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*For Karen, my partner in crime—
unending thanks for making it all possible.*

Cast of Characters

HAMLET
UNHAPPY PERSON IN AUDIENCE
GERTRUDE
CLAUDIUS
OPHELIA
LAERTES
TRADITIONAL JULIET
MODERN JULIET
EMCEE
RICHARD III
ZOMBIES
NARRATOR
BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN
JERRY SPRINGER
OTHELLO
IAGO
DESDEMONA
TV MAN
TED
SHEILA
DICK
DIRECTOR
COW
TIMON
WITCH
BANQUO
MACBETH
MESSENGER
LADY MACBETH
DUNCAN
MURDERER
FLEANCE
SPIRIT
MACDUFF

BURBAGE
MISS PURDIE
BILL SHAKESPEARE
ANTONY
JIM LANGE
ROMEO
PARIS
BOB
PUCK

Acknowledgments

I Hate Shakespeare! was originally staged by the Chatham Middle School Drama Club on Cape Cod, Massachusetts on May 9, 2008, with the following cast and staff:

HAMLET	Michael Couto
ANGRY GIRL	Michaela Ryder
GERTRUDE.....	Chloe Walter
CLAUDIUS	Max Arvidson
OPHELIA	Brooke Meservey
LAERTES	John Mulholland
MODERN JULIET	Makayla Cussen
TRADITIONAL JULIET	Molly Pelletier
PUCK	Courtney Milley
OTHELLO	Kevin Couto
MISS PURDIE	Brianna Donahue
DUNCAN.....	Lucas Parada
WITCH.....	Cloe Murphy
PARIS.....	Michael Sequin
JERRY SPRINGER.....	Marissa Doyle
DESDEMONA	Connie LaMotte
IAGO.....	Mackenzie Barnard
SPIRIT	Caroline Couto
BILL.....	Liam Phelan
WITCH.....	Susan Hart
MACBETH	Jonas Greenblatt
SHEILA.....	Taylor Wilkins
COW.....	Madison Lucarelli
LADY MACBETH.....	Laura Wanamaker
FLEANCE.....	Meredith Biron
Director	Karen McPherson
Costumes	Betty Marshall
Props	Marie Williams
Sets	John Kaar

I HATE SHAKESPEARE!

by Steph DeFerie

ACT I

(A bare stage.)

(A spotlight. Silence.)

(A musical fanfare.)

(An ACTOR steps into the light. Black tights, black doublet, a crown, a medallion, sword at his side and a skull in one hand.)

(It must be...HAMLET!)

(HAMLET takes a moment to prepare. Then...)

HAMLET. To be, or not to be: that is the question:

(A pause.)

UNHAPPY PERSON IN AUDIENCE. Boo!

HAMLET.

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune...

UNHAPPY PERSON. Bor-ring!

HAMLET. Or to take arms against a sea of troubles...

UNHAPPY PERSON. This stinks!

HAMLET. And by opposing end them?

UNHAPPY PERSON. Get off the stage!

HAMLET. Be quiet or I'll throw my skull at you!

"To be or not to be..."

UNHAPPY PERSON. You did that already!

HAMLET. *(Shading his eyes and looking out into the audience:)* Hey, buddy! What's your problem?

UNHAPPY PERSON. Pretentious crap.

HAMLET. Door's right there. *(Thinks, can't remember where he was, sighs in frustration.)*

UNHAPPY PERSON. Arms against a sea...

HAMLET. ...of troubles, thank you!

“Arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them?”

“Arms against a sea of troubles...”

(HAMLET trails off, thinks, hits his head in frustration.)

It's no good, I'll have to do it again from the beginning. *(To UNHAPPY PERSON:)* I hope you're happy.

UNHAPPY PERSON. I'm not!

HAMLET. “To be...”

If you think Shakespeare is pretentious crap, why are you here?

UNHAPPY PERSON. Because it's called “I Hate Shakespeare.”

HAMLET. It's ironic.

UNHAPPY PERSON. Now you tell me.

HAMLET. “To be...”

UNHAPPY PERSON. I mean, what's so great about Shakespeare, anyway?

HAMLET. “To be...”

UNHAPPY PERSON. Everybody always goes on about how great Shakespeare is. I don't get it.

HAMLET. “To...To...”

UNHAPPY PERSON. He's sooooo boring. Admit it—the plays are too long and complicated, nobody understands the words and the jokes aren't funny.

HAMLET. “To...”

Oh, son of a...!

UNHAPPY PERSON. Not to mention the fact that nothing he writes about has anything to do with anything today.

(Enter CHEERLEADER at a run.)

CHEERLEADER. (*Cheering:*) N-O-T-H-I-N-G! That's what Shakespeare means to me! Nothing! Absolutely nothing! Whoop!

(*CHEERLEADER runs off.*)

HAMLET. (*After a look at the CHEERLEADER off:*) Well I'm sorry if it's not as easy to follow as "Blue's Clues" but some things in life require a little effort.

UNHAPPY PERSON. Yeah, well I got your winter of discontent right here!

HAMLET. Look, all I know is somebody told me to come out here and do the famous soliloquy from "Hamlet" which is a great opportunity for me so piss off!

UNHAPPY PERSON. What's the big deal with "Hamlet" anyway? Why does everybody always get so excited about "Hamlet?"

HAMLET. It's a quintessential story. He's a remarkable tragic figure who reflects the dichotomy in all of us as...

UNHAPPY PERSON. He's the biggest wuss in literature. Look—all he has to do is kill one guy, right? One bad guy. And he spends hours agonizing about it and then when he finally decides to actually do something, he screws it up and a whole bunch of innocent people die. Right?

HAMLET. You don't understand the...

UNHAPPY PERSON. Right?

HAMLET. If you want to be simplistic about...

UNHAPPY PERSON. Right?!

HAMLET. Fine! You're right! You're right!

UNHAPPY PERSON. Told you.

HAMLET. But there's more to it than that. He's a tortured soul who exemplifies man's indecision in the face of...

UNHAPPY PERSON. He's wishy-washy with a capital "wishy."

HAMLET. That is just so...so...ignorant!

UNHAPPY PERSON. Look, tell me the story and I'll prove it to you.

HAMLET. Fine! Come on up here and I will.

(UNHAPPY PERSON comes up on stage.)

HAMLET. *(Handing him the skull:)* Hold my skull. Okay, so I'm Hamlet, right? Prince of Denmark? I live in Elsinore Castle. *(Stage whisper:)* Go get Elsinore Castle.

(UNHAPPY PERSON exits and returns with a small piece of low, crenellated wall which is set down to one side. Meanwhile...)

(Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE wearing a crown and carrying a large life-size dummy also wearing a crown and a fluffy bathrobe—the king. QUEEN stands behind the wall and holds the dummy up next to her as they smile and wave, the QUEEN moving the dummy's arm and providing his voice.)

QUEEN. Hello, dear!

KING. Hello, son!

UNHAPPY PERSON. Who're they?

HAMLET. *(Embarrassed:)* My parents, the king and queen. Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad.

(Enter CLAUDIUS who stands to one side looking shifty.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. Who's that?

HAMLET. Uncle Claudius, my father's brother. I don't like him.

UNHAPPY PERSON. He looks shifty.

HAMLET. I know! So, when the play begins, my father has just died very mysteriously...

(QUEEN throws the dummy "over" the wall onto the stage before her. CLAUDIUS comes forward, takes crown and bathrobe from dummy, puts them on and then surreptitiously pushes the dummy aside with his foot as QUEEN joins him and they smile and wave.)

HAMLET. ...and Uncle Claudius has jumped right in and married my mother and become king so fast that they served the left-over cold cuts from my dad's funeral banquet at the wedding feast.

CLAUDIUS. *(To HAMLET:)* Son!

HAMLET. And then one night, I see my father's ghost.

(EVERYONE looks at the dummy, unsure of what to do. Finally, HAMLET, CLAUDIUS, and QUEEN look at UNHAPPY PERSON. With a sigh, UNHAPPY PERSON crosses to the dummy, picks it up and manipulates it from behind, providing the voice.)

GHOST. Whoo! Whoo! Hamlet, your uncle has killed me and taken my crown and wife!

(QUEEN quickly exits, looking guilty. CLAUDIUS ducks down and hides behind wall.)

HAMLET. Not to mention your bathrobe. Dad, cover yourself!

GHOST. *(Putting hands over his crotch:)* Kill him and avenge me! Whoo! Whoo!

HAMLET. You're not very scary for a ghost.

GHOST. I'm not supposed to be scary. I'm supposed to be exposition. I give you information and you act on it. So go and act on it.

HAMLET. I'm going to have to think about it first. What if you're not real? What if you're a figment of my imagination? A crust of moldy cheese? A bit of rotten potato?

GHOST. That's the Ghost of Christmas Past and I told you before, I'm not a figment, I'm exposition.

HAMLET. I thought you were a ghost.

GHOST. See there's your problem right there. If you'd just go and kill Claudius like I asked instead of talking all the time, we'd be done by now.

HAMLET. You can't just go and kill somebody in cold blood.

GHOST. He murdered your father and married your mother! What more reason do you need?

HAMLET. I know! I'll pretend I'm crazy!

GHOST. How's that going to help anything?

HAMLET. I have to get proof of my uncle's guilt and if everyone thinks I'm crazy, no one will suspect I'm up to something.

GHOST. Hello! I'm a ghost! I think I know who murdered me!

HAMLET. Farewell, ghost!

(HAMLET crosses to wall. Enter OPHELIA.)

GHOST. See, this is why everybody thinks you're wishy-washy.

HAMLET. *(Over his shoulder:)* No they don't!

OPHELIA. No they don't what?

HAMLET. Think I'm wishy-washy. Hello, Ophelia.

OPHELIA. Hello, Hamlet. Who were you talking to just now?

HAMLET. Nobody.

OPHELIA. But I just heard...

HAMLET. No, you didn't.

OPHELIA. Look, Hamlet, speaking as your girlfriend, if you think you can get out of our engagement by pretending to be crazy, you got another thing coming.

HAMLET. You mean, you'll marry me even if I'm nutsy-cuckoo?

OPHELIA. Every marriage has its problems. We just have to work through them. I know! What if I go crazy too? Then we'll be perfect for each other!

(OPHELIA goes crazy and exits.)

HAMLET. Oh, man! I am having the worst day! I gotta go see my mom! Mom!

(Enter QUEEN.)

QUEEN. Is something wrong, dear? You've been acting awfully funny ever since your father was murder...*murmur*-ing that he

loved you just before he died and your uncle took his bathrobe. Oh, did you want it?

HAMLET. See, that's what I wanted to ask you about. Something's rotten in the state of Denmark and a little ghostie told me that you know all about it.

QUEEN. How can you say such a thing to your own mother? Are you crazy?

HAMLET. *(With a look to the GHOST:)* Yes! Yes, I am crazy and I say Uncle Claudius murdered father and you knew all about it! How do you like them apples?

(HAMLET quickly crosses to QUEEN.)

QUEEN. Help! Help! My crazy son's attacking me!

POLONIUS. *(From behind wall:)* I'll save you!

HAMLET. I think not, Uncle Claudius! Thus I avenge my father!

(HAMLET crosses to wall and without looking, stabs down. POLONIUS [played by actor who played CLAUDIUS in a new wig and costume] falls out from behind the wall.)

POLONIUS. Aargggh!

HAMLET. Hey! You're not Uncle Claudius! You're Polonius, Ophelia's father.

POLONIUS. And I can tell you she is not going to take this well.

(Dies.)

HAMLET. But I thought...didn't Uncle Claudius duck down there before...?

QUEEN. Help! Help!

(QUEEN exits at a run dragging POLONIUS.)

GHOST. Nice going, brainiac. You killed the wrong guy.

HAMLET. I don't believe this! I finally get up the nerve to do it and it's not even him! What're the odds?

(Enter OPHELIA.)

OPHELIA. *(Singing:)* “Hey nonny nonny and a ha cha cha!” Hamlet! Did you kill my father?

HAMLET. Sort of.

OPHELIA. That’s it! The wedding is off! Going crazy I can take but killing my daddy is going too far! I’m going to kill myself! And it’s all your fault!

(OPHELIA exits.)

GHOST. I ask you to kill one guy! One guy! And look at the body count you’re racking up! And the one guy you’re supposed to kill is still alive!

HAMLET. This revenge stuff is hard.

(Enter LAERTES. He looks an awful lot like OPHELIA and carries a sword.)

HAMLET. Ophelia! You’re not dead!

LAERTES. *(If played by same actor who played OPHELIA, taking off Ophelia wig:)* It is I, Laertes, son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia, so I can see why you would make that mistake. You seem to have killed my entire family!

HAMLET. It was an accident! I could’ve sworn I saw Uncle Claudius...

LAERTES. Nevertheless, we must have a duel!

GHOST. Great! More killing but again...wrong guy!

(Enter QUEEN and CLAUDIUS who carries a goblet.)

CLAUDIUS. Pssst! Laertes!

(LAERTES crosses to CLAUDIUS.)

CLAUDIUS. There’s poison wine in this goblet. Coat your sword with it and if you but scratch him, he will die.

LAERTES. Well, that’s fine but what if he kills me first?

CLAUDIUS. I’ll make sure he drinks it and he’ll die that way. So it’s a win-win situation.

(LAERTES *sticks his sword in the goblet.*)

LAERTES. Except I could be dead, too.

CLAUDIUS. That's a risk I'm willing to take. Now, en garde!

(HAMLET *and* LAERTES *duel.*)

QUEEN. Hon, can I have a drink? (CLAUDIUS *hands her the goblet absentmindedly and she drinks.*)

LAERTES. (*Stabbing* HAMLET:.) Ha! Got ya!

HAMLET. 'Tis but a scratch! (*Twisting the sword around so* LAERTES *is stabbed by his own sword.*) Now that's what I call a wound!

LAERTES. Hey, that hurt!

QUEEN. (*Choking and dying and making a face:*) Hamlet! Don't drink the wine!

(QUEEN *dies.*)

HAMLET. Why, bad year? (*Checks* QUEEN.) Not again! (*To* GHOST:.) Okay, I had nothing to do with this one.

LAERTES. (*Dying:*) Hamlet! Your uncle...

HAMLET. ...killed my father and married my mother? I know.

LAERTES. Yes but he...

HAMLET. ...needs to be taught a lesson? I know!

LAERTES. Yes but he also...

HAMLET. ...looks terrible in that bathrobe? I...

LAERTES. (*Not dying:*) Look, would you just shut up a minute and let me talk?! (*Dying again:*) Your uncle...poisoned the wine... poisoned my sword...we're both...goners...

HAMLET. Wow...now that I didn't know.

LAERTES. I know.

(LAERTES *dies.*)

HAMLET. You have got to be kidding me!

GHOST. If you had just listened to me in the beginning!

HAMLET. (*Crossing to CLAUDIUS.*) You! You are the cause of all this death and destruction!

GHOST. (*Sarcastically.*) Oh, really? *He's* the cause?

CLAUDIUS. I just wanted to be king. (*Wrapping robe around himself.*) And comfortable. Is that so wrong?

(*HAMLET stabs and CLAUDIUS.*)

HAMLET. Take that!

CLAUDIUS. Bury me...in your father's robe...it's so warm and fluffy...I regret nothing...

(*CLAUDIUS dies.*)

HAMLET. (*Feeling the poison working.*) And so it's finally over.

(*CLAUDIUS twitches violently.*)

HAMLET. (*Louder, to CLAUDIUS.*) And so it's finally over! If only it didn't have to end this way...

GHOST. Well, it wouldn't have if you'd just listened to me, Mr. Wishy-Washy.

HAMLET. The rest...is...silence.

(*HAMLET dies. A pause. GHOST looks around.*)

GHOST. Okay, enough silence already, let's have some applause.

(*GHOST takes a bow.*)

HAMLET. (*Sitting up and clapping his hands to dismiss the others.*) Okay, I think we're done here, people. Good job, everybody, thank you.

(*GERTRUDE, CLAUDIUS, and LAERTES exit, taking dummy with them.*)

UNHAPPY PERSON. What a tragedy...

HAMLET. Yes.

UNHAPPY PERSON. All those poor people dead...

HAMLET. I know.

UNHAPPY PERSON. ...because you wouldn't kill your uncle right at the beginning.

HAMLET. Haven't you ever put off doing something difficult and unpleasant?

UNHAPPY PERSON. Oh, no! Don't you go dragging me into this. Shakespeare has nothing to do with me.

(Enter CHEERLEADER.)

CHEERLEADER. *(Cheering:)* I-R-R! E-L-E! V-A-N-T! Irrelevant! Irrelevant! Shakespeare's so irrelevant! Whoo!

(CHEERLEADER exits.)

HAMLET. He's not irrelevant. The things he wrote about are still going on today. He's timeless. That's what makes him brilliant.

UNHAPPY PERSON. Well, I wouldn't know about that because the stupid words keep getting in the way. All those "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune..." What the heck does that mean?

HAMLET. You just have to take it slow and pay attention. Here, let's translate a speech of his into modern English.

(Lights up on TRADITIONAL JULIET up on a balcony [or perhaps a small ladder or stepping stool].)

(Opposite, lights up on MODERN JULIET.)

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

MODERN JULIET. *(Dialing cell phone and looking at her watch:)* Romeo! Of all the guys I could go out with, why does it have to be you, king of problems? *(Talking into phone:)* Look, where are you? I'm in front of the Limited just like I said I'd be and you're not here!

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

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.

MODERN JULIET. Okay, I know you're all freaked out about how my dad makes fun of your name. Get over it! How many times do I have to tell you it doesn't matter what your name is? So your name's Romeo, big deal! I don't care! It could be worse. What about that girl in Biology Class whose name is Rainbow? Just go by your middle name. If it makes you feel any better, I'll go by my middle name, and we'll be Theodore and Marguerite. How's that?

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

MODERN JULIET. What're you getting so freaked out about for, anyway? It's just, like, a name! It's not like some deformed face they can't fix or something. You know I'd like you no matter what you're called.

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man.

MODERN JULIET. Romeo! I don't have time to text this so pick up! I know you're there! Look, nobody cares about your name but you and my dad and he's not dating you—I am and I don't care! It doesn't have anything to do with how cool your hair is or how excellent your tattoo is or how totally wicked your pierced tongue is.

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.

MODERN JULIET. It's like when we got our dog, right? And my mom wanted to call him "Arfy?" Well, even if we had called him "Arfy" instead of Gandalf, I'd still love him just as much as I do now. So even if your mom had named you something even stupider than Romeo, you'd still be like, the hottest boy in school.

TRADITIONAL JULIET.

Romeo, doff thy name,

And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

MODERN JULIET. So get over yourself already! Okay, I'm going over to food court so when you're ready to grow up, you can meet me there and buy me some nachos or something.

(MODERN JULIET and TRADITIONAL JULIET bow to each other and exit.)

HAMLET. *(Speaking like MODERN JULIET:)* See? Like, you can figure out what they're saying if you just like, take it slow.

(HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON begin to exit.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. I guess.

HAMLET. It probably won't make you feel any better but Shakespeare wouldn't have understood what you're saying, either.

UNHAPPY PERSON. Hey, you're right! That doesn't make me feel any better.

(HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON exit.)

(Enter EMCEE.)

EMCEE. *(Reading from a card:)* And now, Zombie Theatre proudly presents: "Richard the Thrid." *(Looks again:)* Sorry, that's "Richard the Third."

(EMCEE exits.)

(Enter RICHARD, limping, with hump and withered arm.)

RICHARD.

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.

(Enter ZOMBIE LADY ANNE. She flails her arms about.)

ZOMBIE LADY ANNE. *(Zombie noise.)*

RICHARD.

Comes now Lady Anne.

Your beauty was the cause of that effect;
Your beauty: which did haunt me in my sleep
To undertake the death of all the world,
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

(With a snicker:) Bosom!

ZOMBIE LADY ANNE. *(Zombie noise.)*

(Enter ZOMBIES.)

ZOMBIES. Brains! Brains!

RICHARD.

Buckingham! Clarence! Know you
A thousand hearts are great within my...

ZOMBIES. Brains! Brains!

RICHARD.

A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!

(ZOMBIES grab RICHARD and pull him off. Screams off.)

(Enter a BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN and NARRATOR with an easel that holds drawings. The first is a traditional picture of William Shakespeare. The BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN has a pointer that he uses for emphasis.)

NARRATOR. *(Setting up easel:)* But now, let's take a moment to learn a little about William Shakespeare, shall we? Here is a British Literary Historian to tell us all about him.

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. Thank you, Mr. Narrator. Back in Shakespeare's day, record-keeping was spotty at best and so we simply do not know as much about the Bard as we would like. For instance, we do know that he was born in Stratford-Upon-Avon and baptized in the year 1564. We do know that he was married at the age of 18 to Miss Anne Hathaway who was Mr. Drysdale's secretary on "The Beverly Hillbillies."

(He shows a large photo of Miss Hathaway or the Beverly Hillbillies.)

NARRATOR. *(Who has not been paying attention.)* Really?

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. But there are many things we do not know about William Shakespeare. Did he actually write all those plays or did someone else? Is he really buried in the hallowed ground of Stratford or does he still walk the earth as one of the living dead?

(He shows a simple drawing of zombie Shakespeare eating an arm.)

NARRATOR. *(Startled:)* What?

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. Why did he come to Earth from a distant galaxy far, far away to enslave mankind with his mutant telepathic powers?

(He shows a simple drawing of Shakespeare in a flying saucer.)

NARRATOR. Excuse me!

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. Was he actually 20 feet tall with eyes that could shoot flames? Some say yes!

(He shows a simple drawing of Shakespeare 20 feet tall, flames shooting from his eyes, tiny people running from him, skyscrapers burning around him.)

NARRATOR. No they don't!

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. Was he responsible for spreading the plague throughout England in the 16th century with his army of intelligent rat slaves? We may never know for sure.

(He shows a simple drawing of Shakespeare commanding an army of rats.)

NARRATOR. I'm pretty sure we will! He didn't!

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. And since there are no photographs of them together, it has been suggested that Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I were really one and the same person!

(He shows a simple drawing of Shakespeare in a dress wearing a crown.)

NARRATOR. No it hasn't!

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. It's impossible to answer these questions definitively but one thing is certain—whether he was named William Shakespeare or Lulu Von Glückensteen, he is indeed credited with writing some simply smashing plays.

(He shows a final drawing—“All hail Lulu Von Glückensteen!”)

BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN. Thank you and good night!

NARRATOR. *(Exiting:)* What the heck was that? I don't think you're a proper British Literary Historian at all...

(NARRATOR and BRITISH LITERARY HISTORIAN exit, taking easel and drawings with them.)

(Enter JERRY SPRINGER. He sets up three chairs. If desired, JERRY SPRINGER can have an on-stage audience.)

JERRY. Hello, audience. I'm Jerry Springer...

VOICES. *(Off:)* Jer-ry! Jer-ry! Jer-ry!

JERRY. And on a very special program today, we have two men who used to be good, good friends but now something has come between them and we're going to try to get to the bottom of it.

VOICES. *(Off:)* Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

JERRY. First, we have a military man, General Othello. Come on out here, General!

(Enter OTHELLO. He sits in a chair.)

VOICES. *(Off:)* Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

JERRY. And now, we have Othello's very good friend, he's also in the military, please welcome Iago.

(Enter IAGO. He sits in a chair so that there is an empty chair between them.)

VOICES. *(Off:)* Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

JERRY. And I think you know who that empty chair is for. When a friendship between two men goes this wrong, there's got to be a woman involved! Let's meet her. Here she is—Desdemona!

(Enter DESDEMONA. She sits in the middle.)

VOICES. *(Off:)* Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

JERRY. Now, Desdemona, why don't you start us off. Do I understand correctly that your husband Othello strangled you?

DESDEMONA. *(Speaking with a Southern accent:)* Yes, Jerry, he did.

JERRY. That sounds terrible.

DESDEMONA. Oh, it was, Jerry, it was! He accused me of the most vilest things and then he started on strangling me and then he killed me!

JERRY. He actually killed you.

DESDEMONA. Yes, Jerry, he did.

VOICES. *(Off:)* Boo! Boo!

JERRY. And just what did he accuse you of doing?

DESDEMONA. He said I was being unfaithful to him.

JERRY. And were you?

DESDEMONA. Oh, no, Jerry! I would never wanna be with anyone else! I love him!

JERRY. And do you still love him? Even though he killed you?

DESDEMONA. Of course I do! What kind of trashy girl do you take me for? Maybe I don't have book smarts like you do but I know what love is and it doesn't change even if you're dead and strangled and your face is all purple and your tongue is sticking out and you look a mess.

VOICES. *(Cheers off.)*

JERRY. Now, Othello. Why would you do something so terrible to this lovely girl?

OTHELLO. *(Mumbling, with a Southern accent:)* I don't know...

JERRY. You don't know.

VOICES. *(Off:)* Boo! Boo!

IAGO. *(With a Southern accent to OTHELLO:)* You had a good reason to, didn't you? *(To JERRY:)* He had a good reason!

JERRY. Come on, Iago, let's let Othello speak for himself. You'll get your turn.

OTHELLO. Yeah, that's right, I did have a good reason! I just forgot! Don't you go judging on me, Jerry! You don't know me! I had a good reason!

JERRY. A good reason? Othello. You're a highly respected man. You're a general. Your wife loves you. What good reason would you have for strangling her?

OTHELLO. Well, I was gonna poison her but Iago said I should strangle her instead.

JERRY. You listen to everything Iago tells you?

OTHELLO. *(Mumbling:)* I don't know...

JERRY. If Iago told you to go jump off a bridge, would you?

OTHELLO. *(Mumbling:)* I don't know...

IAGO. Yes he would 'cause I'm his good friend and if'n I told him to go jump off a bridge, I'd have a mighty good reason to. Maybe he's on fire or something.

JERRY. So you're his good friend?

IAGO. Well, I thought so. Until he went and promoted Mick Cassio over me. What's Mick Cassio ever done for him I'd like to know, 'cept make a fool of him. And if it weren't for me, Othello here wouldn't even know what was going on right under his very nose!

JERRY. And just what was going on right under his very nose?

IAGO. She were playing him big time!

OTHELLO. Yeah! Yeah! She was all unfaithful to me, Jerry! She was making a fool of me with my friend Mick Cassio! The guy I promoted!

DESDEMONA. That's a lie! That's a lie and you know it! You take that back!

(DESDEMONA attacks OTHELLO. JERRY separates them.)

VOICES. (*Off:*) Jer-ry! Jer-ry! Jer-ry!

JERRY. And how do you know she was unfaithful to you, Othello? Did you catch them together?

OTHELLO. Not exactly...

JERRY. Then how do you know?

OTHELLO. Uhm...

IAGO. (*Reminding him quietly:*) ...handkerchief, handkerchief...

OTHELLO. Oh, yeah, right! He had her handkerchief!

DESDEMONA. I told you I lost that down at the Piggly Wiggly!

JERRY. That's it? That's how you know they were together? He had her handkerchief? That's why you killed her?

OTHELLO. You ain't telling it right! I know it don't sound so good when you put it like that but it made sense when he (*Meaning IAGO.*) explained it to me.

JERRY. Iago? You want to explain it to us?

IAGO. He's a sucker, Jerry! All right, maybe I set him up with that handkerchief thing, my wife found it and I planted it in Cassio's room but if this big, dumb ox weren't suspicious in the first place, he never would've believed it! If he really trusted her, he wouldn't never have listened to me! I just told him what he wanted to hear!

OTHELLO. You set me up?!

IAGO. What'd you go and promote him over me for?

DESDEMONA. That's what this whole thing's about? You're mad you didn't get a promotion?! That's what I got killed for?

(DESDEMONA, OTHELLO, and IAGO begin arguing and fighting amongst themselves.)

JERRY. What have we learned here today? It's true that you can't really *make* someone believe something they don't deep down *want* to believe so be sure that you're sure that what you believe is worth believing. Take care of yourself and each other.

VOICES. *(Off:)* Jer-ry! Jer-ry! Jer-ry!

(JERRY exits as do DESDEMONA, OTHELLO, and IAGO, still arguing and pushing each other.)

(Enter TV MAN, holding a cut-out TV in front of him so he appears to be speaking to us from inside a TV set.)

TV MAN. How many times has this happened to you?

(Enter TED, a nice guy and SHEILA, his girlfriend. They are in bathing suits and carry a blanket and picnic basket. Perhaps they spread out a blue tarp to simulate the ocean.)

TED. How's this, Sheila?

SHEILA. It's great, Ted!

(TED and SHEILA spread out their blanket, sit on it, open the picnic basket, enjoy their picnic.)

TED. It was swell of you to suggest a picnic.

SHEILA. It was swell of you to think of the beach.

TED. You sure look swell in that bathing suit.

SHEILA. It sure is swell of you to say so.

TED. *(Shading his eyes and looking out at the "ocean":)* Don't those ocean swells look swell? I'm going to learn to surf someday.

SHEILA. Really? That'd sure be swell.

TV MAN. You're enjoying a great day out at the beach with your best girl, your favorite sandwiches, a cold drink. It couldn't be sweller. And then, out of the blue...trouble!

(Enter DICK, a bully, also wearing a bathing suit. He runs by.)

SHEILA. Hey! That man kicked sand on me!

TED. Excuse me, sir, but I think you owe this lady an apology.

DICK. Say, you're right. *(To SHEILA:)* Ma'am, I'm really so terribly sorry...

SHEILA. Thank you.

DICK. ...that you're forced to spend the day with such a diminutive, irresolute, pathetic washout!

SHEILA. Well, I never!

DICK. Wouldn't you rather be spending your time with a well-spoken, erudite scholar like myself?

SHEILA. Ted! Say something!

TED. *(Sputtering:)* That is really very...uhm...uncalled for...

SHEILA. Is that the best you can do?

(TED gives her an unhappy look and shrugs his shoulders.)

DICK. *(To SHEILA, offering his arm:)* Well?

SHEILA. I'm sorry, Ted. I like a man with a strong vocabulary and well...he really has it.

(DICK and SHEILA exit.)

TED. Darn!

TV MAN. Don't you wish you could think of the right words to cut those bullies down to size?

TED. I sure do!

TV MAN. Don't you wish you had one of the world's greatest writers with you here right now to supply you with insults that would impress the ladies?

TED. You said it!

TV MAN. Then, you need "Shakespeare in a Can!"

(TV MAN holds out a can to TED who takes it.)

TED. "Shakespeare in a Can?" What's that?

TV MAN. It's the revolutionary new product that provides you with the right words at the right time. Now, let's see that again.

(SHEILA, DICK, and TED "rewind" themselves back to the beginning of the scene so that TED and SHEILA are sitting down again.)

TED. It was swell of you to suggest a picnic.

SHEILA. It was swell of you to think of the beach.

(Enter DICK, running by.)

SHEILA. Hey! That man kicked sand on me!

TED. Excuse me, sir, but I think you owe this lady an apology.

DICK. Say, you're right. *(To SHEILA:)* Ma'am, I'm really so terribly sorry...

SHEILA. Thank you.

DICK. ...that you're forced to spend the day with such a diminutive, irresolute, pathetic washout!

SHEILA. Well, I never! Ted! Say something!

(TED looks at TV MAN. TV MAN nods encouragingly. TED opens the can and takes a drink.)

TED. *(Impressive English accent:)* Thou art a paunchy fool-born canker-blossom!

DICK. What?

TED. *(Regular voice:)* You heard me!

DICK. Yeah, well, I'm rubber, you're glue, anything you say bounces off me and sticks to you.

(TED takes another sip.)

TED. *(Impressive English accent:)* Methink'st thou art a general offence and every man should beat thee.

SHEILA. *(Admiringly:)* Ted!

TED. *(To DICK:)* You'd better leave us alone...

DICK. *(Hesitantly:)* Yeah? Or what?

TED. Or... *(He takes another sip and in an impressive English accent:)* ...you starvelling, you eel-skin, you dried neat's-tongue, you bull's-pizzle, you stock-fish, I'll call you a poisonous bunch-back'd toad!

DICK. *(Crying:)* Stop! Stop!

TED. Now leave, thou lump of foul deformity! You are a qualling pox-marked varlet and you are not worth another word, else I'd call you knave.

(DICK runs off crying.)

SHEILA. Ted! I've never seen this side of you! *(She snuggles up to him:)* Say another one.

(TED takes another sip.)

TED. *(Impressive English accent:)* He was a churlish dismal-dreaming puttock that hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows.

SHEILA. Oh, Ted!

TED. *(Letting out an impressive burp:)* Forsooth! And it tastes good, too! *(To TV MAN:)* Thanks, Shakespeare in a Can!

(TED and TV MAN give each other a thumbs-up.)

TV MAN. "Shakespeare in a Can!" Get yours today!

(Lights on TED, TV MAN, and SHEILA. They exit.)

(Enter DIRECTOR and COW who is dressed as a cow with horns and an udder. The COW has a robe on. The DIRECTOR pushes in a small cart or table with snacks and a cream pie on it and parks it on the tarp.)

DIRECTOR. *(Looking out at the audience:)* How do you think it's going?

COW. Pretty good, I guess. They seem to like it.

DIRECTOR. *(Taking a bite of a snack from the table:)* It's a nice house. I guess we're all set for the intermission bake sale.

COW. Stay away from the brownies. Mrs. McPherson made them.

DIRECTOR. Bleah! Thanks for the tip. So, you all ready to go on? You know all your lines?

COW. How hard is it to say "moo?"

DIRECTOR. Why would you say moo?

COW. (*Taking off his robe and revealing the cow costume.*) Because I'm a cow.

DIRECTOR. Wait. Why're you dressed like a cow? You're not a cow. You're a clown. Why would Shakespeare put a talking cow in "King Lear?"

COW. Why does Shakespeare do anything?

DIRECTOR. You're the comic relief not a barnyard animal. Why did you think you were a cow?

COW. (*Pointing to his horns.*) You told me I was wearing the horns.

DIRECTOR. You are!

COW. So I figured that meant I was a cow.

DIRECTOR. Those are supposed to be funny.

COW. They are?

DIRECTOR. It's supposed to show that your wife is cheating on you.

COW. What?!

DIRECTOR. Those are the horns of the cuckold. Your wife's fooling around behind your back with another man so you're (*does an air apostrophe.*) "wearing the horns." It's funny.

COW. Why is it funny?

DIRECTOR. I don't know. It just is.

COW. Why would you make fun of a man whose wife is cheating on him? That's not funny, that's sad.

DIRECTOR. You can't criticize Shakespeare! He's...Shakespeare!

COW. So what? People always pretend that Shakespeare is funny because he's "Shakespeare" but admit it. Nobody gets the jokes any more.

DIRECTOR. Look, I'm the director...

COW. Like, that line I have—"If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger of kibes?"

DIRECTOR. Oh, yeah, that's hysterical!

COW. No it isn't! What the heck is "kibes?" Nobody knows what it means. Do you know what it means?

DIRECTOR. *(He doesn't.)* Of course I do.

COW. What, then?

DIRECTOR. Well, it's not funny if I explain it. And we don't have time for it. Get out of that costume this instant!

COW. I know what's funny and Shakespeare ain't funny.

DIRECTOR. Okay, Mr. Humor Authority. What is funny?

COW. This!

(COW pulls down DIRECTOR's pants.)

DIRECTOR. *(Looking down at his pants:)* Hey!

COW. And this!

(As DIRECTOR looks up again, COW hits him in the face with the cream pie.)

COW. Now *that's* funny! Intermission! Intermission and bake sale!

(If an intermission is needed, blackout. If not, just keep going and have someone come out and clean up the pie mess by dragging the tarp off as the COW rolls the cart off and the DIRECTOR exits, sputtering. [A pile of shaving cream in a pie tin without any crust works best and is easiest to clean up.])

End of Act I

ACT II

(Enter EMCEE.)

EMCEE. *(Reading from a card:)* And now, Zombie Theatre proudly presents: “Lassie and Timmy of Athens.” *(Looks again:)* Sorry, that’s “Timon of Athens.”

(EMCEE exits.)

(Enter ZOMBIES.)

ZOMBIES. *(Flailing about and making zombie noises.)*

(Enter TIMON.)

TIMON.

Well fare you, gentlemen: give me your hands;
We must needs dine together.

ZOMBIES. *(Attacking TIMON:)* Brains! Brains!

(ZOMBIES chase TIMON off.)

(A scream off.)

(Enter HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON.)

HAMLET. So how are you doing so far?

UNHAPPY PERSON. I’m starting to like it. Maybe Shakespeare’s not the stuck-up old fart I always thought he was.

HAMLET. Don’t worry about the words so much. Just enjoy the story. For instance, the Scottish Play. You should like that one—it’s got murders and ghosts and witches and a crazy woman who thinks she’s covered in blood.

UNHAPPY PERSON. I’ve never heard of The Scottish Play.

HAMLET. Well, it’s really called “MacBuh.”

UNHAPPY PERSON. “MacBuh?”

HAMLET. I can’t say it. It’s bad luck.

UNHAPPY PERSON. Bad luck.

HAMLET. It’s cursed! You can’t say the name in a theatre or all kinds of bad things will happen.

UNHAPPY PERSON. You're kidding me.

HAMLET. I'm not!

UNHAPPY PERSON. So tell it to me if it's such a great story.

HAMLET. Okay, but we can't use the name. So it starts off out in this field up in Scotland in the middle of a storm with these three witches.

(A storm. Enter a WITCH with two dolls or puppets. Conversely, three witches may be used, perhaps pushing a cauldron which contains an unseen spirit that provides the "rain.")

WITCH. When shall we three meet again?

PUPPET 1. In thunder...

(A roll of thunder or the SPIRIT bangs the cauldron.)

PUPPET 2. ...lightening...

(A flash of lightening or the SPIRIT flashes a flashlight.)

WITCH. ...or in rain?

(The SPIRIT sprays water in the WITCH's face. The WITCH blots herself with the puppets which sputter and cough.)

(Enter BANQUO and MACBETH.)

HAMLET. And then these two generals come by, Banquo and Macbeth. Oops!

UNHAPPY PERSON. You said it, you said it!

(HAMLET puts his hands over his mouth but it's too late—BANQUO trips, falls into MACBETH and both end up sprawled on the stage.)

HAMLET. See? I told you it's bad luck.

WITCH. Banquo! Mac...! *(She covers her mouth with her puppets.)*
Banquo's friend! Back from the wars I see!

PUPPET 1. Who won?

BANQUO. The forces of King Duncan, of course. You should have seen Mac... *(He is shushed.)* ...my companion here! He fought most terrifically.

WITCH. All hail Thane of Glamis!

(An ominous chord of music.)

MACBETH. That's me!

PUPPET 1. All hail Thane of Cawdor!

(An ominous chord of music.)

MACBETH. I wish! He has a bonny castle.

PUPPET 2. All hail King Macbeth! Ah!

(An ominous chord of music. A sandbag falls from above.)

MACBETH. Surely you jest! It's true we're related but Duncan our king is in excellent health and he has two fine sons—Malcolmbain and Donalbain. I shall never be king.

BANQUO. Do me! Do me!

WITCH. You won't be king yourself, sweetie, but your kids will.

(An ominous chord of music.)

BANQUO. What a gyp!

WITCH. *(Shrugging:)* It's the best we can do—take it or leave it. Beware!

PUPPET 1. Beware!

PUPPET 2. Beware!

(With an ominous chord of music, WITCH exits.)

MACBETH. That was odd.

BANQUO. I know! Where's that music coming from?

UNHAPPY PERSON. What's a Thane?

HAMLET. A lord, you know, like a nobleman.

(Enter MESSENGER [or HAMLET can do it].)

MESSENGER. Banquo! Mac... *(He stops himself.)* Banquo's friend! Good news from the King! In recognition of...someone's...valor, he has made...someone...Thane of Cawdor!

(An ominous chord of music.)

BANQUO. There it is again!

MACBETH. What about the old Thane of Cawdor?

MESSENGER. He...uh...had to go somewhere.

BANQUO. What're the odds? First they knew you were Thane of Glamis and then they call you Thane of Cawdor and now you're Thane of Cawdor. I wish I was Thane of Cawdor.

MACBETH. We can't all be Thane of Cawdor. Do you think that means I'm going to be King, too?

BANQUO. Probably. You can always trust witches. I don't think they'd try to trick you or anything.

(An ominous chord of music.)

BANQUO. *(Looking around:)* Where is that coming from?

(Exit BANQUO, looking for music source.)

MACBETH. Cool. I'd better write a note to my wife and tell her about my promotion. *(To the MESSENGER:)* Take a letter.

(MESSENGER takes out parchment and quill pen and starts to scribble.)

MACBETH. Dear Wife. How are you? I am fine. Guess what? The war is over and we won! Just a minute ago, I met three witches and the weirdest thing happened...

(MACBETH and MESSENGER exit.)

(LADY MACBETH enters, reading the note.)

LADY MACBETH. ...so maybe I'll be King some day and you'll be Queen. Wouldn't that be neat? Well, see you soon. Love, your husband, MacBeth.

(A crash and scream off.)

LADY MACBETH. (*Calling off:*) Sorry! Imagine—Queen Me! (*She smiles and waves to imaginary admirers.*) Bow down, you filthy peasant scum, or I'll crush you like a worm! But when, when? Duncan could live for years yet. And he's got those two sons of his. It'll be murder coming up with a scheme to get rid of them.

(An ominous chord of music.)

LADY MACBETH. Why, there's the doorbell! Come in!

(Enter MACBETH and DUNCAN.)

MACBETH. Hon, look who I've brought home for dinner—the boss!

(An ominous chord of music.)

DUNCAN. What was that?

LADY MACBETH. Nothing. (*Curtseying:*) King Duncan.

DUNCAN. Lady MacBeth.

(Part of the set falls over. LADY MACBETH runs to hold it up.)

DUNCAN. My bad, my bad. Uh, I thought I'd drop by to visit my favorite Thane. I just gave him a promotion, you know.

LADY MACBETH. I know! That's so thoughtful. I'd...uh...show you to your room so you can freshen up but I'm...uh...needed here. It's the third door down on your left.

DUNCAN. Wait! Do I have to go off right now?

LADY MACBETH. What?

DUNCAN. That's my whole part? I had to come to all those rehearsals for two stupid lines?

LADY MACBETH. Just go!

DUNCAN. Fine! Then I shall go to my room anon. Thank you for your hospitality, Lady *MacBeth!*

(Blackout. In the dark, LADY MACBETH fixes the set.)

LADY MACBETH. What the heck?

HAMLET. Just keep going!

(HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON cross to MACBETH and LADY MACBETH, lie on the stage under them, take out flashlights and aim them up at the faces of the MACBETHS.)

LADY MACBETH.

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

MACBETH. What?

LADY MACBETH. Let's kill him! Let's murder him most foul and make it look like his servants did it. Then we can get rid of his sons and make ourselves King!

MACBETH.

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly.

LADY MACBETH. Easy for you to say. (*Starts to exit.*) I'll get the knives!

MACBETH.

Wait! We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honour'd me of late;
I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; and as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself.

LADY MACBETH. For God's sake! You're not going to pull a Hamlet on me, are you?

HAMLET. Hey!

LADY MACBETH. Do you want to be king or not?

MACBETH. Yes! But what if we fail?

LADY MACBETH.

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,

And we'll not fail.

When Duncan is asleep I'll get his bodyguards drunk and they'll pass out. We do the bloody deed, frame the bodyguards by planting the knives on them and we're in the clear!

MACBETH. What about his sons?

LADY MACBETH. We'll get rid of them somehow. Are you with me?

MACBETH. *(A pause. Then...)* Yes!

LADY MACBETH. You won't regret it!

(LADY MACBETH exits.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. This is great! What happens next?

HAMLET. Mac gets ready to kill the King but his conscience bothers him and he goes a little crazy and sees imaginary knives floating in the air.

MACBETH.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

HAMLET. Then his wife gives the signal that the guards have passed out.

(A bell rings.)

MACBETH.

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

(MACBETH exits.)

HAMLET. And he kills the King!

UNHAPPY PERSON. So let's see it!

HAMLET. No, it's too horrible. We're trying to keep this G-rated. But he stabs the King and then goes and tells his wife.

(Enter MACBETH and LADY MACBETH. MACBETH's hands are bloody and he carries two daggers.)

MACBETH. I have done the deed.

LADY MACBETH.

Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH.

I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH.

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil.

(LADY MACBETH grabs the daggers and exits.)

MACBETH. *(Looking at his bloody hands:)*

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

(Enter LADY MACBETH with bloody hands.)

LADY MACBETH.

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white.

MACBETH. *(Looking at his hands:)* I don't feel so good.

LADY MACBETH. Just wash it off. Sheesh—what are you, a little girl?

(Exit MACBETH and LADY MACBETH.)

(Lights up. UNHAPPY PERSON and HAMLET get up and put away flashlights.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. So do they get away with it?

HAMLET. They do. The guards get blamed and Mac pretends to go crazy with grief and kills them before they can protest their innocence.

UNHAPPY PERSON. And what about the King's sons?

HAMLET. They get scared and leave the country so Mac becomes King, just as the witches predicted.

UNHAPPY PERSON. But we all know that crime does not pay.

HAMLET. Exactly. He feels guilty and afraid. Remember what the witches said to his friend Banquo?

(Enter WITCH with puppets.)

WITCH. I'll get you, my pretty! And your little dog, too!

HAMLET. Wrong story.

WITCH. I mean— You won't be king yourself, sweetie, but your kids will.

(Exit WITCH, a bit embarrassed.)

HAMLET. So he's worried that Banquo will somehow depose him so he invites Banquo and his son Fleance to his castle for a banquet.

(Enter BANQUO and FLEANCE.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. Wait. "Fleance?" *(Sarcastic:)* Great name!

FLEANCE. At least I've got a name. Check the program, smart guy. You're listed as "Unhappy Person In Audience."

HAMLET. And Mac arranges to have them killed as they're riding to the castle.

(A MURDERER jumps out and attacks BANQUO.)

MURDERER. *(To BANQUO:)* Take that!

HAMLET. And Banquo is murdered.

MURDERER. *(To FLEANCE:)* And that!

(The MURDERER is about to attack FLEANCE but FLEANCE runs off.)

HAMLET. But Fleance gets away.

FLEANCE. *(Sticking out tongue to MURDERER:)* Nah nah!

(FLEANCE runs off.)

MURDERER. Darn!

(MURDERER exits.)

HAMLET. And at the party that night, Mac gets a very nasty surprise.

(Enter MACBETH and LADY MACBETH with plastic champagne glasses and a bottle. They hand UNHAPPY PERSON and HAMLET each a glass, “pour” champagne, toast, drink. Sixties party music plays. We hear party chat in the background. Perhaps streamers and balloons fall from the ceiling.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. Lovely party.

LADY MACBETH. Thank you. You don't see any blood on my hands, do you?

UNHAPPY PERSON. No.

LADY MACBETH. Good. *(Cheerily:)* Lately I've had the strangest feeling that my hands are covered in blood and I can't wash it off. *(She laughs gaily:)* Isn't that the oddest thing?

(BANQUO rises up from where he has been lying. There is blood on his face. MACBETH is the only one who can see him. Perhaps the lights dim and there is a spotlight on BANQUO as he points at MACBETH.)

MACBETH. Dear, sometimes you say the craziest... *(He sees BANQUO:)* Banquo?

LADY MACBETH. I don't think he came.

MACBETH. But he's right there! He's looking at me, staring at me, with those horrible eyes! He's pointing at me! He's accusing me of killing him! Can't you see him?!

LADY MACBETH. *(To MACBETH:)* Get a hold of yourself! *(To HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON:)* I'm afraid the party's over. My husband seems to have suddenly become a deranged lunatic.

UNHAPPY PERSON. That's one way to clear the room.

(BANQUO exits. UNHAPPY PERSON and HAMLET withdraw a bit. Lights return to normal.)

LADY MACBETH. Get a grip, would you?! You're going to blow this for us!

MACBETH. I saw him, I tell you, plain as day!

LADY MACBETH. Look, why don't you go have a word with those witches? They'll put your mind at ease.

(LADY MACBETH exits with bottle and glasses. Enter WITCH with puppets and a cauldron.)

PUPPET 1.

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

PUPPET 2.

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw.

WITCH.

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

UNHAPPY PERSON. If they invite us to dinner, let's not go.

PUPPET 1.

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

(MACBETH crosses to WITCH.)

WITCH. What do you wish to know?

MACBETH. Tell me I have nothing to fear.

WITCH. Let us conjure fearsome spirits who know all.

(WITCH conjures. A SPIRIT rises from the cauldron.)

SPIRIT. Beware Macduff!

MACBETH. But he's in England. He can't hurt me there. But just to be sure, I'll kill his family.

SPIRIT.

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Mac.

MACBETH. Well, that's reassuring. Everyone's born of woman.

SPIRIT.

Mac shall never vanquish'd be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

(SPIRIT exits, sinking into cauldron.)

MACBETH. So I'm safe until the trees around my castle start walking toward it? Excellent! Thanks, gals!

WITCH.

Show his eyes, and grieve his heart;
Come like shadows, so depart!

(WITCH exits.)

MACBETH. I wonder how my wife is getting along.

(MACBETH exits. LADY MACBETH enters.)

HAMLET. Oh, I love this part! Lady Mac is going crazy! She's sleepwalking!

(Perhaps a red spot on LADY MACBETH.)

LADY MACBETH. *(Rubbing her hands:)*

Yet here's a spot.
Out, damned spot! out, I say!
Who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him.
What, will these hands ne'er be clean?

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate:
What's done cannot be undone.—To bed, to bed, to bed!

(LADY MACBETH exits.)

HAMLET. And she kills herself!

(Enter MACBETH.)

MACBETH.

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

HAMLET. Macduff, who's another Scottish nobleman, has suspected what's going on and after Mac kills his family, he raises an army and they gather around the castle.

(MACBETH rolls his hands up in a "tube" like a telescope and looks through them.)

MACBETH. You can't scare me! Nothing can hurt me until Birnam Wood comes to the castle walls.

HAMLET. *(Looking off:)* Unfortunately, the soldiers have camouflaged themselves with tree branches so it looks like that's exactly what's happening.

(Enter MACDUFF holding a sword and a large fake tree in a pot.)

MACBETH. Uh oh. Macduff!

MACDUFF. MacBeth!

(MACDUFF throws down his tree, sucks his finger.)

MACDUFF. Ah! Splinter!

MACBETH. Nice try but I'm afraid I can't be killed by any man born of woman!

MACDUFF. Well, I wasn't born of woman—my mother had me by C-Section, so there!

MACBETH. Oooohh—done in by a technicality! Those darn witches deliberately misled me!

MACDUFF. En garde!

(MACBETH and MACDUFF duel and exit.)

UNHAPPY PERSON. So who wins?!

(Enter MACDUFF with MACBETH's head.)

MACDUFF. *(Presenting head:)* Me, of course! Order must be restored! Huzzah!

(MACDUFF exits.)

HAMLET. So? What'd you think?

UNHAPPY PERSON. You were right. That was pretty good.

(HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON start to exit.)

HAMLET. And it wasn't too hard to understand, was it?

UNHAPPY PERSON. No, I think I got most of it.

(HAMLET and UNHAPPY PERSON exit.)

(Lute music plays.)

(Enter RICHARD BURBAGE, the manager of the medieval theatrical company "Lord Chamberlain's Men." He pushes a desk with three chairs on it. He places one chair behind the desk for himself and arranges the other two before the desk for BILL. He sits in his chair.)

BURBAGE. *(Calling:)* Miss Purdie! Where's my one o'clock?

MISS PURDIE. (*Entering:*) Dead of the plague, Mr. Burbage. Here are the box office totals for “Coriolanus” that you asked for.

(She hands him a parchment.)

BURBAGE. (*Looking at parchment:*) These are awful! They’re worse than “Timon of Athens.”

MISS PURDIE. But they’re better than “Pericles, Prince of Tyre.”

BURBAGE. The play where the audience got pelted with rotten garbage did better than “Pericles, Prince of Tyre.” It’s not even a tenth of what we made on “MacBeth.”

(A crash off.)

BURBAGE. (*Calling:*) Sorry!

MISS PURDIE. Every play can’t be The Scottish Play, Mr. Burbage.

BURBAGE. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men can’t afford another “Coriolanus.” It’ll ruin the company! Is Bill here yet?

MISS PURDIE. He’s in the waiting room.

BURBAGE. Did he say what his latest play’s about?

MISS PURDIE. It sounds like another romantic comedy.

BURBAGE. Not more mistaken identities! Why can’t he understand that men in drag are funny but women dressed as men are dull?

MISS PURDIE. I don’t know, Mr. Burbage. I think he mentioned a husband who suspects his wife is cheating on him.

BURBAGE. That’s not what’s hot right now! Send him in, Miss Purdie.

MISS PURDIE. Yes, Mr. Burbage.

(MISS PURDIE exits.)

BURBAGE. (*Calling:*) And shut that bloody lute music up!

(Enter BILL SHAKESPEARE.)

BURBAGE. Bill! How’s my favorite playwright? Sit down.

(BILL *sits.*)

BURBAGE. So how're you doing?

BILL. I'm fine. What's the good word on "Coriolanus?"

BURBAGE. Not bad, not bad.

BILL. (*Putting his head in his hands:*) Why do you always say "not bad" when it's very, very bad?

BURBAGE. No, no! It's really not bad. It did better than "Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

BILL. That show of Marlowe's with the dancing pig in it did better than "Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

BURBAGE. Oh, I loved that show! If you had a dancing pig in one of your plays, it'd be boffo! Is there a dancing pig in your new one...what's it called?

BILL. "Titus Andronicus." No, it doesn't have a dancing pig.

BURBAGE. But you could you put one in, couldn't you? Just sort of slip it in somewhere?

BILL. I don't know...

BURBAGE. Just as a bit of comic relief. It doesn't have to be an intrinsic part of the plot or anything.

BILL. I'll see what I can do.

BURBAGE. It's just that "Titus" has got to be a blockbuster. We need a hit.

BILL. So, no pressure.

BURBAGE. Look. How about a change of pace? You've done three light pieces in a row—"Much Ado About Nothing," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." (*With a heavy sigh:*) And before that, we had those *seven* King Henry plays and the two Richards.

BILL. I was thinking of doing one about King John...

BURBAGE. No, no, no! Bill, you know I love you. But let's shake things up a little. Say, another Scottish Play? People like thrills and chills, blood and guts, passion and rage. What do you think?

BILL. I guess. It's just that "Titus" isn't really like that.

BURBAGE. I'm sure we can spice it up a little. Let's see what you got.

(BILL takes out some sheets of parchment and a quill.)

BILL. Okay. There's this fellow, Titus Andronicus and he's the mayor of a town in Italy.

BURBAGE. We need something bigger. Could he be, I don't know, a general? A Roman general, doesn't that sound good?

BILL. Uh, yeah, that might work. *(He writes.)* And he's been out of town on business for a few months...

BURBAGE. He's been away fighting wars against...who were those barbarians, lots of black eye liner, very depressed?

BILL. The Goths?

BURBAGE. That's it—the Goths. He's been fighting the Goths. And it's been years, ten years.

BILL. And he has these four sons...

BURBAGE. *(Warningly:)* This isn't going to be another "King Lear," is it?

BILL. No, no. He brings back a woman he wants to marry—Tamora, and her sons and her lover who is disguised as her servant.

BURBAGE. That's good, that's good. Let's just make Tamora the Queen of the Goths. More dramatic—a conquered enemy.

BILL. Okay. So custom demands that Titus defeat Tamora's eldest son in a contest to win her hand.

BURBAGE. Wait, he has to...he has to *kill* her son to avenge his sons that died in the war!

BILL. Really? Won't that make her awfully mad?

BURBAGE. Exactly! She'll plot some horrible revenge!

BILL. But it was going to be funny. I thought you wanted a dancing pig...

BURBAGE. Forget the pig—this is miles better! So naturally, Tamora refuses Titus and marries the emperor instead.

BILL. And to get revenge on Titus, Tamora and her lover murder her brother-in-law and ravish his wife and blame Titus' sons and they get arrested.

BURBAGE. Now you're getting the hang of it! But wouldn't the wife just tell who really attacked her?

BILL. (*Getting enthused now:*) No, she can't...because...because...

BURBAGE. Because they kidnap her.

BILL. No, because they cut out her tongue so she can't talk!

BURBAGE. She could write a note.

BILL. (*Pulling his hands up into his sleeves and waving the empty cuffs:*) She can't because...they cut off her hands, too!

BURBAGE. (*A little frightened of his enthusiasm.*) They go that far, do they?

BILL. And...and then Titus cuts off one of *his* hands because he thinks that the Emperor will let his sons go if he does!

BURBAGE. Why would he think that?

BILL. But instead, the Emperor punishes the sons by...

BURBAGE. Putting them in prison?

BILL. (*Puts his hands around his neck.*) By cutting off their heads!

BURBAGE. Maybe we should pull back a little. This is getting a bit much...

BILL. So to get back at Tamora, Titus captures her sons and kills them and bakes them in a pie!

BURBAGE. A pie?! Where did that come from?

BILL. And get this...he tricks her into eating the pie! She eats her own children!

BURBAGE. That's disgusting!

BILL. Isn't that what you wanted? Thrills and chills? Blood and guts?

BURBAGE. Do you feel all right? Do you want to lie down?

BILL. *(With a crazy laugh:)* And then Titus tells her what she did and then he kills her! And then he kills his own daughter!

BURBAGE. Why... *(Would he do that?)*

BILL. And then the Emperor kills Titus and then the Goths come in and kill the Emperor and then Titus' son becomes Emperor so it's a happy ending!

BURBAGE. That's a happy ending?

BILL. You're right! This story is much better than the one I wrote! I'll get started on it right away!

(BILL exits.)

BURBAGE. What have I done?!

(BURBAGE exits with his desk.)

(Enter EMCEE into a spotlight.)

EMCEE. *(Reading from a card:)* And now, Zombie Theatre proudly presents: "Orange Julius Caesar Salad." *(Looks again:)* Sorry, that's "Julius Caesar."

(EMCEE exits. Lights up.)

(Enter ANTONY.)

ANTONY. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your...

(Enter ZOMBIES.)

ZOMBIES. *(Attacking ANTONY:)* Brains! Brains!

(ZOMBIES drag ANTONY off. Screams off.)

(Music—the theme from "The Dating Game." Enter JIM LANGE, dressed in 1960s fashion. He arranges the three chairs so they are grouped together.)

JIM LANGE. And now it's time to play everyone's favorite game show—"The Dating Game!" Hello, everybody, I'm your host Jim Lange and now let's bring out our three lucky Bachelors!

(Enter ROMEO, PARIS, BOB. They sit in the three chairs in that order. ROMEO and PARIS are dressed in classic "Shakespearean" costumes. BOB is dressed in normal, modern clothes.)

JIM LANGE. Bachelor Number One, please tell us your name and a little something about yourself.

ROMEO. Dude! My name is Romeo Montague and I live in Verona Beach and I like dueling, surfing and skateboarding and I hate the Capulets! Montagues Rule! Whoo!

JIM LANGE. Bachelor Number Two.

PARIS. Hello, Jim. My name is Paris, I'm a Count, I also live in Verona and I'm looking to get married.

JIM LANGE. Wow, so you're pretty serious about this.

PARIS. I am.

JIM LANGE. And Bachelor Number Three.

BOB. Uh, I'm Bob, I'm a claims adjuster for a major insurance company and... *(He looks at the other two.)* ...uh...I think I'm in the wrong...

JIM LANGE. That's great! And now, let's meet our lovely Bachelorette!

(Enter JULIET, classically dressed. She is quite chatty. She stands to one side with JIM so that she is facing the audience but is unable to see the men.)

JIM LANGE. Her name is Juliet, she's also from Verona and why don't you tell us something about yourself, Juliet.

JULIET. Jim, my parents are trying to make me marry some awful guy that I don't even know, can you believe it? It's really bumming me out so I'm trying to find someone who can take me away from all their parental tyranny.

JIM LANGE. You know this is just for fun, right? We just send you to Van Nuys for the weekend...

JULIET. We'll fall deeply, madly in love and he'll make all my dreams come true and we'll live happily ever after!

JIM LANGE. That's an awful lot of pressure to be...

JULIET. *(Who just won't shut up:)* I'll show them I can make my own decisions and live my own life and I don't need their help, thank you very much! God!

JIM LANGE. Well, that's great. So let's get started! Juliet, you know how the game is played so why don't you ask your first question.

JULIET. *(Looking at a card:)* Bachelor Number One, I'm thinking of getting a tattoo. Which one would you pick out for me and why?

ROMEO. I would get you a bitchin' skull on fire with a sword going through it and a snake coming out through the mouth.

JULIET. But I was thinking of a teddy bear!

ROMEO. Okay, okay, I see where you're going. So change it to a pink teddy bear...

JULIET. Okay...

ROMEO. And it's on fire with a sword going through it and a snake coming out through the mouth!

JULIET. Ew! Why would I like that?

ROMEO. Because it's radical and all the skater chicks I know have 'em. You'd look totally shredded.

JULIET. But maybe I don't want to look totally shredded.

ROMEO. If you want to be with me, you got to be shredded, dudette!

JULIET. *(To JIM LANGE:)* I don't even know what that means. Bachelor Number Two, my friend Tiffany has tickets to see Pink but it's a school night and my parents won't let me go. How would you help me sneak out?

PARIS. I certainly could have my servants take care of that but I think you should listen to your parents and do exactly as they say. They know best and you should honor and respect them and marry who they tell you to.

JULIET. (*To JIM LANGE.*) What a buzz kill.

JIM LANGE. Ouch! Quick question—how old are you, hon?

JULIET. 14.

JIM LANGE. 14?! That seems a little young for this...

JULIET. Bachelor Number Three, my Hello Kitty backpack falls in the mud on my way home from school. What do you do?

BOB. I guess I'd take you down to the Galleria and get you another one.

JULIET. And...?

BOB. And maybe an ice cream to cheer you up?

JULIET. Excellent! (*To JIM LANGE.*) I like him.

JIM LANGE. And now we move on to round number two!

JULIET. Bachelor Number One, do you believe in true love, a love at first sight that leads to a wonderful marriage and lasts forever and no one can stand in its way?

ROMEO. That's pretty heavy, Bachelor-Chick. I don't know if I'm ready to commit to that kind of a serious...

JULIET. Bachelor Number Two, same question.

PARIS. I have very strong feelings about marriage.

JULIET. Excellent!

PARIS. I believe marriage is a political and economic union to insure the survival of the family. It should be entered into as solemnly as any other business contract and love certainly has no place in it.

JULIET. You don't believe in love?

PARIS. Oh, I believe in love. I just don't believe it has anything to do with marriage.

JULIET. Then why get married at all?

PARIS. To forge ties between families, to increase financial gain and to produce children, of course. Every man must have an heir.

JULIET. Ew! What about my figure?

PARIS. Between the disfigurement of smallpox and the almost certainty of dying in childbirth or the plague, your figure is the last thing you should be worried about. Did I mention you might be burned as a witch if I get tired of you?

JULIET. Bachelor Number Three, you believe in love in marriage, don't you?

BOB. Well, yes, of course I do, but...

JULIET. He's the one! I want him!

JIM LANGE. But there's still another...

JULIET. Him!

JIM LANGE. Then let's meet the Bachelors you didn't choose. Bachelor Number One, come on out and meet Juliet!

(ROMEO gets up and crosses down to JULIET and JIM LANGE.)

ROMEO. *(Howling:)* Ooowww!! What a fox!

JULIET. Oh, he's cute! Can I change my mind?

JIM LANGE. No, I'm sorry, you didn't choose Romeo Montague.

JULIET. Montague? *(Makes disgusted sound:)* I hate Montagues!

ROMEO. What's wrong with Montagues? Wait a minute, are you Juliet *Capulet*? Is she a Capulet? Dude, I am so out of here!

(ROMEO exits.)

JULIET. *(Calling after:)* Montagues stink!

ROMEO. *(Off:)* Montagues rule!

JIM LANGE. And here's Bachelor Number Two!

(PARIS crosses over to JULIET.)

PARIS. (*Looking at JULIET:*) Good child-bearing hips but much too passionate.

(*PARIS exits.*)

JIM LANGE. And now let's meet the Bachelor you did choose! His name is Bob Hoffman, he's an insurance claims adjuster from Akron, Ohio who likes bowling and sweaters and heerreee he is!

(*BOB crosses over to JULIET.*)

JULIET. We're getting married! We're getting married!

BOB. What?!

JULIET. You said you believed in love! So do I! I love you! I loved you the moment I saw you! Let's get married!

BOB. (*Looking to JIM LANGE for help:*) I thought we were just going to go to Van Nuys for the weekend.

JULIET. You don't love me?!

BOB. I don't even know you!

JULIET. But I know you! One look in your eyes and I knew we were meant to be together forever! It's written in the stars!

BOB. (*Looking up:*) What stars?! (*To JIM:*) What is she talking about?

JULIET. (*To JIM LANGE:*) He's spurning me! He doesn't want me! I have no reason to live!

(*JULIET takes out a small vial.*)

JULIET.

Eyes, look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you

The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss

A dateless bargain to engrossing death!

Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavoury guide!

Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on

The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!

Here's to my love!

(*JULIET drinks from the vial.*)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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