare, but has 'leading man' looks. Plays Romeo.

**JULIE:** (*female*) A self involved, emotional, seemingly fragile but utterly manipulative 'drama queen.' Plays Ophelia.

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**AT RISE: ACTORS are warming up physically and vocally. CARDENAS is sitting with his head in his hands, not doing anything. LARA is already in costume. ASHLEY and KARL, the directors, sit on chairs Upstage Left and look at their scripts. KELLY, the Stage Manager, enters Stage Left.**

KELLY: Okay people we start in five. Ashley and Karl? Where's Ashley and Karl?

ASHLEY: We're right here Kelly.

KARL: Hi, Kelly.

KELLY: *(to herself)* The directors are consulting their notes, the actors are warming up – looks like we're good to go. *(looks around, consults clipboard)* Wait a minute. Where's Chris and Brad? People!

*(warm- ups stop)*

Where's Chris and Brad? We can't rehearse Romeo and Juliet without Romeo and Juliet.

ANNA: I'm sure they'll be here any second.

KELLY: You can't be late for rehearsal, Anna. I thought we established that.

PAT: Maybe Brad had football practice.

KARL: Chris went home to finish making Romeo's pants.

PAT: Julie's not here either.

KELLY: Great. *(takes out cell phone)* Now I have to call them. *(gets out her cell phone)* And of course it's a dead zone in here so I have to go outside. *(exits Stage Left)*

AMY: Hey, Cardenas. You okay?

CARDENAS: Sure.

CLAIRE: Ashley, could I talk to you in private?

ASHLEY: Not now, Claire. Karl, why don't I start rehearsing Midsummer's, since Brad and Chris aren't here?

CLAIRE: But - that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

ASHLEY: Claire, can't it wait a minute?

CLAIRE: It would only take a min-

*(After LARA interrupts, CLAIRE gives up.)*

LARA: You know what you should do, Karl? You should let me play Juliet.

KARL: No.

LARA: I have one word in Romeo and Juliet. One word, and I get here thirty minutes early. *And* I'm in costume and ready to go.

MEGAN: Lara, remember the old saying: there are no small parts. Just small parts of actors.

PAT: That's not the saying. It's: There are no small parts, just small actors.

LARA: Oh sure, Megan, you can talk. You get to play Cleopatra.

MEGAN: Get off of it, Lara.

*(Enter CHRIS and BRAD Stage Right.)*

LARA: Hi, Chris! *(very sweet)* Hi, Brad. How are you?

CHRIS: I'm so sorry we're late.

LARA: It's okay.

CHRIS: Making Romeo's pants took longer than I thought.

KARL: It's fine. Let's get into costume, and we'll start.

*(Exit BRAD and CHRIS Stage Left.)*

LARA: I just don't know what he sees in her.

MEGAN: Lara, knock it off. They've been going out for months. They're good together.

LARA: I'm just saying.

AMY: Well don't.

LARA: Jeez, Amy. Who made you boss?

*(Enter KELLY Stage Left.)*

KELLY: Neither one of them are answering their phone.

PAT: That's cause they're here. In the dead zone.

KELLY: And nobody told me? I *am* the stage manager.

PAT: Julie's still not here.

KELLY: *(not hearing PAT)* A little respect, that's all I ask. Where's Julie? Julie's not here.

PAT: Yeah, I've been saying that.

KELLY: Great. Now I gotta go and call Julie.

*(As KELLY starts to exit Stage Left, JULIE enters Stage Right, very close to tears. SHE looks at CARDENAS. CARDENAS looks away. KELLY doesn't notice JULIE's mood.)*

PAT: Julie is here!

KELLY: I was just about to call you. You're late!

JULIE: I'm sorry. Hi Cardenas.

*(CARDENAS looks away. JULIE bursts into tears and runs off Stage Right.)*

PAT: Oh- oh.

KELLY: *(exasperated)* Great.

ANNA: Cardenas, did you guys have a fight?

CARDENAS: I don't want to talk about it.

ANNA: I'll go talk to Julie.

*(ANNA exits Stage Right.)*

KELLY: Okay everybody. We're off book today, so I hope you have your lines memorized.

LARA: My line is completely memorized. Let's see if I have it right: "Madam!"

KARL: Why don't all the actors not in the balcony scene get into costume for your scenes?

CLAIRE: Ashley, maybe we could talk now?

ASHLEY: This is really not a good time, Claire, I want to watch this scene.

*(As ALL the ACTORS except LARA, who is in costume, begin to exit Stage Left, enter BRAD and CHRIS Stage Right. The ACTORS hang about the exit watching the argument for awhile.)*

BRAD: *(Entering in extremely puffy, short, pantaloons)* You've got to be kidding me! I'm not wearing these!

CHRIS: *(following)* Brad, do you know how long it took me to make those?

BRAD: I can't wear these pants. Look at this! Could these pants be any poofier? I feel ridiculous!

KARL: That's what they wore back then.

LARA: I don't know about that.

BRAD: See?

KELLY: Seriously, Lara, you're not helping.

CHRIS: Brad, we're doing one of the most beautiful love scenes ever written, so please -

BRAD: And why do we have to do Romeo and Juliet? Why couldn't we do the swordfight scene in Hamlet where everybody dies? Now that's cool.

KARL: Brad, think of it this way – Romeo and Juliet, you and Chris - it'll be like playing yourselves.

BRAD: What kind of a girlfriend makes her boyfriend wear pants like this?

LARA: Good question, Brad.

KARL: *(To LARA)* Will you stop?

BRAD: Do I really have to wear these pants?

CHRIS: I'm not your girlfriend anymore if you don't!

KARL: *(quickly, before BRAD can respond)* Places!

*(CHRIS goes to balcony, LARA Upstage Left, KARL, KELLY and ASHLEY watch the rehearsal. After her line, LARA goes back Upstage Left.)*

KELLY: Lara please begin.

LARA: Hi. Welcome to the Shakespeare Project. Our first piece is from Romeo and Juliet. I'm playing the Nurse. Chris is playing Juliet. There she is now, on the balcony, *(CHRIS is on a chair)* dreaming of Romeo.

*(LARA crosses Upstage, waiting for her line.)*

CHRIS: "Dost thou love me? O gentle Romeo, if thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully. Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won, I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay, so thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world. I should have been more strange, I must confess, but that thou overheard'st, ere I was 'ware, my true-love passion. Therefore pardon me, and not impute this yielding to light love, which the dark night hath so discovered."

*(Pausing, SHE waits for ROMEO's answer. HE has become distracted by trying to flatten his very puffy pants.)*

KARL: Brad, it's your line.

BRAD: What?

LARA: *(sweetly)* It's your line, Brad.

BRAD: Sorry. Give me the cue again.

CHRIS: I said, *(back into her Juliet persona)* "Therefore pardon me, and not impute this yielding to light love, which the dark night hath so discovered."

BRAD: *(listlessly)* Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow -

CHRIS: Don't say lady like that!

KARL: Chris, I'll handle-

BRAD: You're not the director, so quit directing me!

CHRIS: You sound like an irate mall cop.

LARA: Christina, I'll do Juliet if you don't want to.

CHRIS: I never said I didn't want to! Brad is being impossible!

KARL: If everyone could calm down-

BRAD: I just don't understand half of what Juliet says! And I hate these pants! They're so -

CHRIS: (*interrupting*) Don't start with the pants again!

KARL: This isn't a fashion show-

LARA: They are abnormally pouffy.

KARL: Lara!

LARA: I'm just saying.

KARL: What's important are the lines. What don't you understand, Brad?

BRAD: Like when she says, "I should have been more strange ..." Why does she want to be weirder than she is?

KARL: It doesn't mean weird; it means she shouldn't have treated him in such a familiar way and asked him straight out if he loved her. She should have acted more like a stranger, get it?

BRAD: Yeah.

KARL: "Therefore pardon me and not impute this yielding to light love" means, don't think my love is like a silly little crush, it's true love! "... which the dark night hath so discovered." Okay. That's your cue, Brad.

BRAD: All right. (*mechanically*) "Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow that tips with silver all these fruit tree tops -"

CHRIS: Now you sound like a robot! Nobody can act with you!

LARA: I'll try! I wouldn't mind.

ASHLEY: I think you've lost control of the rehearsal, Karl.

KELLY: Actors, don't bring your problems to rehearsal! I thought we established that.

CHRIS: (*angry*) What is your problem, Brad?

BRAD: It's just stupid! Why does Shakespeare have to go on and on and on?

CHRIS: I don't believe you. You are inane.

LARA: I don't think you're inane, Brad.

ASHLEY: Will you stay out of this?

KARL: Come on, guys, how are you going to do this scene if all you do is fight?

CHRIS: He started it. He's not even trying. It's like acting with a pillow in pantaloons.

BRAD: And who made the stupid pantaloons?

CHRIS: It took me hours-

KARL: Let's take five-

BRAD: (*starting to exit*) I'm outta here.

CHRIS: Get back here or I am breaking up with you right now!

BRAD: Oh, yeah? Well, I'm breaking up with you! It's over!

*(BRAD goes Upstage and fumes, LARA follows him.)*

CHRIS: *(yelling after BRAD)* Good! *(to KARL)* He dumped me!

KARL: It was kind of a mutual dumping, really. Let me talk to him.

*(CHRIS goes Offstage Left, ASHLEY follows. KARL crosses to BRAD.)*

KARL: Lara, would you excuse us?

LARA: I'll be right here if you need me, Brad.

*(LARA crosses Left to KELLY. KARL takes BRAD aside Down Stage Right.)*

KARL: Brad, what's up?

BRAD: I'd rather be playing football. The only reason I'm here is that Chris asked me to do it. And I hate this costume.

KARL: Acting isn't about cool costumes – it's not about being cool at all. You can't be cool and be any good. Being cool can be really boring, you know. You gotta care. You care about Christina, right?

BRAD: She just dumped me!

KARL: It was really more of a mutual dumping, don't you think?

Anyway, let's do the scene the way it was written – with emotion, with passion - like that fight you guys just had. Or the way you play football. All right?

BRAD: All right.

KELLY: Should I get Chris?

KARL: Please.

*(KELLY exits Stage Left. PAT enters Stage Right in GAME SHOW costume.)*

BRAD: I'll show her. A pillow in pantaloons!

PAT: Uh - I take it we're not ready to do the game show?

KARL: No, Pat. Okay, let's continue –

*(CHRIS, ASHLEY and KELLY enter Stage Left as PAT exits Stage Right.)*

Are you ready, Chris?

CHRIS: *(tersely)* Yup.

KARL: Let's take it from: "O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?"

*(CHRIS starts the scene still angry from the fight, BRAD wins her over.)*

BRAD: “O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?”

CHRIS: *(coldly)* “What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?”

BRAD: “Th’ exchange of thy love’s faithful vow for mine.”

CHRIS: *(warming up)* “I gave thee mine before thou didst request it; and yet I would it were to give again.”

BRAD: “Wouldst thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?”

CHRIS: “But to be frank, and give it thee again. And yet I wish but for the thing I have: my bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite.”

LARA: *(from Upstage Right)* “Madam!”

CHRIS: “I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu! Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true. Stay but a little, and I will come again.”  
*(crosses Upstage Right)*

BRAD: “O blessed, blessed, night! I am afeard, being in night, all this is but a dream, too flattering-sweet to be substantial.”

CHRIS: Wow.

LARA: Brad, that was great.

ASHLEY: Yeah, I’m impressed.

BRAD: *(surprised)* I’m really good!

LARA: I really believed you were Romeo.

CHRIS: Yeah, me too -

LARA: I knew you had it in you!

BRAD: Thanks.

CHRIS: *(crossing to BRAD)* It’s so sad, isn’t it, to think that both Romeo and Juliet end up dead - dead, and so young.

BRAD: It’s just a play.

CHRIS: You didn’t feel anything?

BRAD: Hey, I’m just a pillow in pantaloons saying words from a script. I think you call it “acting”.

CHRIS: Fine.

BRAD: Fine.

ASHLEY: Awkward!

*(BRAD exits Stage Left. CHRIS exits Stage Right.)*

KARL: Well that didn’t go well.

*(MEGAN enters Stage Left, in Cleopatra costume.)*

MEGAN: Ashley, I’ve got some questions about the Cleopatra scene.

ASHLEY: Let’s talk about while we get the props.

*(Enter CLAIRE Stage Left, as MEGAN and ASHLEY exit Stage Right.)*

CLAIRE: Ashley!

KELLY: She'll be right back, Claire. Help me with the prop box, Karl?  
Claire, why don't you get into your Wall costume?

*(KELLY, CLAIRE and KARL exit Stage Left, LARA is alone onstage. SHE begins to clear it.)*

LARA: I can't believe how Chris treats Brad. I like Brad. I wish he were my boyfriend. Well, they did break up, right? He is totally up for grabs. Hey, this is like a soliloquy. Like Hamlet, with his To Be Or Not To Be speech. I was born to play Shakespeare. And now I'm going to find Brad.

*(LARA exits Stage Left. JULIE and ANNA, in Thisby costume, enter Stage Right. AMY enters Stage Left, in Charmian costume.)*

AMY: Julie, are you okay?

JULIE: *(in a tiny trembling voice)* I think so.

AMY: What's going on? Did something bad happen?

JULIE: Yes. *(as SHE starts to tear up)* I ... I can't talk about it.

ANNA: She broke up with Cardenas last night.

AMY: What did he do?

JULIE: He – he – *(can't continue)*

ANNA: She broke up with him because he doesn't have a car. They had to go everywhere by bus.

AMY: You broke up with a really cool guy like Cardenas because he doesn't have a car?

JULIE: It was embarrassing! People were making fun of me!

AMY: Do you have a car?

JULIE: No.

AMY: So, are you gonna break up with yourself too?

JULIE: That's just harsh!

ANNA: Amy – not necessary.

AMY: Well, honestly. You break up with him, then fall apart to get our sympathy. That's just crazy. Over a car!

JULIE: *(running off Stage Right)* You're just mean!

ANNA: Amy, you could try to be a little more understanding.

AMY: No, I couldn't. That's one of the dumbest things I've ever heard.

ANNA: I'm going to talk to her.

*(Exit ANNA Stage Right. Enter CARDENAS from Stage Left, dressed as Slave.)*

AMY: Cardenas, are you okay?

CARDENAS: I'm fine!

*(Enter ASHLEY and MEGAN from Stage Right, with props.)*

ASHLEY: *(looks accusingly at CARDENAS)* I just ran into Julie, who is crying her eyes out in the hall.

MEGAN: *(glaring at CARDENAS)* We didn't get the details because she was too upset to talk, but I assume, Cardenas, that you had something to do with it.

CARDENAS: I do NOT want to talk about it!

ASHLEY: *(Glaring at CARDENAS)* Fine. Then we'll get started.

MEGAN: *(Glaring at CARDENAS)* Men! They are so insensitive!

AMY: Ashley, Megan - it's not what you think.

ASHLEY: But Cardenas doesn't want to talk about it, so let's move on.

*(Enter KELLY and KARL, Stage Left, with prop Box. Enter CLAIRE, dressed as Wall, stage right.)*

MEGAN: I'm ready.

*(Enter PAT, Stage Right.)*

PAT: There is way too much drama backstage. Everyone's crying.  
What is going on?

MEGAN: Not now, Pat.

PAT: Nice wall, Claire.

*(PAT exits Stage Right.)*

CLAIRE: Ashley, please, I need to talk to you before we rehearse Midsummer.

ASHLEY: I'd love to, Claire, except that now I'm directing Cleopatra. We'll talk right after this. Okay, Cardenas, remember the messenger is in mortal fear of his life here.

CARDENAS: I'm definitely feeling that, Ashley.

ASHLEY: Places!

KELLY: Amy, please begin.

*(CLAIRE sits next to DIRECTORS and watches the scene.)*

AMY: It's 30 B.C. Mark Antony and Cleopatra are madly in love, but he's been called back to Rome. The messenger has just told Cleopatra that Antony, while in Rome, has married Octavia, but she refuses to believe him. We're at the point where the messenger is telling Cleopatra the news. I'm playing Charmian, Cleopatra's maid.

*(CLEOPATRA [MEGAN] is sitting next to an urn of snakes, CHARMIAN [AMY] crosses to her. In the prop box are scrolls, figurines, a knife, a bowl of fruit, flowers, a shawl, whatever: which can be placed on a small table or in a trunk so SHE can throw them at the messenger later. Action starts with the MESSENGER, frozen in fear, next to CLEOPATRA.)*

CARDENAS: He's married, madam.

MEGAN: *(draws knife)* Rogue, that hast lived too long!

CARDENAS: Nay then, I'll run!

*(CARDENAS as MESSENGER runs off Stage Right.)*

AMY: Good madam, keep yourself within yourself. The man is innocent.

MEGAN: Some innocents 'scape not the thunderbolt. Call the slave again! Though I am mad, I will not bite him. Call!

AMY: *(calling offstage)* Slave! SLAVE! He is afraid to come.

MEGAN: I will not hurt him.

*(Exit AMY Stage Right.)*

These hands do lack nobility that they strike a meaner than myself, since I myself have given myself the cause.

*(Enter AMY, urging MESSENGER CARDENAS back on.)*

Come hither, sir. Though it be honest, it is never good to bring bad news.

CARDENAS: I have done my duty.

MEGAN: Is he married? I cannot hate thee worst than I do if thou again say 'Yes.'

CARDENAS: He's married, madam.

ASHLEY: Throw things! Hit him! Hit him with things!

CARDENAS: What?

*(CLEOPATRA MEGAN throws snakes out of the urn at CARDENAS. KARL, CLAIRE and AMY onstage are horrified.)*

KELLY and KARL: What?

MEGAN: (*pummeling MESSENGER*) The gods confound thee! That thou shalt tell me that again!

CARDENAS: (*as himself*) Ow! Oh!

AMY: (*taking urn of snakes away*) Megan, what are you doing?

ASHLEY: (*yelling*) Stay in character!

CARDENAS: (*in character*) Halt! Should I lie, madam?

MEGAN: Oh, I would thou didst. Go, get thee hence! Hadst thou Narcissus in thy face, to me thou wouldst appear most ugly. He is married?

CARDENAS: (*lying prone*) I crave your highness' pardon.

MEGAN: He is married?

CARDENAS: Take no offence at me! To punish me for what you make me do seems much unfair! He's married to Octavia.

(*MEGAN crosses to prop box to get things to throw CARDENAS.*)

MEGAN: Oh, get thee hence!

(*MEGAN throws things at the MESSENGER's hasty exit.*)

AMY: Good your highness, patience.

MEGAN: In praising Anthony, I have disprais'd Caesar.

AMY: Many times, madam.

MEGAN: I am paid for it now. Lead me from hence, I faint! Pity me, Charmian, but do not speak to me. Lead me to my chamber.

(*End CLEOPATRA scene, AMY and MEGAN start cross Right, CARDENAS comes back onstage Stage Right.*)

AMY: Okay, what was that? We never rehearsed pummeling Cardenas.

CARDENAS: That kinda hurt.

MEGAN: I'm sorry. I got mad, I guess, because of the way you hurt Julie.

CARDENAS: I hurt Julie? She broke up with me.

AMY: Because he doesn't have a car!

MEGAN: But I thought –

ASHLEY: Why didn't you say so?

CARDENAS: Because it's embarrassing! And it's none of your business!

MEGAN: Had I known, I wouldn't have thrown things at you.

KELLY: Rehearsals are no place for personal grievances. What's it going to take to establish that with you people?

MEGAN: I am so sorry.

ASHLEY: Me too. That was inappropriate behavior on my part. And Megan's. Mostly Megan's. She's the one who threw things and hit him.

MEGAN: You told me to and you're the director!

ASHLEY: All right. I started it. I'm really sorry Cardenas.

CLAIRE: Are you okay?

CARDENAS: I'm fine. No big deal. I'm getting into my Pyramus costume.

*(Exit CARDENAS Stage Left.)*

MEGAN: *(conspiratorial, to ASHLEY)* Actually, I thought it was a good bit. Could we keep it, but just not throw so hard?

ASHLEY: Absolutely.

*(JULIE and ANNA enter Stage Right.)*

AMY: *(tartly)* So, Julie, are you emotionally capable of doing Ophelia?

JULIE: *(not getting the sarcasm)* Yes, I can do it.

AMY: That's great. Let's get into our costumes. I'd like to have a little chat with you.

MEGAN: Me, too.

*(Exit JULIE, MEGAN, and AMY Stage Left, as CARDENAS enters Stage Left. JULIE chokes back a sob; MEGAN and AMY roll their eyes.)*

ASHLEY: So, Claire, what did you want to talk about?

CLAIRE: I know this is silly, and I should have brought it up sooner ... but ... *(takes a deep breath)* I really wanted to play Thisby. I memorized all of Thisby's lines for the audition. My grandmother played Thisby in the Lake Superior Summer Stock Theater in 1953. But you gave me the part of a wall. It's the first play I've ever been in, my grandparents are coming from Ohio to see me, and I'm playing a wall named Snout.

KELLY: The wall's a great part! You have lots of lines!

ASHLEY: The wall is really important. Thisby and Pyramus are separated by the wall. It's pretty much the point of the scene.

CARDENAS: You don't have to get all huffy.

ASHLEY: Karl, am I being huffy?

KARL: You're a little huffy.

ASHLEY: I'm not being huffy! I'm blunt. Blunt is not huffy.

ANNA: I'll play the wall. I mean, I went ahead and learned everyone's part in case someone got sick.

ASHLEY: That's nice of you, Anna, but I cast you as Thisby.

ANNA: Come on, Ashley. Let me do the wall. It's the part I really wanted anyway.

CLAIRE: Please, Ashley.

CARDENAS: Come on, Ashley.

KARL: It's a win-win, Ashley.

ASHLEY: All right! Let's change costumes, then.

*(ANNA, CARDENAS, ASHLEY and CLAIRE exit Stage Left.)*

KARL: It will be a small miracle if we can pull this play off.

*(Enter BRAD and PAT, cross Down Stage Right, BRAD very dejected. BRAD sighs, PAT crosses to KARL.)*

PAT: Karl, you gotta talk to him. I've tried everything. He's really depressed. And I'm tired of crouching in the costume rack.

KARL: What? Why –

PAT: He's hiding from Lara.

KARL: Thanks, Pat. Kelly, would you give us a minute?

KELLY: *(muttering)* It's rehearsal, not therapy.

*(KELLY exits Stage Left. KARL crosses to BRAD and PAT.)*

KARL: What's up?

BRAD: I miss Christina. I want her to be my girlfriend again. But she refuses to even talk to me.

KARL: You broke up, what, 15 minutes ago?

BRAD: I don't even know how it happened. Just a stupid fight that got out of control.

KARL: *(leafing through R & J script)* Here. Read this to her.

BRAD: What's this?

KARL: It's from Romeo and Juliet. It's great.

BRAD: *(reading)* It's corny.

PAT: It takes guts to be corny. I should know, I play the accordion.

KARL: Give it a try. Go read it out loud a few times, so it sounds natural.

BRAD: All right.

*(As BRAD starts to exit Stage Right, LARA enters Stage Left.)*

LARA: Oh, Brad there you are! I've been looking for you!

BRAD: Um – I don't really have time -

KARL: Oh, Lara, – Pat was wondering if you'd run lines with him for the game show?

LARA: I guess. Come on, Pat.

PAT: (*quiet, to KARL*) Thanks a lot.

(*Exit LARA and PAT Stage Left. Enter MEGAN, ASHLEY, KELLY, ANNA, CARDENAS, and CLAIRE Stage Left. KARL sits in his chair, MEGAN by him.*)

KELLY: Places for a Midsummer Night's Dream!

(*CARDENAS exits Stage Right, CLAIRE exits Stage Left. ANNA comes Downstage.*)

ANNA: I, one Snout by name, present a wall; and  
such a wall, as I would have you think,  
that had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,  
Did whisper often very secretly.

(*Enter CARDENAS as PYRAMUS.*)

Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

CARDENAS: O night! Alack, alack, I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot.  
And thou, O wall! O sweet, O lovely wall!  
That standst between her father's ground and mine;  
Thou wall, O wall! O sweet, and lovely wall!  
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.

(*ANNA shows mitted hand where chink is.*)

Thanks, courteous wall:  
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.  
Wicked wall! Through whom I see no bliss;  
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

(*ANNA gives him a "It's not my fault" look. Enter CLAIRE as THISBY.*)

CLAIRE: O wall! Full often has thou heard my moans, For parting my  
fair Pyramus and me

CARDENAS: I hear a voice: now will I to the chink, to spy an I can hear  
my Thisby's face. – Is that right? Hear my Thisby's face?

ASHLEY: Shakespeare meant that to get a laugh.

MEGAN: No one's gonna laugh.

ASHLEY: Could we just continue?

*(JULIE enters from Stage Left, partly in costume for Ophelia, and watches.)*

CARDENAS: - and I can hear my Thisby's face. Thisby!

CLAIRE: My love! Thou art my love, I think.

CARDENAS: Oh! Kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

*(THEY kiss into the oven mitt.)*

CLAIRE: I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

CARDENAS: Will thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightaway?

CLAIRE: 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

*(Exit CARDENAS and CLAIRE, Stage Right and Left.)*

ANNA: Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so; And, being done, thus  
Wall away doth go.

KARL: Ashley, that was good.

ANNA: I gotta change. *(Exits Stage Right)*

MEGAN: Yeah, I like how you switched the parts, Ashley. That was a  
good call.

ASHLEY: Thanks.

*(Enter CARDENAS Stage Right and CLAIRE Stage Left.)*

JULIE: *(crossing to CARDENAS)* Enjoy that kiss with Claire?

CARDENAS: What are you talking about? I kissed an oven mitt!

JULIE: Don't think I don't see what's going on here between you two.

CARDENAS: It was an oven mitt! It was in the script! Besides, you  
broke up with me!

JULIE: Well it didn't take you very long to get over it!

KELLY: Julie, places for the Game Show. NOW.

JULIE: *(glaring at KELLY)* People can be so insensitive! *(exits Stage  
Right)*

CLAIRE: Seriously? She's jealous of an oven mitt?

CARDENAS: You know, I'm glad she broke up with me. I was thinking  
about breaking up with her, but I was afraid she'd cry. I guess I  
didn't have the guts to break up with her. That's pathetic!

CLAIRE: Don't be so hard on yourself. It took me three weeks to get the  
guts to ask to play Thisby.

CARDENAS: I'm glad you did.

CLAIRE: Me, too.

*(Enter LARA Stage Left, with a box of props for game show.)*

LARA: I've got Pat's props for the game show. He's letter perfect, by the way, on his lines.

*(Enter CHRIS, Stage Left, SHE glances around the stage.)*

CHRIS: Anybody seen Brad?

LARA: He left.

CHRIS: He left?

KELLY: He left? I'm the stage manager, and he didn't tell me he was leaving. *(gets out her cell phone)*

LARA: All I know is that I saw him go out the door.

ASHLEY: We can't deal with it now. Let's finish the rehearsal.

*(KELLY puts her cell phone away. KARL and PAT enter, Stage Left, with podium. PAT starts putting props into the podium.)*

KARL: *(yelling Offstage Left)* We're rehearsing the Game Show! Anyone not in it plays audience!

*(The CAST, except for the principal players of the game show and BRAD, come onstage and sit on the floor in a semi circle around the game show area and act as the audience.)*

KELLY: Please begin, Pat.

PAT: Hi, I'm Pat, your host and M.C. of the Shakespeare Project game show! We were going to call it Shakespeare in Jeopardy, but apparently there are legal issues with that name and we can't afford a lawyer. Now let's meet our celebrity contestants. From Henry IV parts I and 2, hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap and part time harlot, audience, say hello to our first contestant, Mistress Quickly!

*(ANNA enters Stage Right, walks to PAT, his hand outstretched to shake hers.)*

PAT: Hi, it's nice to - *(SHE grabs him in a lusty bear hug)* – meet you.

M. Q.: *(swatting him on the tush)* Good morrow Master Pat!

PAT: Good morrow and don't touch me there! We don't do things like that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for fear of lawsuits.

M.Q.: Let's kill all the lawyers! *Henry IV part 2.*

PAT: Thank you, Mistress Quickly, but again, please try to modify your speech and behavior to that deemed politically correct in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Killing of lawyers is not condoned anymore.

M.Q.: *(cheerfully)* Whatever you say! I'm easy.

PAT: So we've heard, Mistress Quickly. Contestant number two is from Shakespeare's bloodiest play, *Titus Andronicus*. Please welcome his most bloodthirsty heroine, the Queen of the Goths and the Empress of Rome: Tamora!!

*(Enter AMY as TAMORA Stage Right. PAT holds out hand to shake hers.)*

TAMORA: Touch me and I'll unhair thy head! Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stew'd in brine smarting in lingering pickle.

PAT: You can't whip me and stew me! You're out of your mind!

Mistress Quickly, tell her she can't threaten me like that.

M.Q: She's the empress of Rome; she can do whatever she likes.

PAT: So she is and yes she can! Watch my back, audience. Our last contestant, from the castle of Elsinore in Denmark, the one time girlfriend of Hamlet, Ophelia! Ophelia, come on out here!

*(OPHELIA enters, looking drowned, twigs and sodden flowers in her hair.)*

OPHELIA: I'm sorry, but you don't want to shake my hand. It's still wet and rather mucky from the pond. I drowned, you know.

PAT: Yes, I'd heard. I'm sorry.

OPHELIA: Sorry? Hamlet should be sorry! He killed my father Polonius, he killed my brother Laertes, then he told me to get me to a nunnery, what else was I supposed to do with my life but to end it?

PAT: I'm guessing I would have got me to nunnery before drowning myself. *(hearty laugh, show host style)*

OPHELIA: Lo, he laughs at my pain.

*(OPHELIA starts weeping, M.Q. hands her a tissue.)*

PAT: No, no I'm not! It was just game show host patter – just keeping things light - *(as OPHELIA hiccups with soft sobs)* – I - I - I won't do it anymore.

TAMORA: Thou full dish of fool!

PAT: Let's move on to the game shall we? Here's how the game is played. I'll ask a question, and our three celebrity contestants will each answer them. Our four categories tonight are: 1. Fools and Fatheads; 2. Quotable Quotes; 3. Plague Sores, Carbuncles and Other Things that Ooze; and 4. Gravestones and Epitaphs. Let's start with Fools and Fatheads. Ready? Okay. *(reading from card)* Jesters lived at the court of Kings to make them laugh, and were often called fools. Mistress Quickly, for 100 ducats, name a famous

fool and or jester from Shakespeare. Please remember to word your answer in the form of a question.

M.Q.: Who is my own dear sweet friend Falstaff?

PAT: That is correct!

M.Q.: Oh, the things they said about him! A fat kidneyed rascal they called him! “Falstaff sweats to death, and lards the lean earth as he walks along.” That’s not very nice. They called him woolsack, and whoreson round man! A clay brained guts, knotty-pated fool, a bed-presser, horse-back-breaker! Oh! (*tearing up*) And the merry wives of Windsor threatened to smite his noddles and then put him in a laundry basket of stinkin’ clothes and dumped him in the Thames! It’s a wonder he had any self-esteem left at all! (*sobs openly*)

PAT: (*very uncomfortable, giving her a tissue*) Mistress Quickly, please. Control yourself. Here. Okay now?

M.Q.: I’m fine now.

PAT: I’m glad. Ophelia, name one of Shakespeare’s fools.

OPHELIA: Who is Alas, poor Yorick!

PAT: That is correct!

OPHELIA: It was Yorick’s skull that Hamlet held in his hand while he waited for my funeral, where they put me in the dark, cold ground for all of eternity! To moulder and to rot -

PAT: Yes, Yorick is correct and now we move on!

OPHELIA: Hark! - mark you how he interrupts my pain!

PAT: This is just a game show. It’s not supposed to be full of pain and agony! Think light, think fun, think witty banter!

TAMORA: You gross watery pumpkin, you rump fed runyon!

PAT: If I knew what that meant, I’d probably be upset. But I don’t, so I’m just moving the game along. Tamora, if you could stop insulting me long enough to answer the question: for 100 ducats, name a fool or jester from Shakespeare, please!

TAMORA: King Lear.

PAT: I’m sorry, but you forgot to say Who Is King Lear.

TAMORA: Who is guard thy head, for I intend to have it ere long.

PAT: UH - I’ll make an exception, just this once. But – in any case, your answer is incorrect. Lear was a King, not a fool.

TAMORA: He was King and a fool. Act 3, Scene 4: “This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.”

PAT: I’m sorry, but King Lear is not one of the answers on my card.

TAMORA: Let me go grind your bones to powder small and with this hateful liquor temper it; and in that paste let your vile head be baked.

PAT: You’re insane!

M.Q.: Watch she don’t smite your noddles.

PAT: I'll make another exception, - just this twice – yes, King Lear is correct! The scores are now equal, each of the contestants has 100 ducats. The next category is Quotable Quotes; and it's the lightning round! (*takes out stopwatch*) Contestants, for one ducat per phrase, you have twenty seconds to name as many phrases that originated in Shakespeare and are still in our common vocabulary as you can. Mistress Quickly: Go!

M.Q.: What is: Knock knock who's there, what the dickens, eaten me out of house and home, household words, what a piece of work is man, the naked truth, the milk of human kindness, it smells to heaven, we have seen better days, pomp and circumstance, laid on with a trowel, the apple of her eye, the lady doth protest too much methinks, the be all and end all, to the manner born, not a mouse stirring, one fell swoop, good night ladies!

PAT: Ding ding ding ding! Time's up! Very good, Mistress Quickly. Eighteen phrases: you've just added 18 ducats to your score! Ophelia, ready?

OPHELIA: I guess.

PAT: And go!

OPHELIA: What is: In my heart of hearts, as white as driven snow, wear my heart on my sleeve, Frailty thy name is woman, something is rotten in the state of Denmark, the play's the thing, too much of a good thing, to be or not to be, neither a borrower or a lender be, to thine own self be true, star crossed lovers, knee deep, sweets to the sweet, parting is such sweet sorrow, for goodness' sakes, as quiet as a lamb, the primrose path, neither rhyme nor reason, good night sweet Prince!

PAT: Ding ding ding ding! Time's up and that leaves Ophelia with nineteen phrases and nineteen ducats added to her score! Congratu-

-

*(During PAT's lines OPHELIA starts stuffing tissues into her nostrils, then tilts her head back.)*

Ophelia, what's wrong?

OPHELIA: I have a nosebleed. It's all right, it happens all the time.

*(M.Q. leaves her a bunch of tissues.)*

PAT: And now, if you're sure you're all right –

OPHELIA: *(faintly)* I'm fine.

PAT: And now to you, Tamora. Ready? Go!

TAMORA: What is: Till the crack of doom, devil incarnate, dead as a doornail, what's done is done, bated breath, full of sound and fury, strange bedfellows, an eyesore, green eyed monster, budge an inch, the game is afoot, the game is up, into thin air, double double toil and trouble, sink or swim, thou herd of boils and plagues, thou pernicious bloodsucker -

PAT: Hey, some of these are just insults –

TAMORA: - you wretched bloody and usurping boar –

PAT: Ding ding ding ding!

TAMORA: You freckled whelp hag born, thou bitch wolf's son, you ruinous butt, thou loath'd issue of thy father's loins, thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb -

PAT: DING DING DING DING! Time's up Tamora!

TAMORA: Hath thou not a real bell? That thou standest there mouthing and mewling a counterfeit Ding Ding Ding Ding?

PAT: We don't have the money to get a real bell! Only fifteen of your answers qualified, giving you fifteen ducats and putting you in last place.

TAMORA: (*coolly*) He hath not so much brain as ear-wax.

PAT: The next category is Plague Sores, Carbuncles, and other Things That Ooze. Okay! Personal question. Contestants: please give us a Shakespearean quote that you believe best describes you. Let me remind you that the audience picks the winner of this category. Mistress Quickly? For 200 ducats, and please remember to phrase your quote in the form of a question.

M.Q.: All right. This is from *As You Like It*. What is: "I am a true laborer: I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good."

PAT: Excellent choice, Mistress Quickly. Ophelia?

OPHELIA: Mine is also from *As You Like It*. What is: "I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs."

PAT: I'd have to agree with that! Tamora?

TAMORA: Methinks the category is misnamed.

PAT: I'll take it up with the producers. But now, a quote, please, that describes you.

TAMORA: Mine is from *Much Ado About Nothing*. What is: "Would it not grieve a woman to be over-mastered with a piece of valiant dust? To make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl?"

PAT: Somehow, I know I've been insulted again.

M.Q.: A piece of valiant dust and a clod of wayward marl are both references to men. Basically, she's saying men are dust motes and clods of dirt.

OPHELIA: She is so right! I want to change my answer to hers!

TAMORA: No. Oozing and pond-soaked Ophelia, thou art a dish of skim milk, a veritable milk-sop!

OPHELIA: Oh — oh —

*(As SHE collapses into weeping, M.Q. gives her the entire box of tissues and leaves them with her.)*

PAT: That's just great. You are so nasty!

TAMORA: Thank you.

PAT: Okay, audience - who best described themselves: Mistress Quickly as an honest laborer, Ophelia as a sucker of melancholy, or Tamora, who just insulted all the men on the planet?

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