

WHEREFORE ART THY HORSE?

By Jerry Rabushka

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WHEREFORE ART THY HORSE?

A One Act Shakespeare Comedy in Four Scenes

By Jerry Rabushka

SYNOPSIS: The best of Shakespeare is up for grabs! This play takes some of his most famous quotes in a whole new direction – down. What happens when Romeo doesn't know what wherefore means? When someone finally offers Richard III a horse for his kingdom? The Macbeth segment stirs up a witches' brew of disgusting glop, and Hamlet? It's just not to be.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1-6 females, 1-6 males, 4-5 either; doubling possible, gender flexible)

INTRO

DIRECTOR (m/f) (23 lines)
 ACTOR (m) (26 lines)
 ACTRESS (f) (11 lines)

SCENE 1: TO BE OR NOT TO BE

DIRECTOR (m/f) (16 lines)
 OPHELIA (f) An actress. (36 lines)
 HAMLET (m) An actor. (26 lines)

SCENE 2: WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

ROMEO (m) (39 lines)
 JULIET (f) (46 lines)
 NURSE (f) (20 lines)

SCENE 3: DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE

MACBETH (m) (21 lines)
 LADY MACBETH (f) Also called Grouch. (18 lines)
 FIRST WITCH (m/f) (23 lines)
 SECOND WITCH (m/f) (22 lines)
 THIRD WITCH (m/f) (21 lines)
 APPY (m/f) Plays three apparitions called
 forth by the Witches. (16 lines)

SCENE 4: MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE!

- CHARLES (m)..... A peasant, Elsie’s husband.
 (32 lines)
- ELSIE (f)..... A peasant, Charles’s wife.
 (21 lines)
- RICHARD (m)..... King Richard III, King of
 England. (32 lines)

OUTRO

- DIRECTOR (m/f) (7 lines)
- ACTOR (m) (5 lines)
- ACTRESS (f) (3 lines)

NOTE ON DOUBLING

As you can see, this play can be performed by as few as six actors, and as many as 17, and any number in between! If you choose to double cast, each story is self-contained, so you can cast each actor in as many stories as you see fit.

DURATION: 45 minutes.

PROPS

- Scroll
- Script
- Crown
- Robe
- Chamber Pot
- Mirror
- Cake Box filled with Breadcrumbs (to use as Witches Brew mix)
- Really Big Spoon/Stirrer
- Ingredients for the Witches’ Brew
- Salt Shaker
- Cauldron
- Gag Items (the more and sillier, the merrier)

SOUND EFFECTS

All sound effects are optional.

- A Horse
- A Trumpet or A battle
- Spooky Music

COSTUMES

These plays are designed to be fun and easy to stage, so if you have something suggestive of a Shakespeare play, feel free to use it. If not, modern costumes will do just fine.

AUTHORS NOTE

This play consists of four parodies of famous Shakespeare scenes plus an intro and outro to frame them. This play can be as simple or elaborate as the director wishes. These plays presume some knowledge of Shakespeare, but should be enjoyable even to the novice. Direct quotes from Shakespeare are in italics.

During Scene 2, Juliet can speak from a small palette or platform if there's no full-fledged balcony available. Romeo will have more of the stage available to him, so he can move around more during this scene.

While not mentioned in the play, Lady Macbeth's given name, historically, is Gruoch (pronounced Grooch). You will need some disgusting ingredients for the witches' brew, which, if not available at a supermarket can be a fun project to make for the show. For the Withes Brew Mix, feel free to decorate the cake box with a name such as "Powdered Witches' Brew."

INTRO

AT RISE: *DIRECTOR and ACTOR are onstage.*

DIRECTOR: *(To the audience, very over the top enthusiastic.)* Don't you just love Shakespeare? I quote him for everything! I haven't had an original thought in years and people think I'm brilliant! Besides, when I put on a Shakespeare play, everyone wants to audition! Put on one of those new-fangled 20th century "dramas" as they call it, and you have to cast drunks out of the bowling alley. But Shakespeare? You get the best of the best lining up out the door and around the block. Here comes someone now.

ACTOR: *(Not the best of the best.)* I'm here for the Shakespeare auditions! I quit bowling in the fifth frame to get here on time, so I hope I strike a leading role. *(Proud of his humor.)* If thou hast one to spare.

DIRECTOR: Do you have any previous experience?

ACTOR: I was a cicada in the second grade play. But I'm ready to step it up! I've brushed up my Shakespeare from *All's Well that Ends Well* to *Winter's Tale*. "To be, not to be," that's my answer! Let's do this thing! After all, all the world's an auditorium! A natatorium! An insectarium!

DIRECTOR: *(Not impressed.)* All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

ACTOR: I don't like how you said merely.

DIRECTOR: You weren't supposed to. You strike me as someone who will do a great job!

ACTOR is excited.

DIRECTOR: With a small role.

ACTOR: *(Disappointed.)* I don't want a small role. I want poetry! I want pentameter! I want the lead!

DIRECTOR: You can't jump from a second-grade cicada into the lead.

ACTOR: But I've incubated for 17 years! Now I've emerged... *(Up to the front with arms out.)* a great stage performer!

DIRECTOR: You can have lots of roles. You can be the herald, the newsman, the messenger, the courier, and the crier.

ACTOR: So all I'll do is...

DIRECTOR: Bring us tidings. Then we react and get on with the real business of the play.

ACTOR: *Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.* So you may say.

DIRECTOR: What are you talking about?

ACTOR: Me, playing small parts.

ACTOR and DIRECTOR argue using Shakespearean insults.

ACTOR: *Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.*

DIRECTOR: *Small things make base men proud.*

ACTOR: *There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune.*

DIRECTOR: *You, minion, are too saucy.*

ACTOR: *Methink'st thou art a general offence and every man should beat thee.*

DIRECTOR: I'm the director and I demand to be treated with the respect I deserve.

ACTOR: You gave me a role with three lines every hour. I'd sooner respect a porcupine.

DIRECTOR: The average Shakespeare play has roles for three or four women and three or four dozen men. We cast women from the finest, and men from the dregs.

ACTOR: I heard you say the best of the best.

DIRECTOR: For leading roles yes, but for the messengers, we want empty headed pretty-boy anchors like on TV. So either you're going to bring us the news, or stay home and watch it.

ACTOR: If I stay home, who gets the news? You'll never get the play off the ground.

DIRECTOR: Exactly. So herald you must be. Crier, newsboy, messenger. *(Hands ACTOR a scroll.)* Here's a scroll.

ACTOR: *(Unrolls the scroll.)* It doesn't say anything.

DIRECTOR: Because your lines will be memorized, so it doesn't have to. Now read it.

ACTOR: (*Reads.*) “Everyone has died, and it’s only act three. There’s one left on stage, and that one is me.” That’s Hamlet, the short version, if there is such a thing.

DIRECTOR: *Thou sham’st the music of sweet news
By playing it to me with so sour a face.*

ACTOR: Who has the lead, if not I?

ACTRESS: (*Enters.*) I do, sweet lord. What news have you for me so I may react and enchant while you beat a hasty retreat and eat crackers in the green room?

ACTOR: How come she gets the lead?

ACTRESS: Because I’m better than everyone else. I played Annie when I was three. I put on a pair of pants and fit right into the *rôle*. In Shakespeare’s time women couldn’t act. So we’re making up for it. Bring me the news, crier.

ACTOR: What news? I don’t even know what play we’re doing.

DIRECTOR: I haven’t decided yet. I’m just casting about like a fishing line in a brackish pond to see what I bring to shore.

ACTRESS: I’ll be Romeo, Juliet, Portia, Caesar, Lear, Learissa, Falstaff or Bud Light. Whatever you need, I’ll be the lead.

DIRECTOR: Now that’s cooperation. No whining.

ACTOR: Of course not, you gave her the lead unconditionally. I’m just reciting news and changing costumes.

DIRECTOR: So? Let’s pick a play.

ACTRESS: I should pick it, since it’s mostly to showcase my talents.

ACTOR: I should pick it, since I’m stuck backstage listening for cues.
Sound and fury, signifying nothing.

ACTRESS: *Golden lads and girls all must, as chimney-sweepers,
come to dust.*

DIRECTOR: Speaking of which, can you clean up backstage, the last group left an awful mess.

ACTRESS: Excuse me? I’m the lead. I have bigger fish to fry.

ACTOR: Excuse me? I’m the messenger. I have lots of small fish to catch, or you fry nothing but cod liver oil.

ACTRESS: You left your mess in the message.

ACTOR: You left your feed in the lead.

ACTRESS: That doesn’t make sense.

ACTOR: It’s Shakespeare. No one understands it anyway. Thee, thou, thy...

ACTRESS: It's you.

ACTOR: Don't blame me!

ACTRESS: Thee means you. Thy means your. It's not that hard. Think'st thou it's so difficult? No wonder you're the messenger. (*Condescending.*) You probably speak in prose.

ACTOR: *The lady doth protest too much, methinks.*

DIRECTOR: (*Has an idea.*) I've got it! We're going to do several Shakespeare's greatest hits! The parts people like the most without all those dukes, earls, and English majors to confuse the issue.

ACTRESS: A compendium? *This is very midsummer madness.*

DIRECTOR: What a resume builder this will be! *Hamlet! Macbeth! Romeo and Juliet! Richard the Third!* But first, clean up that mess backstage. Perhaps we'll find just the sets and costumes we need left over from the last show. Come on everyone, let's get to work.

Everyone [at director's discretion] involved in the production enters and moves some stuff around to set up the stage and then exits.

**SCENE 1:
TO BE OR NOT TO BE**

AT START: *DIRECTOR and OPHELIA are onstage.*

DIRECTOR: (*To audience.*) You are about to witness the greatest scene ever written for the stage. I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to direct it. Be quiet and listen closely, as this passage asks a very important question.

OPHELIA: (*Mocking, to herself.*) Yes, it's very important. (*To audience, in a whisper.*) Worst director ever!

DIRECTOR shoots a nasty look to OPHELIA, who shoots the same look back.

DIRECTOR: The actors have worked very hard on this scene – well, at least one of them has – so please give us your undivided attention, as Hamlet is about to speak. (*As if in the play, saying this line while exiting the stage.*) *I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord. (Exits.)*

HAMLET: (*Enters, and thinks things over for a moment.*) *To be, or not to be: that is the question:*

OPHELIA: (*Hardly cares.*) No it isn't.

HAMLET: (*Confused, but more insistent.*) *To be, or not to be: that is the question:*

OPHELIA: The question is "what shall I wear to the dance tonight?"

HAMLET: *Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer*

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

OPHELIA: Not nobler at all, nope.

HAMLET: (*Trying not to look annoyed or distracted, but not doing a good job of it.*) *Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them?*

OPHELIA: What sea of troubles? We haven't even got to the first question, which as I noted is decidedly not the question you asked. Not that you'd know about making a decision anyway Hammy Ham Hamlet. Be, not be... "whatever shall I wear" is the question (*Indicates audience.*) these people want to know about.

HAMLET: *To die: to sleep;*

OPHELIA: I'll die if I wear the wrong thing...

OPHELIA is very impatient while HAMLET recites the following lines.

HAMLET: *No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.*

OPHELIA: Seriously are you even paying attention to me? The dance! The dance!

OPHELIA goes up to HAMLET who still tries to ignore her.

OPHELIA: My kingdom for a dance! (*To audience.*) We go through this all the time. I'm not even sure what I'm doing here. I'm supposed to listen to this? (*To audience.*) Or course you should be. (*Over the top, and right in HAMELT'S way.*) Be! Be! Be! Stung by two bees or not two bees but one wasp! (*Peaceful.*) Now, about me.

HAMLET: *To die, to sleep;*

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;

OPHELIA: What rub? Some crème would be nice. (*Gets up close to HAMLET again.*) You have some splotches you know. (*To audience.*) We all get smallpox and we don't want it to show, particularly in women of marriageable age.

HAMLET: *For in that sleep of death what dreams may come...*

OPHELIA: (*Indicates audience.*) You're putting *them* to sleep! (*To audience.*) It's like I'm not even here. Like he's just talking to himself. And they say I'm the crazy one.

HAMLET: *Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action-* (*Sees OPHELIA, finally.*) *Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia!*

OPHELIA gives a fake smile.

HAMLET: *Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.*

OPHELIA: Finally, I get to talk. (*To HAMLET.*) *Good my lord,
How does your honor for this many a day?*

HAMLET: *I humbly thank you; well, well, well.*

OPHELIA: You don't sound so good. You've been rambling on about being or not being and life and death and I just had a simple question of a much more immediate nature.

HAMLET: I had a complicated one of a much more philosophical nature and I had to work things out. In my mind, to which you should not be privy.

OPHELIA: A simple answer would have sufficed so we could move on.

HAMLET: "Hamlet, do I look fat in this dress?" is not a question with a simple answer.

OPHELIA: I mean you. To be, not to be? Yes, no.

HAMLET: It's a lot more complicated than that.

OPHELIA: Not really, no. *O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!*

- DIRECTOR:** (*Enters, storming onstage, can barely find the words.*)
What is going on? I can't! I can't let this go any farther. You've taken the greatest play in the English language and ruined it in front of this educated and refined audience.
- OPHELIA:** (*Dumbfounded.*) Really? I thought the greatest play in the English language was *Seussical*.
- DIRECTOR:** I'm about to faint! Whatever gave you that idea?
- OPHELIA:** Every community theater puts it on all the time, while *Hamlet* is cast aside on the heap of forgotten culture, rotting like old egg whites in a pile with *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Our American Cousin*.
- HAMLET:** I skipped half of my soliloquy what with her constant interrupting. Couldn't hear myself think, or think myself hear.
- OPHELIA:** Ophelia needs a voice. She sits there like she doesn't hear a thing, when she obviously-
- DIRECTOR:** She wasn't supposed to hear anything. They didn't have voiceover in 1600.
- OPHELIA:** I'm trying to do the voice under. This is what Ophelia thinks to herself while Hamlet thinks out loud.
- DIRECTOR:** You've turned a scene about love, life, and death into "what shall I wear to the prom?"
- OPHELIA:** The dance. Not the prom.
- DIRECTOR:** Your teenage selfishness has ruined the greatest speech in the English language.
- OPHELIA:** Now that would be something by Christopher Durang. Everyone does his monologues. Something in there should ace out "to be or not to be" by now. (*Indicating the audience.*) Plus they're all texting and tweeting. Teenage selfishness, adult selfishness...how can *Hamlet* compete with Snap Chat?
- DIRECTOR:** Well, there's a playoff game going on downtown. It's been a hundred years you know. (*Claps hands to move the action along.*) So, we better hurry it up, I want to see the end of the game. Now where were we?
- HAMLET:** I have no idea. (*To audience.*) I'm so sorry.
- OPHELIA:** If you'd have avenged your father when you were supposed to we could all be at the IHOP by now.
- HAMLET:** The whole play is about how I can't avenge my father.

OPHELIA: It's about how you won't, yet that men see women as the weaker sex.

HAMLET: I won't because I can't.

OPHELIA: I'd do it if I could. I want to be empowered. Like a Disney princess!

DIRECTOR: We're doing *Frozen* next year. But for now...

HAMLET: *Get thee to a nunnery.*

While OPHELIA gets heated in the following lines, HAMLET tries to remind calm.

OPHELIA: A nunnery? Who dances at a nunnery? But it was always about you anyway. *To be or not to be, that is the question.* Well you know what? It's not the question. Not for me, anyway. My part's written so I have no mind of my own and no recourse to ever exercise my own will. Just asking the question of what shall I wear, is, in fact, an act of rebellion in far too many women of the Renaissance era. So in my case, *to take arms against a sea of troubles* has only to do with should I wear the green or the blue? That's the only choice I'm allowed to make and you keep talking over it.

HAMLET: Yet thou art asking me about it? Make the choice thyself.

OPHELIA: No, you make your choice first. Be, or not. If it's not, then I won't go to the dance anyway. So shut thyself up and go kill thy uncle.

HAMLET: It's not the right time!

OPHELIA: You have the freedom of choice so denied to my gender yet you can't seem to get up the guts to use it. And to think I might have loved you. I'm done. *(Exits.)*

DIRECTOR: Get back here this this instant! People came to see Hamlet, not "what should I wear to the prom!" Return at once.

OPHELIA: *(Enters, with a pile of gag items.)* Fine. I'm back to "return at once" some love tokens you gave me in what was apparently a standard moment of insanity, so if that will help you with the question, here.

OPHELIA hands HAMLET gag items. If there are extras or other actors available, they can bring in more stuff.

HAMLET: *I never gave you aught.*

OPHELIA: *My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.*

HAMLET: *I did love you.*

OPHELIA: *Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.*

HAMLET: *You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot
so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of
it: I loved you not.*

OPHELIA: *First you did, then you didn't... Then you better take this
stuff. If you can't make up your mind, I will go to the dance –
unescorted. (Starts to walk away from the action.)*

DIRECTOR: *(Calling to OPHELIA.)* What dance? There isn't a dance!

HAMLET: *(Again, far too calm.)* There's a play coming up though. We
could go to that.

OPHELIA: *(Stops short.)* A play?

DIRECTOR: A play. There's a play within a play in the next scene of
the play. But no dance.

OPHELIA: *Ohhh. (Something comes to mind.)* That's a whole different
play.

DIRECTOR: Let's go watch it and see if we can salvage some of act
three.

OPHELIA: I have nothing to wear.

DIRECTOR: You have the blue or the green. Pick one and don't be
late.

OPHELIA: That's for a dance, not for a play.

DIRECTOR: Why did you think it was a dance? Where have you been
this whole time?

OPHELIA: I've been rehearsing for *My Fair Lady*. It opens next week
at the Bouffant Theatre. I think I better take my leave. I feel like I'm
going crazy! *(Exits.)*

DIRECTOR: *(Can't handle any more.)* Oh you will...you will. *(Exits.)*

HAMLET: *(Wary, but tries to start again as if nothing happened.)
To be or not to be, that is the question...*

*Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? (Looks around at the audience.) Where
is everybody? (Exits.)*

**SCENE 2:
WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?**

AT START: *ROMEO is onstage.*

ROMEO: *(To audience, sneaking around.) Shhh! Juliet doesn't know I'm skulking around under her balcony! (Bangs into or trips over something in the dark and lets out a yell.) If she sees me, it may frighten her. (Sharing a secret.) Our families don't get along. I'm a Montague and she's a Capulet. Never a good mix. (Takes a couple more steps, bored.) I've been waiting here for hours; I hope the servants don't empty a chamber pot over the side! (Notices JULIET is about to come out, gets excited and nervous.) Here she comes! I'd better hide.*

JULIET enters and takes a few steps back and forth, but does not see ROMEO, and she bumps into or trips over something.

JULIET: *Ow! Who put that there? (Looks down.) Yuk, let me dump this out.*

JULIET picks up a pot and empties it [it doesn't need water in it necessarily], ROMEO run and hides to get out of the way.

JULIET: *That's better.*

ROMEO: *(Coming back more into view.) She speaks:*

*O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head
As is a winged messenger of heaven.*

(Confuses himself.) Sometimes I have no idea what I'm saying.

JULIET: *O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?*

ROMEO: *(To audience.)* I just can't hide any longer! *(Jumps in front of the balcony and speaks to JULIET, waving around.)* Here I am. Over here!

JULIET looks around and ROMEO jumps and waves.

ROMEO: Over here!!!

JULIET: Romeo? *(Sees ROMEO.)* What-for are you doing here, Romeo?

ROMEO: I come to answer your question, wherefore am I. Herefore am I, beloved!

JULIET: *(Put off.)* Wherefore doesn't mean where. It means why!

ROMEO: What a buzzkill. Why would it mean why? Why not just say whyfore?

JULIET: Heretofore, wherefore has always meant why, and so it shall henceforth! *(Explaining, both to him and to the audience.)* "Why are you Romeo?" Why are you the person you are versus someone my nurse won't smack me for talking to? That's what I'm getting at. Where you are isn't up for discussion. You could be at the malt shop for all I care. But our families hate each other and we have a big problem.

*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.*

That's what I mean. At least one of us has to renounce our family.

ROMEO: I still don't get it. It should be where.

JULIET: *(Really frustrated.)* I didn't invent the language. I just speak it.

ROMEO: Why not just say, "Why are you Romeo?" and leave it at that. *(To audience.)* I just learned thee, thyself and thou last week and now I have to get into wherefore.

JULIET: Seriously though, what are you doing here?

ROMEO: Seriously though, who were you talking to if you didn't think I was here?

JULIET: I'm thinking.

ROMEO: You're rambling.

JULIET: I'm soliloquizing. I'm thinking out loud.

ROMEO: So you are talking to yourself.

JULIET: Apparently not.

ROMEO: I think you're just coco-loco.

JULIET: I think you're stalking me.

ROMEO: I just wanted to see you. And be with you. The enmity between our families won't let us be near in the light.

JULIET: (*Disappointed.*) I took you for one more educated.

ROMEO: So much for accepting me as I am. OK, if I must, let me speak as thou dost: (*Approaches her romantically.*)

I take thee at thy word:

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;

Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

JULIET: *What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!*

ROMEO: But if I keep this one I'm going to come into a lot of money.

JULIET: (*Shuns ROMEO.*) And dump me for a dollar? Wherefore would you do that for?

ROMEO: There you go again. *Wherefore art thou?* I'm a simple man.

JULIET: That's coming through all too clear. Your name complicates things, but your brain clears them up.

NURSE: (*Enters, in a tizzy.*) Madam!

JULIET: What?

NURSE: Madam, wherefore are you out on the balcony? There's crazies about.

JULIET: Just Romeo, nurse.

NURSE: (*Looks over the side and he backs away.*) Just Romeo? Just Romeo? Why not Casanova or Don Juan? Why not Chris Brown or Kanye West? Get thee inside.

JULIET: I'm talking.

ROMEO: She's talking to herself. I'm eavesdropping.

NURSE: Young man, wherefore art thou hither?

ROMEO: I don't know what that even means.

NURSE: Wherefore art thou even hither? What are you doing here?

ROMEO: You're all giving me a complex.

NURSE: You're going to get a lot more than that if you don't hie thee hence, and fast.

JULIET: She's right. If dad catches use together, it's... (*Symbolizes cutting her throat.*)

ROMEO: Wherefore would he do that for?

JULIET: Now you're catching on!

ROMEO: Seriously, your family's out to lunch.

JULIET: Only to fight with yours.

NURSE: *Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
y thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets,
(To JULIET.)* Juliet, you're almost fourteen years old. It's high time you let go of childish foolishness and get married to a responsible man.

JULIET: Eeewww. Nurse! I haven't even had a date.

NURSE: And it's my business, as the woman who raised you, to keep it that way.

ROMEO: I'll marry you, sweet Juliet.

NURSE: You'll do no such thing, stale, sour Romeo. There are other more suitable suitors, who won't be nearly as much trouble.

JULIET: That's what I was saying. If thou wert Romeo Macbeth or Romeo Madcuff we could pull this off relatively easily. But now-fore, we can't.

ROMEO: That's why I'm here. Wherefore or no. Why-fore or no. Therefore, you should come down.

JULIET: Romeo, we have a communication problem.

ROMEO: Why are you using all that high falutin' Shakespearean English that nobody understands anymore for?

JULIET: They would understand if it was taught properly.

ROMEO: No one talks that way anymore. That was 400 years ago, speaking of fore.

JULIET: This is 400 years ago.

ROMEO: What is?

JULIET: This is. We're 400 years ago. In fact, we're 700 years ago. The story is set in 1303 and the play is from 1595, so actually I'm speaking ahead of my time, not behind it. Plus, nobody asked you to come here. The servants will dump a chamber pot off the balcony at any time, so you'd best be careful.

ROMEO: I did notice the foliage here is exceptionally green, yet foul smelling.

NURSE: Juliet! You're ruining the reality.

JULIET: The reality is I know not wherefore Romeo is Romeo or wherefore he came hither.

NURSE: You're not supposed to know that you're in a play.

JULIET: I wish I was in a play, at least I'd know my next line.

NURSE: You need to come into the house. Your next line is "exit."

JULIET: And leave this boy loitering outside my window? I can't even think to myself anymore without him listening in. I'm in 1303 and he's empathic. Whatever.

ROMEO: *(To audience.)* She talks to herself. In iambic pentameter. Just when you thought that things could not be verse.

NURSE: Madam! Come inside!

As ROMEO and JULIET talk, NURSE gets more impatient. JULIET and NURSE struggle as NURSE tries to move her in and she keeps talking.

JULIET: *How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?*

Uh... why, I mean.

*The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.*

ROMEO tries to get to JULIET but can't because of the struggle with NURSE.

ROMEO: *With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;*

*For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.*

JULIET: *If they do see thee, they will murder thee.*

ROMEO: *Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.*

JULIET: *I would not for the world they saw thee here.*

ROMEO: *I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;*

*And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.*

JULIET: *By whose direction found'st thou out this place? (To NURSE.)*

That's creepy!

ROMEO: Love showed me the way.

NURSE: Yes, creepy! This is who you want? Are you willing to risk life, limb and reputation to marry this lollydoppler?

JULIET: What's a lollydoppler?

NURSE: It's whatever I want it to be. You're making words up, so I can too.

JULIET: I'm not making up anything. I'm just talking like normal people talk.

ROMEO: *(Snotty.)* The Montagues don't say wherefore.

JULIET: The Montagues are primitive, primordial, and primeval.

ROMEO: I won't stand for such insult! *(Starts to exit.)*

JULIET: *(Over it.)* Then go home already! *(To NURSE.)* I'm in a lot of trouble, aren't I?

NURSE: You have no idea.

ROMEO: *(When near the exit.)* O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET: *What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?*

ROMEO: *(Runs to her.)* The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

JULIET: I need time.

ROMEO: There isn't time. I need to know now.

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